

# RESOURCE TEAM ASSESSMENT REPORT

For

## ***BIG TIMBER/ SWEET GRASS COUNTY MONTANA***

**ORGANIZED BY SUBJECT**

**OCTOBER 7 – 8, 2014**

For the full report please visit [http://www.medamembers.org/media/userfiles/subsite\\_107/files/Big\\_Timber\\_Report\\_Final.pdf](http://www.medamembers.org/media/userfiles/subsite_107/files/Big_Timber_Report_Final.pdf)

**In Partnership with: Beartooth RC&D, Montana USDA/RD, Montana Dept. of Commerce, Montana Economic Developers Association, Lake County Community Development Corp., Prospera Business Network, Triangle Communications, and Jefferson Local Development Corporation.**

## **MAIN TOPIC: BUSINESS RECRUITMENT AND EXPANSION**

### **ISSUES:**

- **Downtown business development**
- **Business diversification**
- **Business recruitment**
- **Value Added Ag Opportunities**
- **Distribution of local products**
- **Regulatory challenges**
- **Transfer of Wealth**

### **Issue: Downtown Business Development**

Big Timber's downtown is vibrant compared to many other small Montana towns. In addition to some of the basic services, Big Timber has some retail and a destination restaurant and hotel. Even so, community members and business owners expressed interest in even more business development in the downtown area. Certainly it is true that the more businesses there are in the downtown area, the more traffic the whole area will draw. Big Timber is well suited to attract additional traffic given its high number of out-of-state land-owners and its proximity to Bozeman and Billings.

### **Recommendation:**

Supporting and enhancing existing businesses so that they are as profitable as they can be is a good first step to attracting more businesses. Resources through the Montana Main Street Program or neighboring towns or businesses could be brought in to teach business owners how to attract more customers and increase sales through merchandising, signage and promotion. The community could develop a façade improvement revolving loan fund using private dollars or Community Transportation Enhancement Program (CTEP) funds.

Existing store owners could mentor potential new business owners by subleasing small spaces in their shops or simply assisting with business planning. Hosting a business planning class in town could give the skills and the incentive to reluctant business owners and could give existing business owners an opportunity to look at their business with fresh perspective. A survey to ask customers what other things they would like to see, do or buy while they are downtown would be helpful to existing or future business owners in pursuing new ideas.

Increasing traffic to the downtown would help existing business owners and could encourage new business owners to move forward on their ideas. Increasing effectiveness of signage directing people to the downtown is essential. Downtown business owners could work together to develop a promotional plan for their downtown and could self-fund it and use social media and other no-cost options similar to Phillipsburg MT.

The Bozeman Downtown Association is very deliberate about encouraging its business owners to cross promote other downtown businesses. They encourage downtown businesses to learn about what each business offers and to refer customers to another downtown business if they don't have what the customer wants. Along a similar vein, buy local campaigns can remind people of the importance of supporting local businesses. Working together as a downtown association of business owners can be an effective strategy. Making a business working group fun and exciting helps attract business members as well as participation from the community as demonstrated by the Great Falls Downtown Chicks group.

Overall, developing a Master Plan for developing the downtown area could give Big Timber a road map to achieving its goals. Having a strategic plan in place makes a town more competitive in seeking grants to fund projects identified in its master plan.

### Resources:

Montana Main Street Program. <http://mtmainstreet.mt.gov/default.mcp>

Montana Community Transportation Enhancement Program grant. <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/business/ctep/>  
Core Four Business Planning.

[http://www.corefouronline.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=171&Itemid=162](http://www.corefouronline.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=171&Itemid=162)

American Independent Business Alliance. <http://www.amiba.net/buy-local-campaigns>

Business Alliance for Local Living Economies (BALLE). <https://bealocalist.org/local-first>

Great Falls Downtown Chicks. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/GreatfallsDowntownChicks/>

**Issues: Downtown (development, diversification, recruitment)** – Big Timber is aesthetically beautiful and the city center and main street area is often undiscovered. Concern has been expressed that certain goods and products are not readily available.

### Recommendation #1:

**Consider a Market or Retail Gap Analysis for the greater Big Timber area.** This type of research can enhance the business mix and the position of Big Timber as a destination for both local residents and those outside Sweet Grass County. Results can help to strengthen existing businesses and assist in business recruitment and entrepreneurship.

Establish a local committee of task force to research options, establish priorities and plan of action. Estimated timeframe: 6-18 months.

- **Formal approach** – seek planning grant funds from [Mt. Department of Commerce Community Development Block Grant Economic Development \(CDBG ED\)](#) or [Big Sky Economic Development Trust Fund Program Category II Planning Projects](#). Both require partnership with local government and/or the Certified Regional Development Group such as Beartooth RC&D and local matching funds to hire and work with a consultant.
- **Informal approach** – work through Chamber of Commerce to prepare and implement a Consumer Survey (you have a wonderful local expert at Survey Solutions) using mixed method (online and printed format.) Working with Chamber, local committee would facilitate process using volunteers.

### Recommended Resources:

Extension website - full overview and examples of Downtown Marketing Analysis - includes samples of business and consumer surveys <http://fyi.uwex.edu/downtown-market-analysis/analysis-of-opportunities-by-sector/retail-service-businesses>

Becky McCray of [Small Biz Survival](#) says it best: “If we can see what your local spend on a category, versus how much of that is spent locally, we can spot opportunities. Look at this [example from Waterloo, Illinois](#). See all those negative numbers? Those are dollars flowing out of the community. Local people are spending in those categories, just not in Waterloo. That means it’s an opportunity. A new business could start in any of those categories, and know that locals are already spending for them.” The full article **What businesses would work**

**in a small town? Filling empty buildings** can be viewed at <http://smallbizsurvival.com/2013/09/what-businesses-would-work-in-a-small-town-filling-empty-buildings.html>

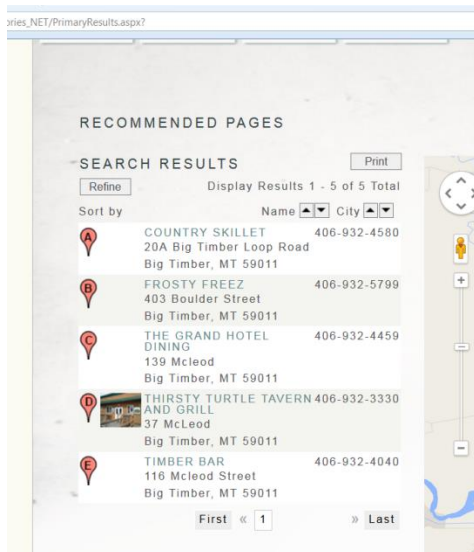
Downtown Sheridan Business Plan – retail market analysis begins on page 18.  
[http://downtownsheridan.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Downtown-Business-Plan\\_1.pdf](http://downtownsheridan.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Downtown-Business-Plan_1.pdf)

Potential partners – Beartooth RC&D, MSU Extension

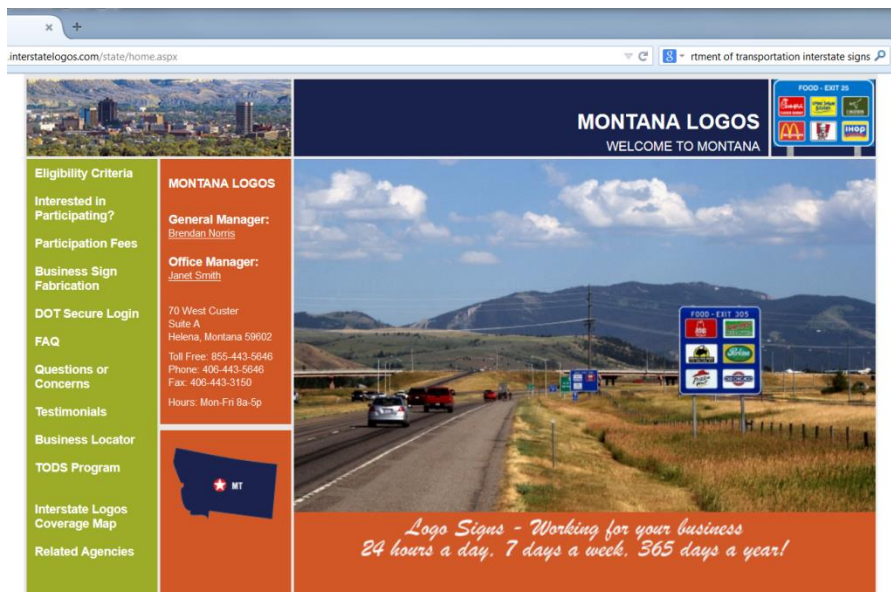
## Recommendation #2:

**Gain a better understanding of local tourism and its economic impacts and improve visibility within and outside of great Big Timber area.**

- Investigate interactive data for Big Timber and region per the UofM Institute for Tourism & Recreation Research (ITTR) website. <http://www.itrr.umt.edu> At minimum, share data with community members in local media, Chamber newsletter and provide a direct site link to the Chamber of Commerce website. This would also be an ideal student government project (research and present a written report to the community.)
- Insure all businesses fully utilize free listings on state tourism [www.visitmt.com](http://www.visitmt.com) website – minimum of photos for all entities. This could also be an ideal student or single volunteer effort – aided by the Chamber and businesses involved. Enter your business information via this link [http://www.travelmontana.org/OURPROGRAMS/survey\\_forms](http://www.travelmontana.org/OURPROGRAMS/survey_forms)



- Understand Montana signage laws and coordinate effort to include all business entities within community. <http://www.montana.interstatelogs.com/state/home.aspx>



- Understand Sign Exemptions and work with local and state MDT officials to create uniform directional signs to downtown Big Timber from all highway entrances to community. [http://www.mdt.mt.gov/business/oac/sign\\_exemptions.shtml](http://www.mdt.mt.gov/business/oac/sign_exemptions.shtml)



- Optimize local websites - consider addition of virtual business and community tour. Example of this <http://www.insidemt.com> (a Montana business - photographer located in Helena)
- Encourage partnership of local Artists and Art Organizations to fully take advantage of available grants, programs and services – work to coordinate with local tourism and marketing efforts. <http://www.art.mt.gov/orgs/orgs.asp>
- Investigate opportunities to showcase and feature the culinary talents of the community at local events and/or develop a local image or brand that is consistently marketed among restaurants, the Chamber and media. This tactic would also be used with locally grown foods such as lamb and beef.
  - Paws Up Resort features several events - Montana Master Chef's, Montana Master Grillers, and Long Table events <http://www.pawsup.com/events/montana-master-chefs.php#.VF1Jf8nYeGo>

- Billings – Guest Chefs events - is a great example of featuring the individuals. Big Timber could copy this on your Chamber website <http://www.winefoodfestival.com/participants/guest-chefs>
- Triple Creek Ranch packages feature their chefs [http://www.triplecreekranch.com/rates/package\\_details.html?id=41](http://www.triplecreekranch.com/rates/package_details.html?id=41)
- Brand local food products on menus
- Encourage positive comments about great food, places to stay or play onto [www.GetLost.MT.com](http://www.GetLost.MT.com) from your guests and visitors.

**Recommendation #3: Make a direct link between Downtown and Tourism.**

The [Montana Main Street Program](#) offers technical assistance and expertise to member communities and awards competitive grant funding to communities actively working on downtown revitalization, economic development, and historic preservation. Following the process outlined by the Montana Main Street Tier System, Big Timber should invite program coordinators to make a formal presentation to the community and work toward becoming an Affiliate Community. The application cycle is open from October 1 through December 31<sup>st</sup>.

Many of the projects and suggestions outline within this assessment could be incorporated into the Main Street Program. NOTE: this program is separate and not to be confused with the Governor Bullock’s Main Street Montana Project.

**Resources:**

**2015 Tourism Digital Marketing Grant – Mt. Department of Commerce** (12.12.14 application deadline - possible funding source for virtual tour and web optimization.) <http://travelmontana.mt.gov/forms>

**Humanities Montana** – regular, major and opportunity grants. <http://www.humanitiesmontana.org/grants/index.php>

**Cooperative Marketing Funds via YELLOWSTONE COUNTRY**

Robin Hoover, Exec. Director, PO Box 3048, Bozeman, MT 59772

[robin@yellowstonecountry.net](mailto:robin@yellowstonecountry.net)

or Riana Davidson, Consumer Marketing Manager, Montana Office of Tourism 406.841.2948

[rdavidson@mt.gov](mailto:rdavidson@mt.gov)

**Montana No and Low Cost Advertising and Marketing Opportunities**

<http://www.travelmontana.mt.gov/forms/No&LowCostMarketing13.pdf>

The Montana Main Street Program <http://mtmainstreet.mt.gov/default.mcp> and the National Main Street Center [http://www.preservationnation.org/main-street/#.VF1m\\_8nYeGo](http://www.preservationnation.org/main-street/#.VF1m_8nYeGo)

**Issues:**

- Downtown Business Development
- Business Diversification

**Recommendations:**

At nearly every community input meeting, citizens expressed concern over the lack of local shopping loyalty, condition of downtown business district, empty store fronts, and getting store owners to work together to promote local business.

### **Downtown Revitalization Plan**

Through Beartooth RC&D, the community may consider applying for planning grants to hire a consultant to complete a downtown revitalization plan. This plan could include an assessment of existing businesses, potential business opportunities, needed infrastructure improvements (store signage, sidewalks, streetlights, etc.), landscaping, parking, and historic preservation.

This plan could include an outline for revitalization of the downtown core, leverage of public/private investment, non-vehicle modes of transportation (walk and bike paths), removal of blight, and affordable housing for mixed use real estate. It was expressed several times at the community meetings about the need for a place that youth could use for after school entertainment. A youth center or teen center could be considered as part of the revitalization plan.

It is understood that the City has a current Capital Improvements Plan that was completed within the last five years. The downtown revitalization plan should include specific improvements related to water, wastewater, and storm drains for the downtown core, if not already included in the City's overall plan.

The Montana Department of Commerce has two programs that can assist with downtown revitalization studies – the Community Development Block Grant – Economic Development (CDBG-ED) Program (planning grants), and the Big Sky Economic Development Trust Fund (BSTF) Program (Category II grants). Both programs can be used to hire a professional to complete this type of plan that would include a list of priorities, cost of implementation, and timelines for completion.

### **Financing Downtown Improvements**

#### **Downtown Business District Revolving Loan Fund**

Once the plan is in place, the City should consider a Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) through Beartooth RC&D specifically for downtown business improvements. RLFs are started with a loan for a specific business improvement. Repayments from that initial loan would be deposited into a Revolving Loan Fund and made available to other downtown businesses for business improvements. Improvements could include new doors, thresholds, windows, sidewalk repairs, signage or other necessary improvements that would enhance local business and increase downtown consumer traffic.

The Community Development Block Grant – Economic Development (CDBG-ED) Program can provide the initial low-interest loan financing to assist a specific business with needed improvements. In turn, that business will need to retain or create jobs during the contract period. Loan repayments would be deposited into an account for relending activities to other businesses. The CDBG-ED program could be used as gap financing ideally with participation from the local banking community, and equity from the business owner.

#### **Downtown Infrastructure Improvements**

The City could apply for a transportation grant from the Community Transportation Enhancement Program for overall downtown improvements including landscaping, streetscape improvements (period lighting, sidewalk paving, benches, planting containers, decorative walls and walkways, signs, public art, and historical markers), for historic preservation projects, scenic or historic highway signage, and aesthetic improvements, and other activities related to strengthening the cultural and environmental aspects of the state's highway system.

Water, wastewater, and storm drain improvements can be financed through the Treasure State Endowment Program or the CDBG Public Facilities Program. Improvements should show community-wide benefit through these programs, and both programs are often used at the same time to finance community infrastructure improvements. The CDBG Program focuses on benefit to low and moderate income persons.

If the City has a business that is not already being served by City infrastructure and the business needs those services in order to expand operations or even maintain operations, the CDBG-ED Program could assist with those hook-up costs, or costs of water or wastewater improvements or extensions. If the infrastructure improvements would be owned by the City or County, the CDBG-ED Program could award a grant for the improvements and the business would only need to document the job retention or creation during the contract period – there would be no loan to the business that would require repayments.

### **Assisting Businesses Development**

If businesses are considering modifications in their marketing or business plans and need assistance, there is help available through the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) in Billings. The SBDC can provide guidance and training to businesses that need to create business plans, need assistance with business accounting, counseling, and other related services.

A business considering an expansion of existing services or expansion into a new market that would result in the creation of new jobs may consider an application for assistance with hiring a consultant to create this type of professional business plan that would in part be financed with a planning grant. If the business needs a grant or low interest loan for needed equipment, working capital, construction costs, or job training – the same programs can assist with those capital expenses.

In addition to local bank options, financing for business expenses can be obtained through the Beartooth RC&D and the Montana Department of Commerce economic development programs.

### **Recommended Technical Assistance Resources:**

Certified Regional Development Office:

Luke Walawander, Executive Director

Beartooth RC&D

110 South Main Street

PO Box 180

Joliet, MT 59041-0180

PH: 406-962-3914

Email: [lwalawander@beartooth.org](mailto:lwalawander@beartooth.org)

Website: <http://www.beartooth.org/>

Small Business Development Center:

Dena Johnson, SBDC Director

Big Sky Economic Development Authority

222 North 32<sup>nd</sup> Street

Suite 200

Billings, MT 59101

PH: 406-254-6014

Email: [Dena@bigskyeda.org](mailto:Dena@bigskyeda.org)

Website: <http://www.bigskyeconomicdevelopment.org/>



## **Funding Opportunities for Planning Grants, Business Loans and Grants:**

Debra Demarais, Section Manager  
Community Development Block Grant – Economic Development Program  
Montana Department of Commerce  
301 South Park Ave.  
Helena, MT 59601  
PH: 1-406-841-2736  
Email: [ddemarais@mt.gov](mailto:ddemarais@mt.gov)  
Website: <http://cdbged.mt.gov>

Nancy Faroni, Section Manager  
Big Sky Trust Fund Program  
Montana Department of Commerce  
301 South Park Ave.  
Helena, MT 59601  
PH: 1-406-841-2744  
Email: [nfaroni@mt.gov](mailto:nfaroni@mt.gov)  
Website: [www.bstf.mt.gov](http://www.bstf.mt.gov)

Michael Wherley, Professional Engineer  
Community Transportation Enhancement Program  
Montana Department of Transportation  
2701 Prospect Ave.  
Helena, MT 59601  
PH: 1-406-444-4221  
Email: [mwherley@mt.gov](mailto:mwherley@mt.gov)  
Website: [www.mdt.me.gov/business/ctep/](http://www.mdt.me.gov/business/ctep/)

## **Community Infrastructure Improvements:**

Jennifer Olson, Bureau Chief  
Treasure State Endowment Program  
Community Development Block Grant – Public Facilities Program  
Montana Department of Commerce  
301 South Park Ave.  
Helena, MT 59601  
PH: 1-406-841-2773  
Email: [jcolson@mt.gov](mailto:jcolson@mt.gov)  
Website: <http://comdev.mt.gov/Grantsbureau/grantsbureau.mcp>

## **Issues:**

- **Downtown business development**
- **Business diversification**
- **Business recruitment**
- **Value Added Ag Opportunities**
- **Distribution of local products**
- **Regulatory challenges**

## **Observations and Recommendations:**

One of the main issues I heard during the listening sessions was the lack of business diversification to keep people shopping locally more. One of the most challenging aspects for economic development efforts is business recruitment and the perceived need to bring in new businesses. It can be much more cost effective to work with existing businesses to fill gaps potentially to address community needs. One alternative to help identify what those needs are more succinctly is to conduct a retail gap analysis study with your residents. This would help the community better understand residents shopping habits and provide a framework from which to ascertain whether what goods and services would compel residents to remain and shop in the community more frequently. Obviously not a unique challenge to most communities, but one that can be addressed. These types of planning projects could be partially funded through the Montana Department of Commerce, Big Sky Economic Development Trust (BSTF) fund.

Identifying and strengthening opportunities within the value added agricultural sector will be very complimentary for the community. I would recommend working with Growth Through Agriculture program and your local economic development organization to develop some training modules that address the value added producer's needs. The Montana Manufacturing Extension Center has also just recently started working with the private sector to establish a food manufacturing network and it may be an opportunity to see how local businesses could benefit from participating. Todd Daniels at MMEC in Bozeman would be the contact person.

*Certified Regional Development Corporation's (CRDC's)* are able to apply for planning funds through the Big Sky Trust Fund category II. These funds could help with planning efforts such as developing a community marketing or branding plan. Beartooth is your community CRDC and should be consulted if interested in developing one of these plans.

#### **Beartooth RC&D**

Luke Walawander, Economic Development Director  
P.O. Box 180  
128 South Main Street  
Joliet, MT 59041  
Phone: (406) 962-3914

#### **MT Food and Ag Development Center**

Joel Bertolino, Manager  
jbertolino@beartooth.org  
P: (406) 962-3914; C: (406) 598-3302  
F: (406) 962-3647  
Beartooth RC&D  
128 South Main Street  
Joliet, MT 59041  
<http://www.beartooth.org>

#### **Montana Manufacturing Extension Center**

##### **Todd Daniels**

##### **Bozeman Area & Billings East**

Montana Manufacturing Extension Center  
2310 University Way, B2-1  
P.O. Box 174255  
Bozeman, MT 59715  
Phone: (406) 994-6055  
Fax: (406) 994-3391

**Issues:**

- **Downtown business development**
- **Business diversification**
- **Business recruitment**
- **Value Added Ag Opportunities**
- **Distribution of local products**

**Recommendations:**

Business recruitment, retaining existing businesses and expansion of those existing businesses that have potential to create a thriving work force reflects the very vitality of a rural community. In the case of Big Timber, this crosses all business sectors, from agriculture to retail/down town businesses; from the hotel and grocery store to its manufacturing sector – all critical to its future development. Here are ideas for various sectors that could be instituted with the assistance of a dedicated “business council”.

- Form a business council of community leaders who could develop both a survey for each sector and a team of people to visit 3-4 businesses in each industry sector to determine the status of the business related to how it rates its own potential for growth, what it sees as critical to its future in the community, what its workforce issues are, wage rates and job availability, and what supporting services it sees as needed from the community (include major agricultural entities, both on-farm and ag-processors in the production/shipping chain), and what types of businesses or products would they like to see available within the community that might be compatible with theirs’ or help them save on transportation costs or otherwise increase sales and/or profits.
- Utilize the resources of the regional development organization (Beartooth RC&D) to help form a BEAR team to provide structure to interviews and enter the information into a data base
- Survey residents of Big Timber relative to how often they go to Billings or Bozeman to shop; what do they buy there that they can’t buy in Big Timber; would they shop in Big Timber for some percent of the time it is was available, what makes them stay in Big Timber, or what would make them push to leave.
- Compile the information and be sure it is distributed throughout the town, to all businesses and residents so that everyone sees the issues that emerge (i.e. retailers see what manufacturers need; grocery store sees what residents or schools need; city council sees what manufacturers need in the way of infrastructure; school sees what workforce issues are expressed).
- Survey tourists at various venues during the summer relative to where they are from; what made them stop in Big Timber; are they passing through or what would make them stop for an additional day; how could Big Timber be more appealing to them? (Good project for students?)
- Form a business outreach team that looks at other communities of this size and see what “mini” chain-type stores serve them and see if there is a fit for Big Timber that might increase the competitive opportunities to offer alternatives in shopping to fill gaps of what is missing.
- Get ag-producers and manufacturers together to brainstorm all the value-added products currently being produced and what is possible. Make them the center of a strategic plan that could potentially develop into an incubator or manufacturing center(s) that features value adding to regional raw materials and ag products.

**Recommended Resources:** [www.beartooth.org](http://www.beartooth.org); <http://businessresources.mt.gov/BEAR/default.mcpX>; <http://mtmainstreet.mt.gov/default.mcpX>;

## **Issue: Business Recruitment**

### **Recommendation:**

Big Timber recognizes the necessity to maintain the small rural community but still have the variety of businesses to allow the townspeople to frequent the local vendors. The community expressed the desire to have a strategic business plan that incorporates the existing businesses and formulate a plan for future growth. The school age generation would like to see more restaurant chains like McDonalds; the young families wanted a variety of eating establishments that encompassed different cultures and the older generation felt the eating establishments were adequate and praised the various current restaurants.

The community does not have a business plan or a business committee that would create and document the desires and direction of the town.

- The town could organize a committee of various individuals who could participate in the 1-year, 5-year and 10-year plan to give depth to the needs of the community. It would detail the infrastructure including water/waste water and storm water needs; medical competency; performing arts aspirations; vendor variety; education growth, etc.
- Hiring an individual to be the community events coordinator who collaborates with all organizations, businesses, and groups could create a unity amongst all peoples and consolidate efforts. This person could also be responsible for the tourism packets to be distributed; neighborhood information for new families locating in Big Timber; work with neighboring communities to support their events and include them in Big Timbers. This position could also be the volunteer coordinator.
- Consider sending out a community survey to the town with questions that pertain to needs and desires of future businesses.
- Create a business organization where the area businesses form a group to encourage each other and inform the various merchants of the products offered. Networking and sharing information could be used to enhance the Chambers direction in future decisions.

### **Recommended Resources:**

USDA Rural Development Business program is utilized to improve, develop, or finance business, industry, and improve the economic and environmental climate in rural communities. The Rural Business Enterprise Grant (RBEG) program provides funding to facilitate development of small and emerging rural businesses. The Rural Economic Development Loan (REDL) provides zero interest loans to local utilities which pass through to local businesses for projects that will create and retain employment in rural areas.

[www.rurdev.usda.gov/mt](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/mt) and [www.beartooth.org/](http://www.beartooth.org/) .

## **Issue: Value Added Ag Opportunities**

### **Recommendations:**

The Agricultural Community of Big Timber on numerous occasions identified the need for producers to increase the ability to process and market value-added products.

The agricultural food product would be raised, produced, and distributed in the local region in which the final product is marketed. Local distribution and sales of the raw agricultural food product results in increased value to the commodity, would expand the market, and increase financial returns.

- The community would be able to make decisions based on need by talking to neighbor ranches and assessing which needs have priority.
- Is the foundational goal to construct and maintain a plant packing facility?
- Would a co-op organization benefit the community?

A USDA Rural Development Planning Grant would facilitate economic planning activities to determine the viability of a value-added venture, and may include costs for an independent feasibility study and development of a marketing and business plan.

A USDA Rural Development Working Capital Grant would contribute to the operational costs directly related to the processing and/or marketing of the value added product.

Grants are awarded on a competitive basis, and are solicited through a Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) each year.

**Recommended Resources:**

USDA Rural Development Value Added Producer Grant

**Issue: Value Added Ag Opportunities and/or Distribution of local products**

There seemed to be a lack of communication between the various sectors regarding agriculture producers adding value to and distributing local products. It was noted that many producers are actually marketing certified organic and natural beef, lamb and pork products. Many of these products are processed locally within two facilities and sold by private label ranches and in online sales. A variety of processed meats are marketed under the label of Meats of Montana.

**Recommendation #1: Make connections.** Tie the local culinary experts to agriculture community to promote and market your community. **See additional connectors in culinary and tourism recommendations above.**

**Resources:**

- BUY FRESH, BUY LOCAL – CONNECTING FARMERS, CHEFS AND DINERS  
<http://www.reapfoodgroup.org/bfbl>
- **Montana Farm to Table – Grown in Montana event**  
[http://agr.mt.gov/Special/pdf/MTF2T\\_restaurant\\_grocery\\_distributor.pdf](http://agr.mt.gov/Special/pdf/MTF2T_restaurant_grocery_distributor.pdf)
- NCAT <http://farmtocafeteria.ncat.org/resources> will help you find a [local food seller](#) or a [local food buyer](#)

## **MAIN TOPIC: WORKFORCE**

### **Issues:**

- **Education**
- **Workforce Training, Recruitment, Retention**
- **Pay Scale**

### **Recommendations:**

Concerns were expressed by many groups that there needs to be more job opportunities in Big Timber. Citizens stated that people, especially youth, don't have many job choices with good wages that would keep youth in Big Timber, or have them return to Big Timber after extended education.

### **Job Training**

The Montana Department of Commerce offers assistance to businesses that need workforce development by training existing and new employees. Programs can help with formalized training through colleges and universities, and also provide funding to companies for on-the-job-training. Funding applied for is dependent upon the amount of training cost per employee, number of employees needing training, and wages and benefits offered at the end of the training period.

The BSTF and CDBG-ED Programs have grants for job training. Businesses can request up to \$5,000 per employee, with a maximum of \$400,000 per local government request for the CDBG-ED Program which can help with training expenses for existing and new employees. The BSTF Program only assists with net new jobs and offers up to \$5,000 per employee for training expenses, or up to \$7,500 per employee in high poverty areas. These job training programs require businesses to pay trained employees a specific wage that includes benefits at the end of the employee's training period. Both programs can be applied to if there is a need to train existing and new employees and businesses of any size can apply for job training grants.

The Montana Department of Labor also has job training grants through their Incumbent Worker Training Program. This program allows for skill-based training that would reward trained staff with a certificate of completion or accreditation. This program is primarily for smaller businesses that have no more than 20 employees per location.

Training existing employees helps retain local talent, allows for a higher wage compensation for employees completing training programs, and enhances local investment. Job training programs can help industries recruit employees and expand operations.

### **Business Development**

Citizens expressed concern about growing businesses, creating new businesses, or attracting business to Big Timber. One option the City may consider is to coordinate with the university system and develop a business incubator where start-up businesses can utilize low-cost space while they grow their businesses. An incubator can provide low cost access to business equipment and resources for a specific length of time at which point, the business can "graduate" and operate on its own. The City of Hamilton has a successful incubator in place through the Ravalli County Economic Development Authority and works with the University of Montana.

Another way to grow small business is through a community kitchen. This is an inspected kitchen in a location that can accommodate multiple types of product production and packaging. Successful community kitchens allow businesses to develop their products, learn about state promotional programs such as the Made in Montana Program, develop product labels, and learn marketing tools. Lake County Community Corporation

operates the Mission Mountain Cooperative Development Center in Ronan where multiple small businesses can manufacture everything from jam, juice, tea bags, and process meat products. This Center also works through the university system.

Feasibility of starting an incubator, a community kitchen, or other types of business development tools can be financed through the BSTF or CDBG-ED programs with planning grants. Planning grants can look at the feasibility of creating a community kitchen or business incubator, best locations for these initiatives, costs of development, initial design, and other related costs.

**Recommended Resources:**

**For Technical Assistance:**

Certified Regional Development Office:

Luke Walawander, Executive Director

Beartooth RC&D

110 South Main Street

PO Box 180

Joliet, MT 59041-0180

PH: 406-962-3914

Email: [lwalawander@beartooth.org](mailto:lwalawander@beartooth.org)

Website: <http://www.beartooth.org/>

**Funding Opportunities for Feasibility Studies:**

Debra Demarais, Section Manager

Community Development Block Grant – Economic Development Program

Montana Department of Commerce

301 South Park Ave.

Helena, MT 59601

PH: 1-406-841-2736

Email: [ddemarais@mt.gov](mailto:ddemarais@mt.gov)

Website: <http://cdbged.mt.gov>

Nancy Faroni, Section Manager

Big Sky Trust Fund Program

Montana Department of Commerce

301 South Park Ave.,

Helena, MT 59601

PH: 1-406-841-2744

Email: [nfaroni@mt.gov](mailto:nfaroni@mt.gov)

Website: [www.bstf.mt.gov](http://www.bstf.mt.gov)

**Practical Experience:**

Julie Foster, Director

Ravalli County Economic Development Authority

274 Old Corvallis Rd., Suite A

Hamilton, MT 59840

PH: 1-406-375-9416

Email: [Julie@rceda.org](mailto:Julie@rceda.org)

Website: [www.rceda.org](http://www.rceda.org)

Billie Lee, Director

Lake County Community Development Corporation  
Mission Mountain Cooperative Development Center  
407 Main Street SW  
Ronan, MT 59864  
PH: 1-406-676-5901  
Email: [lccd@ronan.net](mailto:lccd@ronan.net)  
Website: [www.lakecountycdc.org](http://www.lakecountycdc.org)

**Issues:**

- **Education**
- **Workforce training, recruitment, retention**
- **Youth**
- **Alternative industries**

**Recommendations:**

The expressed concern as to the Community losing its children due to lack of jobs is a chicken and egg issue throughout rural America. The survey of manufacturers (and service industries such as health care) previously noted should be used within the schools to help both guide students into skill-based training, technical schools or other “matching” programs help Big Timber students see the possibility of a future in Big Timber; develop with manufacturers, an OJT program that is more than summer work – but geared to evaluating what a career in such a company or industry might look like and how they would need to prepare themselves for such a path and the potential for upward mobility.

- Work with regional development and the state’s job service representative for your area to understand all possible job training funds that can be used by local businesses
- Work with manufacturing and health care sector to determine if high school students can access training programs within companies at a above minimum wage
- Is there a mentoring program with retired businessmen, both to existing businesses and to the school
- Assess what portions of the Career Track performance program being used in the school in specifically meaningful to Big Timber Businesses
- Start an “entrepreneurism” program as a competition for students every year where the entrants build a small business plan; develop prototypes of their product; are featured at some type of business fair; and winners are awarded and acknowledged.
- Develop relationships with educational foundations; “big” business that serve the area that may be willing to sponsor youth development programs
- When the “holes” are identified, research families, children etc. who have left the area because of the lack of opportunity who may have established businesses elsewhere to see if they are ready to return home and bring that business with them.
- Find out what incentives may exist for bringing a business into the community

**Recommended Resources:** <http://wtg.mt.gov/default.mcpx>; <http://wsd.dli.mt.gov/wia/wiaadult.asp>;  
<http://www.entre-ed.org/teach/busplan.htm>; <http://steveblank.com/2014/03/12/beyond-the-lemonade-stand-how-to-teach-high-school-students-lean-startups/>;

**Issues:**

- **Education**
- **Workforce training, recruitment, retention**



- **Youth**
- **Medical**
- **Alternative industries**

**Observations and Recommendations:**

Whether we heard it from law enforcement, students, or at the senior center work force challenges and training needs spanned the community. What I heard in the sessions was not just hiring the appropriate staff, but providing additional training. To that end, I would encourage the businesses to work with the Dept. of Labor’s Incumbent Worker Training program and access the local Business Expansion and Retention team for the region. The challenge is bringing the training to the community for easier access. Given that additional technical training is either in Billings or through MSU Gallatin College in Bozeman which may be a barrier to access easily, look to funding programs through the CDBG-ED or BSTF programs to work with businesses that are creating new jobs or possibly training existing staff. These funds may help to help mitigate some of the direct costs to the businesses.

**Resources:**

**Beartooth RC&D**

Luke Walawander, Economic Development Director  
 P.O. Box 180  
 128 South Main Street  
 Joliet, MT 59041  
 Phone: (406) 962-3914

**BEAR**

**South Central Montana**

Marissa Hauge, Columbus, 406-322-8050, [mhauge@stillwater.mt.gov](mailto:mhauge@stillwater.mt.gov), [Stillwater County](#)

Chad Moore, Billings, Yellowstone County, 406-869-8404, [moore@bigskyeda.org](mailto:moore@bigskyeda.org), [Big Sky Economic Development](#)

**Issue: Housing**

**Recommendation:**

Affordable housing is a state wide issue. Big Timber has the inventory of numerous vacant properties but not the variety to meet family size and financial needs. The clean town, excellent recreational resources, and beautiful surroundings of the area will not entice families to move to the area if they can’t find and afford the housing.

Financing for high end properties requires conventional financing. The very low, low and moderate income families can utilize the USDA Rural Development housing programs. The Direct loan does not have a down payment and is facilitated by a possible government subsidy. The Guaranteed loan is processed by a bank utilizing the RD program. Property can be new construction, existing, modular and new manufactured homes. There are income and loan limits to be considered.

**Resources:**

The repair or rehab of existing properties can also be a burden on the elderly. The 504 Program can assist home owners repair items that are deemed health and safety hazards. This program has a loan and grant option. The home owner has to be 62 or older and living in the home to be eligible for up to a \$7,500 grant; loans are available for qualifying applicants. This program can enable the home owner to get need repairs like a new roof; heating system, windows and deteriorating floor coverings repaired for the safety of the borrower.

[www.rurdev.usda.gov/mt](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/mt)

**Issue: Housing**

Affordable housing was an issue for many people, particularly because wages tend to be lower in Big Timber. It appears that there is adequate single family housing stock available for purchase, but the offerings do not fit the preferences of the buyers. Downtown housing could be a solution for some of these buyers and it could also meet the needs of snowbirds and others that want a second home in Big Timber. The Sonoran Institute did a study recently showing a strong trend of Baby boomers and millennials preferring compact, downtown residential in the West.

**Recommendation:**

Bring in a speaker from the Sonoran Institute to talk about developing downtown housing in Big Timber. Facilitate a group to identify buildings suitable for downtown housing.

**Resources:**

[Sonoran Institute study on downtown living preferences in West: http://communitybuilders.net/reset/](http://communitybuilders.net/reset/)

## **MAIN TOPIC: INFRASTRUCTURE**

### **Issues:**

- **Sidewalks**
- **Pedestrian Safety – school drop off and sky bridge**
- **Bike paths/Walking trails**
- **Utilities**
- **Water/Sewer**
- **Broadband**
- **Cellular/Mobile Connectivity**
- **Storm water system**

### **Observations and Recommendations:**

One of the primary issues brought up was with regards to an aging infrastructure and primarily I am referring to more of the underground utilities. Without benefit of seeing a comprehensive list of engineering projects that have been completed for the city, I would recommend that if one hasn't been done to develop a comprehensive engineering report that encompasses the CIP, and any other ancillary improvements that need to be done for streetscape improvements that may fall outside of the typically underground, curb and gutter types of projects. I recommend this after going through a similar process with a community to ensure a more efficient construction process. I would also recommend that those projects include the installation of the conduit and fiber capacity to address the connectivity challenges of the community. This could be an open access network and there are similar projects being completed in other areas of the state that you may be able to model yours after.

### **Resources:**

#### **Beartooth RC&D**

Luke Walawander, Economic Development Director  
P.O. Box 180  
128 South Main Street  
Joliet, MT 59041  
Phone: (406) 962-3914

#### **Issue: Bike paths/Walking trails**

Big Timber is surrounded by natural beauty, but local residents have no place to take a quick walk around town for pleasure or fitness. Walking trails are one of the top amenities sought out by people looking for a new place to live.

#### **Recommendation:**

Seek out assistance on developing walking trails from communities that have successfully developed them. Facilitate a trails working group to make progress on the project.

#### **Resources:**

Gallatin Valley Land Trust. <http://www.gvlt.org/trails/>  
City of Shelby trails. <http://www.shelbymt.com/roadrunner-trail/>  
City of Three Forks trails. [http://www.threeforksmontana.us/main/trail\\_system.asp](http://www.threeforksmontana.us/main/trail_system.asp)  
Montana State Parks Recreational Trails Grants. <http://stateparks.mt.gov/recreation/rtpGrants.html>  
Montana Community Transportation Enhancement Program grant. <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/business/ctep/>

## Issue: Broadband

### Recommendations and Resources:

- Investigate interactive broadband reference maps from the Montana Broadband program <http://mtbroadband.org/interactive-broadband-map> Gain a general understanding of regulatory and funding issues faced by the FCC, state and service providers.
- Inquire with all current broadband providers (wired, fixed wireless, mobile wireless) regarding their current capabilities, short and long range plans for system upgrades.
- Investigate options for open dialog and areas of opportunity between existing or new providers. Consider hosting a “round table discussion” or similar conversation to share concerns and opportunities.
- Apply to Triangle Communications Connected Community Challenge program which promotes Smart Rural Communities throughout their service area. The process follows national priorities that include “Access, Adoption and Use of Broadband” in communities. Using a local committee and local technology assets, existing needs and opportunities are reviewed along with demographics of who’s not online and why. The final aspect of the program is a simple community Broadband Action Plan. See details at Triangle’s website or via this link <http://www.itstriangle.com/economic-development/connected-community-challenge> The next round of applications is anticipated to be in early 2015.
- In addition to the above, good examples and links to materials include:  
50 ideas to Connect Communities - <http://www.connectingcommunities.info>  
Blandin Broadband Initiative [www.blandinfoundation.org/html/public\\_broadband.cfm](http://www.blandinfoundation.org/html/public_broadband.cfm)  
Connected Nation <http://www.connectednation.org/who-we-are>  
Building Digital Communities [http://www.imls.gov/about/building\\_digital\\_communities.aspx](http://www.imls.gov/about/building_digital_communities.aspx)

## Issue: Lack of Cell Service and either No Internet Service or Extremely Slow Speeds

### Recommendations and Resources:

USDA finances new construction and upgrades to telecommunications infrastructure. Access to high-speed Internet services and other quality telecommunications services increases educational opportunities, improved availability of healthcare, job creation, retention and growth of businesses, and other economic growth.

- [Telecommunications Loan Program](#)  
This program provides funding for the improvement and expansion of telecommunications facilities and service in rural areas of 5,000 in population or less. All facilities financed must be broadband capable. Program funds are provided through a variety of direct and guaranteed loans.
- [Broadband Loan Program \(Farm Bill\)](#)  
The Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (2002 Farm Bill) established a new loan and loan guarantee program access to Broadband Telecommunications Services in Rural Areas. This program was modified and reauthorized under the 2008 Farm Bill. This program provides funding for the cost of constructing, improving, and acquiring facilities and equipment for broadband service in rural communities of 20,000 inhabitants or less. Program funds are provided through a variety of direct loans.
- [American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 Broadband Initiatives Program](#)  
This program supports the expansion of broadband service in rural areas through loans, grants and loan/grant combinations to projects that provide access to high speed service and facilitate economic

development in locations without sufficient access to such service. All funds under this program must be obligated by September 30, 2010.

- [Distance Learning And Telemedicine Grant Program](#)  
Under this program, RUS provides grant funding for the deployment of distance learning and telemedicine projects serving rural areas of 20,00 or less (based on formula) to entities operating educational and healthcare facilities.
- [Community Connect Broadband Program](#)  
This program is designed to fund deployment of broadband infrastructure to the neediest areas in rural America. Each application covers only one community, population of 20,000 or less, which is completely unserved with regard to broadband services.

[www.rurdev.usda.gov/mt](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/mt) or Kim Jacobs at [Kim.Jacobs@wdc.usda.gov](mailto:Kim.Jacobs@wdc.usda.gov) 307-254-0910

## **MAIN TOPIC: MARKETING**

### **Issues:**

- **Marketing of Big Timber**
- **Signage to find McLeod**
- **Signage off of interstate**
- **Recreation and tourism**
- **Increased awareness of the arts community**
- **Expansion of civic events**

### **Observations and Recommendations:**

My primary recommendation is to develop a comprehensive plan and then implement it in a series of phases that you can accomplish with current staff and/or volunteers. I would recommend an overall strategic marketing plan for the community. This might be part of a large economic development plan for the community, but this piece in particular will provide you guidance for a more effective marketing campaign. Last year the community of Livingston embarked on a branding planning project. The project was funded in part with BSTF planning grant dollars. It has been instrumental for the community and now the community partners are funding the implementation in stages. The key will be to develop a brand image and campaign for the community that can be used by businesses, the Chamber and municipalities to promote the community.

I would recommend going through the local CRDC to seek BSTF planning grant funds for this project. Once that is complete seek grant funds matched by local funds to promote the community and access the Yellowstone Country tourism funds.

### **Resources:**

#### **Beartooth RC&D**

Luke Walawander, Economic Development Director  
P.O. Box 180  
128 South Main Street  
Joliet, MT 59041  
Phone: (406) 962-3914

### **Issues:**

- **Marketing of Big Timber**
- **Signage to find McLeod**
- **Signage off of interstate**
- **Recreation and tourism**
- **Increased awareness of the arts community**
- **Expansion of civic events**

**Recommendations:** In the heart of the beautiful Sweet Grass Hills, it could be possible to develop a “brand” that could be used to create a marketing campaign that crosses all business sectors from lamb and grass-fed beef to Main Street and equates “quality” and “beauty” with location – capitalizing on state’s “made in Montana” branding by further localizing it. This is a very successful strategy used in other states and Countries, including places like Vermont and Italy, where they use the cooperative marketing model to trademark and brand everything from wine to cheese to sell throughout the EU and the world. Consider a marketing collaborative or cooperative that helps local businesses and producers sell the “branded” products and/or image of the region itself.

- Form a committee of beef and lamb producers in the valley to determine if a marketing cooperative or collaborative is viable; explore options for building a central storage facility to hold the meat; hire a marketing manager to manage sales, shipments and explore additional collaborative arrangements with other interested parties in the region.
- Assign the Business Council to develop a cohesive “brand” and how it will be used in signage, on the town’s website, by the chamber and as an added value to products, art, businesses, festivals, etc. in their own advertising
- Create winter festivals to match summer festivals that invite the “urban” centers of Bozeman and Billings to come to Big Timber to re-experience small town wonders. An old-fashioned Christmas Stroll and lighting, with the hotel and restaurants offering winter warming specials might be one such event that highlights what is truly a lovely down town.
- Find who in town has connections to the more “moneyed” summer residents and begin recruiting a board of directors to establish a community endowment/foundation to help provide an ongoing source of funds for youth activities, provide matching dollars for grants that will help address things like trails, the swimming pool, parks, festivals
- Explore all the opportunities with the Montana Department of Tourism relative to infrastructure and festival grants.
- Be sure that any and all festivals and activities find a place in the regional tourism guides and on websites
- Invest in “Welcome to Big Timber” signage at both exit ramps that feature the business areas; point the way to hotels and the Chamber of Commerce office. Post visitor guides around town. Find ways to draw attention to your Tesla station – then establish signage at the station that show visitors what else they can experience while they are “charging”
- Be sure Main Street businesses have a full menu of upcoming events or happenings that they use to invite visitors back to town to experience
- Ask the mine to develop a story board about its activities, the process of mining and processing the minerals - including its collaboration with environmentalists. It is not only an interesting, intricate process, but could be used as an educational tool and a model of the partnership that could exist. And people really do want to know some of the back stories – not just what they read in the paper.
- Assure the art community is “embedded” with the Montana Arts Council; galleries are featured in its newsletter and featured on its web site; have stories written and submitted on featured artists and events. It lays the foundation for being more competitive for grants and other funding for the arts.
- Feature artists, fishing guides, town characters, history, etc. festivals on a rotating basis on websites (the personal stories, not just the event details)
- Develop a “fun-facts” history of Big Timber – put them up throughout town. (School project in both researching and making the signs?)
- Get Newspaper to feature a weekly “did you know” column on a different business, store, gallery etc. every week – that gives 52 businesses per year the opportunity to talk about themselves, what they have to offer or what they do and what they contribute to the economy of the area – include ag producers
- When advertising an event, collaborate on “experiential” advertising that tags other things to do in Big Timber or the region to the event itself. Explore how places like Vermont and Maine work to integrate food, lifestyle, farms, and events into their tourism planning

- Develop “driving” tours from Bozeman, Billings, Livingston and Yellowstone Park (I love the driving tour we took) through Big Timber. Do a recording of the history and sites – perhaps a mobile phone application – or a downloadable or CD of the tour could be available at the Chamber and other key locations.

**Recommended Resources:** Department of Commerce Montana Office of Tourism <http://travelmontana.mt.gov/index.asp>; Institute of Tourism and Recreation Research <http://www.itrr.umt.edu/>; Montana Cooperative Development Center, [www.mcdc.coop](http://www.mcdc.coop); Lake County Community Dev. Food Enterprise and Cooperative Development Centers, <http://www.lakecountycdc.org/MMFEC%20Landing>; <http://art.mt.gov/>

## **Issue: Marketing of Big Timber**

### **Recommendations and Resources:**

The community of Big Timber needs to decide and define the reason for the marketing of the town. Is it to create a bigger tourism business; or bring in people on a more consistent nature; or to have more attendance at the special events? Is it to bring new businesses into the area that in turn creates more jobs, fills the schools with children and brings growth to Big Timber? Is it as simple as a larger and more concise signage on the highway that by passes Big Timber?

- Create a logo that is attached to your advertising, your marketing language and signage.
- Coordinate a Big Timber campaign that celebrates a single or series of events.
- Organize a newsletter that is either hard copy or web based and update the news monthly; distributing to surrounding communities and larger cities.
- Produce signage that has an identifiable distinction to Big Timber and advertises local businesses.
- Create a new slogan.
- Do free radio announcements; TV spots to highlight the town.
- Partner with Beartooth RC&D and apply for a strategic plan, a feasibility plan or business plan that incorporates your particular issues.
- Solicit businesses to locate in the Big Timber area.
- Research grants opportunities through the internet that would enhance your mission. Consider hiring a grant writer that can research the grant opportunities that pertain to your needs through [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov); <http://arts.gov/> (National Endowment for the Arts); CHS Foundation Grants (awards for projects and programs related to rural youth leadership, and community leadership development); just to name a few. [www.beartooth.org/](http://www.beartooth.org/)

## **Issues: Marketing of Big Timber**

### **Recommendations:**

Citizens described local events held at the fairgrounds, parades, concerts, and other promotional events that did not have the level of local support that was needed, or did not have the frequency or advertising to bring in adequate participation from neighboring communities.

## **Branding and Marketing Plan**



To recruit businesses and bring more consumer traffic to Big Timber for vacations, recreational activities, civic events, and museums, the City should consider a city branding and marketing plan. Planning grants could be applied for to hire an experienced consultant to work on a professional branding campaign for Big Timber. This campaign should include community input and meetings to select a brand focus and the development of a community marketing plan. With a brand, the City would have a theme for erecting street banners, developing promotional materials, and advertising to attract people to Big Timber.

Big Timber has an ideal location - with two large metropolitan areas within one hour of Big Timber that offer a consistent supply of potential tourists that only need to travel a short distance, branding would help recruit visitors from these areas to enjoy recreation, events, downtown shopping, and overnight stays. Recruitment efforts should include the newspaper, Internet, Facebook, Twitter, updated community calendar, and the Chamber of Commerce.

The Montana Department of Commerce can assist with planning grants to develop a branding and marketing plan (not printing or development of promotional materials). The BSTF and CDBG-ED have both been accessed for this same activity by other Montana communities. The branding and marketing plan could include website development which would also attract visitors and recreationalists.

### **Downtown Business Development Group**

Downtown businesses should consider forming a downtown business development group and strategize on how the downtown will promote and encourage local shopping and recruit shoppers from outlying areas. Combining efforts and strategies would provide economic benefit to the whole downtown business community. Businesses should look at additional creative ways to draw people to their shops. As other communities have done, the downtown core may use a gift certificate program where purchased gift certificates, gift cards, or tokens are good for any local eatery or store. Gift certificates would be a low cost campaign to garner business support. The Chamber of Commerce could be the portal for the purchasing of certificates.

Shop owners should find other ways to attract more people to the downtown area to shop and eat with extended shop hours, art walks, sidewalk sales, block parties, Christmas strolls, and other promotional efforts. If there's a parade in town, shops should be open to capitalize on the foot traffic working its way through downtown. Extending shop hours would help attract the after work consumer, and coupling downtown events with other community events would ensure greater participation.

The city could develop a business promotion where people have to visit a selected set of businesses, receive stickers for each visit, and turn in completed sticker books for entries into a downtown gift certificate or other type of reward. The reward could be a coupon for a service or discount which would be a low cost promotional incentive.

Advertising should extend beyond the city and county to bring in more visitors – which would be an opportunity for packaging weekend getaways for hotels, meals, and recreational opportunities. The Chamber of Commerce and members should work with the city and local development staff to plan and implement promotional activities. Big Timber could be promoted as an affordable weekend getaway with great restaurants, lodging, and local events. If Big Timber receives the highest visitor traffic in the summer, it should also work on winter promotional events which could include activities that would bring in locals and outside visitors such as a crafting fair for hunter's wives, Victorian Valentine making clinics, or other low cost events that would draw people to beautiful downtown, Big Timber.

### **Issues:**

- **Signage to find McLeod**

- **Signage off of Interstate**

### **Recommendations:**

#### **Transportation Study**

Big Timber should also consider hiring a consultant to complete a transportation study that includes compliance with signage requirements for the business loop, downtown historic business district, best location for bike and walking paths, traffic patterns, crosswalks, and school traffic and safety.

With the community expressing concerns with obtaining signage from the highway to the City, and signage directing people within the City to critical points, it would be helpful to have a professional review all the requirements set by the Montana Department of Transportation and Federal highway regulations to develop a plan so proper signage can be in place to help bring visitors into Big Timber and direct them to downtown.

The transportation study should also address the community's concern with pedestrian safety related to school traffic, and early morning pedestrian traffic to the mine's office, street conditions, crosswalks, potential sky bridge, and other traffic related issues. This study could also identify the best locations for walking and bike trails that citizens have expressed a critical need for.

The Montana Department of Commerce offers planning grants to assist with this type of study as it relates to business development, potential for business recruitment, and contribution to downtown revitalization. The BSTF has funding available as does the CDBG-ED Program.

A consultant should work with the Montana Department of Transportation related to any corridor studies that may be applicable to the Big Timber region and for any available financing that could assist with these studies. This is especially important with the development of the Cowboy Hall of Fame and efforts to draw visitors from the museum to the downtown area.

### **Issues:**

- **Increased Awareness of the Arts Community**
- **Expansion of Civic Events**

Attendants at the community meetings explained that the local museums have done outreach to recruit an interest in local art and museum attractions. Citizens expressed the need for more emphasis on bringing people to Big Timber to enjoy the museums, buy art from local artists, and enjoy local concerts and events at the fairgrounds.

Big Timber has a neighboring community with a strong arts and entertainment population – Livingston. As the City considers the next steps towards promoting local events, it may consider coordination with adjoining communities such as Livingston so there could be a joint promotion of unique cultural offerings with studio tours, artist lessons, gallery showings, and other special events that would bring in visitors to both communities. One promotion could be a passport for visits with a map of critical points of interest which would enhance awareness of the arts community.

The art and cultural businesses could capitalize on volunteer assistance and consider discussions with the local school arts class to recruit student volunteers to assist with providing direction, registrations, and assistance with children's art clinics which would draw families to these events. Students at the high school indicated that they do a lot of volunteer work in the community. Some public schools offer credit for volunteer work, or require a certain number of hours of volunteer work as a graduation requirement.

Completing a downtown revitalization study, transportation study, and branding and marketing plan will put the City farther ahead when planning and promoting local civic events.

### **Financing Local Events**

There may be grants available through the Montana Arts Council under several programs to help finance and promote local art and performing events. The Montana Arts Council also has a published calendar that could promote events in addition to posters, Facebook, Twitter, the Chamber of Commerce, newspapers, blogs, and other means of social media.

Depending on the event, the City may be eligible for assistance with eligible expenses by the Office of Tourism at the Montana Department of Commerce for promotional and advertisement of local civic events, or other related infrastructure costs associated with historical and cultural treasures. The tourism office also conducts workshops on promoting Montana tourism in an effort to assist Montana businesses attract and retain visitors. The workshops include training on social media and best practices.

### **Recommended Resources:**

#### **For Technical Assistance:**

Certified Regional Development Office:

Luke Walawander, Executive Director

Beartooth RC&D

110 South Main Street

PO Box 180

Joliet, MT 59041-0180

PH: 406-962-3914

Email: [lwalawander@beartooth.org](mailto:lwalawander@beartooth.org)

Website: <http://www.beartooth.org/>

### **Funding Opportunities for Planning Grants for Community Branding and Marketing Plans:**

Debra Demarais, Section Manager

Community Development Block Grant – Economic Development Program

Montana Department of Commerce

301 South Park Ave.

Helena, MT 59601

PH: 1-406-841-2736

Email: [ddemarais@mt.gov](mailto:ddemarais@mt.gov)

Website: <http://cdbged.mt.gov>

Nancy Faroni, Section Manager

Big Sky Trust Fund Program

Montana Department of Commerce

301 South Park Ave.

Helena, MT 59601

PH: 1-406-841-2744

Email: [nfaroni@mt.gov](mailto:nfaroni@mt.gov)

Website: [www.bstf.mt.gov](http://www.bstf.mt.gov)

### **Information on Transportation Studies and Possible Funding:**

Michael Wherley, Professional Engineer

Community Transportation Enhancement Program

Montana Department of Transportation

2701 Prospect Ave.  
Helena, MT 59601  
PH: 1-406-444-4221  
Email: [mwherley@mt.gov](mailto:mwherley@mt.gov)  
Website: [www.mdt.me.gov/business/ctep/](http://www.mdt.me.gov/business/ctep/)

Chris Dorrington, Bureau Chief  
Data and Statistics Bureau  
Montana Department of Transportation  
2701 Prospect Ave.  
Helena, MT 59601  
PH: 1-406-444-7239  
Email: [cdorrington@mt.gov](mailto:cdorrington@mt.gov)

Also Contact the Following for Transportation Related Studies:  
Montana Department of Transportation/Billings District  
Stefan Streeter, 1-406-657-0268  
Email: [sstreeter@mt.gov](mailto:sstreeter@mt.gov)

For Signage Issues  
Montana Department of Transportation Traffic and Safety  
Ivan Ulberg, 1-406-444-6217  
Email: [iulberg@mt.gov](mailto:iulberg@mt.gov)

Transportation Plan  
Montana Department of Transportation  
Carol Strizich, 1-406-444-9240  
Email: [cstrizich@mt.gov](mailto:cstrizich@mt.gov)

**Information on Assistance with Local Event Costs:**

Victor Bjornberg, Program Manager  
Tourism Infrastructure Development  
Montana Department of Commerce  
301 South Park Ave.  
Helena, MT 59601  
PH: 1-406-841-2795  
Email: [vbjornberg@mt.gov](mailto:vbjornberg@mt.gov)  
Website: <http://travelmontana.mt.gov/forms/>

Montana Arts Council  
Website: <http://art.mt.gov/default.asp>  
Cultural and Aesthetic Project Grants  
Website: [http://art.mt.gov/orgs/orgs\\_ca.asp](http://art.mt.gov/orgs/orgs_ca.asp)  
Artists in Schools and Communities Grant Program  
Website: [http://art.mt.gov/schools/schools\\_aisc.asp](http://art.mt.gov/schools/schools_aisc.asp)

**Social Media Training and Promoting Montana Tourism:**

Pam Gosink, Sales and Constituent Services Bureau Chief  
Tourism Office  
Montana Department of Commerce

301 South Park Ave.  
Helena, MT 59601  
PH: 1-406-841-2894  
Email: [pgosink@mt.gov](mailto:pgosink@mt.gov)

**Issue: Recreation and tourism**

Even though second home owners are prevalent in the Big Timber area, the typical infrastructure to support those frequent visitors was minimal. The second homeowners would likely engage with the Big Timber community more if there were more things for them to do.

**Recommendation:**

Find out what amenities tourists and second home owners would use and support entrepreneurs in developing those businesses.

**Resources:**

Montana Tourism Assessment and Planning Program (MTAPP). This was a pilot program but may continue. Contact Victor Bjornberg, Montana Office of Tourism, 406-841-2795 [ybjornberg@mt.gov](mailto:ybjornberg@mt.gov) or Tash Wisemiller, Montana Main Street Coordinator at (406) 841-2756.

## **MAIN TOPIC: COMMUNITY SERVICES**

### **Issues: Medical Center Expansion**

#### **Recommendations:**

Citizens expressed several times what a great medical center Big Timber has. The Montana Department of Commerce has programs that could support a medical center expansion when the center is ready to move forward with that.

One way the Department could help is with planning grants to hire a consultant to look at any feasibility studies or a preliminary architectural report related to the center's services, determination of the most desirable location for the expanded center, initial designs for expansion, review of equipment upgrades, workforce availability, and other critical components needed to grow the medical center.

The BSTF and CDBG-ED have funds available for these types of studies. Planning grants could be used to hire professional consultants to help gather needed information and develop plans to enable the medical center to determine the type of expansion best for its facility.

Once the preliminary plans are completed the City could apply for grant funds from the BSTF and CDBG-ED programs to purchase needed equipment, assist with construction costs, or pay for job training costs for employees. If the center would not meet the low and moderate income job requirements under the CDBG-ED program (51% of the jobs are made available to or held by low and moderate income persons), and the City meets the low and moderate income requirements for area-wide benefit (center's service area serves 51% low and moderate income persons) under the CDBG Public Facilities Program, it could apply for a grant to help with construction costs, infrastructure improvements, or equipment purchases.

### **Issue: Medical Center Expansion**

#### **Recommendation:**

Whether it is expansion or rehab of existing facilities, the town of Big Timber will have to strategize on if they can afford a loan to complete the desired result. Loan funds can be used to construct a new facility, enlarge or improve the existing health care center, or purchase equipment.

The information received during the community assessment was mainly praising of the existing facility but that there was a need for specialized physicians and office space to house them. It would be beneficial to look into a plan to recruiting physicians once the appropriate office space has been designated.

Consider a Community Open House Day at the Hospital. This will give the community an opportunity to tour the facility and meet the staff. Also giving care gives a low stress way to introduce the care that is available and build trust with the residence.

**Recommended Resource:** [www.rurdev.usda.gov/mt](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/mt)

#### **Issues:**

- **Medical Center expansion**
- **Emergency equipment upgrade and replacement**
- **Emergency training funds**
- **Equipment and evidence storage**
- **Senior Citizens Center- improvements**

- **Youth Activities/Center**

### **Recommendations:**

The development of a youth activity center, including year-round swimming pool, and a sidewalk and trail system through town could potentially have the largest singular impact on improving relationships with the Town's youth and engaging town people and visitors alike. Come to some final conclusions on the old high school building – renovation, if still possible, could turn it into the needed auditorium and museum space and community activity center. Demolition and removal could provide space within the school complex for the same activities plus the swimming pool.

- Form an action committee that has youth, seniors and city officials to clearly define what these centers need to have
- Obtain planning funds for feasibility studies, preliminary architectural designs, engineering studies, brownfield assessments, etc.
- Engage the MSU School of Architecture and MSU Extension in providing leadership to the teams
- Engage the Montana Department of Transportation and Fish Wildlife and Parks to determine funds available both for planning and constructing trail systems in the community and surrounding areas.
- Determine the costs of each project and then develop an action plan that includes potential funding sources.

### **Recommended Resources:**

<http://www.mdt.mt.gov/business/ctep/>; <http://fwp.mt.gov/doingBusiness/grants/>;  
<http://fwp.mt.gov/doingBusiness/committees/stateTrailsAC.html>;  
[http://www.arch.montana.edu/pages/portfolio/portfolio7\\_cdc.php](http://www.arch.montana.edu/pages/portfolio/portfolio7_cdc.php);

### **Issue: Lack of City Owned Police Vehicles and an Aging Fleet of Ambulances and Emergency Equipment**

#### **Recommendations and Resources:**

Community Facilities Programs provide loans, grant and loan guarantees for essential community facilities in rural areas. Priority is given to health care, education and public safety projects. Typical projects are hospitals, health clinics, schools, fire houses, community centers and many other community based initiatives. They can also be used to fund new equipment such as vehicles, radios, and specialty rescue/law enforcement tools.

- [Community Facilities Direct and Guaranteed Loan Program](#)  
Community Facilities Programs can make and guarantee loans to develop essential community facilities in rural areas and towns of up to 20,000 in population. Loans and guarantees are available to public entities such as municipalities, counties, parishes, boroughs, and special-purpose districts, as well as to non-profit corporations and tribal governments.
- [Community Facilities Grants](#)  
Community Facilities Programs provides grants to assist in the development of essential community facilities in rural areas and towns of up to 20,000 in population. Grants are authorized on a graduated scale. Applicants located in small communities with low populations and low incomes will receive a higher percentage of grants. Grants are available to public entities such as municipalities, counties, parishes, boroughs, and special-purpose districts, as well as non-profit corporations and tribal governments.  
[www.rurdev.usda.gov/mt](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/mt)

## **Issue: Senior Citizens Center – Improvements**

### **Recommendations:**

The Resource Team was lucky to have a delicious lunch at the Hospitality House - Senior Citizen's Center and to have the chance to meet with the seniors and gain their input into community issues. The Hospitality House serves as a shared library, gift shop, game room, meeting room, coffee house, and dining facility.

Seniors expressed the need for some structural improvements to the center including kitchen upgrades, stairs repair, insulation of windows, improvements to upstairs apartments, and other energy efficient upgrades. The Hospitality House not only offers a place for social gatherings, but also focuses on health related services and education for the City's senior population.

The Montana Department of Commerce can offer assistance through the CDBG Public Facilities – Planning Grant Program if the City demonstrates the low and moderate-income benefit. If the City wants to hire an architect to complete an analysis of the building, compile a list of needed improvements and associated costs, or draw up a preliminary design for the center, it may consider applying for a planning grant through this same program. Demonstrating the need for a public facilities project such as this should have a focus on the service to the seniors including medical services (i.e. flu shots and blood pressure checks), nutritional programs (i.e. Meals on Wheels), and education (i.e. diabetes information, communicative diseases).

The same program could be considered for project funding to make the necessary upgrades to the facility to meet current codes, improve energy efficiency, and expand services under the CDBG Public Facilities category. If the apartments upstairs are rentals, the City should work with Beartooth RC&D to explore options under the CDBG Housing Program category for grant funding to repair and upgrade the living quarters.

### **Recommended Resources:**

#### **For Technical Assistance:**

Certified Regional Development Office:

Luke Walawander, Executive Director

Beartooth RC&D

110 South Main Street

PO Box 180

Joliet, MT 59041-0180

PH: 406-962-3914

Email: [lwalawander@beartooth.org](mailto:lwalawander@beartooth.org)

Website: <http://www.beartooth.org/>

#### **For Funding Opportunities:**

##### **Funding Opportunities:**

Debra Demarais, Section Manager

Community Development Block Grant – Economic Development Program

Montana Department of Commerce

301 South Park Ave.

Helena, MT 59601

PH: 1-406-841-2736

Email: [ddemarais@mt.gov](mailto:ddemarais@mt.gov)

Website: <http://cdbged.mt.gov>

Nancy Faroni, Section Manager



Big Sky Trust Fund Program  
Montana Department of Commerce  
301 South Park Ave.,  
Helena, MT 59601  
PH: 1-406-841-2744  
Email: [nfaroni@mt.gov](mailto:nfaroni@mt.gov)  
Website: [www.bstf.mt.gov](http://www.bstf.mt.gov)

Jennifer Olson, Bureau Chief  
Community Development Block Grant – Public Facilities/Housing Program  
Montana Department of Commerce  
301 South Park Ave.  
Helena, MT 59601  
PH: 1-406-841-2773  
Email: [jeolson@mt.gov](mailto:jeolson@mt.gov)  
Website: <http://comdev.mt.gov/Grantsbureau/grantsbureau.mcp>

**Issue: Youth Activities/Center**

**Recommendations:**

Keeping youth in Big Timber includes activities and entertainment sources that will satisfy their need for variety, keep them safe, and allow for families to keep track of their where-about. Allowing youth to have a say in what their community offers, keeping them in the decision making process, and enabling them to help facilitate plans will ensure personal, volunteerism, commitment, and help build community roots. Communities have enhanced their local offerings to include skate board parks, after school youth centers, community gardens, community centers, indoor pools, and other types of youth-attracting amenities. Funding for amenities can be raised through local fundraising activities or through public and private foundations. The Grant Service Center through Montana State University/Billings offers information on potential funding sources for state, federal and private grant funding organizations and foundations.

**Recommended Resources:**

Montana State University Billings  
Grant Service Center  
Grants and Sponsored Programs  
1500 University Drive  
Billings, MT 59101  
PH: 1-406-657-2011  
Email: [webmaster@msubillings.edu](mailto:webmaster@msubillings.edu)  
Website: [www.msubillings.edu/grants/opportunities.htm](http://www.msubillings.edu/grants/opportunities.htm)

## **MAIN TOPIC: NATURAL RESOURCES**

### **Issue: Renewable Energy Resources, i.e., Hyrdo, Wind, Solar**

#### **Recommendations and Resources:**

Renewable energy and energy efficient projects can come in many varieties. Talking with a few of the Agricultural individuals the idea of utilizing the programs of many agencies to provide assistance to agricultural producers was not a new concept but not well none of the expanse in eligible technology.

The Rural Development Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) helps eligible applicants install renewable energy systems such as solar panels or anaerobic digesters, make energy efficacy improvements such as installing irrigation pumps or replacing ventilation systems, and conduct energy audits and feasibility studies.

This program has two areas: 1) Renewable Energy Projects that include biomass (bioenergy production or anaerobic digesters), geothermal (electric generation and direct use), hydrogen, solar, wind, hydroelectric, and flexible fuel pumps. 2) Energy Efficiency Improvements Projects include any energy savings measures to businesses or agricultural operations including but not limited to replacement of inefficient equipment, retrofitting, insulation or any recommend improvement identified in the energy assessment or energy audit.

The minimum Renewable Energy System Grant is \$2,500 up to a maximum of 25% of eligible project costs or %500,000 whichever is less.

The minimum Energy Efficiency Improvement Grant request is \$1,500 up to a maximum of 25% of eligible project costs or \$250,000 whichever is less.

Projects can include converting to solar power to generate a livestock well pumping station; replacing boilers in a business, etc. [www.rurdev.usda.gov/mt](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/mt)

## **MAIN TOPIC: CATALYST PROJECT**

### **Issue:**

- **Old High School**
- **Auditorium/Performance Hall**

### **Recommendations:**

At every community meeting citizens expressed concern over the state and future of the old high school building. It is understood that the building is privately owned and that the owner is not interested in selling the building if it will be torn down or damaged in any way. At the same time, the community has indicated that it wants an auditorium or performance hall where it could hold concerts or other events.

One option for consideration is to apply to the BSTF or CDBG-ED Program for planning grants in different calendar years, 1) to complete a feasibility study for a performance hall or auditorium – with the old school house as one potential location, and 2) to do an assessment of the building for repurpose. A comprehensive feasibility report would help the City determine the viability of constructing a performance hall or auditorium and whether it would be sustainable. This study could include the determination of the best location for a hall or if there are potential existing buildings that could be refurbished for this purpose.

If a performance hall or auditorium proves feasible for Big Timber, one potential project for planning money (with the owner's permission and financial match) could be to hire an architect to do a structural analysis with list of improvements needed and associated costs. This type of analysis may be to focus on using the old high school for a performance hall – as other Montana communities have done, or for another identified purpose which could include senior apartments, mixed use real estate, assisted living, or another use that the City has identified through a public process.

### **Recommended Resources:**

#### **For Technical Assistance:**

Certified Regional Development Office:

Luke Walawander, Executive Director

Beartooth RC&D

110 South Main Street

PO Box 180

Joliet, MT 59041-0180

PH: 406-962-3914

Email: [lwalawander@beartooth.org](mailto:lwalawander@beartooth.org)

Website: <http://www.beartooth.org/>

#### **For Funding Opportunities:**

#### **Funding Opportunities:**

Debra Demarais, Section Manager

Community Development Block Grant – Economic Development Program

Montana Department of Commerce

301 South Park Ave.

Helena, MT 59601

PH: 1-406-841-2736

Email: [ddemarais@mt.gov](mailto:ddemarais@mt.gov)

Website: <http://cdbged.mt.gov>

Nancy Faroni, Section Manager

Big Sky Trust Fund Program  
Montana Department of Commerce  
301 South Park Ave.,  
Helena, MT 59601  
PH: 1-406-841-2744  
Email: [nfaroni@mt.gov](mailto:nfaroni@mt.gov)  
Website: [www.bstf.mt.gov](http://www.bstf.mt.gov)

**Issues:**

- **Old High School**
- **Auditorium/Performance hall**
- **Indoor Pool**
- **Jail**
- **Cowboy Hall of Fame**
- **Volunteer Coordinator**
- **Next Generation Group 20's – 40's**

**Observations and Recommendations:**

**Old High School and the Arts**

There appear to be several good opportunities to expand the arts in the community. While many in the community feel the old school should be torn down for parking or other alternative uses, I would encourage finding common ground with the owner and see whether there could be a feasibility study/architectural and engineering study done to recapture the building from decay. Funding could be accessed through the BSTF program for the studies to be done in phases. Examples of these types of projects would be The Shane Center, in Livingston (<http://www.theshanecenter.org/>) and as far flung as the Curley School in Ajo, Arizona (<http://www.curleyschool.com/>).

There may also be opportunities to enhance the arts community through an organization called Art Place (<http://www.artplaceamerica.org/>). While their most recent grant cycle just closed, it may be worthwhile to connect with this organization for additional support for the arts community as one part of the economic fabric of Big Timber.

As the community is exploring how the arts can be an integral part of the “place” of Big Timber, also consider the National Endowment for the Arts grant programs (<http://arts.gov/grants/apply-grant/grants-organizations>).

Also consider possibly putting together a summer “tour” of the artist’s studios in the area ending with an event in downtown. Utilize the Yellowstone Country tourism grant funds to help support the promotion of the event itself and others connected to the arts.

**Jail**

One of the catalyst projects that jumped out during the meetings with the law enforcement and emergency services group, was the need for a new jail. Based on the initial conversations we had that day, I would recommend sitting down with Luke from Beartooth RC&D and do an analysis on how to possibly structure debt service for a new jail based in part on the amount currently set aside in the budget for contractual services all the way over to Bozeman. There was roughly \$100K set aside for that contractual arrangement. Based on 30 year low interest notes, or revenue bonds, that would provide a portion of the total debt service needed. In terms of a job creation project, if you estimate that it would require 14 more employees at or around the average median income for the county (which is \$54K) that would provide a tremendous boost to the local economy, not inclusive of the expenditures that could be derived to provide other goods and services to the facility by private

enterprise. This project could very well be a solid feasibility study with funding support from the BSTF or CDBG-ED planning grants.

### **Issue: Jail**

#### **Recommendation and Resource:**

Conversations with the townspeople of Big Timber conveyed the message that the current jail is inadequate and in need of a larger facility to house the impounded vehicles and other confiscated property. Once the community agrees on the project whether it is an addition to the original facility or construct a new regional facility, options are available with Rural Development

The Community Facilities program can provide financial assistance to help construct, enlarge or otherwise improve essential community facilities in rural areas. Examples of public safety include Communications Center, Fire and Police Stations, Fire Trucks, Jails and Civil Defense Buildings. [www.rurdev.usda.gov/mt](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/mt)

### **Issue: Sweet Grass County High School**

The deterioration of the old high school was top of mind for many residents. The dominant opinion seemed to be to remove the building somehow even though it was agreed that the building was beautiful in its day.

#### **Recommendations:**

To an outside eye, the old High School is a gem, loaded with potential. The school could help Big Timber meet some of its needs and build on its greatest strengths. The old High School is located near Big Timber's vibrant downtown. Redeveloping the school into a space for arts, small business, affordable housing and youth activities could further enhance the traffic to downtown. The Emerson building in Bozeman is an excellent example of how an old school was transformed into an economic and cultural engine. The Borden's building in Whitehall is currently being redeveloped into housing, office and retail using Historic Tax Credits purchased from the local mine. In the short term, some of the space could be leased to the County for much-needed evidence storage which could create a small revenue source to repay debt.

#### **Recommended Resources:**

Borden's Building in Whitehall. <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Bordens-Hotel/452989941441466?ref=hl>

Emerson Building in Bozeman: <http://www.theemerson.org/>

Historic Tax Credits: <http://www.nps.gov/tps/tax-incentives.htm>

Montana State Historic Preservation Office: <https://mhs.mt.gov/shpo.aspx>

[Sonoran Institute study on downtown living preferences in West: http://communitybuilders.net/reset/](http://communitybuilders.net/reset/)

#### **Issues:**

- **Indoor Pool**
- **Cowboy Hall of Fame**

#### **Recommendations:**

Raising money for museums and pools will depend on local fund raising efforts, campaigns, and private foundations. It is understood that the City has instigated fund raising efforts for both an indoor pool and the Cowboy Hall of Fame. I would direct the City to contact the Grant Service Center through Montana State University/Billings which offers information on potential funding sources for state, federal and private grant funding organizations and foundations. There are sources of funding for these types of projects and often from local or regional endowments. The Grant Service Center will have information on sources of grants for both community pools and museums.

#### **Recommended Resource:**

Montana State University Billings

Grant Service Center  
Grants and Sponsored Programs  
1500 University Drive  
Billings, MT 59101  
PH: 1-406-657-2011  
Email: [webmaster@msubillings.edu](mailto:webmaster@msubillings.edu)  
Website: [www.msubillings.edu/grants/opportunities.htm](http://www.msubillings.edu/grants/opportunities.htm)

**Issue: Volunteer Coordinator**

**Recommendation:**

It's a common thread among our cities - that there are a handful of energetic and passionate people who volunteer their precious time to help with causes they believe in. Volunteers hold jobs, raise families, and have life obligations, in addition to working long and hard hours to help local and national causes to better our world. They are natural leaders, and are a group that rarely hears "thank you" or receives recognition for all that they do. Finding additional people to help with local objectives can be a challenge.

The Heartland Center for Leadership Development offers training for local development officials and volunteers to learn practical, hands-on learning and networking, on leadership and community development. Heartland offers a couple of reasonably priced courses to help communities capitalize on local assets, learn from other communities how to promote tourism and business development, and how to be competitive for local and outside dollars. The courses are "Helping Small Cities Succeed", and "Home City Competitiveness". I would encourage attendance at one or both of these courses as they offer substantive and useful information that would assist the city expand its social capital, and further its economic development efforts. Courses are offered in regions and are well attended.

The city's youth are a potential source for additional volunteers. Seniors at the Hospitality House also spoke of volunteer efforts and the desire to coordinate more with the City's youth. Seniors could be a source for mentoring youth to volunteer time, help with career exploration, and provide experience on business development.

**Recommended Resources:**

Heartland Center for Leadership Development  
3110 N. 40<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite A  
Lincoln, NE 68504  
PH: 1-800-927-1115  
Email: [info@heartlandcenter.info](mailto:info@heartlandcenter.info)  
Website: [www.heartlandcenter.info/contact.htm](http://www.heartlandcenter.info/contact.htm)