RESOURCES TEAM ASSESSMENT REPORT

For

DEER LODGE, MONTANA

MARCH 7 – 8, 2016

INTRODUCTION

It was a privilege for the MEDA Deer Lodge Resource Team to spend time in your area. Thank you for your hospitality, your time, and for sharing with the team the vision you have for your home.

Before digging in to the report itself, I would like to thank Montana Department of Commerce (MDOC) for its support of the Montana Economic Developers Association (MEDA). It is a partnership between MDOC and MEDA that makes Resource Team projects available across the state.

Special thanks to Julie Schroder, a resident of Deer Lodge and an employee of the Anaconda Job Service who served as the champion behind this project. Julie will no doubt continue her leadership role with the process and see it through to completion. In addition, the Deer Lodge Resource Team Assessment could not have happened without the support of Headwaters RC&D which serves as the Certified Regional Development Corporation for the area.

The MEDA Deer Lodge Resource Team Assessment had many sponsors that contributed to the success to date including City of Deer Lodge, Travelodge, Pizza Hut, PC Senior Center, Elks Lodge, Deer Lodge Medical Center, Powell County, Broken Arrow, Gerald and Jan Bender, Valley Foods; and the Chamber.

Finally, I applaud each and every team member who dedicated hours of work in order to participate on the team: Heather Handeland, MT USDA/RD; Gus Byrom, MT Dept. of Commerce; Abbie Phillip, Anaconda/Deer Lodge County MSU Extension; Sue Taylor, Beartooth RC&D; and Eric Seidensticker, Montana Business Assistance Connection.

Each team member’s contact information is provided in the following report. Please feel free to call on any of us for additional information or support. It would be our pleasure.

The stage is now set for Deer Lodge to begin change. There are a number of short term and long term accomplishable recommendations that the resource team has provided in this report. Each of you individually must decide what it is that you want to do—what kind of project you want to tackle. It is also important for the entire community and county to be involved in finding ways to accomplish its goals. A few celebrations at the successful conclusion of an activity that has involved a large number of citizens will lead to a feeling of accomplishment that will carry over into other activities. Look through the suggestions, pick out one, and get started. It can be done. It is your choice, your decision; you can do it!

Gloria O’Rourke
MEDA Team Coordinator
PROCESS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THIS REPORT

According to Montana Department of Commerce program requirements, Resource Team Assessments are to be approved through the community’s Certified Regional Development Corporation (CRDC). The CRDC for Powell County is Headwaters RC&D, of Butte. After visiting with Julie Schroder, Mayor Zane Cosby formally requested a MEDA team for Deer Lodge. Julie Schroder served as liaison and coordinator for the team’s visit. Montana Economic Developers Association (MEDA) provided staff support for the coordination of a resource team to assist Deer Lodge in evaluating its assets and challenges and in developing suggestions for improving the environment, social and economic future of the area.

Under the direction of Julie Schroder, an agenda was developed, logistics arranged, as well as budgeting and publicity for the assessment. Resource Team members were selected to visit, interview citizens, businesses and community leaders to develop options for projects for Deer Lodge. The team members were selected based on their fields of expertise that local officials indicated would likely be needed to respond to the problem or project areas identified.

Throughout the Resource Team on March 7 – 8, over 160 people attended listening sessions and made comments. All notes from all listening sessions as well as those submitted via email or handwritten are included in this report. The team was available for listening to the following groups: Senior Citizens, City Planning Board, High School Students, High School Teachers, Civic Groups, Economic Development, Historic Preservation, City Council, Medical/Law Enforcement, Emergency/Fire, Churches/Non Profits, Childcare, Banking/Sawmill, Chamber of Commerce Retailers, County Officials and Employees.

Each participant was asked to respond to three questions designed to begin communication and discussion and to serve as a basis for developing recommendations in this report. The three questions were:

- What do you think are the major strengths and assets in Deer Lodge?
- What do you think are the major problems and challenges in Deer Lodge?
- What projects would you like to see completed in two, five, ten and twenty years in Deer Lodge?

Upon completion of the interviews, the team met in a work session to compare notes and share comments. The team then agreed that each team member would carefully analyze the things said, synthesize what they heard with their knowledge of programs and resources, prepare their notes and suggestions, and forward these items to be combined into this final report to the people of Deer Lodge.

A preliminary oral report and a summary of group recommendations were presented to the people of Deer Lodge the evening of March 8th.

Following the oral report, this formal written report was prepared and is presented to the people of Deer Lodge. The report is available on the MEDA website at http://www.medamembers.org under the Resources tab.

A Town Hall Meeting is planned for the evening of May 12th. The purpose of the meeting will be to briefly review the report, identify projects, set priorities and create working groups for action.
DEER LODGE, MONTANA
RESOURCE TEAM ASSESSMENT

March 7th – 8th, 2016

Gus Byrom, Planning Bureau
Community Development Division
MT Dept. of Commerce
301 S. Park
Helena, MT 59601
Ph: (406) 841-2777
Email: gbyrom@mt.gov

Heather Handeland, Area Specialist
USDA/Rural Development
3550 Mullan Rd # 106
Missoula, MT 59808
Ph: 406-829-3395 x 106
Email: Heather.Handeland@mt.usda.gov

Abbie Phillip, MSU Extension Agent
Anaconda/Deer Lodge County
800 S. Main Street
Anaconda, MT 59711
Ph: (406) 563-4036/4035
Email: abbie.phillip@montana.edu

Eric Seidensticcr, Program Manager
Community Development
Montana Business Assistance Connection
225 Cruse Ave.; Ste. D
Helena, MT 59601
Ph: (406) 437-8566
Email: eseidensticker@mbac.biz

Sue Taylor, Development Director
Beartooth RC&D
P.O. Box 180
Joliet, MT 59041
Ph: (406) 962-3914
Email: staylor@beartooth.org

Local Team Coordinator:
Julie Schroder

Gloria O’Rourke, Team Assistant
Montana Economic Developers Association
118 E. Seventh St.; Suite 2A
Anaconda, MT 59711
Ph: 406.563.5259  Fx: 406.563.5476
gloria@medamembers.org
www.medamembers.org
The Main Topics and Issues listed below are a summary of the comments, ideas and suggestions made during the Deer Lodge Listening Sessions. These topics and issues form the outline for the Deer Lodge Resource Team report. Topics and Issues can be added when the team returns on May 12th.

MAIN TOPIC: HOUSING
ISSUES:
- Cost of renovating older homes
- Availability of quality rentals
- Disconnect between wages and housing supply
- Possibility of increasing housing density
- Connection of workforce with housing

MAIN TOPIC: COMMUNICATION
ISSUES:
- Cross promote businesses and activities
- Communication between City and County
- Coordination between DEQ and EPA
- Coordination of community events and adjoining community events
- Unification of community efforts and attitude
- Improvement of internal and external communication (both within the community and to visitors)

MAIN TOPIC: INFRASTRUCTURE and RELATED PUBLIC SERVICES
ISSUES:
Infrastructure
- Streets and sidewalks
- Snow removal
- South Interchange
- Beautification of buildings and removal of blight

Public Services
- Lack of mental health services
- Addiction services

MAIN TOPIC: TRAILS AND RECREATION
ISSUES:
- Connected trail system – walking, biking, skiing
- Skateboard Park
- Enhanced fishing and rafting opportunities
- Indoor skating rink
- Playground – for smaller children
- Free pool – improve opportunities for use
- City parks
- Golf course

MAIN TOPIC: DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION
ISSUES:
- Cost
- Vacant store fronts
- Decaying buildings
- Traffic flow
- Pedestrian safety
- Lack of parking
- Downtown beautification and appearance
- Incentives for business development
- Identifying a shared vision and brand

MAIN TOPIC: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
ISSUES:
- Living wage jobs
- Manufacturing
- High Tech
- Work from home
- Niche markets
- Increase tax base
- Variety store, i.e., family dollar type – Got Sox!
- Use of old hospital building – incubator and….
- Workforce development
- The Arts – including Theatre

MAIN TOPIC: TOURISM AND PROMOTION
ISSUES:
- Enhancement of outdoor recreation opportunities
- Coordination with Grant Kohrs Ranch and the Museums
- Keeping visitors in town longer; package deals
- Lodging accommodations – including RV
- Parks, Hotel/Motel
- Wayfinding for hiking, biking, historic homes and other sites, hunting, fishing, etc.
- Information kiosk listing activities
- Revitalize gateway signage
- Proximity between Glacier and Yellowstone
- Frontline training/hospitality training/customer service

CONTRADICTIONS THE TEAM HEARD
- Zoning vs No Zoning
- Volunteers vs Engagement
- We love Deer Lodge vs. We shop out-of-town
- Location – Pros and Cons of Interstate
- Clear areas for new growth and development vs Lack of identified areas
MAIN TOPIC: HOUSING

ISSUE: Housing Conditions
Frequently, the deterioration of existing housing units was mentioned in the community. The point was stressed that many households are living on either fixed or low incomes and do not have the necessary financial resources to keep their homes repaired. This issue not only affects the individual private health and safety of residents, but contributes to the appearance of blight in some portions of the community, thus discouraging investment by neighboring property owners.

Recommendations:
Seek funding assistance from the Montana Department of Commerce Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and HOME programs, as well as USDA Rural Development, for low interest loans and/or grants to assist qualified low and moderate income households with home rehabilitation assistance. CDBG planning funds could be used for preparation of detailed housing studies or for preparation of a preliminary architectural report in support of the possible rehabilitation of a major apartment building.

Recommended Resources:
Andrew Chanania, Program Manager
CDBG and HOME
Grants Bureau
Community Development Division
Montana Department of Commerce
301 So. Park Ave.
P.O. Box 200523
Helena, Montana 59620-0523
(406) 841-2551
comdev.mt.gov
AChanania@mt.gov

Allison Mouch, AICP
Community Planning Bureau Chief
Community Development Division
ISSUE:  Housing Supply
Similar to the issue of the existence of deteriorated housing conditions in the community, the lack of housing, especially the lack of affordable rental housing for low and moderate income households, was repeatedly mentioned.

Recommendation:
Seek assistance from the Montana Department of Commerce Community Development Block Grant or HOME program. CDBG planning funds could be used for preparation of detailed housing studies or for preparation of a preliminary architectural report in support of the possible new construction of housing units.

In addition the Low Income Housing Tax Program of the Department of Commerce Housing Division could provide assistance with new housing construction for households earning less than 60 percent of the area median income (approximately $28,980 for a two person household). USDA housing programs may also be available, operating in tandem with Montana Department of Commerce programs, to increase the supply of affordable housing units in Deer Lodge.

Recommended Resource(s):
Andrew Chanania, Program Manager
CDBG and HOME
Grants Bureau
Community Development Division
Montana Department of Commerce
301 So. Park Ave.
P.O. Box 200523
Helena, Montana  59620-0523
(406) 841-2551
comdev.mt.gov
AChanania@mt.gov
MAIN TOPIC: WAYFINDING

ISSUE: Signage and Direction
Many times during the course of our meetings the lack of clear information and directions relative to Deer Lodge’s community attractions was mentioned. Besides the Grant-Kohrs Ranch and Old Prison Museum Complex, the importance of directing visitors to the many Deer Lodge businesses lying in-between these two main attractions was stressed.

Recommendation:
Develop and implement a Wayfinding Plan for the Deer Lodge community. A wayfinding system contributes to a larger walkable community effort – one focused on neighborhood and downtown connectivity, safety, accessibility, and enabling multiple forms of transportation.

Recommended Resource(s):
Tash Wisemiller, Program Coordinator
MAIN TOPIC: DOWNTOWN

ISSUE: Creating a vibrant downtown
Vacancies on Main Street, as well as on-street parking issues, necessity for façade renovation, wayfinding, pedestrian crossings, and deteriorating property conditions.

Recommendation:
Continue to explore creation of Business Improvement District (as recommended in the recently completed Growth Policy) – seek funding from the Montana Main Street program to prepare a Downtown Master Plan to give guidance and direction for Main Street priorities, including priorities for the Business Improvement District. Preparation of a Downtown Master Plan would build upon the work initiated in the recently completed Growth Policy and would provide a mechanism to address the issues identified above, developing specific goals, objectives, and action items for Downtown Deer Lodge improvements.

CDBG planning grant funds may also be available once the current CDBG Deer Lodge planning grant is completed (Subdivision Regulation Update/ Annexation Policies). The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) – Helena Office should also be contacted in regards to lead-based paint / asbestos remediation funds that can be used to assist in the clean-up of environmental contaminants in the older buildings in Downtown Deer Lodge.

Recommended Resource(s):

Tash Wisemiller, Program Coordinator
Montana Main Street Program
Community Development Division
MAIN TOPIC: TRANSPORTATION – INTERSTATE ACCESS

ISSUE: Lack of north bound lane at south interchange.

Recommendation:
Request Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) to investigate the feasibility of installing a north bound lane at either the existing south Deer Lodge interchange or construct a separate north-bound on-ramp structure south of the existing south interchange. In addition the Montana CDBG Planning Grant program of the Department of Commerce Planning Bureau (Community Development Division) could be a source of funds for preparation of a Transportation Plan or Transportation Plan Update for Deer Lodge. It is possible that MDT funds could be used in combination with CDBG planning funds to complete a local transportation planning effort in Deer Lodge.

Recommended Resource(s):
Division Engineer,
Montana Department of Transportation
District 1 Administrator Ed Toavs
2100 W Broadway
P.O. Box 7039
Missoula, MT 59807-7039
Phone: 406-523-5800
Toll-free: 888-231-5819
TTY: 800-335-7592
Fax: 406-523-5801

Allison Mouch, AICP
Community Planning Bureau Chief
Community Development Division
Montana Department of Commerce
301 So. Park Ave.
REPORT BY: Heather Handeland
USDA/Rural Development Missoula Area Office
3550 Mullan Road, Suite 106 Missoula, MT 59808-5125
406-829-3395 extension 106
heather.handeland@mt.usda.gov
www.rurdev.usda.gov/MT_Home.html

MAIN TOPIC: HOUSING

Issue: Cost of Renovating Older Homes
The citizens of Deer Lodge discussed the older housing stock located in Deer Lodge and the costs to repair or update them to a decent, safe and sanitary manner.

Recommendations:
During our tour of the town, it was noticed that the housing stock is older and some of it is in need of repairs. We heard that the cost of the repairs can sometimes be prohibitive to the residents. USDA Rural Development believes helping people stay in their own home and keep it in good repair helps families and their communities. Homeownership helps families and individuals build savings over time. It strengthens communities and helps many kinds of businesses that support the local economy.

Through its Housing Programs, USDA Rural Development can assist with the costs to repair and renovate homes. We fund public and nonprofit organizations who apply for the Housing Preservation Grant. This grant is available to repair and rehabilitate individual housing or rental properties occupied by very low and low income families. Rural Development partners with and provides grants to a sponsoring organization for repairs or rehabilitation of housing occupied by low and very-low income people. We work with organizations like the Human Resources Council District XII and Montana Board of Housing.

Another potential resource for affordable funding may be the Human Resource Council District XII. It has programs and services for low to moderate income families and individuals. Funding for repairs may be available through the weatherization program it administers.

USDA Rural Development also offers financing through the 504 Home Repair program. We provide loans to very-low-income homeowners to repair, improve, or modernize their homes. We can also provide grants to elderly very-low-income homeowners to remove health and safety hazards.

Recommended Resources:
For additional information and ideas, please visit the following websites:

- Human Resources Council District XII: (406) 496.4975
- Montana Board of Housing: http://housing.mt.gov
ISSUE: Disconnect Between Wages and Housing Supply
During our meetings the housing stock in Deer Lodge was discussed along with the observation that the costs for housing seemed to exceed what the citizens could afford to pay for housing.

Recommendations:
We heard from many citizens that household incomes are relatively low in the area and there is little availability of good paying jobs in the area. Because Deer Lodge also has limited housing stock, the costs of homeownership can be too high for residents to support on a small income.

To counterbalance this income gap with the cost of housing, USDA Rural Development provides affordable funding to purchase single-family housing. Also known as the Section 502 Direct Loan Program, this program assists low- and very-low-income applicants to obtain decent, safe and sanitary housing in eligible rural areas by providing payment assistance to increase an applicant’s repayment ability. Payment assistance is a type of subsidy that reduces the mortgage payment for a short time. The amount of assistance is determined by the adjusted family income.

A number of factors are considered when determining an applicant’s eligibility for Single Family Direct Home Loans. At a minimum, applicants interested in obtaining a direct loan must have an adjusted income that is at or below the applicable low-income limit for the area where they wish to buy a house and they must demonstrate a willingness and ability to repay debt.

USDA Rural Development also partners with other funding sources to help make homeownership affordable like Montana Board of Housing. Its public purpose is to provide decent, safe, sanitary and affordable housing for lower income individuals and families in the State of Montana. Montana Board of Housing accomplishes this purpose by issuing tax-exempt bonds, administering federal housing programs and working partnerships with many other housing providers throughout Montana. USDA Rural Development also partners with your local banks by using our Single Family Housing Guaranteed Loan Program. Our rural home loan guarantee program assists low to moderate income families who cannot obtain conventional financing. Because a down payment is not required, this program helps borrowers by reducing closing costs. The guarantee also costs less than comparable mortgage insurance premiums.

Recommended Resources:
For additional information and ideas, please visit the following websites:

- Montana Board of Housing: http://housing.mt.gov

MAIN TOPIC: DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION

ISSUE: Incentive for Business Development
The citizens of Deer Lodge had great concern for the health of their downtown. There are multiple storefronts that are boarded up and closed for business. In our listening sessions, we heard that growing new businesses and sustaining the existing ones downtown is priority for the town.
**Recommendations:**

Deer Lodge has a burgeoning business community. New businesses have developed with the hope of more to come. A common issue discussed was how to create new businesses, organize present businesses, and re-invigorate the more veteran ones. Deer Lodge benefits from being located in a beautiful valley and located halfway between Yellowstone and Glacier National Parks. It also has two very well-visited tourist attractions on either end of town. With a large amount of tourist traffic passing through downtown enticing the tourists to stop along the way for goods and services would lead to a windfall for local businesses.

USDA Rural Development can help Deer Lodge harness this economic potential through its Business Programs. Our various programs provide financial backing and technical assistance to stimulate business creation and growth. The programs work through partnerships with public and private community based organizations and financial institutions to provide financial assistance, business development, and technical assistance to rural businesses. These programs help to provide capital, equipment, space, job training, and entrepreneurial skills that can help to start and/or grow a business. Business Programs also support the creation and preservation of quality jobs in rural areas.

Loans, loan guarantees, and grants are available to individuals, businesses, farmers and ranchers, public bodies, non-profit corporations, and private companies in rural communities. The financial resources of the Business Programs are often leveraged with those of other public and private credit source lenders to meet business and credit needs in under-served areas. The funding is intended to help improve the quality of life in rural communities by enhancing economic opportunities and ensuring self-sustainability for generations to come.

USDA Rural Development can partner with the Town of Deer Lodge to implement these funding programs or work with our trusted partners like Headwaters Resource Conservation Development (RC & D). Headwaters RC & D provides clients with access to essential resources that result in sustainable economic development and conservation management. Their goal is to be the leading provider of sustainable economic development and conservation services to stakeholders and residents in Southwestern Montana.

From aiding in the creation of a business plan to providing technical assistance to community groups, Headwaters RC&D improves the economic and social well-being of the Southwest Montana region through conservation, development, and proper use of natural and human resources. It assists with the development of small business, tourism, employment, and other economic and social opportunities; it also assists communities in planning public works projects and coordinating public and private investments.

There are many funders available to assist in business development; both on a state and federal level. Groups like Headwaters RC & D are well-educated in these programs and their associated requirements. They are a useful resource when developing affordable financing for projects of all sizes.

**Recommended Resources:**

For additional information and ideas, please visit the following websites:
- Headwaters Resource Conservation Development: http://www.headwatersrcd.org
REPORT BY: Abbie Phillip  
Anaconda-Deer Lodge County Agent  
Montana State University (MSU) Extension  
800 Main  
Anaconda, MT 59711  
406-563-4035/4036  
abbie.phillip@montana.edu  
http://adlc.us/departments/msu-extension-office/

MAIN TOPIC: COMMUNICATION
The growth policy document is a good way to start communicating your community’s vision. But how do you go about encouraging people to read it and support it? Improving communication both internally (among residents, civic associations, businesses, local government) and externally (tourists, colleagues in near-by communities, state and federal officials) will:

- Promote and cross-promote local businesses,  
- Increase tourist activity in the central business district,  
- Increase buy local campaigns and local participation in events,  
- Improve coordination of city and county local government for efficient use of limited resources from the State and Federal level

The residents who participated in the MEDA listening session also expressed need to improve communication between households and associations; this would raise the sense of community and promote community-wide team building so that the city of Deer Lodge, MT could accomplish more projects together.

The communication systems in small, rural communities are largely governed by word of mouth. Most people get community news and information about upcoming events through friends and families. The local newspaper, radio, church/school newsletters, and other media are important. People read signs and flyers to some degree, and they can be effective is used in conjunction with other media. Use mailers to get information into each home and building. Social media is a powerful tool to get instant news and feedback, but keep it positive and inclusive.

With a simple survey done face-to-face, on paper, or online (e.g. SurveyMonkey), you can determine what social media the majority of people in your community are using; perhaps it’s Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Remember that it takes time to establish, in the hearts and minds of a community, both support and participation in a new event or operation. It has also been said by other community organizers, If you want others to come to your party, you have to go to their parties too. Attend and help with events hosted by groups outside your normal circle, and invite them to attend your events. Communications are a two-way street, based on building trust and relationships between you and the people with whom you want and need to work.

ISSUE: Promote and cross-promote local businesses
**Recommendations:**
Become a Montana Superhost Community to improve customer experiences and strengthen local businesses and attractions through community-based trainings, online training, and reoccurring webinars.

**Resources:**
The Montana Superhost program is part of The Montana Office of Tourism. The program is going in new directions. Recently, the complimentary program shifted only being offered to high schools right now. It is a new direction. If you would like more information, contact Jodi Smith at jsmith@fvcc.com or visit their website at [http://montanasuperhost.com/](http://montanasuperhost.com/)

The Made in Montana program, Grown in Montana, and Native American Made in Montana programs boost the success of buy local campaigns and local products in the market place. Consumers will see the trusted Made in Montana sticker in your community. Made in Montana Trade Shows are a great way to market local products and your community across the State. Read more about the Made in Montana program here [http://www.madeinmontanausa.com/madeinmontana.aspx](http://www.madeinmontanausa.com/madeinmontana.aspx).

The MT Dept. of Agriculture provides grants for agricultural entrepreneurs to develop an exhibit and attend new wholesale trade shows. To help entrepreneurs get the most out of their trade show experience, they also provide online training resources on how to select and prepare for a trade show. [http://agr.mt.gov/agr/Programs/Marketing/Trade-Show/](http://agr.mt.gov/agr/Programs/Marketing/Trade-Show/)

You can work with our Regional Economic Development Center, Headwaters RC&D of Butte and learn more about the [Small Business Development Center (SBDC)](http://www.sbdcmontana.org/) and the [Food and Agriculture Development Center (FADC)](http://www.fadcmt.org/) programs and mentors to help with small business marketing.

**ISSUE:** Increase buy local campaigns and local participation in events (Growth Policy, p. 28).

**Recommendations:**
As stated in the growth policy, (Year One Action Section, p.8), you plan to hire a City Planner to manage the projects and communications of the BID. This individual can help establish and coordinate annual ‘Buy Local’ days during key shopping seasons, like Christmas and summer tourism. Special events hosted in the central business district give residents and visitors the opportunity to appreciate the local culture and heritage and give back to the quality of life in your community, which goes beyond the shop local mantra.

Community’s who develop their ‘buy local’ mission and incentives for business owners and consumers who participate in ‘Buy Local’ days increase chances for success.

**Resources:**
Durango, CO formed the Local First nonprofit to promote local economic initiatives. [http://local-first.org/](http://local-first.org/)

The Institute for Local Self-Reliance published this article entitled, “Key Studies: Why Local Matters.” The article describes the important aspects of building local economies through buy local campaigns and
policies, and it cites many other studies and publications to support their positions. [https://ilsr.org/key-studies-why-local-matters/](https://ilsr.org/key-studies-why-local-matters/)

The Community Builders.org provides information, research, insight and analysis for developers, realtors, planners, public officials and engaged citizens who are actively building stronger economies in the towns and cities of the American West. The webinars are an easy way to learn about what is working in other communities, like the Community Partnerships archived webinar about how Durango Colorado is building a vibrant small town economy. [http://communitybuilders.org/](http://communitybuilders.org/) and [http://communitybuilders.org/webinars/community-partnerships/](http://communitybuilders.org/webinars/community-partnerships/)

The American Independent Business Alliance is a trusted resource for developing, implementing, and sustaining successful buy local campaigns. [http://www.amiba.net/buy-local-campaigns/](http://www.amiba.net/buy-local-campaigns/)

**ISSUE: Improve coordination of city and county local government for efficient use of limited resources from the State and Federal level**

**Recommendations:**
Effective communication between the city and county will be key to the Cottonwood Creek Corridor project. According to the growth policy, it will not only elevate public safety, but will also provide valuable recreational greenspace for the city. “While Cottonwood Creek may currently be viewed as a liability, it should also be viewed as a potential asset” (Growth Policy Section, Cottonwood Creek Corridor Section, p. 39). The efforts to manage and enhance this area are held in vested interest with private and public parties, including city, county, state, and federal bodies.

Therefore it is fitting to develop a Cottonwood Creek joint task force between the City of Deer Lodge and Powell County through a Memorandum of Understanding to interface collectively with State and Federal regulatory agencies. (Growth Policy, p.8, 40)
Building the capacity of the individuals in these leadership roles to better handle challenges associated with organizational development, effective communication, project planning, conflict resolution, problem solving, public engagement is always a good invest in the success of your project. Leadership development workshops are offered by a variety of for profit and nonprofit agencies.

**Resource:**
The Local Government Center through Montana State University Extension is a great resource of city and county governments. Contact your local MSU Extension office for more details.

**ISSUE: Increase tourist activity in the central business district (Growth Policy, p.27)**

**Recommendations:**
As stated in Goal 1 of the Growth Policy (p. 25-28) to “Develop the organizational structure necessary to manage, promote and revitalize downtown Deer Lodge,” it will be important to develop a strong volunteer program. Exploring potential funding sources may lead to hiring a paid staff member to manage the strategic activities of the BID. These individuals will be involved in branding, marketing and promotions of the City of Deer Lodge on local, state, and national mass media.
A city promotional website will promote activities happening in downtown. (City Growth Policy, Year Two Actions p.9, p. 28) Community development happens around communication, so as residents and visitors easily learn about the activities and how they can get involved Deer Lodge will experience a greater sense of public engagement and excitement. A great tool on any city promotional website is a community calendar to act as a central clearing house that will be a one stop shop where current and prospective residents, business owners, and tourist can learn about what is happening in the community and who to contact. Link the City of Deer Lodge, MT Community Calendar to the calendars of surrounding communities.

**Resources:**
The community toolbox is a beautifully organized resource for community development workers; it was created by a group of experts at the University of Kansas. You can read more about recruiting and training volunteers and board members who will be working to make the BID a success. [http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/structure/volunteers](http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/structure/volunteers).

The BID team will be looking for branding and marketing resources, and this website is great place to start [http://mrsc.org/Home/Explore-Topics/Economic-Development/Fostering-Economic-Development/Marketing-the-Community.aspx](http://mrsc.org/Home/Explore-Topics/Economic-Development/Fostering-Economic-Development/Marketing-the-Community.aspx)

Marketing Hometown America is a community visioning program designed to uncover what locals think makes their community a great place to live and visit. Through study circles and action planning local residents get to work creating a strong image and message to share with prospective residents, business owners, and tourists. The Marketing Hometown America was created by the USDA Cooperative Extension Services in North Dakota, South Dakota and Nebraska. [http://igrow.org/community-development/communities/marketing-hometown-america/](http://igrow.org/community-development/communities/marketing-hometown-america/)


**MAIN TOPIC: COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP; TRAILS AND RECREATION, ETC.**
All of the issues on the topic of trails and recreation that were mentioned by community members who participated in the MEDA listening sessions are closely related; therefore, some of the recommendations for action steps and solutions can be applied to all the issues in this category whether it is building a new park along the Clark Fork River within city limits, increasing the number of tee times sold at the public golf course, or building trails for non-motorized recreation and safe pedestrian commuting.

**ISSUE: Community Leadership to tackle projects**
- Connected trail system – walking, biking, skiing
- Skateboard Park
- Enhanced fishing and rafting opportunities
- Indoor skating rink
- Playground – for smaller children
• Free pool – improve opportunities for use
• City parks
• Golf course

Recommendations for these issues and general Community Leadership Development:
Many communities have found within their population the energy, volunteers, expertise, and funds to build playgrounds, skate parks, and community gardens. Community Leadership Development programs, like community leadership academies, are a terrific way to empower and motivate community leaders and residents to pool their ideas, build teams, and plan action steps to make their vision a reality.

Resources for Community Leadership Development:
The University of Wyoming Extension Community Development Education faculty have developed a successful community-based leadership development model called, EVOLVE, http://www.uwyo.edu/uwe/community/evolve.html

Two years ago, Park County, Montana started a similar local leadership development program for motivated residents called Leadership 49. Here is a link to their program details, https://livingstonwomeninbusiness.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/l49-informational-flyer.pdf.

You can hear actual success stories about community-based leadership programs recorded by CommunityMatters.org at http://www.communitymatters.org/event/citizen-planning-academies.

MONTANA TOBACCO USE PREVENTION PROGRAM

Why partner with your local Tobacco Prevention specialist?
By partnering with your local tobacco prevention specialist you become a hero to your community. Not only are you helping youth choose to stay nicotine free, you help adults get the support they need when they are ready to quit. You are also helping youth and the general public stay educated, informed and safe. Youth take what they have learned and educate their peers. Youth interact with the community by combining their activism with other local groups and events. The youth are involved in Volunteer work, Education, Activism, Art, Branding and Media. Your partnership also provides the latest updates on law changes and enforcement by keeping your city leaders informed. When you work with the tobacco prevention specialist you also contribute to the overall health of your community.

Amanda Bohrer
Tobacco Prevention Specialist
406-846-2303
ISSUE: Connected Trail System
Building a connected trail system throughout the area is an important growth policy initiative. The growth policy states on p. 53 in the Parks and Trails Section, “The Arrowstone Park Board is developing a comprehensive parks master plan in and around the City of Deer Lodge. The Arrowstone Park Board includes one position appointed by the City of Deer Lodge City Council, but the City does not have any staff to assist in this planning effort.”

Therefore it is recommended to form a trails advocacy group, such as the Arrowstone Park Board, with representative membership from the community-at-large work with local residents, local officials, and other stakeholders to create a trail that connects the south and north side of Deer Lodge, from Arrowstone Park to Grant Kohrs Ranch. Another unique opportunity the City of Deer Lodge has to showcase their rich urban-natural resources is, “developing a river front park on the City owned vacant property west of downtown…Few communities in Montana have the opportunity that this piece of property provides. It’s a blank slate located just a few blocks from Main Street and sits on the banks of what could be one of the best trout fisheries in the state. This is the type of property that if properly designed can put Deer Lodge on the map. As we talk about being competitive as a community, this project would be huge.” (Growth Policy, p.18)

Resources

Creating a community-wide vision for trails, parks, fishing access, and way-finding signage can be done through community-wide, facilitated study circles. You learn more about organizing study circles at the Community Toolbox, http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/advocacy/advocacy-research/study-circles/main. Your community may decide to include design professionals in your discussion from either the profit or nonprofit sector. Here are three nonprofit suggestions to help capture your community’s vision for new recreational, green spaces.

1. The Community Development Center is housed in the Montana State University College of Architecture on the Bozeman campus, http://www.arch.montana.edu/cdc/. Contact Tom McNab at cdc@montana.edu and (406) 994-3793.


3. Western Transportation Institute (WTI) focuses in eight different study areas of transportation in the rural western US; they are housed in the Montana State University College of Engineering.
David Kack is the Mobility and Public Transportation Program Manager, solving rural transportation problems by facilitating and coordinating the efforts of all the various transportation providers in your community, for example, MT Dept. of Transportation, city, county, and private. Their mission is to increase mobility of all people through sustainable modes such as bicycle, motorized, pedestrian walkability, rail and aviation. Contact David Kack, 406-994-7526, http://www.westerntransportationinstitute.org/research/transportation/default.aspx

MAIN TOPIC: INFRASTRUCTURE and RELATED PUBLIC SERVICES

One economic determinant for the community is beautification of their historic buildings in the business district and removal of blight to bring more people who will shop, eat, and tour the downtown district. The buildings and other built/natural features that are in disrepair, vacant, unsafe, or do not add to overall aesthetic and historic value to the area need to be addressed by a public/private community-based program, like instituting a Business Improvement District (BID). The community will benefit from a decision-making process and enforceable ordinances to address infrastructure improvements, including commercial buildings, residential neighborhoods, roads/sidewalks, green-space, and land development.

ISSUE: Infrastructure ~ Beautification of buildings and removal of blight

Recommendations:
- Review, update, and enforce city blight ordinances
- Appoint city staff to handle code enforcement for blight mitigation
- Review city building codes
- Appoint a city staff to handle building code enforcement for blight mitigation
- Conduct an inventory of downtown buildings to appraise and assess their condition. Make recommendations to the landowner based on the value and liability of the property.
- Build relationships with public/private owners, as well as local/regional real estate professionals Find funds and to create marketing packages of the land and buildings to attract potential developers and investors.

Resources:
The Montana Weatherization Center, a program of MSU Extension located in Bozeman, MT, will work with communities to provide outreach and educational programming about indoor air quality and energy efficient public buildings, private businesses and homes. Learn more and find their contact information at http://www.weatherization.org/.

At the CIRD website http://rural-design.org/resources, city elected officials and planners can read and share resource guides entitled, ReBuilding Downtown, From Vacant to Vibrant, Rural Planning and Design, and many articles on how economically challenged communities attract artists to highlight community assets for new purposes. http://art-force.org/files/Rural-Research-Report-Art-Force.pdf

MAIN TOPIC: DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION
ISSUES: Traffic flow, Pedestrian safety, Lack of parking

Recommendations and Resources:
Creating a community-wide vision for the Downtown area and way-finding signage can be done through community-wide, facilitated study circles. You learn more about organizing study circles at the Community Toolbox, http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/advocacy/advocacy-research/study-circles/main. Your community may decide to include design professionals in your discussion from either the profit or nonprofit sector. Here are three nonprofit suggestions to help capture your community’s vision for an inviting downtown district.

1. The Community Development Center is housed in the Montana State University College of Architecture on the Bozeman campus, http://www.arch.montana.edu/cdc/. Contact Tom McNab at cdc@montana.edu and (406) 994-3793.


3. Western Transportation Institute (WTI) focuses in eight different study areas of transportation in the rural western US; they are housed in the Montana State University College of Engineering. David Kack is the Mobility and Public Transportation Program Manager, solving rural transportation problems by facilitating and coordinating the efforts of all the various transportation providers in your community, for example, MT Dept. of Transportation, city, county, and private. Their mission is to increase mobility of all people through sustainable modes such as bicycle, motorized, pedestrian walkability, rail and aviation. Contact David Kack, 406-994-7526, http://www.westerntransportationinstitute.org/research/transportation/default.aspx

ISSUE: Incentives for business development

Recommendations:
Chamber of Commerce already hosts after hours events where business owners get to know one another and share business goals setting. In addition to the Chambers After Hours events, host a strategic business planning workshop and marketing workshops. Also, Consider adding to your growth policy a section on economic growth to address market gaps for good and services in your community, consumer buying capacity and pattern, and a local business inventory, and role of public and nonprofit institutions in local economy.

Resources:
• You can work with our Regional Economic Development Center, Headwaters RC&D of Butte and learn more about the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) program to help with small business marketing and strategic business planning.

• Resources that will help with a low-cost assessment of your local businesses, consumer behavior, and other economic assets are the ABCD Institute workbooks, "A Guide to
Mapping Local Business Assets and Mobilizing Local Business Capacities” and “A Guide to Mapping and Mobilizing the Economic Capacities of Local Residents.” The life-long work of John P. Kretzmann and John L. McKnight has formed the Asset-Based Community Development Institute, and it is made available through trainings and a collection of resources shown at [http://www.abcdinstitute.org/](http://www.abcdinstitute.org/). The Asset-Based Community Development Institute (ABCD) is a growing movement that considers local assets as the primary building blocks of sustainable community development. The philosophy builds on the skills of local residents, the power of local associations, and the supportive functions of local institutions. Asset-based community development draws upon existing community strengths to build stronger, more sustainable communities for the future.

**ISSUE: Identifying a shared vision and brand**

**Recommendation:**
- Host a community study circle on branding and visioning
- Consider adding a second section to the growth policy on community marketing and branding strategies to address the community’s vision and goals in creating a message and logo to attract tourists, new businesses, developers, and residents to the city.

**Resources:**
The BID team will be looking for branding and marketing resources, and this website is great place to start [http://mrsc.org/Home/Explore-Topics/Economic-Development/Fostering-Economic-Development/Marketing-the-Community.aspx](http://mrsc.org/Home/Explore-Topics/Economic-Development/Fostering-Economic-Development/Marketing-the-Community.aspx). A quick search at the MRSC.org website led me to an article on the branding process that the community of Lynnwood, WA went through with a company called North Star, [http://www.ci.lynnwood.wa.us/AssetFactory.aspx?did=276](http://www.ci.lynnwood.wa.us/AssetFactory.aspx?did=276).

Marketing Hometown America is a community visioning program designed to uncover what locals think makes their community a great place to live and visit. Through study circles and action planning local residents get to work creating a strong image and message to share with prospective residents, business owners, and tourists. The Marketing Hometown America was created by the USDA Cooperative Extension Services in North Dakota, South Dakota, and Nebraska. [http://igrow.org/community-development/communities/marketing-hometown-america/](http://igrow.org/community-development/communities/marketing-hometown-america/)

At the CIRD website [http://rural-design.org/resources](http://rural-design.org/resources), there resources that address communities issues on “Local Identity and Character,” which led to a link to an USEPA Smart Growth document on “How Small Town and Cities Can Use Local Assets To Rebuild Their Economies: Lessons From Successful Place” such as Eugene, OR, Dubuque, IA, and Paducah, KY, and others. [https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-05/documents/competitive_advantage_051215_508_final.pdf](https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-05/documents/competitive_advantage_051215_508_final.pdf)
REPORT BY: Eric Seidensticker  
Program Manager-Community Development Specialist  
Montana Business Assistance Connection (MBAC)  
225 Cruse Ave, Suite D  
Helena, MT 59601  
Phone: 406.447.1510  
Direct: 406.437.8566  
Email: eseidensticker@mbac.biz  
Website: www.mbac.biz

MAIN TOPIC: COMMUNICATION

ISSUE: Consistency  
Repeatedly, the people of Deer Lodge said one of the greatest strengths their community has is the people themselves. However, it was also mentioned that the people could be the community’s biggest weakness because of the lack of communication.

Recommendations and Resources:  
- Establish more communal activity boards around town that show what is happening on any given day, or weekly activities that everyone can attend.  
- City and County officials should meet to better understand each other’s position, identify common ground, and begin moving forward in the same direction. If the citizens of Deer Lodge begin seeing positive combined efforts from these two, it may help unification efforts.  
  - City and County officials improve efforts to get citizens involved and talking.

MAIN TOPIC: DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION

ISSUE: Prioritization (Growth Policy pg. 15)  
Many of the same suggestions and concerns were brought up for the downtown such as general associated costs, traffic and parking layout, appearance, and identifying a shared vision/brand. However, there was much speculation as to what should happen first.

Recommendations:  
- Make the creation of a Business Improvement District (BID) a high priority. As mentioned in the Growth Policy, a diversified group of board members is needed to set the tone in identifying and prioritizing the needs of the downtown.  
  - Invite the public to correspond as much as possible.  
  - Downtown Association should happen in lieu of BID not being created.

MAIN TOPIC: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

ISSUE: Attraction
With the amount of vacant store fronts in the downtown area, one could argue that this is a great opportunity to try and attract new businesses. The challenge is attracting businesses that can be successful, have a prolonged stay, and won’t shut down within a year. There is also potential and opportunities for other parts of town for new businesses to setup.

**Recommendations:**
- **Attract niche markets:**
  - Outdoors related stores (i.e. fishing shop, bike shop, a clothing shop)
  - Niche markets that tie in to the largest industry in Deer Lodge-Tourism!
  - Create incentives within the BID to further the chances of landing niche markets.
- **Explore ways to repurpose the old hospital facility**
  - Seek grant funds that could be used for a feasibility study.
  - Seek grant funds if remediation is needed because of asbestos or lead (Brownfields)
  - Possible usage ideas:
    - Community center
    - After school program (i.e. Boys and Girls Club)
    - Business Incubator
    - Used again in a medical capacity.
- **Create a local Economic Development Organization (EDO):**
  - An EDO can be a great resource to further the working relationship between the City and the CRDC of the region.
  - EDOs can create grant opportunities from within the community such as:
    - Front Street Grant
    - Relates to downtown revitalization and beautification
    - Marketing Grants
    - Helps with marketing the local businesses within Deer Lodge, and can be a valuable tool for branding.

**MAIN TOPIC: HOUSING**

**ISSUE: Abundance and Accessibility**
After touring the town, it was seen/mentioned that there are many older homes that need attention. However, the cost of renovating may exceed the cost of replacing some of these homes. Some of these homes will most likely need some sort of remediation before they can be renovated/replaced which adds to the overall cost per home. Another issue that surfaced was the lack of rentals in Deer Lodge. One individual mentioned that it took them a considerable amount of time to find a place to live for them and their family when they moved to town because of low quantity. There was also desire to build more housing units (i.e. apartment complexes or 4-plexes).

**Recommendations:**
- Access grant programs like Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) to help aid low income individual/families so that they can have their older homes renovated.
- Identify potential areas around town that could be demolished to make way for housing units.
If the old hospital facility cannot be repurposed, it could be demolished and replaced with an apartment complex or other residential units. (i.e. low income housing)

Resources:

http://comdev.mt.gov/Programs/CDBG/Housing/Overview

MAIN TOPIC: TOURISM AND PROMOTION

ISSUE: Attraction and Retention

Although tourism is one of the largest money makers for Deer Lodge, there was mentioning of several ways to improve getting people to come to Deer Lodge and enticing them for an extended stay. Small towns, or rural areas may be smaller than Metropolitan and Urban areas but they can provide a distinct brand that the latter cannot.

Recommendations:

- Communication and coordination with Grant-Kohrs Ranch and the Museums, especially the Old Montana State Prison.
  - Information Kiosks could be placed at the ranch and the old prison. These kiosks should have information that pertains to what is going on around Deer Lodge. This is especially important for the downtown area because of the opportunity to get travelers/tourists to walk the downtown area.
- Signage
  - If a Downtown Association is established, creating signs/banners that say along the lines of “…Deer Lodge Downtown Association Welcomes You…” presents an aesthetically pleasing image. It also strikes the message to tourists/travelers that the downtown area is the backbone of town when they first arrive.
  - Signs that point travelers/tourists towards recreation parks, national forests, and other landmarks.
    - Wayfinding as a possible tool on a downtown association website.
- Lodging accommodations
  - Attract another hotel to Deer Lodge.
  - And/or and RV Park

Resources:

http://www.cfra.org/node/2504

http://ruraltourismmarketing.com/

MAIN TOPIC: INFRASTRUCTURE & RELATED PUBLIC SERVICES

ISSUE: Streets and Sidewalks
In relation to the downtown area, it was mentioned that many of the streets that stem off of the downtown can be difficult to drive on, especially in the winter. One point made was that some of these streets are not plowed, or that only the main roads get plowed, and that once it gets warmer there are many potholes. Much like the streets, it was brought up that the sidewalks at time do not receive the proper snow removal. Again, when it becomes warmer, the sidewalks are cracked or splintered from the moisture.

**Recommendations:**

- Volunteerism
  - Establish a system to get volunteers help maintain the streets and especially the sidewalks. Elderly citizens may need help shoveling their sidewalks in the winter.
  - Businesses helping each other by shoveling their neighbor’s sidewalk if it hasn’t been done, and vice versa!

**Resources:**

Example website:  [http://www.volunteerspot.com](http://www.volunteerspot.com)

**MAIN TOPIC: TRAILS & RECREATION**

**ISSUE: New Opportunities & Enhancing Existing**

A connected trail system (i.e. walking, biking, and skiing) was one of the most sought after trail system projects. The youth of Deer Lodge especially showed desired to have more trails. Mentioned in the Growth Policy (starting on page 53), these are essential to a local community and represent a portraying image of a town. The Growth Policy touches on the importance of connectivity of the trails throughout town and the importance of maintain sidewalks, commons paths, and roadways.

**Recommendations:**

- Making sure that the trails are being respected by the users and no littering occurs.
  - Strategically place disposal containers and signs thanking users for keeping trails and pathways clean.
  - Disposal containers for pet feces and have them strategically placed. Including the bags.
- Volunteerism
  - Create an opportunity for the community to get together to pick up trash. This strengthens community bonds and the promotion of clean trails/pathways.

**Resources:**

Example website:  [http://www.volunteerspot.com](http://www.volunteerspot.com)

**CONCLUSION:**

Overall, Deer Lodge is a great small town and is composed of a great community that wants to see the town be successful. The challenge is getting the community moving together in the same direction to achieve the goals that have been mentioned. The Growth Policy is the first step to identifying and composing a plan to address the issues the town faces and creates a framework moving forward. Although it takes time, if every citizen can find common ground to move towards these goals, all of the above is possible for Deer Lodge.
INTRODUCTION
The Resource Team visit on March 7th and 8th was enjoyable and Deer Lodge is certainly poised to do great things. You have wonderful assets on which to build and a “can do” attitude that will serve you well. The historic district, the presence of Grant-Kohrs Ranch and the museums, engaged citizens, great volunteer participation, strong church communities, outdoor recreation at your front door and support for your youth make this community a good place to call home. The assets of the community far outweigh the challenges and the opportunities are many. We look forward to seeing what you accomplish in the future!

Below are recommendations that could provide you with some great opportunities. Should you have questions about the recommendations or would like additional information for any of the topics, please feel free to call or email for clarification or further explanation.

MAIN TOPIC: HOUSING
General comment on HOUSING: The Issue statement on the Growth Policy Plan summarizes the state of housing in a realistic way, including the constraints to affordable housing listed on pages 47-48. A strong recommendation would be to review the goals, objectives, actions and implementation presented in section 9 of the Growth Policy and choose a date in the next six months to complete at least two of the actions listed under Objective 9.2.

Housing is an issue in communities large and small all across the country, but in rural areas the issues and solutions are sometimes difficult to identify and resolve. That being said, those communities who are able to successfully identify and address their housing deficiencies are more successful than those who do not. And of course it sounds easier than it is, because once you delve into housing issues you will discover that the topic is quite complicated. However, if you make a concerted effort to identify one area at a time and build momentum towards the larger goal, you will find your time is being well spent and you’ll be ahead of many other areas.

Recommendation(s): Consider forming a Housing Task Force to develop a plan of action with a specific timetable and measurable results in order to stay focused on housing initiatives. This could be a sub-committee of the Planning Board and should have representation from the real estate industry, the construction industry, landlords, renters, financial institutions, the mental health field, large employers and other key stakeholders as identified by the group.

Recommended Resource(s):
Housing Division – Montana Department of Commerce
http://housing.mt.gov/
406-841-2840
**ISSUE: Availability of quality rentals**

**Recommendations:**
Work with realtors and private land owners to build an inventory of rentals and costs of rentals so you are able to have a good understanding of the rental market in Deer Lodge. Consider creating a list of rental properties with contact information so a person searching for an available rental has a single point of contact. The list could be distributed through City Hall and the Chamber.

Prepare a “satisfaction survey” for renters to further understand their needs and identify the reasons they may be looking for rentals outside of the area. Another survey to consider is one for prison employees to learn why they don’t choose to live in Deer Lodge.

One of the most proven methods of increasing the availability of quality rentals is to purposefully create quality units. Engage in conversations with local builders to determine how interested they would be, or what it would take for them to make the commitment to construct a four-plex of higher-end rentals. If you are able to create a few of these higher-end rentals, they will be among the most desirable units in the area and will force some of the other landlords to make improvements to their properties in order to remain competitive and keep those unit filled. Be cautious about any financial incentives to get the units built, as that would likely have a negative impact on the overall effort.

**Recommended Resource:**

**ISSUE: Disconnect between wages and housing supply**

**Connection of workforce with housing**

**Recommendations:**
These issues can and should be addressed together. There is a very direct connection between your available housing stock and your ability to attract and retain workforce. If the only housing you have readily available is lower quality rentals, that is the population most likely to migrate to Deer Lodge. On the other hand, if you have an abundance of higher-end homes for sale, that is the population most likely to move to Deer Lodge. You must be able to identify who you are trying to attract and retain in the community and then be able to meet their housing needs.

One of the ways you can accomplish this is to conduct a Housing Assessment that addresses these four key areas:

- What is the data telling you? Looking at census numbers and other verifiable data to gain a full understanding of your existing housing stock.
- What are the employers telling you? Talk to your key employers to learn about who they are trying to hire and in what wage bracket(s). Ask if they are having difficulty recruiting or retaining those workers and to what extent they believe available housing might be hindering their ability to hire.
- What are the realtors telling you? Local real estate professionals have a very good handle on who is interested in moving to the area. Ask them to share housing market information as they see it by talking to the clients they work with and the prospective clients who call.
What are the builders and developers telling you? What are the barriers to new construction or to housing rehabilitation? Do they have an interest in building workforce housing, or is it too costly?

Many state and federal programs exist to address the needs of low to moderate income housing, but programs that benefit those people who fall into the 80-120% income levels are few and far between. In order to be able to attract and retain that segment of the workforce, you need to be able to meet their housing needs.

In order to gain a better understanding of workforce needs you may wish to conduct a Workforce Readiness Assessment which would look at factors beyond just housing and explore other areas that would give you a better understanding of how ready you are to attract and retain a workforce that matches employer needs and would help you to understand what types of businesses are most likely to move to your area based upon the available workforce.

**Recommended Resource:**
Montana Department of Commerce – Big Sky Trust Fund Planning Grant for workforce assessment
Eligible entity for this grant resource: Headwaters RC&D – 406-782-7333
[www.headwatersrcd.org](http://www.headwatersrcd.org)

Montana Department of Commerce – Community Development Division for housing assessment

Scope of Work Template for a combined Housing and Workforce Assessment
[staylor@beartooth.org](mailto:staylor@beartooth.org)

**MAIN TOPIC: DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION**

*General comment on DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION:* This is another priority addressed at great length in the Deer Lodge Growth Policy Plan. Please re-read this section because it has many achievable goals, objectives, action and implementation steps identified. It will also be helpful for you to become familiar with the Four Point Approach from the National Main Street Center as referenced beginning on page 12 of the Growth Policy. The Desired Future Conditions section on page 13 of the Growth Policy is especially inspiring for efforts in this area.

**ISSUE: Vacant store fronts**

**Recommendations:** While we were in Deer Lodge in early March we heard about a local effort to place artwork in the vacant spaces. This is a good start to having those building appear more vibrant. Please continue with this effort and expand it if possible. Another good source of providing fill is to offer window space to local nonprofits to promote their organization or upcoming event. Yet another option would be to feature some of the area’s history in a few storefronts and promote museum visitation to learn more. Some building owners will be reluctant to do this, but others will welcome the initiative. Another option is to create a large picture frame and mount a poster on the inside of the frame that says “Picture Yourself Here”. Consider having two people from the Chamber talk with the vacant building owner to brainstorm ideas for dressing up the empty space and make sure you are viewing the space as an opportunity rather than an
eyesore. Even if you aren’t able to utilize the inside of a building for an attractive display, make sure the sidewalk in front of a building is swept on a regular basis – this could be accomplished by asking a neighboring business to “adopt” the front and keep it clean because it will reflect better on their business as well. In short, anything you can do to lessen the appearance of an empty downtown is worth the effort.

Make sure that you have a least two available properties, with complete information, listed on the Montana Site Selector website as a way to help market these properties. (As a cautionary note – you don’t want to list too many at any given time or there will be an appearance of a ghost town to those viewing the information.)

**Recommended Resource:**
To list a commercial property on the Montana Site Selector website, create an account at this link:
https://svc.mt.gov/gov/sitesselectoradmin/Home/Instructions

**ISSUES:** Traffic Flow, Pedestrian Safety, Lack of Parking

**Recommendations:** These three issues can be addressed together because they are connected in many ways. There were concerns expressed regarding the speed of traffic downtown, pedestrian safety due to both the speed of traffic and the width of the road and lack of parking in the two block historic district. Unfortunately, there are not readily available solutions for any of these issues, but they should be examined for possible remedies – both short-term and long-term. One of the things that complicate the matter is the fact the there is a state highway involved and with that another layer to a potential approval process. The fact is that the Montana Department of transportation would rather leave the downtown district as it is, because it complies with established traffic and safety standards, however, this may not be in the best interest of the downtown businesses and the ability to increase revenue-generating activity in the downtown corridor.

A core group of downtown merchants should be called upon to explore possible solutions that would meet the requirements of DOT and allow them to build a stronger trade district. Other Montana towns have been successful in making this happen, including nearby Phillipsburg. The best way to start the ball rolling towards an alternative solution, such as diagonal parking on Main is to start a conversation with the MTDOT to see how receptive they are to changes and then include them in a series of discussions with downtown merchants to come up with at least two options.

Consider making these three issues part of a larger downtown revitalization plan, including elements of beautification and appearance and creating a unified vision for Main Street. This could take through a process known as a Charrette. These are most often defined as an intense period of design or planning activity.

As an aside – be grateful that you have a lack of parking, because it means that people are wanting to be downtown. Just imagine how dire the situation would be if there were always ample parking!

**Recommended Resource:**
Charrette Institute, including webinars for inline viewing:
http://www.charretteinstitute.org

**ISSUE:** Downtown Beautification and appearance

**Recommendations:**
You will find that this is a long-term commitment as well as a short-term project. This is an area where even small changes can make a big difference. Adding more street trees, banners, benches and planters on the corners can make an instant change to the appearance of the downtown. While these are not inexpensive items, there are creative ways to fund the various items, including asking businesses to sponsor a flower basket or tree; creating a process for a citizen to have a bench installed in memory of a loved one; proposing a fundraiser to a civic organization or former graduating class in connection with a reunion for a specific item; and crowdfunding. Many dozens of communities have information posted online to give you some great ideas for local efforts.

A great resource for ideas, webinars and publications is Roger Brooks, has many resources for downtown promotion and appearance available on his website. The resources you will find on this site are quite affordable and several are offered as free downloads. You might want to listen to his webinar on creating a public plaza to see if that fits with your vision for downtown.

Consider an ordinance similar to Bloomington, Indiana that requires a building owner in the downtown district a specific amount of “green” footage in front of their building – this can be in the form of a planter box, tree, or flower pots out front.

The Mayor made a comment which makes a lot of sense. He said the downtown could use “a shave and a haircut, beginning with City Hall”. Another suggestion that some downtown districts utilize is a spring clean-up event where people bring their power washers downtown and wash down the awnings and fronts of buildings, wash the windows, sweep the sidewalks and put a fresh shine on the district, then gather afterwards for a bowl of chili and cookies. It’s a great way to include youth and have a little fun while getting the work done.

**Recommended Resources:**
Roger Brooks website – [www.rogerbrooksinternational.com](http://www.rogerbrooksinternational.com)
Roger Brooks Beautification Idea Book
Crowdfunding platforms: [www.gofundme.com](http://www.gofundme.com); [www.kickstarter.com](http://www.kickstarter.com); [www.indiegogo.com](http://www.indiegogo.com);

**ISSUE: Identifying a shared vision and brand**

**Recommendations:** This issue is really a continuation of the items already listed under the Downtown Revitalization topic. There are several good resources available to help you get started, including those on Roger Brooks’ website. Another source that is extremely valuable to dipping your toes in the water is a book by Bill Baker titled “Destination Branding for Small Cities”.

In the introduction section of Bill Baker’s book he talks about cities needing to constantly adjust to changing circumstances while maintaining a balance with the values and vision of their residents. He suggests that a good starting point is to be able to answer these basic questions:

1. What do we want to be known for?
2. How can we stand out from the crowd and be more competitive?
3. What thoughts and feelings do we want to come to mind when people are exposed to our name?
4. How can we gain improved results from our resources?

In considering the above questions it’s important to be able to take an honest view of who you are and who you are most likely to be. It’s a temptation to try to be all things to all people, but that isn’t an achievable goal. Another caution in this area is to try to be like some other town that you perceive as being successful. We often heard “like Phillipsburg”, but you need to strive instead to be “like Deer Lodge”, because that’s who you are and once you are able to define just what that means you are well on your way to carving out your own place in the world.

One of the things we heard during listing sessions was that you feel there’s a stigma to being a “prison town”…what would happen if you used that to your best advantage? Especially in terms of the old prison. How about a brand that uses the silhouette of the old prison and some of these phrases: “Arresting Views”, “Great Escapes”, or “Outdoor Recreation so good it’s Criminal” – you could use a font that incorporates black and white stripes in the capital letters and really have fun with it and it certainly would be unique to Deer Lodge.

Recommended Resource:
Bill Baker book – available at Amazon and other resources – (less than $30.00)

MAIN TOPIC: COMMUNICATION

ISSUES:
- Cross promote businesses and activities
- Coordination of community events and adjoining community events
- Unification of community efforts and attitude
- Improvement of internal and external communication (both within the community and to visitors)

Recommendation: Launch and rabidly promote a Facebook page for Deer Lodge then consider other social media platforms as they make sense. Just this single action coordinated and administered by an organization such as the Chamber will help with the cross promotion of businesses and activities, and provide coordination of community events. There are many other steps that can be undertaken as time and resources allow, but this is a potential and relatively easy starting point. You might consider asking a small group of high school students to serve as an advisory board for any social media efforts, since this is their primary source of communication.

Continue to build on your Chamber After Hours networking event – you’re off to a great start with that one!

MAIN TOPIC: TOURISM AND PROMOTION

ISSUES:
- Enhancement of outdoor recreation opportunities
- Coordination with Grant-Kohrs Ranch and the Museums
- Keeping visitors in town longer; package deals
- Lodging accommodations – including RV
- Parks, Hotel/Motel
- Wayfinding for hiking, biking, historic homes and other sites, hunting, fishing, etc.
- Information kiosk listing activities
- Revitalize gateway signage
- Proximity between Glacier and Yellowstone
- Frontline training/hospitality training/customer service

**Recommendation:**
Rather than break these into separate issues, this is an area that should be addressed as a whole, similar to downtown revitalization and this is also an area where it makes sense to form a committee or task force to identify a series of projects to leverage the potential that exists in Deer Lodge for enhanced tourism and promotion. You are fortunate to have strong anchors at each end of town to draw in travelers, but as was mentioned at nearly every listening session in March, you have many opportunities to make Deer Lodge a destination.

It’s best to start small and identify one or two projects that can be accomplished within a short time with a very limited budget and then build upon those early successes to take on bigger and more complex projects. One of the easier projects would be to build upon the early success of the efforts that took place downtown during Pumpkin Sunday at Grant-Kohrs Ranch – and bring back the scarecrows! Use this opportunity to draw people downtown for additional fun activities. And absolutely take full advantage of any other events that are already taking place in the area.

Host a meeting for downtown merchants to brainstorm ideas for new events, or enhancements to existing events. This is an excellent way to get the promotional juices flowing. Look at traditional retail holidays…but also consider some quirky events that would draw Deer Lodge residents and those nearby. Popular events in small towns that allow for cross-promotion include: Ladies’ Night Out; Scavenger Hunts; Living Windows; and Arts Walks. Also, encourage the merchants to update their Yelp listings or any other digital presence their business might have so that their business is promoted is a positive light as well as the community.

Consider forming a downtown merchant’s association, perhaps as a committee of the Chamber. This would be a natural flow from the brainstorming session above. The association can then continue to look for opportunities to promote the downtown as a whole and develop programs that would benefit several businesses at once, such as Customer Service training, initiating a “Mystery Shopper” program to learn more about what’s being done well and where there is room for improvement and for possibly developing a joint tourism grant application.

Another program to consider is the First Impressions Program which has been implemented by several states. The one operated through Ohio State Extension describes the program like this:

> Ever wonder what impressions a first-time visitor to your community walks away with? We know what is special about where we live, but do tourists or business travelers find this a place that they would choose to return? Even though the answers to these questions could be so helpful in targeting our community and economic development efforts, we are unlikely to ever gain this knowledge. First Impressions: A Program for Community Improvement provides communities with information concerning how they look and feel to first-time visitors. Data gained through this process can be used to identify what
could be improved in your community, enhancing your image to the outside world.” Even though their exact program would not be available to Montana communities, there is useful information to be gained from a review the program. It would be fairly easy to adapt the program for use by Deer Lodge and a comparable Montana community.

You also have a tremendous opportunity to leverage the presence of live theatre and other performing arts. Celebrate what you have and appreciate that you have several good jumping off points within the community.

Another consideration would be to involve high school students in the production of a commercial for Deer Lodge. This might also cause them to have some ownership in the effort and view their home town in a slightly different light and may instill a greater desire to either stay or to return sooner rather than later or not at all.

The more involved the citizens of Deer Lodge are in any of these efforts, the better results you will be able to achieve. A resource you may find helpful in order to develop a broader base of involved and engaged citizens is to apply an Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) strategy through the materials available at the ABCD Institute. They are at the center of a large and growing movement that considers local assets the primary building blocks of sustainable community development.

**Recommended Resources:**
Montana Office of Tourism and Business Development
http://tourism.mt.gov/MarketingDevelopment/TourismGrantProgram
http://tourism.mt.gov/MarketingDevelopment/DevelopmentEducation

ABCD Institute - http://www.abcdinstitute.org/

Ohio State Extension First Impressions Program Brochure
http://comdev.osu.edu/sites/comdev/files/imce/Myra/1st_Imp/1stImpressionsBrochure.pdf

**MAIN TOPIC: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

**ISSUES: Manufacturing, workforce development**

**Recommendations:**
Page 19 of the Growth Policy Plan is absolutely spot on as far as economic development goes, especially in recognizing that the best strategy to grow the economy is through supporting existing businesses.

Consider taking a good, hard, honest look at the current economic base and explore opportunities to either fill gaps or to enhance what’s already here and working. For example, are there support industries for the lumber mill – or can you add amenities that theatre-goers would appreciate? Manufacturing jobs are highly desirable, but also very elusive in terms of recruiting new manufacturing jobs to a rural area. A higher degree of success would be to talk with your existing manufacturers to determine how they could add jobs. One way to do this would be for them to agree connect them to a BEAR (Business Expansion and Retention) Team in
your area. This is a program designed to assist existing business owners and operators to access resources allowing them to improve and/or expand their business.

Consider a quarterly meeting for larger employers to have a forum to discuss issues they may be facing and ways to share resources. This can be helpful in the areas of safety training, for example. Would it be possible for two or more employers to share in the cost of safety training for their employees? This type of forum would also help to identify potential workforce development needs across several employers.

Consider an annual survey for larger employers and one for smaller employers to identify areas of need in terms of training, marketing, supply chain or distribution. The Department of Labor and Industry would be in a position to assist you in the design of this type of outreach.

Consider a business plan contest or a “Shark Tank” style competition to encourage the development of local entrepreneurs. Another idea that could help your smaller retailers would be a website builder workshop where they would build and launch a site during the course of the day. The Small Business Development Center in Missoula or Helena should be able help you with these ideas through their network of contacts.

There were several assets identified during the listening sessions that could be utilized in the area of economic development. The two most notable were the presence of two Class 1 railroads providing a real benefit for manufacturing and the other is that the City has the ability to fast-track a business with interest so a quick reaction is possible, which is very important in today’s business climate.

**Recommended Resources:**
BEAR Program – Mike and Gloria O’Rourke, statewide coordinators
gloria@medamembers.org

Workforce Development – Montana Department of Labor and Industry
http://wsd.dli.mt.gov/

Small Business Development Center
http://sbdc.mt.gov/

**ISSUES: Business Recruitment, variety store (and socks)**

**Recommendation:**
The first step is to understand your market and work to develop a plan to promote opportunities in Deer Lodge. The Extension office of both the University of Wisconsin and the University of Minnesota have developed good resources to help you conduct an analysis of your downtown and business district. It is well worth your time to look at both of these resources and consider forming a small group to conduct this analysis in order to develop a useful recruitment tool.

It was noted during several sessions that the Powell County Chamber is undergoing positive changes and it is likely that they are soon to be in a position to take a leadership role in several of the initiatives identified in this report.
The Montana Site Selector web portal has a large selection of reports specific to Deer Lodge which can be used to further understand your market and opportunities. These reports can be accessed free of charge and are well worth adding to your arsenal of tools. Right below the top navigation bar are three tabs – select the “Generate Reports” tab to access the menu of available reports which are available under “Site Analysis Report” as a pull-down option. Choose your report type and format, then select “by City” or “by County” or “Map point” and run the report. The various reports can be used to determine specific marketing areas for a retail business, or to identify a gap in services, or a variety of other uses.

Recommended Resources:
University of Wisconsin Market Analysis took and Instructional Webinar:
http://fyi.uwex.edu/downtown-market-analysis/

University of Minnesota Market Analysis Toolbox:
http://www.extension.umn.edu/community/retail/downtown/

Montana Site Selector Portal for reports and commercial property searches:
http://svc.mt.gov/gov/sitesselector

ISSUES: Use of old hospital building

**Recommendation:** Talk to the people in nearby Anaconda about what they were able to do with the reuse of a large vacant building. Jim Davison, Executive Director, Anaconda Local Development Corporation, pulled together multiple partners to re-open the old hospital building that had been vacant for 13 years. Many issues had to be addressed as a result of the long-term vacancy and deterioration. Jim Davison would be an excellent resource to tell you how this project came about. Today, the “old hospital” is the Anaconda Service Center which serves as a business incubator for multiple businesses, a veteran’s clinic, the home of the ADLC Boys and Girls Club, and many more entities.

**Resource:**
Jim Davison, Executive Director
Anaconda Local Development Corp.
118 E. Seventh St.; Third Floor
Anaconda, MT 59711
Ph: 406.563.5538
Email: jamesdhavison@gmail.com

*****************************************************************
DEER LODGE RESOURCE TEAM ASSESSMENT
LISTENING SESSION COMMENTS (In person, hand written, and emailed)
March 7 – 8, 2016

What are the strengths and assets of Deer Lodge?

Senior Citizens Listening Session
- The people
- Sense of community; friendly
- Tourists - old prison, Grant Kohrs Ranch
- Knowing your neighbors
- Children enjoy growing up here
- Good school system
- Strong organizations
- Enjoy the parks
- Tri-County Fair
- Territorial Days
- The people who are caring, cooperative, open to progress and growth
- We have some great accomplishments, such as Rialto restoration
- Community volunteers “group of angels” helping with household hardships, like a water leak or a new roof
- Relationships, personable
- Setting for recreational pursuits
- Intergenerational days when the near-by day care eat and play with seniors at the Center
- Historical railroad was a cultural tie-together
- Employers: prison, school district, federal registrar bldg, hospital, nursing home, timber
- Associations: Elks, Women’s Club ($30,000 grossing annually)

Planning Board Listening Session
- Our people is our #1 strength. We can build Deer Lodge to make it all that it can be.
- Ditto
- Location – transportation hub
- Location, and no I.D. needed to buy groceries.
- History – oldest white settled community in Montana.
- The people, County Commissioners, City Council and Mayor are willing to get to work!

High School Students Listening Session
- Pool complex/St. Mary Center
- Outdoors, fishing
- Five minute trip to the mountains
- Teachers, Educators
- Drug store, furniture store
- Movie theatre
- Can find summer jobs
• Food pantry
• Rialto
• Youth sports

High School Teachers Listening Session
• Our community is very giving.
• Close knit community
• Small town atmosphere
• Golf course
• People are willing to get involved
• Snowmobile club and snowmobiling
• Library summer reading program
• Slower life style
• Youth board
• Rialto
• Museum
• Grant Kohrs Ranch
• Trails
• Airport
• Elks
• Powell County Foundation

Civic Groups, Economic Development Historic Preservation Listening Session
• The People
• Location – between hubs
• Clubs and churches that pull together to support events.
• Ditto on good cooperation between churches and clubs.
• Museum, working ranch, beauty
• Candy shop is going to open, as well as a brewery
• 10,000 visitors to ranch in three months.
• Two anchors – the ranch and the museum – so fill the interim with shopping potential.
• Draft Horse Show – but locals don’t attend.
• A lot of potential with traffic zooming by – just have to capture it.
• Lots of history, hands on activities, hot springs – we have it all nearby.
• Activities we do have are good – expand them!
• Low cost of living here
• Milder winters
• The LDS Church contributes a lot; building a volunteer website.
• Parade
• Ministerial Association

City Council Meeting Listening Session
• The people here and their ability to adapt and change.
• Location – prime for many opportunities; manufacturing hub possibilities
- Expansion of runway at airport
- Rich history
- Center of remediation between Butte and Missoula

**Medical/Law Enforcement Listening Session**
- Recreational activities are phenomenal
- Snowmobiling, hiking, fishing.
- Interact with all ages here and people are ready to do whatever it needs to make Deer Lodge prosperous.
- Leadership Training Weekend
- Cardboard paintings to fill in the empty windows project. Don Haggin; Maggie Hunter
- Deer Lodge has a lot of Arts
- Our hospital – holistic approach to medicine - Plane Tree
- Deer Lodge Christian Men
- Trails – beginning to take over the community; connecting and expanding
- Trails Committee; Grant Kohrs Trails Map
- Location – in the middle between both National Parks
- 49 lakes in this area
- Wilderness
- Grant Kohrs Ranch
- Museum
- Chamber After Hours
- Pumpkin Sunday
- The people of Deer Lodge
- Consideration of Charter Government – on ballot in November
- Current City Council – taking their job seriously

**Emergency/Fire Listening Session**
- Chamber restart – great committees at work
- Chamber After Hours - business card socials – growing
- New candy store coming to town
- Demolition Derby

**Churches, Nonprofits, Childcare Listening Session**
- Cutler Productions
- Quad City Misfits
- Domestic Violence Program
- Ministerial Association
- Ministry at Montana State Prison
- The Elks
- Community choir
- Community Garden – grows food and builds relationships
- Our people help each other; had several tragedies and people come together
- The swimming pool
- Good schools
- Outdoor activities
- Theatre
- Survivors – have a lot of poverty
- People volunteer for a lot of different groups
- I have never seen a community in 30 years of ministry where churches cooperate so well.
- After School Program is run by volunteers – 50 kids participate.
- Sense of community – people wave!
- Depot Church Preschool
- I love living here; I feel so happy here.
- School District – our kids are so successful after they graduate.
- Chamber of Commerce – positive energy
- Amazing talent comes out of this theatre.
- Churches coming together for one cause.

**Banking/Sawmill Listening Session**
- Volunteer Fire Dept.
- ReAct Youth Group – anti tobacco group; lots of support from police and other groups to apply for a grant for a summit.
- Sawmill employs about 160 people – another 50 in logging
- Deer Lodge is an undiscovered treasure
- Location is great – for tourists and manufacturing; near Interstate
- Both Class 1 Railroads – Union Pacific and BNSF
- Good community support for manufacturing
- 4-H
- Across community support
- When we put on an event, people really care and participate.
- Hunting and access to the mountains.

**Chamber and Retailers Listening Session**
- Lots of people who love each other
- Civic minded people
- A lot of history
- Ditto
- Grant Kohrs Ranch – our people appreciate its history
- Incredibly welcoming to out-of-town guests
- Ditto great community spirit
- Ditto – great support of our Senior Citizens
- Main Street potential
- Museums
- Mid point between Glacier and Yellowstone
- Community and volunteers.
- Ditto – location (lots of dittos)
- Customers are friends and neighbors; personal relationships.
County Officials and Employees Listening Session

- Zoning is in place in Deer Lodge in subdivisions.
- Fair grounds
- Blue ribbon pavilion
- All season facility (fair grounds) going out to bid soon.
- Trail committees
- Campgrounds
- Rock Creek –
- Agriculture – backbone of Powell County
What are the challenges or problems of Deer Lodge?

Senior Citizens Listening Session
- Easy to ignore us.
- Concerns about businesses closing
- Housing – lack of affordable
- Need effective community champion, a leader who can orchestrate city and county business/service/dollars
- Communication getting people to get together and talk ….improve cooperation public engagement, notification of citizenship opportunities
- Infrastructure: roads, housing
- We need to turn the town around between the Grant Kohrs Ranch and the Prison Museum - local shopping and services

Planning Board Listening Session
- People do not lock arms and work together.
- Communication – hard to get the word out; even organizations don’t communicate
- Infrastructure
- “We have always done it this way.”
- It is filthy, dirty, dusty, and needs cleaned up.
- Housing – very difficult to find without run down property right next to it.
- Deer Lodge is not benefitting from clean up money – did not get amount of funding as others did.
- Easy to ignore us.
- Need effective community champion, a leader who can orchestrate city and county business/service/dollars
- Communication getting people to get together and talk ….improve cooperation public engagement, notification of citizenship opportunities
- Infrastructure: roads, housing
- We need to turn the town around between the Grant Kohrs Ranch and the Prison Museum - local shopping and services

High School Students Listening Session
- Businesses open then close in a few months.
- Downtown needs more of everything
- Side streets are bad
- Need snow plow for side streets
- More to do outside of school stuff
- People don’t pay attention to their houses – need to clean up yards, too.
- Old buildings people can’t live in
High School Teachers Listening Session
- Little affordable housing available
- Have to go out of town to buy some things
- Lost population due to declining railroads, mining, logging
- Too easy to drive by Deer Lodge
- Disjointed families
- Communication – between group, officials, - across the board
- Prison stigma
- Very little reason for our kids to remain in Deer Lodge or return here once they obtain a degree or receive vocational training.
- Some people are still on dial up to get internet services.

Civic Groups, Economic Development Historic Preservation Listening Session
- Getting the traffic to stop here; People drive through here - don’t stop.
- Need businesses – entrepreneurs. Must have technology to offer them.
- Communications – use the Chamber once leadership is in place.
- Land locked.
- Don’t know how to find out what to do in the summer, what if I want to ride horses? How do I find out?
- Parents don’t take their children to see things or do things here!
- Offer an event, but there has to be a body of people who will attend it! How do we encourage that to happen?
- Some have a depressing outlook on Deer Lodge.
- Pool complex is only open at 6pm at night; closed on Sundays.
- Businesses don’t keep their data up on Yelp.
- Don’t have hotels to encourage people to stay here when a special event is held….have a bottleneck here.
- Not enough lodging to have tournament events here.
- Challenged in connecting the other Powell County communities.
- Agricultural sector of community is not appreciated or recognized.
- No mental health services here in Deer Lodge; suicidal people are referred to Butte.
- Communication – Boys Scout, Youth Board, Art Club, 4-H, - groups do not communicate with one another.
- Underage drinking is a problem.
- Huge problem with prescription drug abuse; cars broken into.

City Council Meeting Listening Session
- Need signage at both ends of town to draw people in.
- Tourism is great but we need sustaining wages and businesses here.
- Housing has hamstrung Deer Lodge for a long time.
- Employees that work at the prison do not live in Deer Lodge – and would like to.
- Landlocked in some ways – only way to grow is North.
- Rehab/Reclamation is going to be needed for some existing homes.
Medical/Law Enforcement Listening Session
- Not enough information out about all of the things to do in Deer Lodge.
- Readiness Assessment was done to see how our community would accept change…10 was high and 1 low. Deer Lodge ranked a 2.8.
- Need more sense of urgency to get projects done.
- Lack of coordination with neighboring Chambers to better coordinate events

Emergency/Fire Listening Session
- We don’t have an economic base, other than the prison and the mill.
- Housing – people who want to work here can’t find housing.
- Pretty locked in as far as growth and expansion.
- To buy socks, you have to go to Butte.
- The County is zoned, but not the City.

Churches, Nonprofits, Childcare Listening Session
- Low income, poverty.
- Old water, sewer systems
- Old buildings ready to collapse.
- Housing – looked for two months to rent a house; searched every day. Looked online; tons for sale, but not to rent. Used word of mouth to finally get the home they are now renting.
- Two people working at the prison still qualify for food stamps.
- Housing is probably our biggest issue.
- Slum lords
- Lack of counselors to help people with mental health issues

Banking/Sawmill Listening Session
- Stigma – a prison town
- Sometimes shortage of qualified workers or lack of a work ethic
- Affordable housing – difficult to build something people can afford to buy. Two low of wages.
- Priorities are shifting: rather have nice car and snowmobile than a nice home.
- We need a clear vision – not just for Main Street but everywhere.
- Appearance sells a town; we need to improve appearance.
- A lot of land owned by Forest Service
- Many children do not have a good home life; more effort needed to educate with parenting, support, etc.

Chamber and Retailers Listening Session
- 94% of the people that come to our shows are not from Deer Lodge!
- Don’t work well together – lack of communication, duplicate events….
- Difficult to attract new business
- Visitors say there is a lack of lodging and lack of housing (seasonal workers can’t find housing)
- Get people to stay and realize our assets
- A lot going on! But people are not aware.
- Community calendar is needed.
• Ag community events/activities are not covered.
• Business property is so dilapidated and expensive.
• Hard for a business to find a location.
• No clothing, towels, socks - can’t stay here and shop; variety store.
• Quantity of business coming in to make it – need to pay insurance, permits, etc….do not have the customer volume.
• Local waitresses, business people need to promote Deer Lodge to visitors.
• Do not cross promote each other’s businesses.
• Defeatist attitude.

**County Officials and Employees Listening Session**

• 50% federal forest and/or wilderness area
• Tax base is extremely poor
• In top ten of poorest counties in Montana
• Interstate makes it easy for people to drive by – shop elsewhere
• Decline in railroad, mining, etc.
• Dwindling school count
• Closed businesses; thrift stores even struggle.
• Getting DEQ engaged with remediation needs; same with EPA.
What projects and/or vision for Deer Lodge would you like to see in the next year – or 5, 10, years in the future?

Senior Citizens Listening Session
- More employment
- More businesses
- See the Brewery become a reality
- Increase niche businesses
- Better utilization of open lands
- Short term - sewer improvements
- Mid-range use - consolidating the dispatch location for law enforcement between city police office and county sheriff office for efficiency
- Long term: roads (36 miles of city roads that were constructed in 1970)

Planning Board Listening Session
- A convention center or one go-to-place to gather.
- A volunteer network
- Historic preservation – become the best historic district in the country!
- More businesses in Deer Lodge – old hospital is vacant.
- Turn City Pavilion into the place the city gathers.
- Jobs, People, Main Street businesses
- Removal of all contaminants
- Corridor through the city (as described in growth plan) becomes a reality.
- Deer Lodge is a destination point for fishing and hunting.
- ½ way between two parks.
- Asking now for Business Improvement District

School Students Listening Session
- Hamburger joint like Parker’s here
- Thriving Main Street
- Skate board park
- Better way to get the word out about things going on; posters and signs help
- New high school
- More school activities outside of sports
- Speech and debate
- Bring more great shows to the Rialto
- Archery Store, Jewelry store, new clothing store – not used clothing
- Playground on Westside Park – what happened to plans a few years ago?
- Big letter “P” on the mountain

High School Teachers Listening Session
- Develop our tourism more, such as the Draft Horse Pull
- More vocational opportunities
- Come up with a way to beautify homes and clean up yards
- Find a new way to promote our community – rebrand; re-tell our story
- Broadband capacity increased
- Program for stay-at-home Mothers
- Starbucks

**Civic Groups, Economic Development Historic Preservation Listening Session**
- Have the ranch and museum at each end – fill the middle with tourist needs
- An interchange built on the south end of town
- Slow down the downtown traffic! Like an interstate – people don’t stop.
- Place more trees on main streets and side streets
- Bike rest area place for bike riders to stop
- Need to give people a reason to stop!
- Create broadband for technological jobs/entrepreneurs
- Draw people in who would work from home.
- Symphony on the Prairie –
- One hub that dispenses all of the event information
- Do a better job to connect with events surrounding us and even within the community...build multiple events. For example – make Deer Lodge the hub for Gold Wings to gather during Evel Knievel Days in Butte.
- Get the Bluegrass Festival going again – or other music festivals.
- Zoning – to control commercial vs private property.

**City Council Meeting Listening Session**
- Learn how to sell Deer Lodge!
- Make it easy to stay in Deer Lodge.
- Welcome signs at each entrance of town– and even on the Interstate to lure people downtown.
- Place signs in windows so that as people are walking they become aware of places to go.
- Have an industrial park ready for business.
- Trails and regional trails; connecting them with neighboring communities.
- Infrastructure up to standard: streets, water, sewer.
- Give Main Street a clean-up and remodel
- Recreational paths – Garrison through Deer Lodge
- Fishing access improved; diversion dam – have a drift boat able to get through
- Draw in the tech savvy to this area; must have accommodations, i.e., hotels, broadband, etc.
- City can set the stage for that tipping point....must put our money where our mouth is. Prioritize!

**Medical/Law Enforcement Listening Session**
- Information out to let visitors know what is here!
- Have mystery shoppers to learn of what happens when visitors come.
- Put together packages so if you golf, you get discounts in town, etc.
- Encourage business owners to direct people to other businesses in town.
- Grant Writer
- Place AED’s in every public building and private building
- Paramedics – we have EMT’s but add paramedics; come up with the funding to train
- Change our thinking: positive, progressive. Perhaps start with our children.
- Provide newsletter from the city so that people know what is going on.

**Emergency/Fire Listening Session**
- Brag up Deer Lodge!
- Chamber becomes an advocate for the city.
- Positive attitudes outshine negative.
- Economic Development Committee –
- You get out of your community what you put into it.

**Churches, Nonprofits, Childcare Listening Session**
- We need a job base to grow business.
- A skatepark; raised the money at one time…
- Chamber firing up again – new members and new ideas
- Skating rink and snack place – gathering place for kids.
- Tap into tourists – get them off I90 to spend a few nights here.

**Banking/Sawmill Listening Session**
- Parenting and support of the home for families in need
- Help prisoners who are being released to be able to leave town.
- Some sort of bus or transportation for those visiting prisoners. (Had one years ago.)
- Come up with a theme for the town so that businesses advertise together - create an identity for Deer Lodge.
- Youth program
- Look outside the box!
- Place to build FEMA small modular homes.

**Chamber and Retailers Listening Session**
- Community calendar – perhaps online newspaper site?
- Need a variety of food
- Lodging for out of town.
- Variety store/family dollar
- No vacant buildings on Main Street
- Major employer here – some kind of industry with good well paying jobs. Keep kids here.
- Ditto – families don’t stay here.
- Become a theatre town – we have so many assets. We could become a mini-Broadway.
- Brewery! Will be a big boost.
- Amazon distribution center at the end of the airport.
- Every building full
- More businesses to succeed.
- A big store to draw people in.
• The hotel torn down and replaced with a park.
• Ditto no vacant buildings on Main Street.
• Ditto theatre town
• Suicide prevention training – had one but only five people came
• Let’s do MT Host Training to learn how to promote.
• Improved customer service locally.
• Eight movies/documentaries have been made here….promote and get those people back.
• Do have tear sheets that advertise activities in the area
• Grant Kohrs – 20,000 per year; Museum 40,000 per year.
• Promote campgrounds
• A map that lists all of the things to do.
• Marketing….placing business on Yelp, Trip Advisor, etc.

County Officials and Employees Listening Session
• Have a combined work session at least once per year to discuss city/count issues.
• Continue to address flooding in Cottonwood Creek area; coordination and agreements needed.
• City and County were consolidated at one time; several years ago became separate. Complex issue; consider an inter-local agreement. Have one County Commissioner and one City Council member meet once per month to meet and gradually come to agreement at the right time for the right reasons.
• GIS would work with City on water, sewer, storm, zoning….do have data to assist; see county website for maps.
• Bring light industry to the area.

WHAT IS NEXT?

The MEDA Deer Lodge Resource Team will return to Deer Lodge May 12th. At that time, during an hour and a half meeting, the community will go through a three step process to establish projects that need doing, prioritize the activity, and establish working groups to get the tasks done. The Deer Lodge Resource Team is pleased and proud to have a role in moving Deer Lodge forward to a bright future.