

Meeting Notes

Meeting: Economic Health

Date/Time: 12-17-14, 5:15 PM

Location: MonTec conference room

Notes by: Bob Horne, Applied Communications

Attended by: Ruth Reineking, Sean McCoy, Sam Sill, Eric Gabster, Nick Kauffman, Matt Joseph, Brigitta Miranda-Freer, Jenny Mish, Mick Harsell, Blake DePastino, Noreen Humes, Mike Halligan, Allen Sangster (Facilitator Assistant Intern), Laval Means (Development Services staff)

Updates & Administration

- The purpose of this meeting is to continue brainstorming the goal statements and to begin to examine objective statements generated from previous planning efforts and the Listening Sessions.
- The Steering Committee will begin meeting in January (now changed to February), so that will mean a second meeting during a few months overlap with the focus group. The group selected Nick Kauffman and Ruth Reineking as co-chairs.
- The group was reminded to check the forum. Staff briefly described how to navigate to it and explained that a simple log in procedure is required. They were also advised that most communication within the Focus Group should take place on the forum so that what is said is accessible to all.
- There was one item left in the parking lot from the November meeting: the idea that an investment pool to support local businesses be explored.
- Nick Kauffman provided an overview of the Sonoran's 'Place Value' webinar.

Background on Additional Topics & Goals

The group quickly reviewed the topic they had selected in November:

- Infrastructure
- Labor pool
- Local business
- Business development
- Transportation/transit/multi-modal

Following discussion, the group agreed to add Downtown and UM, but agreed that they would not duplicate what other focus groups might be working on and would focus mainly of the economic development/base economy components of the new topics. The group then went through the goal formulation process and came up with the following:

Goal Statements by Topic

Downtown

- Maintain and enhance the historic characteristics of downtown.
- Incentivize fiber optic connections into downtown structures.
- Attract external resources by strengthening unique local character and walkability as a destination.

- Create fast-track permitting process for buildings meeting LEED certification (or other relevant building code) in order to create a more green and sustainable downtown.
- Continue to create and enhance downtown's economic vitality and make our urban core a competitive hub for the region (housing, safety, mixed use, & place making).
- Maintain vibrancy and diversity through a combination of housing, small and large businesses, parks and trails, retail, food-related, events, etc.
- Be a vibrant hub of diverse retail and professional service businesses.
- Ensure diversity of businesses that serve residents as well as tourists, and specifically residents of downtown.
- Maintain the economic vitality of downtown as a safe destination for residents and visitors as a component of our quality of life.
- Maintain a safe downtown that imparts a sense of place and supports economic diversity.
- Remain a vital hub for the community and a focal point where people will want to visit, shop, and work as a component of quality of life.
- Emphasize creation of more living wage jobs and require advance scheduling for employees.
- Support the downtown master plan's intention for a dynamic mixed environment of business and retail.

University of Montana

- Encourage educational excellence that produces globally competitive graduates from the two and four-year educational programs.
- Ensure educational efforts at UM meet demands in the local, regional markets for technology and work force.
- Provide opportunities to the community through integrative learning experiences as well as graduating a professional and competitive workforce.
- Promote labor and workforce development relevant to emerging local business.
- UM and Missoula College supply the community with a workforce that meets the needs of current and prospective employers in good paying fields.
- Produce catalytic innovation and leadership for economic sustainability.
- Improve alternative channels for education and training.
- Develop alternative transportation and parking.
- Ensure that Missoula College site on East Broadway receives requisite permits and/or any necessary exceptions to existing zoning to ensure that it can have maximum desirable economic impact on Missoula now and in the future.
- Increase number of employees and amount of federal research dollars.
- Encourage UM to focus on professors and educational staff over hiring administrative staff.
- Decrease level of debt required to graduate.

There was discussion regarding adding Land Use/Zoning and also addressing small businesses in neighborhoods as a form of micro placemaking. It was determined that those topics would best be covered by other groups, but if those subjects arose in conjunction with consideration of the topic already selected, they would be considered in context.

Climate change was also discussed, as it had been by the Environmental Quality group the night before. Narrowing down the topic was considered, as was resilience and adaptation to change. How climate change issues are managed can impact our economic well being. The example of forest service management of wildfires was used to point to the impact of smoke-filled days on business services. The potential impact of climate refugees was considered, along with incentivizing companies to use green products and sustainable technologies. It was determined that while climate change is a factor that will influence policy across many

topics, it is not a topic in and of itself that the Economic Health group should take up. The group decided to consider the impacts and use climate change as a lens for looking at other issues and topics.

The group also discussed the merits of supporting local businesses compared to box stores. They recognized the value and strength of maintaining local businesses downtown but also expressed caution about inadvertently discouraging something desirable just because it is a chain-store. It should be more about how it looks and less about whether the business is part of a franchise – making the consideration a form-based critique on big box rather than being anti-chain store. Concern was raised over putting too many parameters on new businesses to the point that the new businesses go away. It's important to incentivize the businesses you want but also don't dis-incentivize other services. It's also important to consider the mix of current uses and consider what is needed for residents and visitors and work to fill those gaps.

The topic of air service was raised, but that topic was already covered under business development.

Discussion and Refinement on Goal Statements from November

Labor pool: we must be nimble and quick with our responses to changes in the market to set up new training programs for emerging technologies. Incorporate a statement that addresses promoting alternative education and training programs like union or guild apprenticeships, mentoring, internships, or farm inheritance. We need to be training the next generation of firefighters, cops, EMTs.

Considerable discussion ensued on coming up with a goal on “livable wage”. No one was able to quantify what a livable wage actually is in Missoula, but people are generally willing to work for less because of the quality of life. Also, 25% of employed persons are self-employed; people here tend to create their own job-----because of quality of life? Gentrification of Missoula was discussed. Do we want to be another Boulder? We want to be Missoula with all that comes with it. We have low unemployment now, so wages will rise. Finally it was agreed that a living wage is the product of a livable, quality community with a diversified and sustainable economy. It was decided that no goal for livable wage would be offered.

Statements from Other Plans (2005 Missoula County Growth Policy and 1998 Urban Area Plan)

The group reviewed and discussed past policy statements and considered whether any of them should be brought forward as a part of the current process. Three statements stood out with slight revisions:

Support a stable economy by encouraging “sustainable” industries; concentrating economic expansion on existing industries; and encouraging economic expansion that meets residents’ needs first.

Business recruitment efforts must be balanced by the careful nurturing and support of our existing businesses.

There are opportunities for greater connections among the business community of western Montana.

Listening Sessions- Recommended Ideas & Objectives

The group briefly undertook this exercise in the time that remained. They selected two statements to apply to the topics they have selected:

- Conduct economic analysis and develop policies and strategies to address issues and problems that can be measured with statistics and benchmarks.
- Strategically build and maintain infrastructure that will support economic development.

The groups also felt that coalitions and partnerships were important in economic development. This exercise will be continued via e-mail and the forum.

Parking Lot

The idea of an investment pool that channels capital to local businesses was left in the parking lot for further consideration.

Next Steps

Goals & objectives will be compiled and in January staff will send out a link for a survey so focus group members can review statements & rank them. The ranking will be the basis for the discussion in January.

Next Meeting Date: January 28, 2015, 5:15 to 7:15 PM, MonTEC Building Conference Room (1121 East Broadway)

Public Comment

No public comment was received.