

DRAFT MATERIAL

The following draft goals and objectives have been compiled from the November and December focus group meetings along with feedback from listening session worksheets. Please note that similar statements/concepts have been combined and some statements have been sorted into either broad goal statements or more specific objective statements. Also, some statements may have been edited to clarify the meaning, provide consistency in style and format or to conform with legal concepts. Further refinement, consolidation, and even shifting of statements to other focus groups are anticipated.

Economic Health Topics, Goals & Objectives**Topic 1: Infrastructure**

Infrastructure is the backbone of economic development. In order to build and maintain a viable base economy that brings dollars into the community while paying good wages, a community needs reliable and affordable utilities, roads, and carrier services. But more and more, businesses need fast, reliable, and redundant broadband service. Missoula has just completed a phase one broadband study and is now looking at a follow up effort to implement the recommendations of that plan. Deployment of reliable broadband is seen as key to further economic development success in Missoula.

Goal 1: Strategically build and maintain critical infrastructure that will support economic development.

Objectives:

1. Work toward deploying free broadband throughout the city.
2. Ensure reliable and affordable next generation broadband service city wide.
3. Assure sufficient wastewater capacity to serve the existing community and to expand as necessary.
4. Identify and provide the type of infrastructure and levels of service that well-paying businesses and industries need.
5. Assure sufficient water system capacity to serve the existing community and to expand as necessary.
6. Support compact development and mixed developments to reduce costly expansion of infrastructure.

Topic 2: Labor Pool

As expressed in the listening sessions and early focus group meetings, the main issue associated with the local labor pool is the ability of training programs to keep pace with rapidly changing technologies. There is concern that Montana's four-year and even two-year institutions are not sufficiently mobile and flexible to add new programs or change existing ones to meet industry demands. Also, alternative training such as internships, apprenticeships, and mentoring appear to be lacking in the community.

Goal 1: Build and maintain a reliable and skilled work force to both serve existing business and industries and to attract new ones.

Objectives:

1. Explore and promote alternatives to traditional higher education in technology fields.

2. Seek more agility and better alignment between business/industry labor needs and training curricula in all educational institutions.
3. Engage youth/millennials in community development.
4. Coordinate with public schools to create a work force with skills for 21st century jobs.
5. Promote associate degree programs in the trades and labor sector.
6. Collaborate with Missoula College to develop training programs to meet the workforce needs of local business and industry.
7. Develop relationships between businesses and educational institutions to share information, retain an educated workforce, and support business growth.
8. Partner with businesses, industries, and trade unions and associations to establish programs in internships, vocational mentoring, and apprenticeships.
9. Work with the city, county, and state to ensure programs are in place for training the next generation of firefighters, police officers, and EMTs.

Topic 3: Business Development

Growth policy participants have identified a number of obstacles to starting and expanding businesses in Missoula. These can include a lack of suitable infrastructure and work force training as already discussed, but also include regulations, financing, and access to markets.

Goal 1: Create a climate and provide resources for business retention, expansion, and relocations to the Missoula area.

Objectives:

1. Work with government and business organizations to create a positive environment for starting, operating, and growing a business in Missoula.
2. Encourage investment in infrastructure for entrepreneurship.
3. Encourage and incentivize outside businesses that fit the “Missoula theme” to relocate here.
4. Promote the development of more frequent airline flights to more regional hubs for better business access.
5. Promote rural outsourcing.
6. Promote packages for start-ups that include incentives such as incubator space, shared facilities, and state-of-the-art broadband access.
7. Balance business recruiting efforts with the careful nurturing and support of existing businesses.
8. Ensure that home-based businesses remain a viable option in the Missoula area.

Topic 4: Transportation/Transit/Multi-Modal

While successful economic development depends on a good local transportation system, excessive automobile trips during the AM and PM peak hours can lead to air quality and level of service problems (congestion). A good street network must be balanced by a reliable, efficient transit system and multi-modal transportation opportunities (walking, cycling) that ease traffic congestion and contribute to Missoula's high quality of life. In turn, the quality of life afforded by the Missoula community attracts a skilled work force and top talent, which contribute to the local economy.

Goal 1: Provide a full range of viable transportation alternatives to meet the needs of residents, businesses, and visitors.

Objectives:

1. Develop a city-wide greenbelt to enhance open space and to facilitate alternative transportation such as walking and cycling.
2. Formulate land use policy that supports compact development and transit and multimodal accessibility.
3. Support land use policy based upon transit and multi-modal transportation alternatives, and focus inward concepts.
4. Encourage the state to establish a matching funds and promotional program in support of improved air carrier service.
5. Design and improve the road network to accommodate vehicles and to enhance safety and reduce congestion.

Topic 5: Local Business

Local businesses are valued in any community, but especially so in Missoula. Businesses that are started and operated by local people better understand the culture and values of their customer base (the community) than national and regional franchises. Also, more of the gross revenue taken in by local businesses remains in the community. In looking at the obstacles to business development in Missoula, many participants feel that local businesses are often less able to overcome those obstacles than larger national or regional firms. Therefore, programs and incentives are often seen as a way to level the playing field for local business.

Goal 1: Support and provide the necessary resources that facilitate local business start-ups and business retention in Missoula.

Goal 2: Recognize the unique challenges faced by local businesses and entrepreneurs in competing with national and regional chains and franchises.

Objectives:

1. Encourage local preference purchasing on the part of anchor institutions.
2. Explore tax rate, and fee reductions for firms and establishments that have Missoula as their only location.
3. Explore an incentives program for local "green businesses" that use reused products and renewable energy.
4. Encourage local lending institutions to streamline the financing process for local businesses.
5. Encourage the state, city, and county to streamline and provide consistent, predictable business regulations.

Topic 6: Economy - Jobs

There is a concern in Missoula that local people are being priced out of the community that they call home. The two factors in play are home prices and wages; the price of housing has outpaced wage growth, leaving more local families cost burdened for housing. The wage side of the ledger also has two factors. One is that existing jobs in Missoula do not tend to pay very well (relative to living costs), and the other is that if the community were to be more successful in recruiting industries with better wage scales, the local work force may not have adequate training to fill those jobs. A combination of targeted recruitment and vocational training programs, especially in hi-tech fields, is often seen as a solution.

Goal 1: Work toward a vibrant, diversified base economy with above median wage job opportunities for the Missoula community.

Goal 2: Support strategic economic development efforts that broaden, expand, and/or diversify the base economy.

Objectives:

1. Encourage investment in research and development for renewable energies.
2. Explore a “new vision” for Montana jobs: tourism, agriculture, and technology.
3. Promote energy efficiency as a local business advantage and a job creator.
4. Develop programs to provide incentives for desirable and strategic types of growth.
5. Develop policies and strategies to address issues and problems that can be measured with statistics and benchmarks.
6. Encourage the creation of jobs that will pay above the community median wage.
7. Inventory community assets and promote them to attract businesses and top notch employees.
8. Coordinate economic development efforts among various agencies and determine priorities to optimize resources.
9. Emphasize the creation of more living wage jobs.

Topic 7: Downtown

Compared to other large communities in Montana, Missoula’s downtown is vibrant and successful, having attracted substantial public and private investment over at least the past two decades. But as communities grow and change, so do their downtowns. The challenge, therefore, is to keep downtown Missoula a vital center for government, entertainment and culture; to ensure a mix of housing, retail, and services, and to keep it a destination and economic driver that contributes to Missoula’s uniqueness and quality of life.

Goal 1: Continue to create and enhance downtown’s economic vitality and make the urban core a competitive hub for the region.

Goal 2: Ensure a diversity of businesses that serve residents as well as tourists.

Goal 3: Continue to promote downtown Missoula as the community's center for government, commerce, entertainment, and culture.

Objectives:

1. Maintain vibrancy and diversity through a combination of housing, small and large businesses, parks and trails, retail, dining and drinking establishments, and events.
2. Maintain downtown as a safe destination for residents and visitors.
3. Ensure that downtown conveys a sense of place and uniqueness.
4. Continue to implement the downtown master plan and to support its objective of a dynamic mixed environment of business, housing, and retail.

Topic 8: University of Montana

The University of Montana is THE largest economic driver in Missoula, employing over 3,000 permanent faculty and staff. However, the University is also a major trainer of the local work force, offering degree programs in many technical and professional fields. It is also a center for the arts, culture, and varsity athletic events, all of which contribute substantially to visitation. Many participants feel that the University could provide even greater community benefit in areas of transportation, housing, marketing and branding, research, and by providing more technology training that fits with the type of industry that the community wishes to attract.

Goal 1: Strive for educational excellence that produces globally competitive graduates from the two and four year programs.

Goal 2: Produce catalytic innovation and leadership of economic sustainability.

Objectives:

1. Ensure educational efforts at UM meet demands in the local and regional markets for technology and work force.
2. Provide opportunities for the community through integrative learning experiences as well as graduating a professional and competitive work force.
3. Encourage UM to focus on professors and other educational staff over hiring administrative staff.
4. Continue to grow the University in terms of employment and investment in research.
5. Explore programs and other opportunities to reduce student debt.