Our Missoula Listening Sessions
September 9 and 10, 2014

INTRODUCTION

This document contains the notes from the first eight 90-minute Our Missoula Listening Sessions, which occurred September 9 and 10. Listening sessions were established based on the many topics that have a role/impact in shaping our community, 28 sessions in all. Supplemental comments received after the sessions will be compiled and posted as a separate document.

The purpose of the listening sessions is to foster open discussion with participants specifically interested in the given listening session topic. The comments recorded during these sessions are the opinions, ideas, and impressions of the individuals present and does not reflect consensus positions.

Each session was formatted similarly with three main components:
1. ASSSETS: What do participants value about Missoula, and then what do they value specifically in regard to their expertise and session topic
2. CHALLENGES: What are the challenges facing Missoula
3. DISCUSSION: Broaden the conversation to openly discuss ideas, recommendations, programs, policies or actions

LIST OF TOPICS
TRANSPORTATION
UTILITIES
NEIGHBORHOOD (Lifelong Learning Center)
UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATION
UNIVERSITY STUDENTS
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
NEIGHBORHOOD (Southgate Mall Community Room)

TRANSPORTATION   [top]

Key Topics
- Bikeable community
- Walkable community
- Safe operation for walking and biking
- Enhance multi-modal coordination
- Enhance funding to support sustainable transit
- Roads
- Infrastructure influences land use
- Focusing inward; connectivity
- Alternative transportation enhancements
- Completing gaps in trail system
- Goals to reduce motor vehicle miles traveled and promote transit
- Consensus building for solutions
- Transportation funding for construction and maintenance
- Land use/transportation connection
- Revisit VMT (vehicle miles traveled) and LOS (levels of service)

What do you value?
- Diversity of transportation options
- Compact city core
- Provides variety of physical activity
- Progress has been made in alternative infrastructure
- Good interagency cooperation
- Respect of all commuters: bikes and cars
- Solutions come from inside the community
- Good community processes; overview, evaluate, and arrive at solution; Bancroft good example
- High level of community involvement
- Good support for multi-modal transportation from the business community
- Increased political awareness; elected officials favoring complete streets

What are the challenges?
- Leap frog/sprawl development
- Misunderstanding that fewer cars are bad for the economy
- Need for more roads and ways through our valley as we grow
- Increased rail use brings challenges
- Maintenance of existing infrastructure; funding
- Air quality, especially during our many inversions
- The real cost of transportation; long commutes, etc.
- High and growing user expectations
- Finding the political will to make changes; keeping bikers safe
- Winter transport; lane use for plowing and snow storage

- Transit not available to all parts of the community
- Shutting the door on new transportation options for the future; relying on modes used historically
- Gaps in bike lanes and sidewalks can nullify safety of the system
- Privatization of public space; distracted drivers
- System gaps in the collector network; for bikes and cars
- Neighborhoods without sidewalks
- Improper lighting; public safety issue
- Declining funding from federal level
- Cannot build ourselves out of congestion

Ideas, Policies, Programs, Actions, Recommendations
- Break down problems into smaller issues; neighborhood solutions from citizens
- Define core for Focus Inward (transit)
- Consider a car share program; less costly for individuals and reduces cars on the street
- Look at 3-lane roads to reduce crashes; also revisit roundabouts; roads don't need to be bigger, just more efficient
- Reduce speed to what is conducive to an urban environment
- Develop neighborhood greenways
- Need a culture shift to embrace and engage in place making
- Conduct a community discussion of private and public parking; parking isn't really "free"
- Find solutions locally, and then look for funding resources
- Explore revenue source-forming; including gas tax
- Use our infrastructure strategically for economic development
- Address misnomer that bicyclists don't pay for facilities
- Involve citizens in decisions
- Need to find local funding for projects and diversify funding streams;
- Need to educate and reach out to all citizens
- Conduct more outreach to get people involved
- Reduce expenses by using alternative materials that have lower maintenance costs; example- cobble
- Update development code
- Develop incentives to get development where it is more conducive for transit, like along key corridors
- Develop a policy and cap on VMT with numbers and thresholds in growth policy; goal for reducing VMT; examine traffic projections more —especially assumptions for long range and large scale models
- Rethink expectations of what is a reasonable LOS to provide
- Filling gaps in bike lane system would make biking feasible to more people
- Address costs of infrastructure: if Missoula shifted to higher alternative modal splits, infrastructure upkeep would be less costly; biking infrastructure costs less
- Develop money saving solutions
- Figure out how to curb sprawl

- Enhance neighborhoods on outer edge with multi-dwelling units and a commercial core so people don't have to drive to the middle of town; make that a land use policy

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UTILITIES

Key Topics

- Coordinate infrastructure installations and coordinate between city and county
- Landfill capacity
- Shared customers (of the various utility and service providers)
- Economic development; responsibility to ensure infrastructure is available, including broadband
- Long- term utility financing and maintenance
- Future capacity of water system
- Infrastructure conflicts, especially as they relate to broadband

What do you value?
- Livability
- Friendliness
- Authenticity
- Access to recreation, trails, fishing, etc.
- Rural small town with amenities
- Trees, parks, and trails
- Water, trash, power—good utilities in place; well positioned for development
- Education side of UM; collaborations for growing new industry
- Variety of cultural amenities for a small town
- Good location amidst mountains, forests, and streams
- Good place to raise kids; library, school system, etc.
- Good climate with four pleasant but distinct seasons
- Water rights in good shape; some wells can expand in future; growth should be no issue here

What are the challenges?
- Good paying jobs-other than UM
- Natural and forced growth
- Funding sources for municipality and utilities
- Financial strain of parks, schools, etc.
- Superfund sites; in-fighting over extent and methods of cleanup; cooperation needed
- Residential development does not pay for the services it requires; need more value added development
- Floodplain; high aquifer
- Wildfires, drought, air quality
- Wastewater treatment system has 15 year capacity; DEQ close to approving expansion to add another 70 years
- Compressed natural gas (CNG) system for future
- Exempt wells could be future challenge;
- Cost of water is high for parks and other green spaces

Focus Inward challenges

- From the water service standpoint, it's good to spread costs; no new capital is involved because infrastructure is already in; seldom have to enlarge pipe and pressures are generally good
- For solid waste collection, density is generally good; it lowers rates, helps routing, and shortens haul trips
- Wastewater treatment is okay and can accommodate 20 years of growth at 15 to 2% annually
- Telecommunications and power have challenges with higher densities; conflicts with trees and other utilities
- Power is set up on older system; 200+ amp service needed
- Dry utilities conflict with existing systems and trees
- 1996 Telecommunications Act requires that broadband facilities be accommodated

Ideas, Policies, Programs, Actions, Recommendations

- Develop better inter-departmental and inter-agency coordination; like between city and county
- Collaborate on Superfund sites; coordinate efforts among DEQ, city, county, and EPA
- Need better financing; DEQ is understaffed; Brownfields programs need to be better funded and made more efficient
- Support standardized programs and processes; consider needs verses wants; who takes the risk and who gets rewarded; resources and institutional change needed to ensure fair process
- Support legislation to allow other agencies to take program lead: Example: City lead agency instead of DEQ
- Encourage agency flexibility; example: Forest Service is only using their cost estimate for bidding
- Continue to focus on economic development; more money in the community
- Develop joint trenching agreements; continue to develop broadband plan; work together to coordinate efforts
- Bring additional air service to Missoula; identify hub airport to focus on and make more flights available through that connection
- Consider what happens to old infrastructure, ie, telephone lines?
- Understand reliability of utilities

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NEIGHBORHOOD - LIFELONG LEARNING CENTER

Key Topics
- General perception that the plan is inconsequential
- How useful are the plans - can we change, do we change too much - let the plan do its work
- Neighborhood issue - Lower Rattlesnake - Traffic: Van Buren and Duncan are only two ways in and out of the neighborhood

What do you value?
- Open Space in and around City; reasonably quiet
- Diversity; all different kinds of uses
- Mixed Use
- Focus Inward is a good idea
- Bike trails
- Keep Missoula exclusive

What are the challenges?
- ADU's in Rattlesnake area; will cause additional traffic and noise
- Longer trains in Rattlesnake area are causing traffic to reroute in a different direction which is putting more pressure on other streets
- Train noise
- New development is monoculture; make new development more diverse ie Low income/high density/single family etc. all together
- Appropriate density; more density is not always better; why is doing high density incentivized; incentives should be for mixed use
- Urban density is okay with urban qualities; example open space
- Irony of growth; more people is not always good; many Missoulians like not having lots of people; if we make it more attractive than more people will come and we won't be able to "get away"

Ideas, Policies, Programs, Actions, Recommendations
- Find a way to not have to stop for trains at Madison Underpass under Madison/Duncan; bad intersection; add silent crossing - four gate quad or speaker poles
- Incentivize mixed use development
- Develop an intermediate zoning that does not allow high density residential, but allows commercial too
- Share facilities to nurture new jobs; startup businesses
- Support Neighborhood Plan
- Change incentive structure for different uses;
- Missoula should remain weird

UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATION

Key Topics
- Sustainability woven into process; protection of agriculture land
- Transportation and accessibility
- Aging population and continued livability while at the same time accommodating the needs of younger people
- Broadband deployment; making technology accessible
- UM's role in economic development
- Community design; maintaining an attractive and welcoming community
- Cultural diversity
- Status as a college town
- Community and student health
- Safety and wellness; concern regarding the public's perception of student conduct
- Housing; residential/student life; community growth patterns
- Public safety
- Preserve and enhance river corridor
- City infrastructure; transportation
- Listening; on the part of the University and community
- Economic health of the community (a more vibrant economy is better able to support the University and its functions)

What do you value?
- Vibrancy; it's an active and energetic community
- Surroundings; mountains and open spaces
- Friendly community
- Accessibility (physical) and interaction between UM and larger community
- Hillside open space
- People and the UM community
- Vibrant downtown
- Safety; feel safe in Missoula
- Active downtown and city as a whole
- Creativity of the local populace in problem solving and getting things done
- Quality and variety of recreational opportunities in town
- River; water quality and activities associated with it
- Trail system
- Caring populace that is active in the community; value and serve the public interest; educated and informed, which leads to quality participation (bringing good ideas to the table)
- Public school system
- Innovative populace; trail blazers
- Students who are active in the community
- Student involvement and participation in UM and community life
- Variety of cultural activities; youth and adult sports
- Diversity in the community

- Mutual openness of UM and community with all activities
- Genuineness of caring in the community
- MonTEC; incubating small businesses
- Griz athletics; success on the field, instill community pride; economic contribution to community

What are the challenges?
- Missoula's economic dependence on UM
- University; everyone working together
- Traffic; community accessibility; southwest end of the City has poor connections
- Maintain environmental qualities while planning for growth; protect vistas, preservation of prime agricultural lands, etc.
- Preserving what makes Missoula unique; avoid the monoculture
- To think about growth in a package; need population growth, consensus about how we grow, transportation/accessibility, environmental considerations
- Tax payer support; for public safety, schools, parks, etc.
- Living wages
- Sense of place; market what Missoula has to offer; access to environment
- Cost of housing; providing affordable housing
- Public safety
- Racial and ethnic diversity
- Inter-city transportation
- Remoteness: often difficult and expensive to travel out of state
- Cost of living; goods and services to sustain the community
- Equality of representation in public-private partnerships; residents are not consulted nor involved
- To prepare for an aging population

Ideas, Policies, Programs, Actions, Recommendations
- Support free fare public transportation; consider partnership with light rail
- Develop a River corridor plan; address beautification; intensified uses; end to end holistic plan
- Get behind efforts now underway for broadband access that will accelerate new opportunities; streamline permitting process for broadband deployment
- Collaborate among City, County, and UM on safety and sexual assault (use as model to address other issues)
- Collaborate between UM Residential Life and Saw Mill Development to address student housing needs; other public-private partnerships should be explored
- Get results on economic development by making it easier to do business in Missoula; tackle the perception of it being hard to do business in Missoula; look at other cities to see what they are doing
- Focus on what industries Missoula is going to market; focus on strengths - things we are "top 5" in
- Encourage even more collaboration and better utilization of the resources at UM; great ideas and access to students to produce usable information for city

- Support UM students that develop "startups" as a launch pad and resource for ideas
- Make connections between new UM building and downtown and community to promote discussion and interaction
- Allow Missoula College to be adaptable to skill needs
- Inventory community assets; all aspects of community and use in promotion
- Music Theatre is an asset, but river front venue is needed
- Function as roving Ambassadors; Missoula College of Technology adds information and collaboration
- Examine resources that go into Health Care; currently one for profit and one non-profit hospital
- More collaboration is needed with BLM and Forest Service especially for processes dealing with environment/lands
- More collaboration with state and federal government is needed to address the community's reliance on the University; understand the importance of funding in one area and how it affects others; advocate for funding of collaborative efforts and use surpluses when available
- Consider who Missoula is trying to attract in order to sustain a vibrant economy

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UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Key Topics
- Engaged community
- Walkable; bike friendly; bike community; multi-modal transportation
- Avoid sprawl; sprawl is bad for tourism and funding
- Viable, dense downtown area
- Environment; water use
- Air quality due to topography; exhaust, fumes
- Local food potential for self-sufficiency
- Transportation alternatives; especially in downtown area; general issue associated with alternative transportation; gaps in bike paths; connected bike system contributes to economic health
- ADUs; student housing
- Economic development; healthy economy
- Jobs with livable wages
- Mixed use development
- Student perspective of community

What do you value?
- Open space and access to it
- Strong sense of community; proximity to nature; suburban trails
- Environmentally-conscious town
- Arts and cultural resources
- Low crime rate
- Active community with folks leading healthy lifestyles
- UM outreach and cultural events; makes UM the heart of the community; provides a wide variety of experiences
- Farmers market and other outdoor events and venues
- Being a small university, UM presents opportunities for mentoring relationships between students and professors/administrators
- Awareness of a younger community
- Access to transit

What are the challenges?
- Recycling is not convenient; limited to some apartments and businesses
- Preserving the character of Missoula; not becoming Anytown, USA
- Improving inner city parking facilities
- Continuing to support local businesses
- Preserving green/open spaces
- Avoiding urban sprawl; sustaining water resources and air quality
- Preserving access to alternative transportation
- Maintaining urban services to neighborhoods

- Expanding transit availability to more people, 24/7
- To maintain a vibrant community that is not so dependent on UM (declining enrollments)
- Maintaining a slower pace of development and commerce; controlling the pace of growth
- Achieving community happiness; defining what 'progress' actually is
- Adaptability to changing ideas and technology; climate adaptation and impact of climate refugees
- Keep integrity of key corridors; gateway entries; sense of arrival (N. Reserve is negative example)
- Communication; community engagement; maintaining information flow and access
- Funding facilities and services

Ideas, Policies, Programs, Actions, Recommendations
- Support a community recycling plant; develop reuse alternatives for glass; need more resources and funding stream
- Encourage non-invasive recycling; looking at all costs; this recognizes community aesthetic and ethic
- Provide effective/efficient collection for recycling; curb side pick-up; consider affordability
- Incentivize reuse of all materials
- Develop disincentive for non-recyclers and polluters; pollution pricing; stick and carrot to innovate
- Create a voucher system to support local businesses; aimed at students
- Develop a system for affordable housing and rents; higher density; more realistic pricing
- Support access to suitable housing by household makeup and income; research affordability factors and how to address them (ex. Different tax rates for affordable rental property)
- Integrate community gardens into neighborhoods; regulations should require garden space in multi-dwelling residential; provide education on gardening and food preparation
- Incentivize biking and walking by the mile (Missoula in Motion)
- Support safe routes to school; buddy system
- Publicize transit routes and re-examine efficiency; more direct (express) routes needed; less transferring
- Consider developing a trolley system
- Explore developing an overhead tram between key focal points (ex. Southgate, downtown, UM)
- Explore car/bike shares; is it feasible for the city to invest
- Consider energy revolving loan funds
- Divest polluting industries; publicize when done
- Consider impacts of coal dust from RR; data on exposure needed
- Explore whether the railroad can connect to more of the region? Feasible?
- Support regional coordination and information sharing

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT   [top]

Key Topics
- Thinking globally about implementing technology infrastructure
- Living wages; economic and environmental health
- Sustainable Missoula; no more "take, make, waste"
- Economic development generally
- Clarity of plan; consistency and predictability
- Streamlining the regulatory processes
- Where growth policy will lead; zoning or not
- Listening; promoting an environment where complex projects can work in Missoula
- Livability and the support systems to make a livable community
- Primary job growth
- Entrepreneurship

What do you value?
- Diversity; full spectrum of political thought
- Activity in downtown; events and social lifestyle
- The University and all it adds to the community
- Cultural events and diversity
- MSU-UM partnerships
- Caring community
- Natural and environmentally based recreation; people in nature
- Sense of community; vibrant minds and hearts
- Workforce; well-educated and talented

What are the challenges?
- Providing living wage jobs
- Infrastructure to support job growth
- Political climate not conducive to certain blue collar jobs (manufacturing, mining, etc.); perception that this type of job growth won't be welcomed here
- Determining what the right kind of jobs are
- Finding a holistic approach to providing opportunities
- Retaining young educated people
- How to attract Fortune 500 companies; identifying incentives that create opportunity
- To diversify our industrial base; manufacturing and technology
- To replace jobs lost from the timber and manufacturing industries; to not rely solely on retail and tourism jobs (which pay lower wages)
- Try to replace these lost manufacturing jobs within the city; metal injection, parts machining, high tech manufacturing; allow zoning variety of urban compatible industrial uses
- People cannot afford to go back to college for additional training
- People can't find a job so they start a business; not enough startups for the kids coming out of the university system

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- To build larger, high-value successful companies
- Availability of capital and good business plans
- Venture capital sources; need millionaires to lead and fund for long term
- Understanding economic development; connecting the dots
- How do we as a community watch for the new trends and implement them?
- Transportation system; especially air

Ideas, Policies, Programs, Actions, Recommendations
- Work with the green building industry, not against it
- Support light rail passenger service
- Collaborate among schools at all levels on what kinds of jobs we should be supporting; introduce the curricula earlier in the education process; fast and light to meet the needs of industries that are changing rapidly due to technology; conduct early conversations with kids
- Encourage legislation and leadership to cut review and permitting times by DEQ and others
- Support accelerator concepts; build resources to help others succeed; develop a policy of prioritizing the sharing of knowledge and access to that knowledge
- Connect education departments with new business; these are natural relationships - University and the entrepreneurial community
- Collaborate across "silos"; support transparency of local economy; where are resources going make them accessible throughout the community
- Be forward thinking; where are the opportunities of tomorrow
- City Development Services: better than it used to be - now supporting progress; they continue to do things differently and that's good!
- Overcome resentment about people making money; you can't give back if you can't make something
- Explore US government job creating program; multiplier effect of those primary jobs

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NEIGHBORHOOD – SOUTHGATE MALL

Key Topics
- Prioritization of transit modes; socialization of push vs. pull
- Livability of community; big yards and green spaces
- Keeping commercial development out of residential areas
- Support for impoverished homeless population; affordable housing
- Maintaining single-dwelling housing in Missoula
- Neighborhood communication (both within neighborhoods and among them)

What do you value?
- Home town neighborhood feel
- Open space; in and out of town
- River front; for the whole community
- Diversity of people and neighborhoods
- Community members that value Missoula
- Activities and events
- Volunteerism; people give their time to make Missoula a better place
- Welcoming community to UM student body

What are the challenges?
- Commercial development in residential neighborhoods
- Ability of City Council to [readily] change zoning (and allow commercial into residential areas)
- Low density in high density district; neighbors don't understand the zoning [that higher densities are allowed]
- Making land use rules understandable to everyone
- Accommodating population growth while maintaining neighborhood character
- Dogs running loose
- Homelessness and poverty
- Maintaining living wages commensurate with housing costs
- Increased traffic from commercial development
- Land use compatibility and neighborhood disputes
- Covenants require grass roots homeowner support over the long term which is not sustainable
- Constant cost of maintenance of existing and new streets for the City

Ideas, Policies, Programs, Actions, Recommendations
- Provide for more mental health services; State should expand Medicaid/Medicare; reinstate mental health funding; need permanent support for mental health services
- Add housing;
- If land is zoned residential, leave it residential
- Provide more education for neighborhood councils
- Evaluate current local government processes for effectiveness, communication and consistency

- Keep Missoula from becoming Everytown, USA; keep uniqueness
- Redevelop existing commercial instead of allowing more commercial zoning; incentivize redevelopment instead
- Discourage focus Inward, it is a threat to single-family neighborhoods; property values will decrease with higher densities
- Use the neighborhood character overlay in the regulations
- Provide better communication and distribution of information
- Establish a process for neighborhood plans
- Encourage neighbors to take care of neighbors
- Consider unique uses of property; community/urban gardens
- Encourage new companies to help with homelessness and poverty
- Retain an educated workforce
- Provide a detox facility for addiction treatment; private or public
- Encourage collaboration among non-profit, local, state, and federal government to help support mental health services
- Encourage institutional change at all levels
- Create a poor farm for homeless/impoverished citizens to work for food and shelter
- Allow trailers for a low-income housing type

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