

Focus Group Meeting Notes

Group: Environmental Quality

Date/Time: April 6, 2015, 5:15 PM

Location: Jack Reidy conference room

Notes by: Tom Zavitz

April 6 Meeting Attended by: Amy Cilimburg, Sean McCoy, Bonnie Buckingham, Bert Lindler, Bob Giordano, Meg Cronin, Neva Hassanein. Staff: Tom Zavitz, Student Assistant: Jonathon Drygas

The meeting was called to order at approximately 5:25 PM. The Environmental Quality focus group continued their review and exploration of action statements.

Topic 1: Climate Change

Goal 1: In order to build a more resilient community, promote local decisions that mitigate the effects of climate change and prepare the City and its residents for the impacts climate change will have on the human, natural, and built environments.

Objectives:

1. Work with city government, elected officials, and community partners on education efforts and community outreach.
2. Support joint, statewide, and regional efforts that contribute to our understanding of climate change impacts and options for mitigation and preparedness.
3. Support projects that link together efforts in and resources of the various focus groups, building climate resiliency.
4. Establish meaningful community climate planning metrics that complements carbon neutrality targets (Obj. #4 under Energy).

Actions:

1. Initiate a public awareness program on how climate change impacts the community now and in the future.
2. Develop an office of energy sustainability and climate change as a city department capable of designing and carrying out mitigation and resiliency programs.
3. Identify specific metrics and milestones to monitor and evaluate climate change mitigation actions and programs.
4. Promote changes to more carbon neutral lifestyles through community awareness programs.
5. Promote a community-wide program for carbon offsets and exchanges, and work with recognized climate registries.
6. Educate to promote voluntary sustainability in addition to regulations.
7. Encourage carbon neutral industries to locate and grow in Missoula.

Topic 2 - Energy (note: energy related to transportation is in Topic 3)

Goal 1: Reduce reliance on carbon based fuels.

Goal 2: Promote energy efficiency, conservation, and green building practices throughout Missoula.

Goal 3: Increase the percentage of renewable energy in Missoula's energy budget.

Objectives:

1. Explore cleaner wood burning technologies for local wood use.
2. Reduce carbon footprint through renewable energy, energy efficiencies, conservation, and carbon offsets.
3. Provide incentives for siting renewable energy generation in preferred locations.
4. Establish a meaningful community-wide carbon neutrality target.
5. Support the creation of a local renewable energy company that can meet the energy needs of Missoula.
6. Promote green building design in all public buildings as models for the community.
7. Implement a decentralized energy system not reliant on fossil fuels.

Actions:

1. Promote and incentivize green building infrastructure.
2. Streamline approval process for green buildings and renewable or alternative energy systems.
3. Promote and incentivize reuse and recycling as energy conservation measures.
4. Provide and promote grants, revolving loans, tax credits, and investment programs to encourage energy saving building features and use of alternative energies.
5. Promote community solar and geo-thermal energy development.
6. Expand net metering opportunities to encourage local renewable energy production.

Topic Area 3: Transportation, Growth Pressures and Sprawl

Goal 1: Develop a safe and efficient transportation system that emphasizes walking, bicycling, and transit while reducing reliance on driving.

Goal 2: Protect and enhance Missoula's open spaces.

Goal 3: Protect agricultural land and water.

Objectives:

1. Reduce reliance on single-occupancy vehicles and continue support for the expansion of public transportation and cycling/walking systems.
2. Expand and improve the public transit system, including bus stop infrastructure, and make the system more efficient.
3. Actively support the return of passenger rail service through Missoula.
4. Ensure new development has a variety of land uses, services, and active transportation options.
5. Protect stream corridors and floodplains from development.
6. Prioritize agricultural land preservation over urban sprawl.
7. Acquire key lands for community open space using bonds and grants.
8. Explore carrying capacity modeling to guide land use planning and development in greater Missoula.
9. Explore policies and incentives to discourage sprawl and leap frog development.
10. Discourage encroachment into the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI).

Actions:

1. Protect farmland through mitigation, designation of key agricultural preservation areas, and through incentivizing infill and cluster development.
2. Integrate community gardens into neighborhoods and require garden space be incorporated into open space required by local land development regulations.
3. Build complete streets, connected trails, and greenways as a primary means of providing active transportation alternatives.
4. Explore and initiate policies that discourage automobile dependence.
5. Explore alternative fuel sources for the bus fleet and city owned vehicles.
6. Promote the conversion of 4-lane city streets to 3-lane configurations (one lane in each direction with a center turn lane).
7. Promote a city-wide 25mph speed limit to improve safety, reduce energy use and increase capacity.
8. Maintain the 10-foot travel lane standard.
9. Exclude Wheel Base-67 tractor-trailers from the city limits where appropriate and adopt new public works design standards for WB-50 vehicles.
10. Deemphasize conventional “level of service” standards for transportation planning and development review.
11. Adopt a “round-a-bouts first” policy for street intersection improvements and in future transportation and facility planning.
12. Partner with the public health department to make alternative transportation a wellness issue.
13. Establish Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) standards to protect human life and property.

Topic 4: Waste Stream

Goal 1: Achieve Zero Waste within the Missoula community.

Goal 2: Reduce the community’s solid waste to the point that the landfill is only minimally necessary.

Objectives:

1. Increase the options for diverting waste from the landfill through the development of more recycling infrastructure within the city.
2. Develop and community compost program.
3. Encourage local reuse/purchase of recycled materials.
4. Promote reuse and recycling of building materials.
5. Continue and expand water conservation efforts, including increasing land application of wastewater.
6. Explore the increased use of gray water as a water conservation measure.
7. Explore additional ways to reduce the following from the waste stream: commercial/industrial hazardous waste, household chemical waste, toxins, pharmaceuticals, and electronic waste

Action Items

1. Educate homeowners, tenants, and business persons on the proper disposal of household hazardous waste and electronic waste.
2. Provide recycling bins for paper, plastic, aluminum, and organic materials throughout the city’s public spaces.
3. Identify major system components and processes that comprise the municipal waste stream.
4. Government and educational institutions should adopt “zero waste” programs to provide local examples of best practices.

5. Create a target of “net zero waste” by establishing a system for large scale projects to invest in programs to off-set their waste impacts.
6. Conduct education and outreach on the environmental and monetary benefits of sustainable practices.
7. Establish a system whereby large scale projects can invest in programs to off-set their waste stream impacts.
8. Increase fees for bringing waste to the landfill from outside the Missoula area as an incentive to reduce that waste.
9. Expand local composting sites to take food waste and coordinate with institutions to utilize the sites in order to ensure the needed quantities of waste for feasibility.
10. Reduce building permit fees when reused materials are specified.
11. Explore pollution pricing and other disincentives for non-recycling and polluting industries.
12. Ban single use paper and plastic shopping bags.
13. Encourage water refill stations and drinking fountains to reduce single use water bottles.

Topic Area 5: Air, Soil, and Water Quality (for water, see also Topic 6)

Goal 1: Improve Missoula’s air quality and visibility.

Goal 2: Protect and enhance Missoula’s surface and ground water quality and quantity.

Goal 3: Protect and enhance Missoula’s soil quality.

Objectives

1. Explore specific programs to reduce air pollution from vehicles, industry, space heating and other point sources.
2. Quantify threats to Missoula’s surface and ground water quality, including spills, pipelines, pesticides, fertilizers, and underground storage tanks.
3. Actively reduce the need to manage storm water from impervious surfaces.
4. Support joint/regional efforts that contribute to clean air and water.
5. Encourage consideration of health impacts and air quality when reviewing and formulating policy for transportation, development regulations, and industrial development.
6. Work with city-county public health officials to promote health, environmental health, and sanitation through education, community outreach, and enforcement.
7. Encourage public agencies to divest holdings or investments in polluting industries.
8. Integrate parks as part of a green infrastructure system that will help manage stormwater and improve water quality.
9. Protect and restore riparian, wetland, and floodplain areas from development.
10. Manage water quality according to final TMDL (total maximum daily loading) for each impaired water body. (Facilitator suggestion for group discussion.)

Actions:

1. Provide and incentivize alternatives to asphalt and concrete in land development regulations and storm water management master plans.
2. Work with state government on groundwater permitting to better protect the quality and quantity of Missoula’s groundwater resource.
3. Adopt building practices that reduce impervious surfaces.
4. Develop a long-term management plan for the urban forest, including potential funding sources.
5. Consider the impacts of coal dust from the railroad and work with officials to minimize public health risks.

6. Prioritize Brownfield clean-up along railroad in low and moderate income areas.
7. Coordinate open space/parks with stormwater and water quality planning and infrastructure.
8. Convert properties to water metering when ownership is transferred.
9. Phase out asphalt roof shingles to green roofing materials.
10. Explore green alternatives to PVC pipes for sewer and water.

Topic Area 6: The River

Goal 1: Reduce recreational impacts on the river.

Goal 2: Maintain and enhance the general environmental health of the river, including healthy riparian zones and water quality and quantity.

Objectives:

1. Strive for a high level of recreational safety on the river.
2. Prevent toxins such as pesticides, fertilizers, and material from railroad spills, pipelines, and underground storage tanks from entering the river system.
3. Preserve and restore wildlife habitat along the river while allowing appropriate public access.
4. Develop a river corridor plan to address and balance development, recreation, environmental considerations, and community aesthetics.

Actions:

1. Establish development standards in the river corridor that support clean water and wildlife habitat.
2. Acquire, restore, and protect river and stream corridors and floodplains as open space whenever possible, including corridors outside of the urban service area.
3. Develop a river corridor plan that addresses land use, transportation, open space, river access, water quality, views and vistas, and wildlife habitat.
4. Create a riparian protection zone that includes setbacks and encourage the restoration of native riparian vegetation.
5. Create a public education and outreach campaign on the impacts of pesticides, fertilizers, and other nutrients and toxins on water quality.
6. Enhance community understanding of how wetlands and floodplains naturally store water, lessen flooding, filter pollutants, and protect wildlife habitat.
7. Identify infrastructure that is vulnerable to flooding and could negatively impact water quality, and work collaboratively to mitigate threats.
8. Support delineation and protection of floodplains and wetlands to reduce peak flood flows, decrease risks to life and property, and encourage groundwater infiltration that will help sustain late summer flows.
9. Set up or support a system of water trusts for conservation and water banks for users to voluntarily reallocate water where it's most needed and work with irrigation or other companies to effectively do this.
10. Work with agriculture community to develop and incentivize water and energy saving irrigation.

Topic Area 7: Natural Resources

Goal 1: Protect and enhance critical wildlife habitat and travel/migration corridors.

Goal 2: Protect Missoula's trees and other vegetation in urban spaces.

Goal 3: Protect Missoula’s view sheds and scenic vistas.

Objectives:

1. Protect intact ecosystems from **the impacts of** urbanization and point and non-point pollution.
2. Quantify and address issues of invasive plant and animal species.

Actions:

1. Explore coordinating agency status to better allow local input into natural resource management decisions.
2. Give preference to indigenous plant species in regulations, city projects, and design contracts.
3. Explore an urban deer policy.
4. Formulate and adopt an urban forestry plan.
5. Adopt FWP wildlife friendly fencing standards along with appropriate urban fencing specifications.
6. Formulate strategies to protect Missoula’s view sheds.
7. Address the issue of feral cats in the community.
8. Create a master trails plan.
9. Adopt zoning regulations that regulate sand and gravel mining to protect natural resources and the health and safety of residents.

Topic Area 8: Natural Areas/Outdoor Recreation

Goal 1: Maintain natural areas for multiple user groups and wildlife habitat.

Goal 2: Protect additional lands for Missoula open space, vistas, wildlife habitat, and recreational trails.

Objectives:

1. Improve infrastructure such as parking, toilets, information kiosks, and roads at access points to parks and open spaces.
2. Ensure that the bike/pedestrian trail system provides access to natural areas.
3. Ensure that bike/pedestrian trail system access is within five blocks of every residence in the city.
4. Invest in parks as a way to promote healthy lifestyles.
5. Promote areas for unstructured play that allow youth to connect with the environment.

Actions:

1. Create and educate about areas of unstructured play for children.
2. Establish standards to minimize use of toxins in natural areas, parks and play areas.
3. Update the open space plan and pursue a new bond.
4. Develop an educational campaign to reduce recreational impacts on natural areas/open space.
5. Use trails and greenway systems to promote connectivity between parks.
6. Where appropriate allow for natural habitats to retain their ecological properties (snags, down woody debris, fallen leaves, etc.).

Topic Area 9: Local Food

The ability of Missoula residents and visitors to obtain a healthy and consistent supply of food is a vital, yet often overlooked, consideration in growth policies. While today's global food system provides important benefits, it is also vulnerable in the face of climate change, dependence on carbon-based fuels, and degradation of resources and rural livelihoods. As fewer and fewer agribusiness firms control most food that North Americans eat, Missoula is creating an alternative, regionally based system, that has energy, environmental, economic, and community benefits.

Goal 1: Further develop our sustainable, community-based food system to improve long-term food security and enhance the regional economy.

Goal 2: Minimize the adverse impacts that the food delivery system has on the local environment and community.

Goal 3: Ensure all residents have access to nutritious and affordable food.*

Objectives:

1. Educate the Missoula community on the importance and advantages of locally produced food.
2. Encourage neighborhood and community gardens.
3. Include provisions in city land development regulations for the limited raising of cash crops in appropriate residential areas.
4. In residential and mixed use planned developments, mitigate the impact of development on agriculture.
5. Encourage vendors to use locally produced fresh and/or prepared food for farmers' markets, festivals, and other community events.
6. Promote locally produced food as a community amenity (tourism and economic development).
7. Ensure food service workers have paid sick days to ensure the safety of our food.
8. Promote sustainable agriculture.

Actions:

1. Educate the public on ecologically sound gardening practices that reduce water, synthetic fertilizer and pesticide use.
2. Work through the Missoula legislative delegation on legislation to incentivize local food production.
3. Inventory unutilized and under-utilized public land that could potentially support agricultural production.
4. Make suitable public lands available for community and commercial agriculture within the city.
5. Adopt public procurement policies that give preference to locally produced food
6. Encourage and support the acceptance of Electronic Benefits Transfer (formerly food stamps) at all direct markets and groceries.*
7. Educate EBT/SNAP users about using their benefits to purchase local food.*
8. Encourage public-private partnerships to appropriate funds to start and expand Double SNAP \$ program to incentivize purchases at farmers markets. *
9. Update Missoula's land use regulations to support urban farming.

*We suggest goal #3 and actions #6, 7 and #8 be communicated to the Safety and Wellness group as they are dealing with homeless and low income issues.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:30 PM with several members expressing gratitude to the city and staff for conducting the project and satisfaction with the results.