

Our Missoula Listening Session

August 20, 2014



This document contains the notes from the discussion with the Chamber of Commerce, Board of Directors. The purpose of the listening session is to foster open discussion with participants specifically interested in the given listening session topic. The comments recorded are the opinions, ideas, and impressions of the individuals present and does not reflect consensus positions. The session focused on three main components:

1. **ASSETS:** 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.

Chamber of Commerce – Board of Directors

What do you value?

- Trail system by the Clark Fork River
- City working with Fort Missoula
- Agricultural lands- we are the Garden City after all; we should still be able to grow things
- Hills and land form as an asset and a challenge
- Parks, trails, and green space
- Health care and retail hub to build on
- University of Montana and the work it brings to Missoula
- Super Missoula County Public School District
- Quality of life that allows us to retain skilled work force
- Missoula's people and uniqueness
- Recreational opportunities around Missoula like the Rattlesnake wilderness
- Starting and growing new businesses
- Human capital; special and remarkable people
- Above average public safety
- Open space
- University of Montana with the potential for highly skilled technical hub
- Potential for high paid work force
- County Fair heritage
- Fort Missoula Regional Park along with our trails and hills
- Recreational opportunities like fishing, hiking, skiing, biking
- Desirable place to live
- Draw from other areas
- Our diversity

What are the challenges?

- Local government
- Too many waiter/waitresses with master's degrees
- Safety concerns and the Police Department is spread thin
- Economic diversity
- Geographic isolation makes it difficult for an industrial presence
- Difficult restrictions on land use
- Housing value verses income value
- Transportation infrastructure – too few bridges; bike/vehicle conflicts; traffic congestion
- Lack of racial and ethnic diversity; not reflecting overall nation
- Loving this place so much it makes it hard to start new ideas; manifested through editorials and government process
- Diversity in thought processes; moving forward gets stalled by protests and other opinions
- Over-regulating growth
- Struggle to define who we are as a community; too many people and too many purposes
- Diversity; no clear vision; Important to get economic development groups to work together
- Low pay scale with high costs of living; yet if we correct it, it will draw more people to Missoula and could create even greater growth
- More inviting to heavy manufacturing
- Transportation; the bike community has taken over resulting in streets that often don't line up because of bike lanes appearing and changing, etc.
- People moving here who like what they see and want to change it to where they came from
- Defining who we are
- Lack of land and infrastructure development; compared to Bozeman where they seem ready to roll; there is less land available here for development
- Lack of clear vision and can't seem to move forward;
- Large financial public expenses without the tax structure for who's paying for it so the burden falls to the tax payers
- Hills and land form as an asset and a challenge

Ideas, Policies, Programs, Actions, Recommendations

- Make the process of developing the growth policy fair (not just consensus) Try to capture what happened throughout the process
- Need a clear direction for the County Fairground