

MONTANA RURAL DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS, INC.



Rural Resource Team Report

**Conrad, Montana
Pondera County
October 15 – 17, 2002**

MT RDP Mission

As our Mission, the Montana Rural Development Partners, Inc. is committed to supporting locally conceived strategies to sustain, improve, and develop vital and prosperous rural Montana communities by encouraging communication, coordination, and collaboration among private, public and tribal groups.

THE MONTANA RURAL DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS, INC.

The Montana Rural Development Partners, Inc. is a collaborative public/private partnership that brings together six partner groups: local government, state government, federal government, tribal governments, non-profit organizations and private sector individuals and organizations.

An Executive Committee representing the six partner groups governs MT RDP, INC. The Executive Committee as well as the Partners' membership has established the following goals for the MT RDP, Inc.:

- Assist rural communities in visioning and strategic planning
- Serve as a resource for assisting communities in finding and obtaining grants for rural projects
- Serve and be recognized as a neutral forum for identification and resolution of multi-jurisdictional issues.

The Partnership seeks to assist rural Montana communities with their needs and development efforts by matching the technical and financial resources of federal, state, and local governments and the private sector with locally conceived strategies/efforts.

If you would like more information about the Montana Rural Development Partners, Inc. and how you may benefit as a member, contact:

Gene Vuckovich, Executive Director
Gloria O'Rourke, Deputy Director
Montana Rural Development Partners, Inc.
118 East Seventh Street; Suite 2A
Anaconda, Montana 59711

Ph: 406.563.5259

Fax: 406.563.5476

genev@mtrdp.org

gloria@mtrdp.org

<http://www.mtrdp.org>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The elements are all here for Conrad to have a successful future. To become a growing, vibrant community takes people willing to roll up their sleeves and go to work. Once this nucleus begins to exert effort, it will begin to show some successes. Then this nucleus needs to expand to include more and more of the community until the entire community is involved. But the work is not on the big jobs, it is on small ones that can be achieved quickly. The big ones come later after Conrad has seen the results of the smaller efforts and sees that it can accomplish things.

There is a number of short term, accomplishable recommendations that the resource team has provided. The most important thing is to get the entire community involved in trying to find ways to accomplish its goals. A few celebrations at the successful conclusion of an activity that has involved a large number of citizens will lead to a feeling of accomplishment that will carry over into other activities. Look through the suggestions, pick out one, and get started!

Each of you individually must decide what it is that you want to do—what kind of project you want to tackle. There are enough tasks for everyone. Each small step, every accomplishment, no matter how limited, is movement in the right direction toward achieving Conrad's goals. It can be done! There is no problem-facing Conrad that cannot be solved by the people living in the community. It is your choice, your decision; you can do it. The Montana Rural Development Partners, Inc. can only help you to help yourself.

On behalf of the Conrad Resource Team, I want to thank the community for the warm hospitality shown during the team's stay. The meals and accommodations were outstanding and certainly deserve a gold star from this team! We know from the listening sessions that Conrad has great people and we can certainly attest to that! Thank you very much.

We hope you will find great value in this report and remember, any team member is available for you to call to clarify or provide more information and assistance. Use these folks!

The Montana Rural Development Partners, Inc. is here to help you in any way we can.

Sincerely,

Gene Vuckovich

PROCESS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THIS REPORT

The Montana Rural Development Partners, Inc. has provided a resource team to assist the community of Conrad, Montana in evaluating the community's assets and liabilities and in developing suggestions for improving the environment, social and economic future of Conrad.

The City of Conrad requested a community assessment from the Montana Rural Development Partners, Inc. Elaina Zemple, Executive Director of Pondera Coalition for Progress, served as the community contact and took the lead in agenda development, logistics and publicity for the assessment. Resource team members were selected to visit, interview citizens, business and community leaders; and develop a plan of recommended action for the city. The team members were carefully selected based on their fields of expertise that Conrad officials indicated would be needed to respond to the problem areas identified.

The Resource Team toured the city and interviewed 221 people over a three-day period from October 15 – 17, 2002. The team interviewed representatives from the following segments of the Conrad community: City/County/Law Enforcement, Agriculture, Churches, Youth, Education, Banking/Financial, Retail/Business/Utilities, Health Care, Civic Groups/Homemakers, Retired Community, and Agriculture Business.

Each participant was asked to respond to three questions designed to begin communications and discussion and to serve as a basis for developing the action plan. The three questions were:

- What do you think are the major problems and challenges in Conrad?
- What do you think are the major strengths and assets in Conrad?
- What projects would you like to see completed in two, five, ten and twenty years in Conrad?

Upon completion of the interviews, the team met to compare notes and share comments following the three days of intense study. The team then agreed that each team member would carefully analyze the things said, synthesize what they heard with their knowledge of programs and resources, prepare their notes and suggestions, and forward these items to be combined into MT RDP's final report to Conrad.

A preliminary oral report and a summary of group recommendations was presented to the people of Conrad on October 17th, 2002 and many of the citizens of Conrad who participated in the interviews were in attendance.

Following the oral report, this formal written report was prepared and presented to the community of Conrad. It was agreed that the Community would print copies or summaries for each person interviewed.

RESOURCE TEAM MEMBERS

Craig Erickson, Team Leader

Planner
Bear Paw Development Corporation
P.O. Box 170
Havre, MT 59501

Ph: (406) 265 - 9226
Fx: (406) 265 - 5602

Email: cerickson@bearpaw.org
Web: <http://www.bearpaw.org>

Lawrence Gallagher

Operations Specialist
HUD - Office of Filed Policy & Mgmt
7th West Sixth Ave.
Helena, MT 59601

Ph: (406) 447-1480
Fx: (406) 449-5052

Email: lawrence_gallagher@hud.gov
Web: www.hud.gov

Will Kissinger

Administrator
Dept. of Ag/Ag Development Division
P.O. Box 200201
Helena, MT 59620-0201

Ph: (406) 444-2402
Fx: (406) 444 - 5409

Email: wkissinger@state.mt.us
Web: www.agr.state.mt.us

Bill Barr

Cooperative Specialist
MT USDA/Rural Development
P.O. Box 850
Bozeman, MT 59771

Ph: (406) 585-2545
Fx: (406) 585-2565

Email: Bill.Barr@mt.usda.gov
Web: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/mt/>

Al Jones

Regional Development Officer
DOC/Southcentral MT
2004 Miles Avenue
Billings, MT 59102

Ph: (406) 655-1696
Fx: (406) 655-0899

Email: aljonesrdo@attbi.com
Web: www.discoveringmontana.com

Dale Mahugh

Customer Issues Coordinator
NorthWestern Energy
40 East Broadway
Butte, MT 59701

Ph: (406) 497-3756
Fx: (406) 497 - 4034

Email: Dale.Mahugh@northwestern.com
Web: www.northwesternenergy.com

Special thanks to our Recorder:

Doreen King

NorthCentral RC&D * P.O. Box 919 * Shelby, MT 59474
Ph: 406.434.9161

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON CONRAD RESOURCE TEAM MEMBERS

Craig Erickson - Team Leader – Bear Paw Development Corporation. Employed by Bear Paw Development Corporation of Northern Montana since March 1, 1999. My responsibilities include working with local governments to assess needs, identify funding opportunities, set priorities, and prepare applications. Along with these duties, I serve as the liaison between local governments and state and federal agencies for selected activities, including the development and administration of projects funded, in part, by the Montana Department of Transportation's Community Transportation Enhancement Program (CTEP). I am also responsible for the preparation of the Bear Paw Economic Development District's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for the Economic Development Administration (EDA), completion of reports to the EDA, and the drafting of the Bear Paw District's annual work program.

I am a native of Minnesota. I moved to Montana in September 1996 to host the morning show on KPQX radio in Havre. Prior to my retirement from broadcasting in 1998, I was the News Director of New Media Broadcasters in Havre. I am married to Nancy and I have three stepchildren: Nicholas, 21; Brendan, 18; and Shannon, 15.

Al Jones – MT Dept. of Commerce Business Resources Division Regional Development Officer for the 10 counties centered around Billings. Assists medium and large businesses, primarily manufacturers, in financing and marketing challenges. Has worked with over 1,300 companies in the past 20 years. Founded Billings SBDC and spent most of his career in the private sector in marketing work. Grandfather Richard Jones ran the Conoco oilfield supply yard here and was Conrad's Chief of Police in late 1930's

Larry Gallagher – HUD, Operations Specialist. Empowering Montana's cities and towns in their evolution from aging, run-down mining and logging camps and agricultural/commercial centers into award winning communities honored with national recognition by HUD for innovation, excellence and extraordinary achievement.

- Train community leaders and their staffs in the use of redevelopment tools
- Turned aged and blighted central business districts into commercial centers
- Worked with historic business districts
- Renewed and redeveloped residential neighborhoods with a diversity of home ownership, mixed with new and remodeled single and multi-family rental units for people of all income levels.

Through years of experience I have learned how to effectively instruct other public servants in the innovative management and administration of scarce Community Development Block Grant, tax increment, HOME, and EDA funds, allowing municipalities to leverage significant public/private partnership investment in Montana cities and towns. Together, we have learned how to stretch limited federal funding into extraordinary community rebuilding projects.

I am a proud CRE designee/member of the Counselors of Real Estate, a skilled, experienced professional interested in continuing my work to help Montana's communities grow and prosper. Becoming Montana's COMMUNITY BUILDER FELLOW in 1998 provided me with an

exciting opportunity to continue that work, and today as an Operations Specialist with HUD's Office of Planning and Management I am available to help implement HUD's Mission and initiatives throughout Montana.

Will Kissinger – Montana Department of Agriculture. Born and raised on a family farm in central Wisconsin and earned his B.Sc. degree in the College of Agriculture and Natural Sciences at the University of Wisconsin in Madison.

Will has accumulated over 30 years of service to Montana's agricultural industry as an employee of the Montana Department of Agriculture. He has held several positions with the Department in which he has been actively involved in addressing the issues affecting Montana's agriculture industry.

Will's present position with the Department involves two functions. He is the Department's Deputy Director in the absence of Director Ralph Peck, and also the Administrator of the Agricultural Development Division which includes the Rural Development Bureau, the Wheat and Barley Bureau, the State Grain Laboratory, and the Agriculture Marketing and Business Development Bureau.

William Barr – Currently the USDA-Rural Development Cooperative Development Specialist assigned to the State Office in Bozeman, MT with additional responsibilities for the Value-Added Development Grant Program. He has experience directing a rural Montana non-profit economic development organization, serving as a college dean in Montana, working twelve years with an aerospace company in Colorado, running a small business for five years, and commanding province military advisory team in Vietnam. He has served as a regional vice-president for the Montana Ambassadors and as secretary of the Montana Economic Developers Association.

Dale Mahugh - North Western Energy, Customer Issues Specialist. Served as credit manager, payment processing manager and quality assurance manager for MPC for 23 years.

Current responsibilities include:

- Customer issues and economic development efforts.
- Coordinating several advisory committee groups in NorthWestern's service area.
- Public Service Commission liaison.
- Develop and administer customer surveys for NorthWestern's MT, SD, and NE service areas.

Prior to joining Montana power, spent several years in commercial banking with an ag lending emphasis. Received degree from MSU in Agri-Business and course work in economics. Grew up on a small farm in the Flathead valley.

LOCAL CONTACTS/COORDINATORS

LOCAL TEAM LEADER:

Elaina Zempel, Executive Director
Pondera Coalition for Progress
406 ½ So. Main
Conrad, MT 59425

Ph: 406.271.7791 Fx: 406.271.7237

Email: ecodev@conradmt.com

Web: <http://www.conradmt.com>

COMMITTEE CHAIRS:

- City, County, Law Enforcement - Cyndi Johnson & Byron Grubb
- Agriculture - Bernard Ries, Brian Garnett
- Churches - Steve Farina, Peter Wetendorf
- Youth - Gavin Grammar, Orlen Zempel
- Education - Bill Jimmerson, Craig Barringer
- Banking/Financial - Dan Majerus
- Retail/Business/Utilities - Jesse Parks, Betty Olson, Jerry Riewer
- Health Care - Llew Jones, Reba Simpson
- Civic Groups/Homemakers - Robert MacGilvra, Wendy Judisch
- Retired Community - Ruthemary Kronebusch
- Agriculture Business - Ted Kronebusch, Ed Erickson

Conrad Community Resource Team Assessment Agenda

<u>Tuesday, October 15</u>	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Location</u>
12:00 noon to 1:25 p.m.	Lunch	The Lobby
1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.	Area Tour	
3:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.	Education	Conrad High School
4:30 p.m. to 5:45 p.m.	Area Tour	
6:00 p.m.	Resource Team Working Supper	Pizza Pro
<u>Wednesday, October 16</u>		
6:30 a.m. to 7:30 a.m.	Breakfast	Home Cafe
8:00 a.m. to 9:20 a.m.	City, County, Law Enforcement	County Courthouse
9:30 a.m. to 10:35 a.m.	Youth	Conrad High School
10:45 a.m. to 11:50 a.m.	Civic Clubs/Homemaker	Community Center
12:00 noon to 1:00 p.m.	Lunch	Community Center
1:00 p.m. to 2:05 p.m.	Seniors Citizens	Community Center
2:10 p.m. to 3:15 p.m.	Break	
3:20 p.m. to 4:25 p.m.	Churches	Conrad Mission Church
4:30 p.m. to 4:55 p.m.	Break	
5:00 p.m. to 6:05 p.m.	Banking/Financial/Professional	Stockman Bank Drive-In
6:10 p.m. to 7:15 p.m.	Resource Team Working Supper	Keg Family Restaurant
7:20 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.	Retail/Business/Utilities	Stockman Bank Drive-In
<u>Thursday, October 17</u>		
6:30 a.m. to 7:30 a.m.	Breakfast	Home Cafe
8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.	Ag Businesses	City of Conrad Office
9:05 a.m. to 10:15 a.m.	Farmers/Ranchers	City of Conrad Office
10:20 a.m. to 11:45 a.m.	Break	
11:50 a.m. to 12:55 p.m.	Medical Community/Lunch	Pondera Medical Center
1:00 p.m. to 2:05 p.m.	Retired Community	Pondera Medical Center
2:10 p.m. to 3:20 p.m.	Review of Listening Sessions	
3:20 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.	Town Meeting Preparation	Stockman Bank Drive-In
5:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.	Resource Team Working Supper	Coaches Corner
7:00 p.m. to ????	TOWN MEETING	Meadowlark Gym

The **bold-faced** listings have been scheduled in an effort to reach a varied sector of our community. We encourage you to choose one of the meetings to attend, but are welcome to attend them all. The Town Meeting scheduled for the evening of Thursday, October 17, will be a review of the findings of the smaller meetings. A report will be published with recommendations from the Resource Team.

TOWN MEETING

Craig described what the team had been doing the last 2 ½ days and the process. Described conversations as candid and positive. Purpose of this is to help local communities and assist them with community development strategies. Projects identified that came from the community will be described this evening. Not us telling you what is good, but you telling your own community. Each member of team will share a brief report with recommendations that have been developed since the sessions. The team will be back in approximately six weeks. After we share recommendations, you share with us what we told you. Introductions were made by the team.

Craig talked of the different sessions that were met with and the themes that were derived from those sessions.

Craig—MAIN ISSUES - desire for water, need for younger people, diversification of economic base, attract tourists into town—I15 was seen as an asset and a liability, strong desire to pull people off the interstate, specific infrastructure with water being the number one project, overpass issue, rest area on I15, youth activities—some said not enough and some said lots to do, youth center, fear and sadness for young people that are leaving and not coming back, skateboard park—issue all over Montana, downtown beautification and in general—particularly on Front Street, agriculture, freight rates, captive shipping, BNSF, CRP – good and bad with impact being negative, value-added agriculture, Canadian trade with some wanting more partnerships and some less, irrigation with issues surrounding Lake Francis, quality of life, desire for fine dining establishment after 8:00 at night, retail shopping specifically of women’s and children’s clothes, one grocery store

BILL BARR

Cooperation and Partnerships-variation of small ball—not home run—a little victory here and there and what matters is who wins the game. Take note of businesses that are no longer. Government agencies are working with financial tools to help you so if you work cooperatively outside of Conrad, resources can be pooled for the success of the area.

- Increased Retail – We can help you to get increased retail access. Gave example of furniture store success story.
- Farmer’s Market—had it fifteen years ago and other ways to get food products back into economy.
- Flea Market – being started in Dawson County and we can copy that model and is working there.
- Hutterites – make good furniture and potential to include them.
- Work Force Development – not a deep labor pool in this community. Use Labor Resource Analysis to find out what is needed whether it is electricians or plumbers, classes online, Hutterites with good work standards that can be utilized. Medical – coop being developed in Wisconsin to deliver services to seniors and

retired people who are based out of hospital and make as much or as little as they want.

- Senior Surrey – resources through Community Facilities Resources. Expanding these services to your community and helps create jobs.
- Wind Energy – programs available to assist wind energy projects where farmers work cooperatively.

LARRY GALLAGHER

In MT communities for over 30 years and there is evidence of obligation, sharing and commitment. Our job is to help you connect the dots to work more effectively.

- Front Street – get co-op going to develop
- Empty Stores – another store, youth center
- Vacant and Underutilized real estate – Urban Renewal can be used, Neighborhood Revitalization.
- Tax Increment Financed Redevelopment is extremely effective
- Relationship with RR is like dancing with a gorilla. Gave example of Kalispell??
- Comprehensive Redevelopment Program will allow you to address as many activities as you are ready to undertake
- Public/Private and Public/Public Partnerships—between schools, hospitals and faith-based communities
- Government agencies and Dept. of Health, Education and Welfare—Faith-based initiatives on how federal agencies can help connect the dots in communities like Conrad
- Need to attract new businesses – Business Expansion and Retention Survey—prepared by MSU—will train community leaders or bring in a team to interview every business that exists in this area to find impediments that exist. Results of survey become a valuable tool when a new business comes into town. Shortages of skilled labor, lack of water, etc. will be addressed in this survey.

WILL KISSINGER

Talked of momentum of everyone focusing on agriculture. Vision 2005 – price of wheat and cattle, issue of CRP. Focus on what we can do which is using our natural products and add value to them and put money back in to the community.

- Question of adding value came up several time in the group sessions. Gave examples of funding available and offered to visit with businesses one on one, answer questions and see how we can help.
- Water Intake Situation – example of getting state agencies going in the right direction with all regulations. Time is so important—situations and attitudes

change. Will work with both funding and regulatory parts of department to help project.

- CRP – real problem across the state. This is a problem in any rural areas of the states and heavily impacts small communities. Farmers have enjoyed the money but that money is not left in the local communities.
- Good schools, good hospitals, etc.

AL JONES

- Diversifying economic base beyond agriculture. Amazing what is here to build on with the specialty skills, etc. Rich in competent managers in this area and well run businesses—quality of management decides a business. Talked of various businesses starting at home, etc. Biggest companies come out of small towns. Gave example of Olds company and others. Cereal example where a small town became the cereal capital of the world. Dishwasher example. John Deere example—originally a blacksmith. National magazines started on kitchen tables. Small guy generally wins. Corporate recruitment is not a successful strategy and gave examples. Talked of standards in the south, which is appalling in Montana.
- Small Manufacturing – each job creates 3-4 ancillary jobs, ways to advance with company. Cheap empty buildings available here is a huge advantage. Timeless Seeds, MMI, Cabinetry shops, Montana Specialty, machine shops and source of great deal of manufacturing, gun manufacturing possibility. Machinists have a huge diversity and can turn things into products. Small feedlot, meatpacking and slaughter operation to tie into hunting. Brain canning, tan buckskin, buffalo hide teepee. Opportunities for expertise with retired folks. Enterprise Facilitation Program will help turn up opportunities. Listen to local people will help develop business. Will be happy to work with you and utilize resources

DALE MUHUGH

During last 2 1/2 days, many steadfast people in audience. There is always a solution and that an obstacle can be used as an opportunity to grow. We have take a look at what you have presented and what you want to do and put ideas together.

- Bring people in off the road and from other areas to Conrad to spend money.
- Off ramp issue to make I15 an asset
- Nice set of ball fields—situation to be proud of and have brought people to town on at least one occasion. Gave example of Butte fields and their use—opportunity to have tournaments where people need meals, gas, etc. and will probably return not just for baseball, but also for other reasons.

- Location –living in shadow of Minuteman issue—difficult process but brings uniqueness to the table. Make Conrad the Minuteman capital to the world and bring an actual missile by the off ramp, have an interpretive center to talk about the issue. Most people do not have an idea of what this community and Montana contributed to this issue. Bring people off of interstate and jump on the issue before GF does. With this idea, add a model missile competition every year and make this a destination point. Capitalize on strengths—get people into town and have them spend money in the community.
- Golf course – undiscovered. People will do anything to golf. Develop asset into moneymaker—view communities that have previously been competition and consider them as alliance—Shelby, Cut Bank, are not destination resort areas—package an offering between golf courses and have everyone benefit. Green fees are low. Talk of airport being close to course and ability to use that and target market—retirees, families, etc.
- Skateboard Park – kids need more to do. Becoming a legitimate sport—Olympics. Vast majority of kids that are skateboarders are independent free souls. Takes coordination, effort and time—make this an asset. People will come here to use the park and leave dollars behind. Insurance is not the major stumbling block as originally thought—MT Municipal Insurance Assn. does insure skateboard parks.
- Ag History – do not overlook that. Possibility of having museum and interpretive center. Share your talents and expertise with others.

CRAIG ERICKSON

- Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy—bring them all together after put in writing. Use extension service, RC&D, PCP and reap benefits for your community
- Rest Area – can piggy back or join a CTEP project where engineering costs are taken care of by MDT and put information center in rest area to use as effective way to market Conrad, Valier and entire county.
- Maintain consistent relationship with MDT—have meetings to find out what is going on in area so that when problems arise, relationship is in place and you can start dealing with them in a very proactive way.

PUBLIC

- asked about Board of Investments—why do they invest in Montana? About 90% of their assets are invested outside of the state—we need MT money for these very projects. Al—they actually invest more than people realize—bonds—drop interest rates on business loans, value-added loans are easier, 29 states in US take pension funds and invest within state but we are getting hopeful. If you invest 2% managed by Board of Investments and that would be \$160 million.

Larry – state board can and has moved to get Stream Int'l to move there, quick sale, and future tax increment is being pledged....There are programs to help you find financing.

- Is there money available for urban renewal?

Larry – yes there is money available from the planning state – dollar for dollar-- \$15,000—gave Livingston example to do full urban design study for highway through Livingston that complemented the core area of the town. Most of communities are getting involved through planning grants.

Projects interested in are the museum and the theater. The appearance of streets and buildings affects the psychological and restoring old buildings are part of urban renewal. Hotel in a lovely location with lots possibilities but needs renewal.

Larry – talked of project in Kalispell paid for by tax increment funds—those only possible by investment in mall and other projects that raised taxes to provide incentives for that investment—helped schools, libraries, culture and arts.

- renewable housing funds—asset rich but not cash rich—talked of younger people living in area in substandard housing. Larry answered that many housing programs available in this area and told of resources
- because of federal mandates, several problems—run a pipe from swift and there will not be a problem because of no farming west of the dam
- talking of infrastructure—nothing about electricity. Abundance of power available.
- based on current state of economic situation in Montana what will it do to the programs that we've talked about this evening. Craig answered in general terms, everything that you've heard tonight is doable right now with resources available. Hard to say but this is one of the things you need to talk about with your local legislatures.
- Veterans—Memorial Day, Flags, Veterans Day services in our schools. Veterans had three floats in Whoop-Up parade and need their recognition—Project Idea?? Gave me sheet after meeting

Larry—money available for sewer and water. USDA, EPA and EDA are available and funding your local economic effort will help bring resources to table.

Bill-what program you are interested in using, use local development vehicle whether it is Chamber or RC&D to get applications in so when funding comes, you roll first. Get planning started and match money when it comes through pipeline.

Craig – funding and public support are always important—competition is tough. Planning is really important.

-been involved with local economic development group for several years and honored to have such good leadership in our community. Grateful for your presence. Enough seeds have been planted that something progressive will come of this. HTM—great hopes of industry and wasn't because of lack of effort but more overzealous regulatory statutes. Lack of capitalization is part also. These are small grassroot things that have been talked about but

we hate to see great hopes fail—it is regulatory issue that was greatest stumbling block. Bill said to not give up, learn and keep trying.

Larry – does a lot of work with Butte Silver Bow—several failures. Louie Geno—needed special financing, Micron, ASME—Silicon Mountain. Each failure taught them something and created an opportunity.

Craig—we've developed a deep appreciation for this community. Folks of EDC for purchasing land. Take advantage of opportunities and develop relationships.

We will take a few weeks, draft a report and bring it back in about 45 days. Projects will be prioritized and asked of you which projects you would like to be worked on. In about a year, we will be back to see what you have done. Please contact us if you need help in the meantime. Volunteer inventory sheet

ELAINA

- Talked her last three years in economic development and what she has learned. Should have done this assessment before and needed to know direction that we needed to head. Sat through twelve assessments—incredible participation and will make this better that you people have had an opportunity to tell us what you want. Thanked people who helped organize assessments. Doing much better job now than three years ago. Her perceptions and facts were different than what she thought originally—strengths and weaknesses. Commented on skateboard park and CEDS document. Need someone in community to be champion for the skateboard park—used Harold and the museum as the example. Talked of playground on east side.

CONRAD RESOURCE TEAM ASSESSMENT REPORT

Craig Erickson, Planner
Bear Paw Development Corporation
P.O. Box 170
Havre, MT 59501
Phone: (406) 265-9226 ext. 27
Fax: (406) 265-5602
E-mail: cerickson@bearpaw.org
Website: <http://www.bearpaw.org>

PLANNING

During our time in Conrad I was repeatedly impressed by the fact that the comments made by each of the groups we met with were essentially the same. Certainly, there were some differences, but each group consistently addressed many of the same challenges, resources and aspirations. I began to ask myself, what is missing? If the community shares a common vision for its future and understands what its resources are why isn't Conrad moving toward the realization of its vision?

In my opinion, the missing ingredient is planning. Successful economic development efforts spring from economic development strategies, which only emerge from a continuous, participatory process.

You have taken the first step toward developing a strategic economic development strategy by conducting the Community Assessment. The next step is to conduct a **Previous Efforts Assets Inventory**. In other words, determine what, if any, previous community processes have taken place. Examples of community processes include: community planning, economic development, program and service development, community visioning and other community involvement activities. A previous assets inventory is simply a list that answers the following questions:

- What previous planning activity or effort has taken place in Conrad?
- What was the result of that effort?
- Who was involved and when?

Once you answered these questions. Study what you find and hopefully, the information will be relevant to the community's current situation.

The second step is to begin the planning process. There are many effective planning models, however, I am most familiar with the model used by the Economic Development Administration

(EDA) for its Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and I will base my recommendations on that model.

EDA designated Economic Development Districts (EDDs) such as Bear Paw Development Corp. and the North Central RC&D are required by the EDA to qualify for EDA assistance under its public works, economic adjustment, and most planning programs. The North Central RC&D has developed and regularly updates a CEDS for a ten (10) county region that includes Conrad and Pondera County. However, I believe it would be worthwhile for Pondera County to include Brady, Conrad, Dupuyer, Heart Butte and Valier in the development of a strategic economic development strategy. A strategic economic development strategy emerges from an ongoing planning process developed with broad based and diverse community participation that addresses the economic problems and potential of an area.

The strategic economic development strategy should contain four primary elements: analysis, vision, action plan, and evaluation. The analysis should examine the current condition of the local economy, the opportunities and threats posed by external trends and forces, and the availability of partners and resources for economic development. The community's vision and goals, together with an assessment of the region's competitive advantage should determine the direction for the action plan. The action plan establishes priorities for implementation. Finally, the strategy should establish criteria and performance measures for evaluation of the process and for the update of the document.

A successful strategy should lead to the formulation and execution of a program that creates jobs, raises income levels, diversifies the economy, and improves the quality of life. The process must adopt a local approach to long-range development while identifying and implementing short-term problem solutions to get early results and maintain momentum and public support.

A full description of the process for developing a Strategic Economic Development Strategy and links to several planning resources are available online under <Planning> at <http://www.osec.doc.gov/eda/>

The Montana Department of Commerce and the Montana State University Extension Program also have many resources that you can utilize to develop a Strategic Economic Development Strategy.

Contact: Gavin Anderson or Kelly Shields
Community Technical Assistance Program
Montana Dept. of Commerce
301 Park Avenue South
P.O. Box 200523
Helena, MT 59620-0523
Phone: 841-2783
Fax: 841-2771
E-mail: gavina@state.mt.us
E-mail: kshields@state.mt.us
Website: <http://www.commerce.state.mt.us/>

Dave Sharpe
Office of Community Development
Montana State University Extension Service
106 Taylor Hall
Bozeman, MT 59717
Phone: 994-5608
E-mail: acxds@montana.edu
Website: <http://www.montana.edu/~wwwcommd/index.htm>

I cannot emphasize enough the necessity for regional economic development planning. In the words, of Dr. David Sampson, Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Economic Development, “good intentions are no longer good enough.”

At the EDA’s Denver Regional Forum in June, Dr. Sampson emphasized the importance of planning and public/private collaboration. He said, “Citizen leaders, both public and private, must agree on a long-term development strategy that creates a competitive climate. They need to agree on the investments in regional assets: education, research, physical infrastructure, and quality of life over time. With such a strategy in place, you will attract private investment and employment. And you will build a "platform for economic growth." Dr. Sampson went on to say, ”In the next generation economy, regions that are seeking to build, the hallmark of vitality will be the agility of institutions and their leaders to recognize and to collaborate in the improvement of existing - or creation of new sources of economic input advantages. Communities that fail to realize this, that fail to come up with a long-term development strategy will either decline, or they will stagnate.”

Continuous broad based planning is the means by which communities and/or regions achieve the “agility” Dr. Sampson referred to in his speech. Furthermore, funding agencies are requiring communities and regions to develop and continually update planning documents. Communities that ignore this fact will find it increasingly difficult to successfully compete for the state and federal funding that is often needed to make a project a success.

LEADERSHIP

During our assessment, it was evident that Conrad and Pondera County have several effective leaders. It also became clear that they need help. Time and again we heard “the same people do all the work and they get burnt out.” One solution to this problem is conducting an inclusive broad based community planning process. Another solution is to develop a Leadership Program in your high school. Several Montana communities, including Great Falls, Missoula, Billings, Kalispell, and Havre have had Leadership High School programs for the past several years. Typically, such programs are a joint effort between the school district and the chamber of commerce.

I recommend that Conrad Schools, Conrad Chamber of Commerce, Pondera County and the City of Conrad should immediately begin the process of developing a leadership program at Conrad High School. The program can be modeled after similar programs in Kalispell, Missoula,

Billings, and Havre. Each of the programs is unique to their communities, but there are several similarities. The schedule below gives a brief description of the program agenda for last year's program at Havre High School.

Retreat – Mandatory

October 30, 2001

Purpose: To create an opportunity for participants to become acquainted with one another. To introduce participants to the team building process, a valuable leadership tool, by facilitating activities that encourage group communications and interaction.

Current Social Issues

November 27, 2001

Current social issues for teens: drinking and driving...its results. The jail process. Presentation on how the community's social services affect our community; to gain knowledge of the many social issues facing our community.

Community Service Work Day

December 18, 2001

A day set aside for youth to help at the food bank, the give-away house, the soup kitchen and/or day care. This day provides an over view of the help provided by these local services as well as giving the students first hand experience volunteering. Another opportunity to learn about the community.

Government – Impact on Youth

January 29, 2002

An opportunity to learn about Havre's history. An insight to the economics of the area and how local economies drive our city. The students are also given the opportunity to discuss the local government process with the local government officials and department heads.

Life Skills

February 25, 2002

Finding a job, writing a resume', filling out job applications, and the job interview are a few of the things that will be covered. There is also a discussion of work ethics and attitude, life outside of work, credit, contracts, bank accounts and dealing with change.

Job Shadowing/Graduation

March 26, 2002

On this day the students will job shadow in the morning. They will then be honored at a graduation luncheon. At this time local businesses will also be recognized for their sponsorship of the program.

Contact:

Havre: Debbie Vandenberg
Executive Director Havre Area Chamber of Commerce
Phone: 265-4383
Email: chamber@havremt.net

Missoula: Krista Clawson
Program and Events Director
Missoula Area Chamber of Commerce
Phone: 543-6623 ext. 25

Kalispell: Shawn Lowney
Youth Leadership
Flathead Kalispell Chamber of Commerce
Phone: 758-2803

Billings: Charlene Zaske
Leadership Billings
Billings Area Chamber of Commerce
Phone: 245-4111
Fax: 245-7333

Potential Funding Sources

Gap Inc. Community Relations
Myra Chow, Director of Community Relations
1 Harrison Street
San Francisco, CA 94105
Phone: (800) 333-7899
Fax: (415) 427-2504
Internet Address: www.gapinc.com/community/community.htm
Scope: Specifically **youth programs that encourage leadership**, learning, building self-esteem and staying in school are supported.

Baker Foundation (R.C.)
C/O Frank L. Scott, Chairman
P.O. Box 6150
Orange, CA 92863-6150
Phone: (714) 750-8987
EIN: 951742283
Scope: Higher and other education, fine arts, youth, hospitals, disabled, **leadership development**, mental health, hunger, museums, cultural programs, health, and social services.

Coors Foundation (Adolph)
C/O Linda S. Tafoya, Executive Director

4100 East Mississippi Avenue
Denver, Colorado 80246
Phone: (303) 388—1684
EIN: 510172279

Scope: Higher and secondary education, public policy, civic affairs, social services, **youth**, health, and disadvantaged.

Moriah Fund
1634 I Street Northwest, Ste. 1000
Washington, DC 20006
Phone: (202) 783-8488
Fax: (202) 783-8499
EIN: 311129589

Scope: Natural resource conservation and protection; healthcare; reproductive health; family planning; family services; single parents; human rights (international); community development; **leadership development**.

Coca-Cola Company Giving Program
Donald R. Greene, Director
P.O. Draw 1734
Atlanta, Georgia 30301
Phone: (404) 676-8804
Internet: www.coca-cola.com

Scope: Health, social services, civic affairs, community development, **youth**. Matching gifts from employees support education and arts organizations.

Fannie Mae Foundation
C/o Harriet M. Ivey, Executive Director
4000 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20016-2800
Phone: (202) 274-8000
Fax: (202) 274-8100
Internet: <http://www.fanniemaefoundation.org>
EIN: 521172718

Scope: Low-income housing and community development (67% of funding): affordable housing, neighborhood revitalization, community reinvestment activities, promote homeownership; Social Concerns (20% of funding): youth at risk, seniors, physically and mentally disabled, homeless; Work Force Issues (10% of funding): prepare youth for college and the workplace, **youth development and leadership**, mentoring and community service, and education preparation for higher education; Other (20% of funding): arts and culture, research and public policy development, health, professional development, public broadcasting, minorities and women.

Land O'Lakes Foundation
Bonnie Bassett, Executive Director
P.O. Box 64150
St. Paul, MN 55164-0150

Phone: (651) 481-2222

Fax: (651) 481-2000

Internet: www.landolakesinc.com

Scope: The foundation gives through the following programs: Community Grants Program, which provides cash grants to help groups put plans and people into action, including support for the United Way and efforts to alleviate hunger, **rural youth leadership**, civic concerns, soil and water conservation and the arts.

I also recommend that an adult leadership program be developed for young adults. Many of Conrad's young people leave the community never to return. Those who stay *must* be given the opportunity to lead, develop projects and to help set the course of the community. The Missoula Chamber of Commerce also has an excellent adult leadership program that has helped groom many of the people who hold leadership positions in that successful community. Krista Clawson is also the contact person for the Leadership Missoula program.

The directors of each of these programs are willing to share their information and experience with other communities. The development of a youth leadership program could begin immediately. The costs associated with such a program are low and the potential dividends are high. I strongly encourage the community to initiate the development of its own leadership program and have it in place in time for the upcoming school year.

TRANSPORTATION – RAILROAD

One problem that was mentioned at every listening session was the blockage of traffic between east Conrad and the rest of the City by Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) freight trains. The BNSF completely bisects the community and freight trains frequently block traffic, which represents a serious problem for emergency service providers. From what I understand this problem has existed for many years and its resolution would be considered a major improvement to the quality of life of Pondera county residents.

Given the frequent turnover of BNSF personnel in Montana it is possible that the current management of the Montana Division is unaware of the problem. After consulting with a colleague who was once the mayor of a Hi-line community that had the same problem I can now recommend the following course of action.

- The Mayor writes a letter to Pat Keim, BNSF's Director of Governmental Affairs in Helena, describing the problem and expressing the City's strong commitment to exploring *all possible alternatives* to finding a solution to this problem.
- If Mr. Keim does not respond and the problem continues, the next step is for the City to call the Pondera County Sheriff and ask him to cite the engineer of any train that blocks traffic for at least 20 minutes.
- If the offending engineer does not cooperate, have the Sheriff get the number of the engine or of any of the cars in the train and send a ticket to the local train master.
- Under Montana law the first fine is \$100.00.

- Follow the citation with a letter to the local train master and explain that the City is considering adopting ordinances to impose speed limits on trains and/or limitations on the types of materials that can be transported through the community.

According to my colleague, this course of action should result in the resolution of the problem. The key is to be willing to follow through with your efforts to explore *all possible solutions*.

Contact: Pat Keim
Director of Government Affairs
Burlington Northern Sante Fe Railroad
139 North Last Chance Gulch
Helena, MT 59601-4125
Phone: 447-2301
Fax: 449-8610

Transportation – Interstate Access

This is one of the other most frequently mentioned problems we heard at the listening sessions. The City, County and Pondera Coalition for Progress have been working with Michael “Mick” Johnson, Administrator of the Montana Department of Transportation’s Great Falls District, to develop a project that would result in the construction of a new on-ramp into the community. From what I understand, a component of a plan that is underdevelopment is the construction of a new rest area. Not, only does this project offer Conrad and the County a real opportunity to improve access from Interstate 15, but it could also answer the a question asked by several people during the listening sessions: “How do we draw people off the Interstate into Conrad?”

The answer is to include have a visitors center at the rest area. Conrad and Pondera County each receive annual allocations from the Montana Department of Transportation’s Community Transportation Enhancement Program (CTEP). For FY 2003, the City will receive approximately \$15,000 and the County \$19,000. This is funding that could be committed to the development of a visitors centers within the rest area. As the Local CTEP Administrator for eight city and county governments in the Bear Paw District, I strongly encourage the City and/or County to explore this option. Incorporating a CTEP project with a planned highway project offers several advantages such as reduced design, materials, and construction costs. A disadvantaged might be that the highway project may not ready for construction for several years. However, it has been my experience that combining a CTEP project with a highway project actually shortens its development time, saves money, and reduces the administrative burden, which on a CTEP can be significant.

Contact:

Michael “Mick” Johnson
Great Falls District Administrator
Montana Dept. of Transportation
P.O. Box 1359
Great Falls, MT 59403

Phone: 454-5887
Fax: 453-1359
E-mail: mijohnson@state.mt.us

Thomas Martin

CTEP Bureau Chief
Montana Dept. of Transportation
2701 Prospect Avenue
P.O. Box 2010011

Helena, MT 59620-1001
Phone: 444-0809
Fax: 444-7671
E-mail: tmartin@state.mt.us

My last recommendation related to transportation has to do with partnerships. I have found that the best way to effectively work with the Montana Department of Transportation is to develop and nurture relationships with your local and district administrators and staff. For example, the City of Havre, Hill County, Blaine County, Havre Area Chamber of Commerce, and Bear Paw Development hold quarterly meetings with Mr. Johnson and his staff four times a year. Mick and his staff give status reports on each of the projects under development in Hill and Blaine Counties. It has become an effective way of addressing issues before they become problems and I believe Mr. Johnson would be willing to hold the same type of meetings in Conrad. You may also consider rotating the location of the meetings between Conrad, Valier, and Dupuyer or you can reach out even further and invite local government officials from Glacier, Toole, Teton, and Pondera Counties.

SKATEBOARD PARK

Libby built the first skateboard park in Montana approximately 11 years ago for \$10,000. Two years ago, the City of Helena completed a 10,000 sq. ft. facility for \$69,000. Billings and Havre are also aggressively pursuing the development of skateboard parks. Grant funding for this type of project is available, but its availability is limited and the competition for funds is fierce. Expecting to fund such a facility primarily with grant funding would be unwise; local investment will be necessary.

One approach is to organize a task force to facilitate the development of a skateboard park. This is a wonderful opportunity to involve young people in the planning and development process of a municipal project.

Given the strengths of the community, I envision a task force including representatives from the city, county, law enforcement, chamber of commerce, Pondera Coalition for Progress, Conrad Schools, churches, local civic groups, and every young person that wants to see a skateboard park built in the community.

The Task Force should contact representatives from the Helena Park and Recreation Department and Libby Skate Park Inc. to understand how each of these communities was able to complete their projects. There is no sense reinventing the wheel. Reach out to these people and take their advice.

Contact:

Jane Thom
Libby Skate Park Inc.
Phone: 293-574
Email: janiethom@yahoo.com

Randy Lilge
Director of Parks and Recreation

City of Helena
316 North Park Ave.
Helena, MT 59623
Phone: 447-8462
Email: rlilje@ci.helena.mt.us

Resource Information:

Professional skateboarder Tony Hawke has a foundation and maintains a website that describes that gives detailed on the four components of building a skateboard park: organizing, planning, fundraising, and designing. The Tony Hawke Foundation awards grants ranging from \$5,000 to \$25,000. For more information visit the Foundation's website at <http://www.tonyhawkfoundation.org/>

Information is also available at Skatepark.Org at <http://www.skatepark.org>

RUNNING TRACK

A new all-weather track for Conrad High School is a community need mentioned by several during our assessment. A potential source of funding for a new track is Nike's Bowerman Track Renovation Program. Named after Nike co-founder, Bill Bowerman, the Bowerman Track Renovation Program is a five-year, \$1 million project program that provides matching funds of up to \$50,000 to youth-oriented nonprofit organizations anywhere in the world.

- Organizations applying for the grant must demonstrate a need for running track refurbishment or construction.
- Grant recipients must provide track access to neighboring communities.
- Bowerman Track Renovation Program funds must be matched in some amount by other contributors by an agreed upon deadline.
- Athletic booster clubs are considered public charities and are eligible to apply.
- Proposals will be accepted on an on-going basis through May 31, 2004.

Contact:

Manager
Bowerman Track Renovation Program
Global Community Affairs
Nike, Inc.
One Bowerman Drive
Beaverton, OR 97005-6453
Phone: (503) 671-6453

YOUTH CENTER

Many of the people we visited with said Conrad needs a Youth Center. Fortunately, there are many foundations that offer grant funding for youth centers. Like the skateboard park project, begin by forming a committee or task force of people who share the goal of building a youth center and then start the planning process by asking questions. For example:

- 1) What type of activities do our children want offered at the youth center?
- 2) What type of facility will we need?

- 3) Do we build or renovate an existing building?
- 4) Who will staff the facility?
- 5) How do we pay for operation and management?

Again, children of all ages should play an active role in developing this project. Give them responsibilities, let them make decisions, and allow them to make mistakes.

For more information about the logistics of running a youth facility you may contact Robin Morris of Havre Encourages Long-Range Prevention (HELP). HELP operates Havre's Boys & Girls Club and she is a remarkable source of information and ideas.

Contact: Robin Morris
Executive Director
Havre Encourages Long-Range Prevention
P.O. Box 68
Havre, MT 59501
Phone: 265-6206
Fax: 265-6206
E-mail: helpcom@hi-line.net

Funding Sources:

Altec/Styslinger Foundation

210 Inverness Center Dr.
Birmingham, AL 35242

Purpose and activities: Giving primarily for arts and culture, education, health associations, human services, children and youth services, and religion.

Fields of interest: Arts; Children/youth, services; Education; Health organizations; Youth development, centers/clubs.

Geographic focus: National

Deramus Foundation, Inc.

c/o David Zimmerman
120 W. 12th St.

Kansas City, MO 64105

Contact: William N. Deramus IV, Pres. and Secy.

Type of grant maker: Independent foundation.

Purpose and activities: Giving primarily for education.

Fields of interest: Children/youth, services; Community development; Education; Higher education; Hospitals (general); Public affairs; Youth development, centers/clubs.

Geographic focus: National

Limitations: Giving on a national basis, with some emphasis on MO.

Application information: Initial approach: Letter - Deadline(s): None

MacDonald Family Foundation

P.O. Box 64788
Los Angeles, CA 90064

Telephone: (310) 571-2492
Contact: David S. Wang, Tr.
FAX: (310) 571-2496

Type of grant maker: Independent foundation.

Purpose and activities: Support for elementary/secondary education, youth development, centers and clubs, Protestant agencies and churches.

Fields of interest: Elementary/secondary education; Protestant agencies & churches; Youth development, centers/clubs.

Geographic focus: National

Robertson Foundation

c/o American Express TBS, Inc.
1185 Ave. of the Americas
New York, NY 10036-2602

Type of grant maker: Independent foundation.

Background: Established in 1996 in NY.

Purpose and activities: Support for education, general and rehabilitative medicine, medical research and philanthropy and voluntarism.

Fields of interest: Arts; Education; Hospitals (general); Protestant agencies & churches; Youth development, centers/clubs.

Geographic focus: National

Limitations: Applications not accepted. No grants to individuals.

Application information: Contributes only to pre-selected organizations.

Sherwood Foundation

c/o Susan Buffett
105 N. 54th St.
Omaha, NE 68132-2810

Type of grant maker: Independent foundation.

Background: Established in 1990 in NE.

Purpose and activities: Giving primarily for the arts, health, and human services.

Fields of interest: Animals/wildlife; Arts; Children/youth, services; Christian agencies & churches; Education; Environment; Health care; Human services; Youth development, centers/clubs.

Geographic focus: National

Limitations: Applications not accepted. Giving on a national basis. No grants to individuals.

Application information: Contributes only to pre-selected organizations.

Dennis & Phyllis Washington Foundation, Inc.

P.O. Box 16630
Missoula, MT 59808-6630
Telephone: (406) 523-1300
Contact: Russell J. Ritter, Pres.
Additional tel.: (406) 449-6510

URL: <http://www.washcorp.com/foundation>

Type of grant maker: Company-sponsored foundation.

Background: Established in 1988 in MT.

Purpose and activities: Priorities for grant consideration are youth-oriented programs and education, focusing on the needs of the underprivileged and less fortunate located in those communities serviced by the Washington Corporations.

Fields of interest: Aging; Aging, centers/services; Business school/education; Children/youth, services; Crime/violence prevention, youth; Economically disadvantaged; Education; Family services; Food services; Higher education; Hospitals (general); Performing arts; Performing arts, theater; Substance abuse, services; Visual arts; Women; Women, centers/services; Youth development, centers/clubs.

Geographic focus: Montana

Types of support: Annual campaigns, Building/renovation, Capital campaigns, Continuing support, Employee-related scholarships, General/operating support, Scholarship funds.

Limitations: Giving generally limited to areas of company operations in MT or the West. No support for religious, veterans', and fraternal service organizations, or national health organizations. No grants to individuals, or for general endowment funds, fundraising events, conferences or seminars, or travel expenses; no loans.

Publications: Application guidelines, informational brochure (including application guidelines), occasional report.

Application information: Application form required.

Initial approach: Letter

Copies of proposal: 1

Board meeting date(s): Annually and on-call; grants committee meets monthly

Deadline(s): None

TOURISM

I believe Conrad has the assets to become a popular stop for visitors and tourists. Personally, I cannot think of a better place to build a museum that interprets Montana's and Pondera County's in the Cold War. The Anti-Ballistic Missile site on the Ledger Road would be an amazing location for a museum. The educational opportunities are almost limitless.

The following is list includes just a few of the attractions, natural resources, and linkages could be developed in Pondera County:

- Agriculture
- Lewis and Clark
- Classic Car Collections
- Native American History
- Watchable Wildlife
- Lake Francis
- Rocky Mountain Front
- Baseball/Softball Complex

I am sure there are several other assets that should be added to that list. It is imperative that the people associated with each of these assets work together to promote what they have developed to potential visitors. The Chamber of Commerce website makes this

immediately possible. The Chamber should create a tourism committee made up of representatives from **each** of the tourist attractions in the community. The Committee can then work through Travel Montana's Russell Country to promote the Conrad region as a tourist destination.

I also recommend that Conrad and Pondera County do a community asset inventory. The Asset Inventory will include cultural and heritage sites, venues, interpreters, events, and all community assets upon which a marketing effort can be built. Help can be available by contacting Vicki Munson, a private consultant that specializes in tourism and Victor Bjornberg at Travel Montana.

By working more aggressively with Travel Montana and by promoting the area via the Chamber of Commerce website and a Visitors Center at the rest area on I 15 Conrad should be able to see a greater number of visitors within the community.

Contact Information:

Vicki Munson
Munson Consulting
8505 East Shore Route
Polson, MT 59860
Phone: (406) 887-2126
Fax: (406) 887-2128
Email: vmunson@cyberport.net

Victor Bjornberg
Tourism Development Coordinator
Travel Montana
Montana Department of Commerce
P.O. Box 200533
Helena, MT 59620-0533
Phone: 444-2654
E-mail: victor@visitmt.com
Website: <http://www.travelmontana.state.mt.us>

Potential Funding Sources:

**Travel Montana
Community Tourism Assessment Program (CTAP)**

CTAP is designed to help rural communities interested in tourism as an economic and/or social improvement tool analyze and develop an appropriate plan of action. CTAP is a community "self help" program provided as a cooperative project of MSU Extension, Travel Montana, and University of Montana's University Travel Research Program. Each year, 3 rural communities are accepted into the 8-month program through a competitive application process.

Travel Montana

Tourism Infrastructure Investment Program (TIIP)

The TIIP invests a portion of Travel Montana's "bed tax" funding into new tourism-related infrastructure products, the enhancement of existing tourism facilities, and the preservation of Montana's historical and cultural treasures. Since its creation in 1995, TIIP has invested more than \$1.3 million in "bed tax" funds into 28 projects in 22 communities across Montana. This investment has helped create over \$19 million in new or improved tourism facilities in Montana. The primary goal of this program is to create or improve attractions and services that will entice visitors to spend more time and money in Montana's communities. The program also aims at helping communities and organizations improve the quality of life for Montanans.

Baker Foundation (R.C.)

C/O Frank L. Scott, Chairman

P.O. Box 6150

Orange, CA 92863-6150

Phone: (714) 750-8987

EIN: 951742283

Scope: Higher and other education, **fine arts**, youth, hospitals, disabled, leadership development, mental health, hunger, **museums, cultural programs**, health, and social services.

Brach Foundation (Helen)

Raymond Simon, President

55 West Wacker Drive, Suite 701

Chicago, Illinois 60601

Phone: (312) 372-4417

Fax: (312) 372-0290

EIN: 237376427

Scope: Prevention of cruelty to animals, public safety, social and family services, prevention of cruelty to children and child welfare, homeless, housing, aged [seniors], youth, women, disabled, disadvantaged, conservation, environment, secondary, higher, and other education, **fine arts, museums**, health, hospitals, law and justice, legal services.

New-Land Foundation, Inc.

1114 Avenue of the Americas, 46th Floor

New York, New York 10036-7798

Phone: (212) 479-6162

EIN: 136086562

Scope: **Arts and children**, civil rights/justice, leadership development, environment (other than hazardous waste), population control, child development, and peace/arms control.

Bair Family Trust (Charles M.)

C/o First Trust Company

Attention: Beverly Jensen, Administrative Secretary

P.O. Box 3168

Portland, Oregon 97208-3168
Phone: (406) 657-8124

Application Address:
C/o U.S. Bank Trust Montana
P.O. Box 20678
Billings, MT 59115
EIN: 816075761

Scope: **Theater, museums, arts, youth, historic preservation**, mental health, **performing arts**, higher education.

Fannie Mae Foundation

C/o Harriet M. Ivey, Executive Director
4000 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20016-2800
Phone: (202) 274-8000
Fax: (202) 274-8100
Internet: <http://www.fanniemaefoundation.org>
EIN: 521172718

Scope: Low-income housing and community development (67% of funding): affordable housing, neighborhood revitalization, community reinvestment activities, promote homeownership; Social Concerns (20% of funding): youth at risk, seniors, physically and mentally disabled, homeless;
Work Force Issues (10% of funding): prepare youth for college and the workplace, youth development and leadership, mentoring and community service, and education preparation for higher education;
Other (20% of funding): **arts and culture**, research and public policy development, health, professional development, public broadcasting, minorities and women.

Kongsgaard-Goldman Foundation

C/o Martha Kongsgaard, President
1932 First Avenue, Suite 602
Seattle, Washington 98101
Phone: (206) 448-1874
Fax: (206) 448-1973
Internet: www.Kongsgaard-goldman.org
Email: kgf@Kongsgaard-goldman.org
EIN: 943088217

Scope: Environment, health associations, cancer, social services, Jewish welfare, AIDS, civil rights, **arts, museums, performing arts**, adult and legal education, literacy, libraries, family planning, hunger, and woman.

Microsoft Corporate Contributions Program

1 Microsoft Way
Redmond, WA 98052-6399
Phone: (425) 936-8080
Fax: (206) 936-7334
Internet: www.microsoft.com/giving

Scope: **Arts and culture**, civic and public affairs, environment, higher education, international, social services, and technology.

Harriman Foundation (Gladys & Roland)

C/o William F. Hibbard, Secretary

63 Wall Street, Suite 3101

New York, NY 10005

Phone: (212) 493-8185

EIN: 510193915

Scope: Private higher and other education, youth historic preservation, social services, **museums, health, and hospitals.**

HEALTH CARE

During our visit it was made very clear to the team that the future viability of the Pondera Medical Center is one of the most important issues facing Conrad residents. The list of concerns related to the Medical Center included the ever-increasing challenge of recruiting qualified staff, especially doctors and nurses. Many of the people who attended the listening sessions mentioned the Medical Center, as one of the County's most important assets and clearly, adequate health care is essential for a community to be considered sustainable.

Given the complex funding, personnel and technology issues indigenous to health care it may be helpful for the Pondera Medical Center to hire a consultant to develop a long-range plan for the facility. Such a plan may already exist, but if it does not, the Center's administrative staff may want to consider developing a strategy for future growth. The American Association of Healthcare Consultants has a directory of member firms that can assist with this project.

Contact Information:

American Association of Healthcare Consultants

1926 Waukegan Road, Suite 1

Glenview, IL 60025

Phone: (847) 657-6964

Email: info@aahc.net

Website: <http://www.aahc.net/>

Potential Funding Sources:

Baker Foundation (R.C.)

C/O Frank L. Scott, Chairman

P.O. Box 6150

Orange, CA 92863-6150

Phone: (714) 750-8987

Scope: Higher and other education, fine arts, youth, **hospitals, disabled**, leadership development, **mental health**, hunger, museums, cultural programs, **health**, and social services.

Fannie Mae Foundation

C/o Harriet M. Ivey, Executive Director

4000 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W.

Washington, DC 20016-2800

Phone: (202) 274-8000

Fax: (202) 274-8100

Internet: <http://www.fanniemaefoundation.org>

Scope: Low-income housing and community development (67% of funding): affordable housing, neighborhood revitalization, community reinvestment activities, promote homeownership; Social Concerns (20% of funding): youth at risk, seniors, physically and mentally disabled, homeless;

Work Force Issues (10% of funding): prepare youth for college and the workplace, youth development and leadership, mentoring and community service, and education preparation for higher education.

Other (20% of funding): arts and culture, research and public policy development, **health**, professional development, public broadcasting, minorities and women.

Bair Family Trust (Charles M.)

C/o First Trust Company

Attention: Beverly Jensen, Administrative Secretary

P.O. Box 3168

Portland, Oregon 97208-3168

Phone: (406) 657-8124

Application Address:

C/o U.S. Bank Trust Montana

P.O. Box 20678

Billings, MT 59115

Scope: Theater, museums, arts, youth, historic preservation, **mental health**, performing arts, higher education.

Coca-Cola Company Giving Program

Donald R. Greene, Director

P.O. Draw 1734

Atlanta, Georgia 30301

Phone: (404) 676-8804

Internet: www.coca-cola.com

Scope: **Health**, social services, civic affairs, community development, youth. Matching gifts from employees support education and arts organizations.

Mattel Children's Foundation

C/o Gloria De Necochea, Manager

333 Continental Boulevard

El Segundo, California 90245-5012

Phone: (310) 252-4747

EIN: 953263647

Scope: Special foundation outreach grant initiatives for Family Learning Center, **health care for children**, and Hand in Hand: Parents, Schools, Communities United for Kids-parental involvement in education and grants serving disadvantaged children.

Ostern Foundation

C/o Howard L. Thaler, Esq.

Suite 1105

9401 Wilshire Boulevard

Beverly Hills, California 90212

Phone: (310) 476-0169

Fax: (310) 472-1174

Scope: Health associations, medical movement disorders research, and **health**.

Coors Foundation (Adolph)

C/O Linda S. Tafoya, Executive Director

4100 East Mississippi Avenue

Denver, Colorado 80246

Phone: (303) 388-1684

Scope: Higher and secondary education, public policy, civic affairs, social services, youth, **health**, and disadvantaged.

Castle Rock Foundation

C/O Linda S. Tafoya, Executive Director

4100 East Mississippi Avenue, Suite 1850

Denver, Colorado 80246

Phone: (303) 388-1636

Fax: (303) 388-1684

Scope: Education, public policy research, legal services, **hospitals and health**.

Herzog Foundation, Inc.

C/o Bentley, Mosher, Babson, and Lambert P.C.

321 Railroad Avenue

Greenwich, CT 06836-0788

Phone: (203) 629-2424

Scope: Medical research, **hospitals** and education.

Huisking Foundation, Inc.

Frank R. Huisking

P.O. Box 368

Botsford, CT 06404-0353

Phone: (203) 426-8618

Scope: Catholic higher and secondary education, church support and welfare, **hospitals**, and religion associations.

Chatlos Foundation, Inc.

C/o William J. Chatlos, President

P.O. Box 915048

Longwood, FL 32791-5048

Phone: (407) 862-5077
Internet: www.chatlos.org
Scope: 26% of funding goes to **medical concerns**.

Davis Foundations (Arthur Vining)

C/o Jonathon T. Howe, Executive Director
111 Riverside Avenue, Suite 130
Jacksonville, FL 32202-4291
Phone: (904) 359-0670
Internet: <http://www.jvm.com/davis/>
Scope: Private higher education, **health care**, and public television.

Little Family Foundation

C/o Linn T. Spalding, Trustee
1 Boston Place
Boston, MA 02108
Phone: (617) 722-7772
Scope: Scholarship funds at designated business schools [higher education], Rhode Island Junior Achievement for programs in secondary education, youth, cultural programs, **hospitals**.

Harriman Foundation (Gladys & Roland)

C/o William F. Hibbard, Secretary
63 Wall Street, Suite 3101
New York, NY 10005
Phone: (212) 493-8185
Scope: Private higher and other education, youth historic preservation, social services, museums, **health**, and **hospitals**.

Hearst Foundations

C/o Robert M. Frehse, Jr., Executive Director
888 Seventh Avenue, 45th Floor
New York, NY 10106-0057
Phone: (212) 586-5404
Internet: <http://fdncenter.org/grantmaker/hearst.html>
Scope: **Health: improve and increase care, facilitate wellness, prevention and rehabilitation, hospitals, increase access for underserved urban and rural populations;** Social Services: technical assistance, management training, and leadership development designed to help non-profit agencies deliver services more efficiently and effectively.

GRANT WRITING

One of the great misconceptions many people share is that grant funding is easy to obtain. I wish I had a dollar for every time I've heard some say, "We'll just get a grant." I wouldn't be a wealthy man, but I'd certainly drive a nicer car.

Yes, there are literally thousands of public and private sources of funding in the United States that offer financial support for everything from Abuse Prevention to Zoological Societies. What people don't understand is how time consuming and challenging grant writing can be. The process of writing just one grant can literally take weeks and the competition is fierce.

My point is: Grant writing is hard work and it would be unreasonable to expect one person to handle all of the grant writing responsibilities of Conrad and Pondera County. The answer is to develop a network of people you would be willing to work individually or as a team to write funding proposals. These people should be given the opportunity to attend training seminars and workshops or to have access to on-line resources.

A few examples include:

The Foundation Center at <http://fdncenter.org>

The Environmental Protection Agency at <http://www.epa.gov/grtlakes/seahome/grants.html>

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance at <http://www.cfda.gov/public/cat-writing.htm>

The Grant Station Insider at <http://www.grantstation.com>

Kent State University at <http://literacy.kent.edu/Oasis/grants/first.html>

New Mexico State University at <http://www.cahe.nmsu.edu/employee/grants/>

These are just a few examples of the training resources that are available on-line. In addition, Montana State University – Northern occasionally holds grant writing workshops in Great Falls or Havre that are affordable and very helpful to both the novice and seasoned grant writer. Your grant writing team should be allowed to utilize these opportunities. The return on the community's investment may be considerable.

Another challenge to grant writing is what to once you have been awarded a grant. This is another issue most people overlook or don't even recognize as an issue. Every grant provider, whether they are private, public, state or federal will want to know how their money is being spent. Grant administration also takes time and it takes resources that most volunteer organizations, especially in small rural communities do not possess. This leads me to my final topic...

SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Conrad is a remarkable community with a long list of assets that most communities in Montana only dream of possessing. The abridged version of the list includes: manufacturing capacity, access to the Interstate, close proximity to a major airport (Great Falls), access to the railroad, direct access to two major metropolitan areas: Calgary and Edmonton (which are in Canada our largest trade partner), and affordable access to high speed, broadband Internet infrastructure. The bottom line: Conrad and Pondera County

have, in my opinion, what it takes to attract and start businesses that creating jobs, wealth, and sustainable growth.

The problem is every that every state has communities just like Conrad and whether your realize it or not, you are competing against each of those communities. What needs to happen, and what you have just started to do, is to create a mechanism for attracting positive attention to your region, a means to collaborate with the private and public sectors to remove the obstacles to growth. I believe Conrad and Pondera County need a **fulltime** economic development organization that has the resources to initiate and sustain the type of projects that will get positive results.

The Pondera Coalition for Progress (PCP) can be that type of economic development organization, but a part-time director with an annual budget of less than \$31,000 is not enough to take on the type of projects so many people told us they want to see happen in Conrad. A short-term goal (one to two years) may be to increase PCP's annual budget to \$80,000, which would allow for a full-time director, full-time administrative assist, travel and training.

To make help make this possible, the City or County may consider creating a Port Authority. According to MCA 7-14-1101: Any county of municipality may, by resolution of its governing body, create a public body, corporate and politic, to be known as a local port authority. The purposes of the Port Authority include:

- 1) Promote, stimulate, develop, and advance the general welfare, commerce, economic development, and prosperity of its jurisdiction and of the state and its citizens.
- 2) Endeavor to increase the volume of commerce within the jurisdiction of the port authority and the state through planning, advertising, acquisition, establishment, development, construction, improvement, maintenance, equipment, operation, regulation, and protection of ports and transportation and storage facilities that promote the safe, efficient, and economical handling of commerce.
- 3) Cooperate and act in conjunction with other organizations, public or private, in the development of commerce, industry, manufacturing, services, natural resources, agriculture, livestock, recreation, tourism, health care, and other economic activity in the state.
- 4) Support the creation, expansion, modernization, retention, and relocation of new and existing businesses and industry in the state and otherwise stimulate, assist in, and support the growth of all kinds of economic activity that will tend to promote commerce and business development, maintain the economic stability and prosperity of its jurisdiction and of the state, and thus provide maximum opportunities and improvement in the standard of living of its citizens of the state.

The Port Authority can be financed by an annual levy that may not exceed two mills. The current value of a mill in Pondera County is \$13,000. This revenue along with continued support from individuals and businesses in the community would help the PCP deliver the type of sustainable economic development the people we heard from want to see take place in Pondera County. If nothing else, I hope this report will serve to launch a discussion among residents of Pondera County of how best to achieve your economic development goals.

Bill Barr
USDA-Rural Development Cooperative Development Specialist
P.O. Box 850
Bozeman, MT 59771
Ph: (406) 585-2545
Fx: (406) 585-2565
Email: Bill.Barr @mt.usda.gov
Web: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/mt/>

1. PREPARATION

The following recommendations are submitted to assist Conrad in improving it's chances for sustainable economic development prospects.

- **Conrad needs to identify and support a solid core of volunteer and professional individuals to assist with economic development strategy and planning with the support of both private and public partnerships.**

Is the Pondera Coalition For Progress (PCFP) the "go to organization" for Conrad? For Pondera County? Is economic development perceived to be a county wide objective, or is it a Town vs Town concept? Are city governments, the county government, the chambers of commerce, the local development organization working together as a team for the economic development in the county and region? What is the extent of private partnership participation in economic development? Are the resources available and are they committed long term to hiring a full time professional economic developer? There are several ways to fund this individual, but it requires a long-term commitment from local residents and businesses as well as the public sector. Leslie Messer from Richland Economic Development in Sidney (406 482-4679) can provide some insight as to how Richland County accomplished a similar task. She can also help discuss the ways of forming a Port Authority. Randy Hansen, Regional Development Officer, Montana Department of Commerce (406) 262-9579, and John Rogers of the Economic Development Administration (406) 449-5580, can help with reviewing the advantages of participating in a regional economic development district. A professional, full time, sustainable economic development presence is an important first step.

- **Conrad should utilize, through PCFP, resources of a network of skilled economic development professionals to assist them.**

The Montana Economic Developers Association at (406) 563-5259 (ask for Gloria O'Rourke) provides direct training for local development organizations (LDO), including their boards, and network access to individuals and groups statewide. PCFP has been doing that and should be encouraged to continue. The Montana Department of Commerce has a Regional Development Officer, Randy Hansen (406) 262-9579, available to assist LDO's with their development concerns. The North Central Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) is available to support Conrad and is led by Larry Robertson, (406) 434-9161. Elaina Zempel of PCFP is also a local technical assistance network provider for cooperative development and is supported by the Montana Cooperative Development Center at MSU-Northern (406) 265-3771. While

economic development is by nature a competitive business, there is a strong federal-state-local partnership which assists existing and emerging LDO's. This includes the USDA-Rural Development Local Office in Great Falls, Cindy Stene (406)727-7580 and members of the Montana Department of Agriculture, such as Will Kissinger, Brent Poppe, Quinn Holzer, and others (406) 444-2402.

- **Assistance provided through the Montana Rural Development Partners Community Resource Assessment Team Report process is a significant first step for Conrad.**

The process has shown that the community can work together. It has identified areas of strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities which when addressed as a community, can start Conrad on a road to improved, successful economic development.

- **There are clearly defined steps which can be followed by Conrad and PCFP if the community chooses to take the next steps along that road.**

There are resources available to help with that journey. It requires a long term, unified commitment by Conrad, complete with follow through, for this process to produce successful results.

- **Conrad must maintain key elements of economic infrastructure.**

Public Capital: these are services which government provides and maintains. They include such things as a transportation network, water and sewer, telecommunications infrastructure, and government buildings.

Human Capital: these are services which relate to the level of workforce skills, education of the people, training programs and private business investment in training and continuing education.

- **Conrad and Pondera County has resources available to it (people, financial, geographic location, transportation, medical, educational) that not every area has.**

Previous economic development experiences, have prepared Conrad and Pondera County for what comes next. Those experiences have developed strengths, exposed problems, and have opened the way to opportunities which can be exploited. The financial resources which have been used in the past may not continue to be available in the future. This puts serious pressure on community leaders to find alternative ways to assure the survival of Conrad, to create reasons for people to want to live, work, and stay in Conrad. . . and to encourage some form of thoughtful growth.

- **The strengths most often mentioned for Conrad and Pondera County by almost all the groups were:**

the airport; belief that Conrad is a progressive city with generous, loyal, giving people and businesses; residual financial wealth the city is clean and has affordable housing; the school system, hunting clientele; the churches and multiple religious opportunities; the hospital and associated medical facilities; DSL, wide band, and fiber telecommunications infrastructure; sports; fire and police departments; senior citizens center; small town living environment; good farm and ranch land; positive geographic location; and the library.

- **There are some problems encountered in Conrad and Pondera County.**

The ones most commonly mentioned by the groups included a declining and aging population, lack of youth returning to the area, a nice place to live, but not to work, invest, or shop, restaurant variety is limited; declining water infrastructure, lack of support for local businesses, limited availability of a variety of retail items, limited job opportunities for youth, limited drug investigation resources and willingness to accept the need for such resources, and no surplus skilled workforce. The community needs good paying jobs, but the work force is not there for job growth. In addition, there is mixed support for local retail businesses, limited markets for local products, and transportation and accessibility issues. Students express “boredom” and complain about a lack of recreational opportunities, and the adult population expresses concerns with complacency over the community’s future.

In summary:

- **There is concern that the community is not working together for economic development activities that will sustain the community beyond simply a place to live**
- **It is not the agricultural community it used to be, but it is still an agricultural economy.**
- **Diversification is needed and desired, but there needs to be some focus made on the nature of the diversification.**
- **Establishment if a community identity is important.**
- **Support for retail business is soft and improved planning is needed for creation of jobs to “bring the kids back.” While some of the kids interviewed expressed interest in returning to Conrad, they were not sure an opportunity would be there should that choice be made.**
- **The fear of losing quality and available health care is adding to the difficulty of maintaining essential services and jobs for those who are left and who getting older.**

These problems are not unique in Rural Montana. Conrad and Pondera County need to support and encourage organizational instruments of change, identify resources (people and financial), develop a plan, reach consensus and make a long-term commitment to do something to improve economic development. Direction, leadership, and structure for economic development needs to be put in place. You have opportunities others do not . . .and you have yourselves, a resource not to be taken lightly.

2. DESTINATION

- **Tourism and recreation, according to Outlook 2002 (Bureau of Business and Economic Research, School of Business Administration, University of Montana) took a major downturn in 2000 after September 11.**

It is projected that on a national basis, it may take four years for tourism and travel to reach 2000 levels. Air travel took the biggest hit.

There are indications that domestic travel may not suffer as greatly.

The Lewis and Clark celebration may encourage domestic travel. Most tourists come to Montana to ski, visit the national parks, battlefields, wildlife refuges, and to fish. In Pondera County, they also come to hunt. Tourists are projected to be older, traveling to less physically demanding destinations, and are concerned by fire damage. Many are in motor homes which require certain facilities to service them.

- **Is anyone involved with the tourism promotional activity of the Montana Department of Commerce?**

Randy Hansen, Regional Development Office, Montana Department of Commerce, (406) 262-9579 or Anna Marie Moe (406) 444-2654, Travel Montana, Montana Department of Commerce can help get the connections made. Internal assessment, in some cases, grant funded, and use of state promotion of tourism opportunities is an important first step to getting folks into town.

- **Does Conrad have adequate tourism infrastructure to attract tourists?**

Are there adequate motels? What type of motels? Are there a variety of restaurants? Are they customer friendly and open when customers want them to be? Are there campgrounds? Are there RV parks and are they signed properly? (Not hidden behind another sign across from Stockman Bank . . .) Part of your follow-on Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy should include an assessment of available and needed tourism infrastructure. An honest assessment of tourism and its potential is important: what do you have to "sell" in terms of sites that someone will want to spend time getting to Conrad to see, to stay and then to shop.

- **The Department of Commerce has a competitive tourism assessment grant (with matching fund requirements), which can assist Conrad and Pondera County in addressing these issues. Anna Marie Moe (406) 444-2654 can assist with this inquiry as well.**

Based on the results of all this information gathering, a question of value received for value invested must be addressed. In other words, will you end up spending money chasing tourist dollars that may never show up? Are you creating sustainable jobs? Where does this fit in your development priorities?

- **While becoming a national tourist destination site is not likely, Baker and Fallon County may be able to develop strategies for attracting day or weekend tourism.**

People do like getting away and take short trips to do something different and away from what is at “home.”

- **How can you attract this type of business?**

What will it require in terms of investment, promotion, and likely return? Anna Marie Moe (406) 444-2654 can assist. Another contact that has significant experience in this area is Sharon Rau, Director of the Sidney Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture, (406) 433-1916. The Great Falls Chamber of Commerce might be will to share ideas and resources with you. How can you "piggy back" on what they are doing without having to reinvent the wheel? How can you get people to drive north and south on I-15 and to stop in Conrad?

- Can you resurrect the regional flea market and farmers market? Can you include the Hutterites? And the furniture they manufacture?

If you want assistance doing this in the form a cooperative business structure or in another form of business structure, call Elaina Zempel, PCFP, (406) 271-7791; Ty Duncan, Montana Cooperative Development Center, (406) 265-3771; Bill Barr, USDA-Rural Development (406)585-2545; Bruce Smith, MSU Ag Extension Agent, (406) 377-4277.

- Can you acquire an IBCN missile shell, erect it, and develop an I-15 accessible information, educational tourist site. It might include information on agriculture, the type of crops grown, what they look like, and the role this community has played in the Cold War and in agriculture.
- How can you market Blue Sky Villa, its retirement Potential, and the retirement potential of the area? How can you attract military retirees?
- If you build a skateboard park, could you market it for tourists?
- If more tourists came, would you be able to keep stores open longer, with more product variety? Would a new or different kind of restaurant be welcome? Would a bed and breakfast be welcome?
- How can the golf course be improved? Can or should it be made into and 18 hole course? Call Jim Nelson, Sidney Montana at (888) 482-4480. Can you establish a "highline" tour of courses all across the highline? How can you appeal to the military? To retired people? Are there enough places to stay?

- **Highway transportation and bridge across I-15.**

A potentially successful technique is to invite the Regional Supervisor from the Montana Department of Transportation, to come to Conrad and to discuss the importance of the highway overpass from a safety and commercial vantage point. Give him a tour of the area, its prospects and potential. Put on a sustained dog and pony show. Invite the State Highway Commission to Conrad and do the same thing. Use your local legislators and your federal legislators (do you know the potential influence on highway funds that Sen. Baucus brings to the table for Montana?) Get your county highway person to “get the project” on the shelf, ready to go, should funds become available because some other project can’t get ready in time. Russ Huotari, Richland County Public Works Director, is a master at this strategy. (406) 488-2106. Sell the project by selling the value the state will receive for investing money in this project . . . will it help not only your economy but the region? Some of this has been done already, but until the project is done, keep going.

- **Comments were heard that shopping in Conrad is expensive and that it is cheaper to drive to Great Falls.**

Driving is not “cheap” and that message can be conveyed to your local residents. It is at least \$.35 per mile and that doesn’t cover all the costs of driving. There is a cost of doing business, which somehow gets lost in the mix of emotion. The need for a business to make a fair profit is important if a business is to be successful in Conrad. Imagine what it would be like if there were no stores in Conrad at all? How can the business community bring more customers to Conrad?

Some businesses have found it useful to form cooperatives or associations in an effort to provide product and service variety at an affordable price. There are marketing, purchasing, and service type cooperatives of a non-agricultural nature that can work. If more information on this is desired, contact Bill Barr, USDA-RD Cooperative Development Specialist (406) 585-2545, Elaina Zempel, PCFP, (406) 271-7791, or Ty Duncan, at the Montana Cooperative Development Center in Havre, (406) 265-3771.

3. DIVERSIFICATION

- **Traditional Conrad economic strengths have been identified as agriculture, local retail, and local recreation and sports.**

Changing government CRP policy is not a realistic quick help for Conrad and Pondera County.

Commodity production is not creating the wealth for farmers that it did years ago. If there are projects that producers would like to start that deal with value-added ventures, assistance is available through Will Kissinger, Montana Department of Agriculture, (406) 444-2402, Bill Barr, USDA-Rural Development, (406) 585-2545, Elaina Zempel, PCFP, (406) 271-7791, and Ty Duncan, Montana Cooperative Development Center in Havre, (406) 265-3771.

Cooperatives can be successfully formed for non-agricultural businesses, too.

For help on forming food processing cooperative ventures (or other kinds of business structures) call Jan Tusick, Mission Mountain Market Cooperative Development Center, Ronan, (406) 676-0676.

There is an economic development adage that suggests success comes best from building on what you do best. Making radical changes from traditional strengths or looking for a big “business recruitment” may work for some communities, but most often, it does not.

- **Diversification does not necessarily mean an entirely new business, but can mean a process by which existing businesses provide new products and services.**

If every existing business added one employee over the next two years, would that have a favorable economic impact on Conrad?

Each business is different and needs to assess whether an expansion of services, products and hours of business would create added business profits to justify the additional employee. Elaina Zempel, PNFC, can help with that assessment and with assisting in promoting markets for those products and services.

- **Elaina Zempel can provide a focal point for conducting a Comprehensive Economic Development Survey (CEDS) to identify what goods and service providers do not currently exist in Conrad.**

In other words, what is currently missing in Conrad which area residents or “drive through” tourists would utilize? What would it take to get those kinds of business ventures started in Conrad? What would it take to make them successful?

A program that uses the format of yearly class reunions as a recruiting pool of businesses has been tried in Sidney, MT. Call Leslie Messer, Richland Economic Development, (406) 482-4679. The idea is to contact ex-students who may own their own businesses and encourage them to return "home" with their business!

- **An assessment of community infrastructure to enable successful expansion of a retail business center should be undertaken.**

What roads need to be resurfaced? Do traffic patterns need to be re-directed? How does Conrad get people into the business section of town and get them out of their cars and trucks? Can the parking be enhanced? How can the community be made more inviting to shoppers? What needs need to be addressed on behalf of the business community? What can be done to bring the financial community to support an aggressive trade center development for Conrad and Pondera County?

Is water and sewer capacity adequate for present and future growth needs? For assistance, call Mitch Copp, USDA-RD Rural Utilities Service Program Director at (406) 585-2520.

- **There are several avenues of assistance available to individuals or groups seeking to start their own business.**

Randy Hansen, (406) 262-9579, Regional Development Officer, MT Department of Commerce

John Guthmiller, USDA-Rural Development, Program Director, Rural Business Cooperative Services, (406) 585-2540 can advise about Business and Industry guaranteed loan program for qualified businesses, Rural Business Enterprise Grant and Rural Business Opportunity Grant, and Value-Added Development Grant Programs.

Information on SBA programs can be obtained at your local banks or from the Small Business Development Center in Great Falls, (406) 453-8834.

An important concept to remember is that tax dollars are not going to be given free for someone to start a business. Technical assistance is often provided for "free", and some grant funds, but mostly loan funds are available to businesses.

4. HABITATION

- **A housing needs assessment is normally included in a Comprehensive Economic Development Survey (CEDS).**

An adequate supply of decent, affordable housing that a person would like to purchase is preferable to having a supply of overpriced housing of questionable quality.

Inadequate housing needs to be fixed up or removed. Few people will want to invest in property and a house in a location that will not support the growth of their investment. Resalability of homes is important to a homebuyer. With that consideration, they are more likely to take care of the property and at least try to maintain its value.

There are several programs available for assisting first time homebuyers, renovating homes, and even building homes. For specific information about programs and how they fit the needs of Conrad and Pondera County, call the following resources:

- USDA-Rural Development, Rural Housing Service.
The Program Director is Deborah Chorlton, (406) 585-2515.

There is a USDA-RD Community Development Office in Great Falls, MT run by Cindy Stene, (406) 727-7580.

The 504 Program is a Home improvement Loan and Grant Program designed to improve or modernize an existing home.

A 502 Direct Loan Program is designed to assist low and very low-income families with little or no down payment, at a low interest rate, with home purchase.

Single Family Housing Guaranteed Loans are used to assist low to moderate income families who cannot obtain conventional financing without assistance. USDA-RD can provide a 90% guarantee to traditional lender loans.

The 515 Multi-Family Housing Direct Loan Program is designed to address rental housing needs and to provide eligible low and very low income persons with economically designed and constructed rental facilities and rental assistance subsidies.

The Multi-Family Housing Guaranteed Loans 538 Program is designed to serve the housing needs of low and moderate income families. It complements other affordable housing programs and seeks to meet the needs of rural America not being served by the Section 515 Direct Rural Rental Housing Program.

The Rural Housing Service Housing Preservation Grant 533 Program is designed to aid in the repair and rehabilitation of individual housing, rental properties, or co-ops owned and/or occupied by very low and low-income families.

The Farm Labor Housing 514 and 516 Program objectives are designed to provide safe, sanitary, and affordable housing for U.S. farm workers through loans and grants to finance construction of on and off-site housing.

The Community Facilities Direct and Guaranteed Loan Program and the CF Grant Program eligible organizations receive help to construct, enlarge, and improve community facilities that provide essential services in rural areas and town. This assistance can include support for hospitals, health clinics, nursing homes, fire and police facilities, community centers, roads and streets, libraries, schools, criminal justice centers, etc. Specific questions should be directed to Sue Gantz, CF Specialist, (406) 585-2555.

The Self-Help Housing Program provides technical assistance grants to non-profit organizations to help very low and low-income families finance and build their own homes.

Information about HUD programs can be obtained from Larry Gallagher, (406) 449-5040.

Classes for first time home buyers and others are available to assist people with this process. Contact any of the organizations above to schedule them.

5. RESTORATION

- **Projects involving restoration should be considered within the scope of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS).**

Restoration projects can become quite emotional, and that is not all bad. Assessment of value spent for value received needs to be made. Is it cheaper to attain the same result (i.e.: a movie theatre) by restoring or building anew? What is the best use of the land?

Are there a county planner and a county plan? What is the community consensus as to an historical property it wishes to restore? Who will own it? Is it a “nice” to restore project or a “have to restore” project? Does it create long term, sustainable jobs? Will it attract business and tourists? How will the project be funded?

A good architectural /engineering firm can provide structural information and cost estimates for designing and restoring the proposed project to a current use.

When resources are limited, and even when they are not, prioritizing resource use and evaluating whether this project will give the economic development benefit most needed at this point in time is a judgment call that should be made.

Economic development resources, both in terms of money and in terms of human resources are limited. Make wise use of them.

6. MEDICAL

- **Medical facilities and services are held in high esteem and work synergistically Conrad's retirement destination strategies.**

Some people will always drive elsewhere for their services. A way of expanding the existing services, increasing the footprint of medical services throughout the county, and enhancing the favorable impact of this resource throughout the county, is to form a cost effective out-patient in-home medical service provider cooperative.

Staffed by trained medical service providers, based upon hospital delivered services, a cooperative of this nature is working well in the mid-west. For information, call Elaina Zempel, (406) 271-7791 or Bill Barr, USDA-Rural Development, (406) 585-2545.

Assistance might be found with Sue Gantz, USDA-Rural Development, Community Facilities, (406) 585-2580.

7. EDUCATION

- **Education and economic development work together.**

In general, the community expressed pride in their school system and faculty. As a component of a unified community problem solving process, the school system has an opportunity to be an integrated player in the economic development picture.

- **Concern was frequently voiced over the lack of job opportunities for youth and that there is no surplus, trained work force should job opportunities arise.**

There are school-to-work programs utilized by other school districts that assist local businesses and students make the transition from student to employee while providing students with work place skills and a business with an employee. Carl Stevens, Office of Public Instruction in Helena (406) 444-3000 is a resource person.

The high school in Rapelje runs an excellent school-to-work program and a program that provides college credit for certain high school courses.

Other resources that could be incorporated into job development picture reside in the Department of Labor and Industry. Bob Simoneau is the Director, State Workforce Investment Board (406) 444-2607, and Wendy Keating (406) 444-2648 is the Administrator of the Job Service Division. Program information assistance linking education and jobs is available through them.

Job Training Partnership information can be obtained from the Office of Public Instruction at (406) 444-4437.

Bill Linder at the Job Service Center located in Sidney (406) 482-1204 can provide insight into the Job Service Employers Council (JSEC) and how that links local businesses to the local schools.

The SBA SCORE Program, a retired executive mentoring program affords opportunity to build on the resources available in the community.

Will Kissinger
Administrator
Dept. of Ag/Ag Development Division
P.O. Box 200201
Helena, MT 59620-0201
Ph: (406) 444-2402
Fx: (406) 444 – 5409
Email: wkissinger@state.mt.us
Web: www.agr.state.mt.us

AGRICULTURAL ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The economy of Conrad and the immediate area is highly dependent on agriculture. Several of the major concepts brought forward at the community listening sessions involved strengthening and taking advantage of the agriculture economy, and broadening its local economy so as not to be so dependent on agriculture. Below are listed several agriculture related issues noted during the listening sessions, and corresponding recommendations:

Effects of Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) on Local Economy

Issue: The purpose of the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) CRP program is to conserve natural resources by taking marginal cropland out of production. The program has been very successful in doing so, however, an unwanted negative consequence of taking large areas out of crop production is to dramatically decrease demand for local sources of agricultural inputs (e.g. seeds, fertilizer etc.), implements, and services. As can be expected, the decrease in local agricultural purchasing activity has hurt the economy of small cities such as Conrad that rely on agriculture as the base of their economy.

Recommendation: Unfortunately, since the CRP program is a federal program, and all program criteria and policies are established at the federal level, there is little direct control of the program at the local or state level. Therefore, the most effective means of influencing the program is to contact the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture's office and Montana's congressional delegation. These can be contacted as follows:

The Honorable Ann Veneman
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20205
Phone: (202) 720-3631

The Honorable Conrad Burns
United States Senate
187 Dirksen Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20510
Phone: (202) 224-2644

The Honorable Max Baucus
United States Senate
511 Hart Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20510
Phone: (202) 224-2651

The Honorable Dennis Rehberg
US House of Representatives
516 Cannon House Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20515
Phone: (202) 225-3211

It is also recommended that copies of letters be sent to the Ralph Peck, Director of the Montana Department of Agriculture and Randy Johnson, State Executive Director of the Montana USDA-Farm Services Agency, since they may be able to influence CRP policy through their USDA and other contacts.

Ralph Peck, Director
Montana Department of Agriculture
PO Box 200201
Helena, MT 59620-0201
Phone: (406) 444-3144

Randy Johnson, State Executive Director
USDA-Farm Services Agency
PO Box 670
Bozeman, MT 59771-0670
Phone: (406) 587-6872

Reliable Water Source.

Issue: Every listening session brought up the need for a reliable source of water for the city of Conrad, and also for agricultural irrigation, specifically the need to move the water intake further out into the deeper part of Lake Francis. The issue of water availability was a factor in several efforts to recruit new businesses to Conrad. The problem has been exacerbated by the ongoing drought in the area.

Recommendation: Although progress has already been made to obtain the necessary financial resources and permits to move the intake further out into the lake, the time may be right to renew and reinvigorate the project. This may be accomplished by moving forward with a focused meeting of all major players in the endeavor, both financial and regulatory. The Montana Department of Agriculture is willing to coordinate such meetings if Conrad so desires. Possible participants (including Elaina Zempel) include:

Will Kissinger, Administrator
Agriculture Development Division
Montana Department of Agriculture
PO Box 200201
Helena, MT 59620-0201
Phone: (406) 444-2402

John Guthmiller, Bill Barr, or Mitchell Copp
USDA-Rural Development
Rural Business & Cooperative Service
PO Box 850
Bozeman, MT 59771
Phone: (406) 585-2580

John Tubbs, Chief
Resource Development Bureau
DNRC
PO Box 201601
Helena, MT 59620-1601
Phone: (406) 444-6687

Larry Gallagher, Operations Specialist
U.S. HUD Field Office
7 West Sixth Avenue
Helena, MT 59601
Phone: (406) 447-1480

Jim Edgcomb, Program Manager
Treasure State Endowment Program (TSEP)
Montana Department of Commerce
PO Box 200501
Helena, MT 59620-0501
Phone: (406) 841-2785

Value Added Business Assistance

Issue: Small businesses, often agri-businesses, are the core of Conrad's business community. These businesses have difficulty developing value added products or finding financial resources to stabilize or expand their businesses. A concerted, focused effort should be made to assist Conrad's businesses to develop value added products and assist them to find financial capital when desired.

Recommendation: A possible means of assisting Conrad's small businesses is to establish a "task force" of individuals from state and federal agencies who have expertise in assisting small businesses. The task force could meet one-on-one with requesting businesses to provide information and assistance best suited to each business. The Montana Department of Agriculture is willing to coordinate such a business assistance task force if desired. Possible task force members, with the addition of Elaina Zemple, include:

Mike Sullivan, Business Dev. Officer
Agriculture Development Division
Montana Department of Agriculture
PO Box 200201
Helena, MT 59620-0201
Phone: (406) 444-2402

John Guthmiller or Bill Barr
USDA-Rural Development
Rural Business & Cooperative Service
PO Box 850
Bozeman, MT 59771
Phone: (406) 585-2580

Rena Carlson
Small Business Administration (SBA)
10 West 15th Street, Suite 1100
Helena, MT 59626
Phone: (406) 441-1081

Larry Gallagher, Operations Specialist
U.S. HUD Field Office
7 West Sixth Avenue
Helena, MT 59601
Phone: (406) 447-1480

Randy Hanson, Regional Dev. Officer
Montana Department of Commerce
Havre, MT 59501
Phone: (406) 262-9579

Suzie David, Director
Great Falls Development
PO Box 2568
Great Falls, MT 59403
Phone: (406) 454-1934

Dale Mahugh
Customer Issues Coordinator
NorthWestern Energy
40 East Broadway
Butte, MT 59701
Ph: (406) 497-3756
Fx: (406) 497 - 4034
Email: Dale.Mahugh@northwestern.com
Web: www.northwesternenergy.com

TOURISM AND AREA REVENUE ENHANCEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Conrad community leaders and participants in the assessment process desire to enhance the opportunity to bring more people into their community to spend time, spend money and find out more about small town Montana and the unique aspects of this community. To do this, a number of options were suggested and some groundwork has already been laid to address this goal. Building from this foundation and building on the strengths of the community, the assessment team suggests/recommends the following:

A significant, but not mandatory, piece of this picture is the upgrading of the North interstate I-15 exit into the city. This issue is addressed in detail elsewhere in the assessment team overview.

Museums:

- A number of participants in the self-assessment process indicated a museum(s) in the community would assist in drawing people into the city. This is a realistic goal to pursue and has been utilized in other communities. The most important and difficult thing to keep in mind is that there has to be some uniqueness, one of a kind or site-specific topic to differentiate your project from others elsewhere. The antique/vintage car museum mentioned several times is a good way to attract those interested in this type of attraction, but this is only a small segment of those traveling Montana and display space is limited.

While this project should certainly be brought to fruition, it is suggested that additional possibilities be explored, including the following:

- Not to overlook the agricultural roots of the community and the entire area, it seems to be a logical extension of the museum and interpretive concept to promote what originally brought growth and vitality to Conrad. There are agricultural equipment displays in several areas of Montana already, so the challenge is to make this different than other displays. By virtue of the larger farms and associated equipment that is required to till and harvest lands in this area, is something that could set you apart from others. Additionally, it was mentioned in more than one discussion that an interpretive crops display should be considered. This creates a logical extension showing people what was/is grown and harvested in the area and it might be valuable to associate price

of the raw product to finished goods and help in a positive way to portray the plight of the Montana farmer today.

Montana has a wealth of contacts to assist in these endeavors. Montana State University and its College of Agriculture is an excellent resource to contact to explore what type of displays would be most effective and also the manner in which they could affect the most personal interest to those not familiar with agriculture and its history. They may also be interested in allowing this to become a student-affiliated project which would offer technical assistance including engineering, marketing and promotional expertise helping to bring the project from concept to reality. The Montana State University Agricultural Experiment Stations and Extension Service are also excellent resources to bring into the mix concerning the interpretive displays of crops and farming methods. As all of these entities are under the domain of the College of Agriculture at MSU, it is suggested that a contact be established with the Dean of the College of Agriculture, Sharon Quisenberry at (406)-994-3681, and at a later date possibly even involve MSU President Geoffrey Gamble. It would also be a plus if a draft proposal be created explaining what you hope to accomplish and the ways in which they might assist in the process.

Interpretive Center:

- Conrad is truly located in a one of a kind location that most people do not know about or comprehend. For many years, Conrad has played a major role in the protection of Americans from world threats. The minuteman missile program has been an economic boon and then bust for the area. We believe that Conrad can exploit this to their monetary advantage. By creating a museum and interpretive center to depict this part of the Cold War that the entire country has heard about, but rarely understand, this has the potential to create significant interest.

A contact made with the Malmstrom Air force Base missile command has revealed that there are two decommissioned missile shells in their possession presently and were originally intended for their Base display. With the heightened security now present in our country and the limited access to federal installations, they may be willing to allow one of these and possibly other artifacts as well to go off base and become part of an interpretive presentation of this important part of our nations history. The Commander of the Malmstrom Missile Wing, Colonial Altin, may be contacted at (406)-731-3411. Because of the increased security concern at federal installations, this type of partnership with a community may be a win-win situation for all concerned. The partially completed silo installation outside of town would also fit well into this interpretive history to show the massive effort involved with these sites. Our Senators, Burns and Baucus, and Congressman Rehberg may also be able to assist in securing credibility and financial assistance to help this project gain momentum.

This notoriety could also foster other offshoot events, including, but certainly not limited to model rocket displays, launch competitions and other rocket/missile related sporting events.

Recreation:

- Recreational opportunities also garnered considerable attention within the community. There were three items that were brought up repeatedly during the community discussions. The first was a skateboard park for the young people of Conrad and provide them with constructive and positive influences keeping them out of trouble. There appeared to be considerable interest in this project for the young people of the community. While these parks are not cost prohibitive to construct, it is still a significant undertaking for a smaller community. It sounded like young boarders are also sincere about stepping forward to help make this park a reality. Volunteers can do much of the work, however materials will cost a fair amount of money.

To aid in making this become a reality, one or more possible sponsors should be identified to assist in securing funds to purchase the materials. To make this a win for all involved, the site could be named in honor of the primary donor(s) if they so chose. One major concern expressed by many with a project of this nature is liability. In the past, liability insurance was prohibitively expensive, especially for smaller communities. This however is not the case presently. The Montana Municipal Insurance Association will now insure these parks and at a relatively reasonable cost.

It is one thing to make the park a reality; it is another to keep it in properly maintained and in good operating order. To aid in covering costs, some type of minimal fee schedule should be considered. Users also tend to take better care of a facility when they take ownership and even have to pay something to use it. Additionally, if this park does become reality, it would be the only one in a fairly large area. Users from surrounding areas would come to use the park. Interest could also be garnered from travelers with children seeking a short respite from traveling. Children often drive the decisions of the parents when traveling. This would allow the kids to do something they enjoy doing and make the rest of the trip more enjoyable for all. Once off of the road, they may choose to see some of the other sites as well. In each case, this means more people coming into the community and injecting new money into the local economy.

Two entities have recently established skateboard parks in their communities. Libby built a park for approximately \$10,000 and a considerable amount of donated labor and materials. Helena also completed a park this year. The cost of their project was considerably higher at \$69,000.

The same philosophy applies to the new sports complex the community can be so proud of. Continue the efforts to attract area tournaments to fully utilize the grounds and especially consider the plight of smaller surrounding communities that do not have the facilities locally to sponsor such events in their own towns. This type of partnership can be a winning combination for both communities. It is suggested that the parks and recreation department contact their counterparts in surrounding communities to suggest such an offer. This would provide a much needed impact on local restaurants, lodging, RV and fuel facilities.

While outside funding sources for these types of programs is rather difficult to come by, the following is a possibility:

Turner foundation/ Turner Youth Development Community Initiative Program
1 CNN Center, Suite 1090 South Tower, Atlanta GA 30303
<http://www.turnerfoundation.org/turner/application.html>

Applications and funding are reviewed quarterly with December 15,
March 15, June 15 and September 15 deadlines.

Another possibility is making more people, locals and out of area travelers alike, aware of the fine community golf course Conrad offers. The problem here is that there is competition in all directions and single handedly, there is not much possibility to make significant inroads in this area. While not a totally unique concept, the teaming up of several communities in a joint effort to promote their course and those of the other surrounding towns could do much to develop an area-wide wide golfing destination. In so doing, each community shares in the increased traffic to golf their own course. It also would help to bring communities together to share in a project and perhaps more importantly help to erase at least some of the competition that currently exists between towns presently. If this is not done, much time is spent trying to outdo the other and no one wins. Efforts that are directed at beating the other in garnering outside tourist dollars and even economic stimulus projects often can be self-destructive and create a situation where no one wins.

In this scenario, a punch card or some similar mechanism could be utilized with access to all courses that chose to participate. With the exception of East Glacier, none of the communities in the area could be considered a destination resort area, where people would stay for an extended period of time. Also it is important to keep in mind that you are not looking to compete with the larger, better known courses in Montana.

By partnering, each community can share in the added revenue that this would bring. This has the opportunity to bring each location into the sights of golfers and allow them to enjoy great golfing and scenery at a very reasonable price. Tournaments such as Northern Plains Open or some other title could be initiated to gain recognition of the area and possibly even coverage in one or more of the golfing magazines.

Conrad also has a plus in that the newly upgraded airport is in very close proximity to the course. It is not unusual for groups of golfers to travel in this fashion. This is another way to make outsiders aware of Conrad and provide visitors with a reason to tell others and return at a later date.

NorthWestern Energy is available to offer energy related expertise for any of these projects and others as it relates to lighting, energy efficiency, line extension needs, new business energy requirements and other economic development projects, etc. there is also sufficient energy infrastructure in place to meet the anticipated needs of the Conrad community for the foreseeable future. We stand ready to assist in helping Conrad in preparing for the twenty first century.

Al Jones
Regional Development Officer
DOC/Southcentral MT
2004 Miles Avenue
Billings, MT 59102
Ph: (406) 655-1696
Fx: (406) 655-0899
Email: aljonesrdo@attbi.com
Web: www.discoveringmontana.com

Al Jones - Background and Experience:

- *Regional Development Officer, Business Resources Division, Montana Dept. of Commerce serving primarily the 10 counties surrounding Billings.*
- *Chairman, Crimestoppers of Yellowstone County*
- *Past Chair, Community Crime Prevention Council*
- *Past President/Grants Chair, Breakfast Exchange Club of Billings (funding child abuse prevention and children at risk programs, \$1 million over past 10 years.)*
- *Founding director of the Billings Small Business Development Center (67 businesses started, 400 counseled, 800 trained, 300 jobs created, 11 turnarounds)*
- *Past member, American Society for Industrial Security and trainer at International Security Conference West*
- *15 years as an entrepreneur or sales & marketing manager.*
- *Worked with over 1300 companies*

Note: These points only reflect my own experience, reading, and observations and have not been reviewed or endorsed by anyone else in the Montana Dept. of Commerce so they are not to be considered an official or even majority opinion, suggestion, or policy. I refer to the crime prevention background as why there's a lot about that in here.

CONRAD
A MOUNTAIN OF RESOURCES & OPPORTUNITIES
IN THE GOLDEN TRIANGLE

Building Conrad as a regional service center instead of a retail satellite of Great Falls

While Great Falls sheer size and hour's distance can appear overwhelming, just as Billings or Missoula does, it's more of a paper tiger than one would expect. Folks from smaller communities and farms are generally less than thrilled by confusing and unfamiliar streets with heavy traffic so these shopping trips are driven more by necessity, need for variety, anonymity, and the experience of eating out somewhere different/catching a movie. Conrad can offer much of this to surrounding communities probably for about an hour's radius if it extends the way it advertises individual businesses/offers and focuses on more "magnet" businesses.

"Magnet" businesses Conrad already has include the implement dealers, the car dealers/service garages, Arnott's furniture, lumberyard, the grain elevators, the machine shops, the hospital/outpatient services, accountants, lawyers, dentists, etc. Consumer and business services get overlooked but since they have to be done typically with the customer present, folks won't/can't drive too far for most of them. Direct mail

campaigns by your businesses out over the 60-100 mile radius would be a way to build more customers (improving your local businesses' health/growth/wages/buying power) is a very efficient and low-key way to let people know what you have. By partnering businesses seeking the same customers for different products, i.e. mailing to farmers offering implements, seed, pickups, recliners, tax preparation, will-writing, teeth cleaning, and pump repair could be done with a series of flyers for each business mailed in a single envelope 3-4x a year with the businesses splitting the cost of the postage, mailing list, stuffing, and envelope. If you want to pursue this, e-mail me and I'll provide more help.

Another route to these customers can be using the **zoned-distribution of the Great Falls Tribune for an inserted flyer**. Newspaper-inserted flyers are unusually effective tools as so much more product information can be included (often these are available from manufacturers and just need a local imprint of the dealer's address/phone). Each newspaper has zones of circulation so by looking at a circulation map with a Tribune ad rep, you can select say Pondera, Toole, Liberty, Teton, & Glacier counties' Tribune subscribers. The longer you make the insert, especially past 8 pages long, the more effective it is so again partnering with other Conrad businesses is a smart step. Co-operative advertising programs from the manufacturers can generally be used on this too which can cut costs by 50%+.

Related to the above, is **coordinating joint sales events** in Conrad and then promoting them together to reduce advertising costs and build customer traffic. An example would be all the implement dealers, car dealers, Arnott's, and the lumberyard doing a Harvest Sale, showcasing new models, hot deals on used/trade-ins, special financing, free hot dogs/pop or coffee/pancakes, a live radio remote from perhaps KMON-AM, and most of the other retailers posting sale signs in their windows and putting some merchandise out on the sidewalk.

Another could be a Tax-Season Sale combining the CPA's, bars, restaurants, lumberyard/Arnott's for using that tax refund check on home improvement or furniture, and maybe a swing-band dance at the high school (combat the winter blahs) or comedians at the restored Orpheum theater. Summer ones could tie in with water recreation at the reservoir or events at the ball field. Even golf tournaments can be nice draws given say 10 foursomes or 20 adds a lot of area customers into town that day (golf tournaments are a very cost-effective fundraiser for most charities and will introduce many people to your course.)

Growing the customer base for Conrad's existing businesses

is the best, fastest, cheapest, fairest, enduring way to add a lot of good jobs locally in many diverse ways (a more robust economy) and also builds the overall advantages of Conrad. If every business in Conrad added 1-2 employees a year, you'd have new jobs for 50-100 households each year. Over a 5-year period that growth would be a net 200-400 jobs. Examples would be Conrad's wood shops and machine shops-with the right marketing, more clients, higher margin work, additional technology, each could grow to employ 10-40 people over the next 5 years while without it, they'll grow far more slowly. Conrad's truck body and food manufacturers are also poised for considerable growth, with help that small manufacturers often don't get at critical times; this could be another

50-100 jobs given their base employment of over 50 now (it's a lot easier to build than start-up.)

Another tactic would be to include a year's subscription to the Conrad newspaper for customers from outside Conrad when they bought significant amounts from the businesses. This would be a partnered deal with the paper to expand it's subscriber base and the audience for local advertising, but more trickily, it would keep folks outside Conrad informed about what was available and happening here. By being aware of sales, events, entertainment at the theater/school/ball field, golf tournaments, how-to workshops at the lumberyard/ag chemical/seed/hospital/school, new places to eat or menu specials, church programs, auctions, garage and estate sales, etc. you'll build their recognition of how many reasons there are to swing into Conrad this weekend.

Supper Club that's a regional draw...

A long-term goal would be to develop an existing local place or a new one into a regional restaurant. These come about pretty quirkily, based more on the food and word-of-mouth/restaurant reviews than a fancy building or big ad campaign. Driving 25-80 miles for a great meal and nice evening is a great pull for empty-nest and mature couples and Great Falls diners could be pulled this way as well as passing through Canadians/tourists and the region's local residents.

A step towards this could be getting the cooks at the existing restaurants to start cruising the www.FoodTV.com and www.topsecretrecipes.com websites to pick up new tricks of the trade from great restaurant chefs (Food TV's alone has 30,000 restaurant grade recipes to search).

Another trick is the ingredients. ***By basing their food increasingly on fresh ingredients from the area Hutterite colonies*** (their much tastier chicken is all that my wife and I buy anymore, as well as their Yukon Gold potatoes, etc.) you'd offer distinctive, great-tasting meals worth a drive and unavailable elsewhere. A wine list also helps and wine reps from the distributors are thrilled at the opportunity to develop and update this at any restaurant.

Targeting meals at people in their 40's-70's is where the growth opportunity is and these are the same people who can be significant customers for other Conrad businesses like legal, accounting, insurance, banking, construction, furniture, new cars, etc.

The food we had in Conrad was consistently good, the places were clean, and the service friendly so I think it's more a tweaking with menu offerings, less common ingredients (like Hutterite Yukon Gold mashed potatoes instead of Idaho Baker Russets), and getting the word out about lots of specials (entrée specials, theme nights, ethnic cuisine nights, holiday meals, etc.) which allows lower cost testing of dishes than adding them to the regular menu while also providing more novelty for local and regional diners.

It's amazing how the more varied your dining is, the more bored and finicky you get so there's an almost infinite level of opportunity in this but you have to keep reinventing the menu, the entrees, seasonings, cooking methods like salmon on a cedar plank, etc.

ODD NOTE FROM MR. SCIENCE: A lot of the food should be fairly high-fat by the way as that requires a high-profit margin beverage to scour the fat off the tongue and the more beverages they consume, the bigger the tips so the better the service becomes (a good wait staffer can make \$2,000+ mo. which is a good job in Montana.)

Moving past high fat meals with cocktails, Conrad's older population and health care strength would probably make a Health Food Store, i.e. a Bonanza Health Foods franchise, an logical retail operation in Conrad and an other regional "magnet" store. These can also be an excellent local outlet for locally grown produce, honey, Timeless Seeds, specialty grains, cooking oils, buffalo, etc. thus helping your area producers. Health food stores at this point don't require the marketing investment that grocery stores do and provide higher profit margins on low volumes so they're nearly ideal for small food makers.

Farmer's Market as a regional draw:

An obvious and previously done effort in Conrad would be to revive your local farmer's market but to promote it as a regional draw and do it where it builds wander-in traffic to your local stores/cafes that Saturday morning. In the Billings farmers' market I've noticed that Hutterite colonies are like anchor stores in a shopping mall, they offer so much variety, quality, and volume that they alone make it worthwhile and allow lots of other folks to be very specialized and small scale. A third of Farmers' Market include crafts so this can be more of a marketing opportunity than you'd expect.

Some folks are just raising flowers or spices in their back yards and making some extra bucks this way, others truck farm an acre and specialize in items like cantaloupes, pumpkins, sweet corn, watermelons, garlic, etc.. It's a great outlet for honey, baked goods, jams & preserves, pastries, cooked as you watch crepes, ethnic specialty foods, local musicians playing for tips (we get string bands, bagpipers, guitarists, violinists, barbershoppers, trumpeters, etc. ranging in ages from about 8 to 65-it's a nice way for school band/orchestra kids to pick up a few bucks and adds a lot to the atmosphere). The following two websites have considerable information on doing this:

<http://www.farmersmarkets.net/>
<http://www.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets/>

There's also a how-to book on farmer's markets that I found online that's very informative and these sources can point you towards.

The key concepts for this are:

1. Make it fun. It's an experience and a socializing opportunity, not just rutabagas on a folding table.
2. Charge enough for display space that it pays someone enough to run it, the marketmaster, which could be a service club, church, Chamber, retiree, etc.
3. Place it so people naturally wander into local stores, dealerships, and cafes.
4. Have food and beverages ready for consumption right there (kettle popcorn works very well as does espresso) as people come or become hungry.
5. Enforce quality and locally produced standards so people don't resell produce like cherries, apples, berries, etc..

6. Sweet corn is a heckuva draw so make sure you've got multiple sources with different varieties like Peaches & Cream and then specially promote it. Corn on the cob is a great lure.
7. Don't underestimate the opportunities to sell fresh-cut flowers, bedding plants, house plants, decorative plant material for centerpieces, etc. so this is a great tie-in for your florists, greenhouses, home flower patches, etc. who should exhibit directly at it rather than hope traffic finds them.
8. Clubs and organizations can get together and market a booth effectively, i.e. baked goods, pies, lefse, cabbage rolls, pasties, lasagna, croissants, egg rolls, etc.
9. Make it unmissable by where it's place for traffic patterns so someone can't come to Conrad and overlook it. Get creative with highway signage and place it far enough out that a driver has several minutes to decide to pull over and take a look.
10. Rent tables, perhaps from the churches or school, and there's another convenience and revenue source.

Reuses for the abandoned Albertsons/Buttrey store

Being obsessed with adding to Conrad's tax base, quality job creation, and range of local services, I'm not going to explore the many suggestions for recreation uses of this building.

Logical thoughts (to me):

1. Large **health food store** as this would complement the other retailers and be a regional draw.
2. A broad-lines **ag-focused store** like a Shipton's, Tractor Supply Company, etc. that carries some hardware, tools, clothing, sporting goods, footwear, lawn mowers, etc.. as that would fill some gaps and further draw the surrounding populations.
3. A **carpeting/flooring/draperies** store as this would complement Arnott's furniture and the kitchen cabinet shops/building contractors. The many homes for sale when we draw in buyers suggest a sizable latent market for new floorings, wallpaper, drapes, etc. as these are common new owner changes. I worked on the ownership transition of one of these in Big Timber, 75 miles from Billings and Bozeman, and was amazed at the local customer base he'd built there.
4. A **"craftsmans'-outlet"** furniture showroom for the Hutterite colonies and the 2 local cabinet-makers. This would complement Arnott's and increase overall furniture shopping here from the surrounding region including Great Falls while allowing much better profit margins for the furniture makers so they can add people and technology like CNC routers, CNC lathes, etc. that make them much more competitive. That would also drive kitchen cabinets demand, grow local upholstering and drapery-making businesses, antique restoration, and local artists sales (putting local artists' works on the wall for sale is a nice way to make money off blank walls in a furniture store.) This could be a joint venture between Arnott's (marketing, mgt., finance) and the furniture makers for the best division of labor.
5. A **combination Video Library (3-4000 video titles for rent) and City Brew** coffeehouse (same ownership based in Billings, Becky Reno runs it) would address the winter entertainment shortfalls and the coffeehouse is a nice

- alternative for teens, adults, and seniors (my wife and I take her mom there most Saturday mornings) would fill that space (and be another regional draw.)
6. **Splitting the space between a Payless Shoes Store, a Hallmark cards** and gifts franchise, a \$1 Store, and a Bath & Bodyworks store would all complement existing retail and the area customer base well, essentially making it a mini-mall. www.chainstoreage.com is a good place to research the economics of retail stores (sizes, sales, growth) as well as identify specific store chains to contact. As everything cycles, I'd wonder if one could lure Sears into there which would address a lot of retail goods shortages in the area and end the Shelby "we've got underwear here" advantage.
 7. The lumberyard could **purchase a TruValue Hardware** franchise and set the building up as a hardware store with a lot of home improvement stuff like sinks, faucets, vanities, paint, doors, windows, countertops, etc. that don't fit well at the lumberyard's space. This could strengthen both sides of the business by adding more inventory, deeper lines, and making it more of a one-stop shop for the region.
 8. A **crafts supplies/fabric store** might do well there as the older population suggests a lot of people who sew, knit, crochet, paint, embroider, quilt, etc. so perhaps a JoAnn Fabrics, Ben Franklin Arts & Crafts (I understand you used to have a general lines Ben Franklin there but they're individual franchises now), or independent store. This again is a regional magnet, particularly for Fall and Winter trade when people are homebound more by the weather.
 9. I'd wonder if Denver-based **Hastings** might be interested (books, music, videos, software) as that would be a regional magnet and could share the Great Falls' store's ad budget. That store is landlocked on 10th Ave. S. so the only way to increase their sales here would be another satellite location.
 10. A modern **pet store** would work there, with live animals as well as food, supplies, and onsite grooming. Pet stuff has good to great profit margins and I'd again suspect that the older populations of this region means a lot of pet dogs and cats as well as a decent pet bird and aquarium market. That would also fit the regional magnet designation. As the only chains appear to be the pet superstores like Petco, Petsmart, etc., this would need to be an independent, locally-owned store.
 11. An **auto parts store**, i.e. a NAPA, CarQuest, Checker, Champion, etc. in that space would stock enough selection to draw regionally and because of the knowledge required of counter men, those are good-paying jobs. This also facilitates local repair and body shop operations considerably with delivered parts.
 12. Of course **it could always be** an antique store, pawnshop, florist, mattress store, sporting goods shop, Harley-Davidson dealer, rental shop (tools mostly), hobby supplies store, Radio Shack, commercial printing shop, Christian books/music/apparel store, or drugstore.

Productive uses for the abandoned Air Force missile control bunker

Not having seen it myself, two thoughts came to mind:

1. It would be a great structure to convert into a Cold War museum, tying to the area's first line of defense/attack in the event of nuclear war. Considerable

surplus equipment could likely be secured from the military and defense contractors like Boeing/Hughes Missiles, General Dynamics, TRW, Lockheed-Martin, Raytheon, etc., probably best done as request letters by aides to Montana's Senators. With some cash, a lot of Russian artifacts could be purchased as well. CTA Architects in Billings & Great Falls has done a lot of museum work and analysis including the Lewis & Clark Interpretive Center, Yellowstone Art Museum, etc. so they'd be good to talk to about an initial walk through and some conversion costs/estimates-Jim Wertmann at 406-248-4788 is the biggest museum buff among the partners and a good starting point.

2. The other thought, my personal preference for job creation, would be to thoroughly analyze and photograph (digitally) the building and grounds and then shop it with federal labs that might be needing a branch lab facility with those characteristics.

<http://www.federallabs.org/>

There are over 200 federal labs with Montana's largest being the National Institute of Health's Rocky Mountain Labs in Hamilton which employs around 400 people. Conrad's affordable and plentiful housing would be a real attractor for lab folk in high housing cost areas like Maryland/Virginia, California, Northern Colorado, Massachusetts, Illinois, etc.. I suspect the National Institute of Health facilities in Maryland or even Fort Detrick there (the Army's biological and chemical warfare research site) could be very interested in this odd structure's advantages in security, biological containment, remoteness, access to Malmstrom's security forces/air services, etc..

This could bring 10-100 high-paying technical and scientific jobs which would consume much of the surplus housing, add kids to the school, and solid families for the local community/customer base. These jobs pay \$30-100,000/yr, which is great money to raise a family in Conrad but in places where a basic house costs \$350-450,000 that's a tight stretch. This would allow spouses to choose to work rather than have to work to make huge mortgage payments, kids to go to the schools ranked #1 in the U.S. for 13 years olds' science scores, and dumping a 3 hour roundtrip commute down into an hour (freeing up 10 hours a week!).

After identifying and contacting specific labs' research directors with e-mails with attached digital photos/descriptions of the site, the Senators' staffs would be of considerable help since each directly impacts their funding through their committee seats and always get their calls returned. Liz Ching at Baucus's office in Billings and Betsy Allen at Burn's office in Bozeman have a lot of technology interest and would be the logical points of contact.

WINDFARMS

These were brought up several times and the U.S. Dept. of Energy's National Renewable Energy Labs and American Wind Energy Association's websites are full of great information and contacts about this. A surprising resource is Yahoo's Distributed Generation chatroom which is a lot of power engineers etc. discussing the realities, performance, economics, etc.. Rough rules of thumb which are changing considerably as wind energy expands around the country towards the European model where 30-40% of their power in some countries come from windfarms.

- A. Low interest rates make this more feasible than usual as the biggest cost is the equipment and erecting it, not ongoing operation.
- B. Around 4.5 cents per kilowatt-hour is a general rule for making windpower profitable.
- C. Big windfarms (for use by more than a building or two) cost about a half million per megawatt of power produced.
- D. Your rural electric cooperative could put these up with 0% money through USDA Rural Development's rural utility service loans.
- E. A very promising use is small-scale windmills to power remote irrigation pumps. These windmills can cost \$10-20,000.
- F. Storage of the power is an issue so a standalone site like a ranch generally needs a significant array of big batteries and solar cells to balance the inputs for when the wind isn't blowing.
- G. To decide on a windfarm site, it's prudent practice to stick an anemometer there for a full year to get enough wind data (speed, hours, daypart, direction) to determine feasibility. The National Center for Appropriate Technology in Butte knows a lot about this process.
- H. The most logical site to my moment's impression is across the road from your industrial park as power distribution lines already run there and the businesses nearby could be good power customers themselves.
- I. Rough rule of thumb is a megawatt's power production handles a 1000 homes as each home averages 750 kilowatts consumption. So Conrad's total power needs would probably be under 4 MW (businesses use a lot more power than the typical home.)

USING THE ORPHEUM THEATER FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

When this is completed you'll be able to draw regionally, especially for live shows. You may be able to get more live shows by tapping into the campus entertainment committees-generally connected with the Student Unions-at University of Great Falls, University of Montana, Carroll College, Montana Tech, and MSU/Northern as acts that contact them are looking for as many fill-in dates on a route as possible so you could be surprised at the variety of lecturers, comedians, musical acts, touring dance or plays, opera companies, one-person shows, military bands, etc. as there are hundreds of acts that make a full or partial living on the college circuit (I was on that committee in college.)

Don't forget the churches as there are a rising number of Christian-music performers who are primarily promoted and tour through churches- some of these acts have drawn thousands of people in Billings and it's probably the fastest growing touring trend. Other sources would be the bookers at the 4 Seasons Arena and Civic Center in Great Falls who end up turning down a number of inquiries that might grab Conrad. That'll spread your operating budget across more shows, allow season and multiple ticket packages, and build a habit of coming there from around the region.

Everyone focuses on the entertainment but a lot of the profit is in the concessions and related merchandise (apparel, recordings, posters, etc.) sales so be sure to set up the theater with natural facilities for those sales. It's surprising how often that gets overlooked. You can also partner with local restaurants to do a dinner & a show package for an easy night on the town.

Other potential sources for shows: MSU's Shakespeare in the Park, the theatre and performing arts/music programs at UM, the Montana Vigilante Theatre Players out of Virginia City, the Great Falls Symphony-perhaps quartets and quintets, high school band competitions, the Round Barn in Red Lodge books many appropriate acts, Jack Gladstone out of Browning, etc. Gladstone could likely identify some particularly effective Blackfoot storytellers and that could be a very popular show/tie-in to the Lewis & Clark bicentennial and beyond (George Bird Grinnell's "*Blackfoot Lodge Tales*" is a good reference on this.)

Movies can come from two sources. Distributors who handle current releases like this week's top movies and Distributors like Swank who handle older films that are much cheaper (so you could do John Wayne festivals, comedy classics, big musicals, great films, children's classics, the wide-screen movies like "Lawrence of Arabia" that lose so much on TV, horror movies, etc..) That would allow weekend or weeknight shows in the summer that only needed 10-40 people showing up to break even and could be tied as fundraisers (the club, youth group, church committee throws a dinner beforehand, everyone goes to the movie afterwards, and it's \$25/head) which also helps guarantee a break-even/profitable audience. <http://www.swank.com/>

Organizing a town theatrical company to stage your own plays, probably in conjunction with the high school's drama, art, and music faculty, really energizes a local theater and provides a great winter blahs remedy. Conrad's older population suggests that there are likely a surprising number of people who have years of experience in playing musical instruments and can read sheet music so a town band or orchestra may not be as absurd as it first sounds.

SOMETHING TO SEE & DO TO DRAW FOLKS OFF THE HIGHWAY

- **Cold-War-based Tourism**-see above for the big underground facility. I picture building what looks like the bottom six feet or so of a Minuteman missile and have that protruding from the ground next to the highway exit to Conrad with a

battery powered-smoke generator inside putting off a thin trail of smoke so it looks the missile just buried itself into the soil (heaped and covered with charcoal around it.) Next to that is a sign for the Cold War Museum. A little shuttle bus would take them out to a decommissioned missile silo for a walking tour/descent, past the former missile technician housing in Great Falls, and then to the main facility underground.

- **Lewis & Clark-based Tourism**

Recreate John Coulter's Run from the Blackfeet is one of the most thrilling moments of the Lewis & Clark expedition and I think tourists would not only really enjoy watching it, I bet a fair number would pay a hundred bucks to try doing it themselves (run the gauntlet, outrace the warriors, defeat one at a dead run, jump in the river, and hide with a hollow reed for breathing.) It would also be a great piece for a cable channel like ESPN 2, the Outdoors Channel, the History Channel, or The Learning Channel to film which would be great promo for the area during the bicentennial.

A low-cost approach many seem to be missing on L&C is to **offer tours of the native plant life** which L&C spent a great deal of time and effort documenting. This is in an interesting aspect and appeals to older tourists who garden themselves while only requiring a knowledgeable person and a preplanned route. It sounded like there are several people in Conrad who already have the knowledge and interest to do an excellent job with this. As the journey of the Corps of Discovery is about exploration and research rather than conquest or trade, botanical tours drawing from Meriwether Lewis's notes/drawings seems like an appropriate tourism experience (and great for school tours as well.) Finishing the tour with a meal made from local native plants would be popular as well. Source books can be "*Montana's Native Plants & Early Peoples*" from Falcon Press, "*The Prairie World*" by David Costello, and USDA Forest Service's "*Range Plant Handbook*".

- **Lake/Reservoir-based Recreation**

It sounds like you have lots of potential there to again be a regional draw. It sounds like a good place for fishing boats, rubber raft rentals, windsurfing board rentals and lessons, jet ski rentals and lessons, water-skiing?, developing a big sandy beach for beach parties/barbecues/picnics/family outings...?

In dry Montana or most other places, folks will drive a long ways to find some water to splash around in and sit next to so I'd look beyond just fishing there. A key might be opening a concessionaire there (bait, tackle, boat fuel, rentals, food, beer, snacks) both for amenities and site management. It generally takes that to make a place safe and convenient as well as more family-friendly. The "I'm always prepared" folks frown on it but most of us are only partially prepared at best so convenience fits a lot more of the market.

- **Hunting/Fishing-based Recreation**

Pheasant Competition would not only emphasize the quality of your hunting but creates a minor, newsworthy event that the Tribune would probably print the results from. More media coverage would likely come from having fun with it like having local hunters compete for the most elaborate or clever blind, sexiest camo outfit on a man over 250 pounds (may not want to photograph that one), best homemade decoys, most accurate bird calls, best pheasant or duck recipes involving hot peppers, .22 cal. Rifle or pistol hunts for fast-moving waterfowl, etc.. The goofier it is, the more likely you are to get a few minutes on weekend local news (that's the hardest half hour to fill) or picked up by broader media or an enthusiast magazine.

Shooting Clays Competitions this seems like a natural, year-round and obviously doesn't require much of an investment to set up for (the right empty land, a couple of clay throwers, and some cases of clays, maybe a table and some folding chairs, discrete shrubbery or port-a-pottie, and you're set.)

4-Wheeler races for time, degree of difficulty, navigating to points, etc. could be a popular activity using the terrain and appealing to the same market.

Ranch-based hunting: stay in bunkhouse/spare bedroom, fee-based, meals included, guided by landowner, minimal gear or great campsites. This has a lot of potential. I'd wonder if the county could pass an ordinance requiring non-local hunters to have signed permission from a landowner or a guide, moving this more towards fee-based hunting and reducing the number of uninvited hunters blithely cutting fences, leaving gates open, shooting all over, and leaving their trash behind.

Joint website marketing to link all of this together so it's easy to plan and schedule.

Do articles with photos for enthusiast magazines. There are a number of national outdoor writers scattered around the state and you can always just send descriptions, invitations, and hospitality offers to the editors of hunting magazines (Travel Montana at the Montana Dept. of Commerce may be able to help with that: Mary Boyle there is very skilled at these and very helpful 841-2893).

Outfitter raising pheasants to stock CRP-land hunts on (existing but discouraged)

- **Mountain-Biking races** would be good around Conrad and other Pondera communities as there isn't much road traffic and plenty of places to stop with a reasonable terrain. These can draw 100+ riders and make a good summer weekend promotion. Work with the local bicycle dealers in Great Falls as they're tuned in with the riding community (who are always looking for new views and new challenges.) Feeding and watering them is where the profit is and some will likely do some shopping. And if somebody has a spill, well it's just a profitable day for your hospital.

- **A Waterslide complex** visible from the interstate would be another regional draw and can be put together for a few hundred thousand dollars using used water slides from other parks and starting modestly.

DIVERSIFYING THE ECONOMIC BASE

THINK SMALL & MANY BUSINESSES INSTEAD OF A FEW BIG EMPLOYERS.

Why?

- A. It's much easier to start small businesses in homes, sheds, empty storefronts, etc. than offer build-to-suits for companies looking to relocate sizable operations. Gateway Computers started in the barn loft of the founders' folks farm in rural South Dakota about 15 years ago. Sun Microsystems started in a dorm room (as did Microsoft and Dell). Hewlett-Packard started in their garage way out in the boondocks, known mostly for orange groves and few people. Ford started in a shed in his yard. Revlon & Estee Lauder started in 3rd floor 1 room apartments. IBM started in a U.S. Census employee's home while Apples were built in a founder's garage for the first year. Playboy's first 4 issues were completely assembled on the owner's kitchen table using his neighbors' help. WordPerfect was developed in a faculty office at the University of Utah. McDonald's franchising was run from Ray Kroc's home office for the first year+. Nearly all great businesses start in people's homes/garages and they mostly stay where they happened to start at.

- B. Small ventures are much easier to bootstrap financially with personal savings, friends and relatives investments/loans/co-signings, credit cards, home equity loans, local investors, and small bank loans. Even today most of the biggest companies were founded with less than \$50,000, giving lie to the much-hyped tech boom companies that burned through millions of dollars while trying to figure out what would make money. The more cash you have at the start, the more expensive (and fatal) the inevitable early mistakes are, so it seems to be more like having too much whiskey rather than too much flour when you're homesteading. Think of the number of big-time outfits in Montana that ran out of money at least once: Northern Pacific Railroad, Pasta Montana, Washington Corp., Touch America/Montana Power, Jore, Life of Montana, etc. Even General Motors spent 4 years in bankruptcy when it became the world's largest car company even though the original little car companies had been profitable and McDonalds was cash starved the first 9 years or so.

- C. By having many different businesses pursuing different sets of customers, using different buildings/resources/staff/advisors, and in different growth stages, the local economy is much more resilient than following the swings of ag prices, military postings, rainfall, etc.. Across America, an average of 10% of all businesses cease operations each year so if you don't have new ones starting and others growing, it's easy to have a town's business economy erode away over 5-10 years. Many North Dakota farm towns have watched

their population melt away, all of their businesses and institutions close one by one, to where there are some former towns of 3-5000 people with fewer than a dozen residents left according to a U.S. News & World Report article last year. Think of it like having a stock portfolio with a hundred companies in it, some up, some down, but overall growing 10% a year, compared to having a stock portfolio with just Enron, Lucent, and Worldcom stock in it.

- D. A corporate branch or chain store ends up sending most of its money to HQ or central suppliers and gets most of it's services internally. Every small business in Conrad will each need CPA's, lawyers, printers, computers, buildings, phones, faxes, websites, cleaning, signs, equipment, banks, insurance, etc. so more businesses allow more businesses to come into being (often low-capital services businesses which can pay quite good wages) as well as strengthening the many businesses you have now (more clients.)

Great resources to explore this further:

Michael Shuman's "Going Local-Creating Self-Reliant Communities in a Global Age" has thousands of ideas and examples

Jane Jacob's "Cities & the Wealth of Nations"

David Birch's "Job Creation in America"

Karl Vesper "New Venture Strategies"

Amar Bhide "The Evolutions & Origins of New Businesses"

Ernesto Sirolli "Ripples on the Zambezi"

Peter Hall "Cities & Civilization"

David Landes "The Wealth & Poverty of Nations"

Nathan Rosenberg "How the West Got Rich"

Albert Hirschmann "The Strategy of Economic Development"

E.F. Schumacher "Small is Beautiful" & "Good Work"

A lot of histories of the West explore this as well. The development of diverse small businesses instead of a core industry and it's suppliers helps explain the long term growth and survival of Billings, Boise, Portland, Seattle, San Francisco, Denver, Phoenix, San Diego, Los Angeles, Omaha, Kansas City, Minneapolis, etc.

Those same principles are applicable to Conrad and Pondera County.

LOCAL MANUFACTURING

Why? According to UND's Dr. Larry Liestritz's research in similar communities in the Dakotas and Minnesota, small town's manufacturers are among the best building blocks for the overall town economy:

1. Their sales are overwhelmingly outside the county so those dollars are brand new to the local economy.
2. As most of a manufacturer's costs, typically around 50-70% are paid out in wages (avg. \$27,000/yr in MT!) and 50-70% of it's purchases of goods and services are made from local firms (that was a big surprise) like accountants, machine shops, lawyers, truckers, landlords, printers, etc. who also usually

pay above average wages to their employees, each new dollar brought in through sales by the manufacturer typically turns over 8-9x in the local economy (vs. a 2-3x turnover in most things.)

3. Manufacturing jobs tend to be stable, full-time (often with overtime), include health insurance/benefits, and offer more promotion opportunities than most small businesses, i.e. foreman, skilled machine operator, product designer, CNC programmer, estimator, sales, operations mgr., shipping mgr, etc.)
4. Locally owned companies rarely move or are closed as readily as branches of external corporations so the community has more control over its future. Profits then also stay locally and reinvestment in the facility and equipment to remain competitive is much easier.

An example of this would be Intercontinental Truck Body in Conrad's industrial park. With the larger building and new product lines, it has considerable growth potential and opportunities. Timeless Seeds is another example with increasing foreign sales and lots of domestic sales potential. MIM (?) already employs around 20 people in its specialty grain operations and also sounds like a high potential company in a good niche.

Conrad is ahead of many communities in the infrastructure it has in place already for small manufacturing companies: 2 sophisticated machine shops, 2 cabinet-makers already making furniture, a computer-aided-drafting service at Triangle Engineering, Lew Jones's computer skills, a strong high school shop/vo-ag program, Hutterite workers already effective in the self-directed work teams that manufacturing is trying to move into, inventive farmers with shop skills/extensive farm machine shops and in some cases ideas/patents for marketable products, an industrial park that includes existing buildings instead of just raw land, 3 aggressive banks, a considerable latent pool of private investors among the retirees and farmers, several cpas and attorneys in town, a commercial printer/layout operation at the newspaper, and likely other services we're not aware of in the area.

Great Falls has some strong resources at Dorsey & Whitney law firm (securities law), Great Falls Paper (packaging help), Suzanne David at the Small Business Development Center, graphic designers and ad agencies, etc.

Rather than focus on recruiting (although few communities try to recruit 1-10 person manufacturing businesses so there's probably more opportunity there than in most), the most reliable and productive route is to help the people already in and around Conrad grow their businesses and ideas.

I was impressed *by the surprising number of obviously effective managers/small business owners already present in Conrad which is a huge, secret advantage for building bigger, better, and more diverse businesses.*

Managerial competence is the hardest thing to find and Conrad is rich in it, as reflected by the many businesses Conrad has that compete in very difficult industries and that have died off in most Montana towns.

Identifying and researching manufacturing opportunities for the Conrad area:

Some that struck me in passing were:

- Super-premium shotgun making as you have most of the people here to do it and Bill Heckman of Livingston or Wolfgang Droege of Big Timber could fill in the missing pieces. Could be a good Superior Machine Shop project working with the gun engraver, custom gun stock maker, and area pheasant outfitters. See magazines like “*Gray’s Sporting Journal*” “*Double Gun Journal*” etc. as there’s a market for these \$10-40,000 new shotguns that could be handled by a 2-10 person operation. Niche firearm makers in Montana do surprisingly well and Conrad has a surprising amount of the right folks and skills already in place, let alone the obvious fine places for testing a great shotgun’s performance (require buyers come to Conrad to take delivery and test it on local waterfowl in a guided hunt a few miles out of town-that’d catch their attention.
- Specialty, exotic, organic, fresh pasta-making. This can be done on quite small scale and the town’s 4% Italian population along with the grain infrastructure are some good resources (Italian residents were found by a USDA study to be a stronger predictor of pasta plants getting done than proximity to ingredients or markets!) See Connor & Schiek’s “Food Processing, An Industrial PowerHouse in Transition.” This can be a nice 1-5+ person business with a lot of the sales to area restaurants. Great profit margins when done very small scale. The most successful pastemaker I knew started making it at home and ramped up from there to a 6 person operation providing fresh and specialty pastas to area restaurants and “take home” sales through his own small storefront-his margins were fabulous because he didn’t have lots of money invested in expensive production equipment or packaging runs or buildings. So this would be the opposite end of the spectrum from the far more ambitious Pasta Montana plant in Great Falls.
- Animal hide tanning with mashed critter brains. Traditional native technique, see Larry Belize’s “Braintanning the Sioux Way” text, that can readily be turned from an individual craft to a low-tech manufactured product requiring a pole barn and less than a thousand dollars worth of equipment so a nice off season farm enterprise. The brain-tanned deer, elk, buffalo hides are the starting point for Blackfeet or Chippewa Creek artifact makers, living history reenactors like the mountain man rendezvouchers, or apparel/tipi making. I’d help set one up years ago and there’s an enormous unmet demand for these hides. The buffalo feedlot near Conrad would be an excellent source for hides while elk and deer hides can either be purchased from hunters, wild game processors, or Pacific Hide & Fur in Great Falls. A tipi made from brain-tanned buffalo hides (typically about 13 full buffalo hides are required for a basic tipi while a society tipi could take 50) can readily bring \$50,000 from museums and enthusiasts with only a handful at best produced in the U.S. each year. Par fleche bags, war shields (made from the hide at the hump of an old bull), moccasins, saddles, etc. are excellent buffalo-hide

products with modern markets for historically correct artifacts by Blackfoot craftspeople, while elk hides make fine war shirts (\$1500-5000), elks'-tooth dresses, leggings, moccasins, etc. so as you can see, a production brain-tanning operation would provide a critical feedstock for many craftspeople, generating considerably more business impact than you'd expect.

- Small multi-species slaughterhouse/packing plant serving area hunters, specialty livestock producers, and selling to area restaurants (best margin at lowest selling cost). These can be done for a few hundred thousand dollars and employ 8-12 people quite readily, allowing a lot more innovation and value-adding for local meat producers and restaurants. Source-verified meat is becoming an increasingly important marketing/health issue and small plants can much more readily do it than huge plants. See Eric Schlosser's "*Fast Food Nation*", also "*Any Way You Cut It-Meat Packing in Small Town America*" by numerous authors, and "*The Meat We Eat*" (the 1948 version is more practical, how-to while the current edition has more science, best to buy both through www.BarnesandNoble.com's "Textbooks" section. The economies of scale appear to be returning to small operations and eluding the largest ones which is not uncommon in any form of manufacturing or processing. Wild game processing is actually the most profitable activity but the buffalo feedlot nearby and local cattle and hog production suggest additional opportunities. Finding experienced meat-cutters turns out to be the toughest part of these businesses.
- Windmill fabrication by your machine shops is probably pretty doable and could be sold through your implement dealers and installed by your electrical and building contractors. The U.S. Dept. of Energy's National Renewable Energy Lab website has a lot of design help while the American Wind Energy Association website has a ton of information. Another good guide to the economics is "Distributed Generation-The Power Paradigm for the New Millenia" by Borbely & Kreider. The best opportunity appears to be the small units for running remote irrigation systems and Conrad would obviously be a great place to figure those out.
- Flax-seed oil pressing/bottling operation. Conrad has a hundred year tradition of flax-raising and use to process it extensively. Flax seed oil has had a resurgence as a health food product and it's considerable benefits and high dollar value along with small market niche suggest there's a possibility there, perhaps as a part of Timeless Seeds which already markets flax to those customers.
- Linen cloth has been making a resurgence as well, but the scale is probably wrong, although linen can be made with literally 18th century technology (many Carolina plantations had onsite linen-making operations and they were certainly low-tech) so there may be more of small-scale/craft style opportunity there than supposed.
- Linen or flax also make fine papers for watercolors, drawing, pastels, calligraphy, etc. and you can make art papers literally in a garage and bathtub/stock tank so

small scale fine paper production is another option (the large number of artists around Great Falls that rely on the Brighten Up Shop there for framing would make distribution easier than you'd expect.)

- Ethanol has some considerable benefits to scale with the 40 million gallon facility/15 million-bushel size currently probably the optimum (at least that's what's being built in 6-10 places this year). Water supply at this point would be an issue but that sounds like it will be resolved. If the Great Falls plant ever gets done, that would require a huge amount of grain, but if it doesn't, a small plant perhaps as a joint venture with the Montana Refining oil refinery in Great Falls might make sense. The federal incentives fit a small plant much more profoundly than a huge one. The best, detailed guide I've run across is Roehr's "*The Biotechnology of Ethanol*" which answers a thousand questions. Dryland Barley is an excellent feedstock by the way.
- *Potable* ethanol has more small-scale promise. Distilling premium LEGAL whiskey (barley, rye, corn) or vodka (soft winter wheat) is a low-tech, small-scale operation that could make a good additional winter profit center for area farmers (as you need to let it age 5-12 years, it's a long time to payday at the start). Kentucky has been reviving it's small batch bourbon makers for 20 years now while Scotland has hundreds of tiny Scotch distilleries and Mexico a hundred plus premium tequila distillers. Award-winning Pearl Vodka is made with Albertan winter wheat just as the best Russian vodkas like Stolichnaya use winter wheat. The chemistry is well known by the high school science faculty, the technology well within the capacity of the machine shops, you can buy "The Alcohol Book" how-to guide on the web <http://www.distill.com/murtagh/textbook.html> takes you to a complete textbook on this.

Contact the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, & Firearms office in Billings or on the web to explore a legal license.

<http://www.atf.treas.gov/forms/5000.htm#alcohol> and then the Montana Dept. of Justice as laws regarding alcohol production and sale are always surprising.

Billings Home Brewer Supply's Errol Seifert may be a great resource as well since the grains are fermented into a beer before being distilled (just as brandy is made by distilling wine and bourbon from a corn beer.) This could be a great outlet for your grain blending operation in Conrad as well.

The opportunity is selling it to tourists as a \$40 bottle with a great label as opposed to a \$5 jug of nameless moonshine. Top scotches can be over \$250 bottle. Not bad for a pole barn operation, some charred French oak barrels, and time in the winter at the farm.

- Higher tech uses for grain and oilseed crops can be found in compilations like Glenn Fuller's "*Agricultural Materials as Renewable Resources-Nonfood & Industrial Applications*" for issues like bioplastics, biodiesel, biolubricants, wheat-straw paper or fiberboard, etc.. While promising, and often proven technologies, many of these appear to require very expensive production facilities,

i.e. Cargill's \$200 million corn-based plastics plant in Blair, Nebraska. Others like small industrial alcohol, lysine acid, etc. mentioned in the book may be more feasible on a small scale and with available feedstocks. Montana Specialty Mills might be interested in pursuing some of this with you and their engineer Jim Stevenson of Unifield Engineering in Billings is a manufacturing process engineer with a microbiology degree too who works on a lot of food processing and refining operations throughout the Northwest.

TOOLS & STEPS FOR BUILDING CONRAD'S MANUFACTURING BASE:

Help them find profitable customers. A lot of this can be accomplished with inexpensive paperback how-to books (see below) working with Randy Hanson/Commerce's Regional Development Officer **262-9579** in Havre, Suzanne David at the Small Business Development Center **454-8834**, and Karl Dehn who helps companies' find and get government contracts (he's based at the Great Falls Development Authority along with Suzanne.) Becky Baumann runs the Made in Montana program for the MT Dept. of Commerce, which is a great tool 841-2756, and her boss Mark Bisom 841-2753 helps Montana companies enter foreign markets. For ag-based businesses, the MT Dept. of Ag has a considerable marketing staff including Brent Poppe, Matt McKamy, Quinn Holzer, and Mike Sullivan. All of the services mentioned above are free and I'll remain available to assist with specific questions via e-mail at aljonersdo@attbi.com as marketing's been my primary work for 22 years now.

Most businesses are inadvertently drained by many unprofitable customers (often about half of their total customers cost more than they pay) so this is the absolute fundamental step. Profitable customers allow a business to grow through its own profits rather than relying on external loans or investment, which allows it to put those profits where they'll be the most effective for growing the business. Quite often the reason a business has cash-flow problems are from unprofitable customers, slow-paying customers, no-paying customers, or how it serves all of its customers in a high-cost way. This has to be continually fixed and improved upon to draw external loans or investment and is really why finding capital is often so difficult.

Some recommended readings (lots cheaper and faster than a consultant):

Adrian Slywotsky's "The Art of Profitability"

Emanuel Rosen's "The Anatomy of Buzz"

Fred Jandt's "The Customer is Usually Wrong"

Harry Beckwith's "Selling the Invisible"

Guy Kawasaki "How to Drive Your Competition Crazy"

Jay Conrad Levinson "Guerilla Marketing"

Geoffrey Moore "Crossing the Chasm"

Regis McKenna "Relationship Marketing"

Eliyhu Goldratt "It's Not Luck" & "Critical Chain"

Kenichi Ohmae "The Mind of the Strategist"

Michael Porter "Competitive Strategy" & "Competitive Advantage"

John Caples "How to Make Advertising Pay"

Roger Ury & William Fisher "Getting to Yes"

Rick Page “Hope is Not a Strategy”

Most books on selling and negotiating will be helpful.

Help them maximize what they have now by leveraging other companies’ resources and capacities (instead of buying everything themselves and then only using it 10-40% of capacity.) This is a much more common dilemma than anyone imagines and a whole series of traps for growing and surviving in business. The manufacturing extension service field engineer, Todd Daniels, has many tools for cutting costs, increasing productivity, making quality more reliable, assessing equipment/plant needs, etc. and can be reached at 841-2745.

Some recommended readings (applicable to small and start-up operations)

Eliyhu Goldratt’s “The Goal”

Robert Schoneberger’s “World Class Manufacturing”

Mary Walton “Putting the Deming Management Method to Work”

Jason Jennings’ “It’s not the big that eat the small, it’s the fast that eat the slow”

James Womack “Lean Thinking”

Donald Reinertson “Managing the Design Factory”

James Pilditch “Winning Ways”

Paul Hawken & Amory Lovins “Natural Capitalism”

Help them get new equity infusions from area private investors (probably syndicated pools of local people putting in \$10-25,000 apiece to create \$250,000-\$1 million equity infusions, allowing 2x that to be leveraged in new bank loans. Outgrowing their equity is an extremely common trap as the bankers in town will readily agree.

Possible Consumer Services Gaps (*many of these would need to draw customers from all of Pondera County and some of the surrounding counties as well, but the distance from Great Falls and underdeveloped consumer service mix there opens up some real opportunities for Conrad*)

- Home handyman services (the number of elderly residents and vacant homes suggest this could probably be 2-3 local home-based businesses and employ some of the local teens as well as farmers. Farmers are really good at this because they have so many skills and tools—it’s not hard to make \$15-\$35/hr all day long at this as an SBDC client of mine did when we got him set up in a town about Conrad’s size.
- Landscape contractor/lawn services/underground sprinkler service & install (again a fit with aging population and a farm background) is great for this. My SBDC clients in this did consistently well.
- Pet care/boarding/grooming/breeding (embarrassingly profitable and popular, especially for a friend who’d bathe dogs at the owner’s home—she was earning more than her job as a legal secretary.)
- Property mgt. Services (100+ empty houses suggests a need)

- Financial planning & brokerage
- Spice gardens, fresh flower sales, local truck farm/greenhouse produce
- Antique restoration & repair
- Painting and siding contractors (nobody likes to do this and everybody needs it done so there's probably work for 2-10 locals at this and for good money.)
- Roofing contractor?
- Home & irrigation pump windmills (can be \$6 grand)
- Mortuary services (Conrad's nice cemetery, health care complex, etc. suggest this could be bigger. I also suspect many folks in the cities would like to be interred in a pretty place where their remains wouldn't be moved in 20 years for a development project.)
- Cosmetologist/Nails (good living, low start-up cost)
- Small fitness center (works surprisingly well in small towns, big money loser in cities so I'm baffled, Curves for Women is a franchise to look into.)
- Tea House (emerging trend that fits Conrad and quickly becomes a pleasant habit/social time.)
- Chiropractors, Physical Therapists, Acupuncturists, Naturopaths (seems like there would be steadily more demand there and again be regional draws.)
- Denture-fitter/lab (good business)
- Medical orthopedic device sales/rental/fittings (regional draw, fits well with hospital or could even be a for-profit branch of theirs)
- Optician (1 in 3 Americans needs help and most people after a certain age need bifocals or reading glasses so this seems again like a regional draw)
- Realtors, Insurance Agents, Appraiser (these jobs pay surprising well in Montana and the market there looks like it would have more capacity.
- Outfitters, fishing guides (tough with state limitations, perhaps more a hosting function by the landowner's family?)
- Antique repair/refinishing (surprising how these can keep several people happily making a living.)

Possible Business Services Gaps

- Small engine repair & service (lawn mower servicing is the bread and butter work but also chain saws, etc.)
- Small electric motor service & repair
- Pump repair, service, & sales (I'd guess this is much of your machine shops' work now but could be wrong.)
- Ag chemical, seed, and fertilizer distribution
- Photocopy service (surprising how many people need these and the number of professional firms in town suggest it's viable.)
- Bookkeeping services (just a guess, step below CPA firms)
- Marketing & web services (need regional base)
- Heifer-development feedlot
- Finishing cattle feedlot & small slaughterhouse (area restaurant sales)
- Aircraft repair, updating, service, fuel
- Charter air service, crop sprayer, flight lessons (flight training seems like a natural with a long runway and little traffic.)
- Sales representatives, contracted with local businesses

Encouraging local creation of living-wage jobs

There are two aspects to this, completely new jobs that pay better which is what most folks think of, and making the jobs you have now pay better which is so obvious no one seems to address it all that much.

Bringing in new dollars, more manufacturing, more services jobs/self-employment, more small businesses, more construction are all ways to add new living wage jobs and are addressed in greater detail above and below.

But how can you raise the wages of the existing jobs?

1. Increasing and improving the marketing by area companies will increase both gross sales and profitability. It's essential to charging higher prices and most small businesses seriously undercharge their customers. Raising a price 3-4% will increase net profit 20%, which is how better wages start being paid as a regular occasion. Too many folks give price way too much imagined power in how buying decisions are made, partly because it's the easiest factor to haggle over as opposed to asking the seller to make the product a little less reliable or durable.
2. Increase the productivity of employees through general and specific training in how to do their jobs better, how the business works, what their customers really need, new technologies and methods, sales training. Almost any sort of training improves productivity and the more employees know about business, sales, and costs, the better cost-managers and salespeople everyone becomes. Training is also one of the great motivators as everyone wants to be competent and skillful at their work. A great deal of worker training is available as online classes now such as from msubillings.edu/ydte, the National Association of Manufacturers, 900 college campuses (see the U.S. News & World Report website), and more all the time as well as through many books.

It doesn't have to cost hundreds of dollars or take days out of a workweek now.

3. Analyze the business to cut the real waste out and reward the employees with the newly freed up dollars (that keeps them looking and thinking very hard.) Most businesses actually lose money on about half their customers and businesses applying Toyota's lean production methods can achieve unbelievable new heights of productivity from their existing equipment, space, and people simply by better organizing the workflow. Todd Daniels, the MMEC Field Industrial Engineer at 406-841-2765 spends much of his time helping businesses do this.

TAPPING THE LATENT PRIVATE INVESTOR CAPITAL IN CONRAD TO START, EXPAND, AND RETAIN LOCAL BUSINESSES

It was mentioned repeatedly at the sessions that there a fair number of retired folks living in Conrad who have significant savings/investment. While most communities end up watching those dollars get invested entirely in national and international financial markets (other place's businesses/jobs/taxbase), there remains an opportunity to invest in local businesses.

Gerald Benjamin's "*The Angel Investors' Handbook*" and Andrew Sherman's "*Kiplinger's Guide to Raising Capital*" are two particularly useful how-to guides for this the most common way of growing a business. Getting the town's bankers, CPA's, attorneys, and insurance agents together in a room thinking about this would be a great start as they're advisors to most of the local capital and also come in contact with businesses that would be worth investing (and ones where it would be good money after bad.)

Organizing and training local folks so they can invest together in worthwhile local businesses will make an enormous difference in the health and growth of the Conrad business community. The highest leverage comes from investing in local manufacturers but it's also essential to restaurants, retail stores, dealerships, construction projects, ag processing, and nearly any other sort of business. This is a natural support to the Enterprise Facilitation project Conrad's involved in, providing a "deal-flow" of good businesses getting started or growing. The Commerce RDO Randy Hanson and the SBDC Director Suzanne David in Great Falls will both help evaluate deals based on their considerable experience at this.

FORMING A PORT AUTHORITY FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

This is a very useful tool and it's 2 mills of property tax dollars would provide about \$25,000 I'm told each year. That would help sustain a program and provides essential dollars to match more. Local businesses would still need to contribute at least that much to have a staff person full-time but it makes a huge difference in what your community can tackle and execute. Shelby has used this very effectively for many years and Larry Bonderud there is quite knowledgeable and helpful about this (and many other things.)

VALUE-ADDED AGRICULTURE – FURTHER OPPORTUNITIES

Ethanol-water availability and malting barley competition make it touchy. I'm working on one right now and it's been quite a learning experience. A small plant like the 10 being built across the U.S. right now (15 million bushels, 40 million gallon annual output) <http://store.yahoo.com/bbiethanol/20etplandevh.html> takes you to the ethanol development handbook, a reference that more people exploring this should order first to save a lot of time. Another great resource is Roehr's "The BioTechnology of Ethanol" available through Amazon.com. These are the real 2 starting points.

Heifer-development feedlot would probably be very helpful. Dr. Matt Cherni at the Cattle Development Center in Conrad, MT is probably the most knowledgeable about this in Montana although it's already common practice in the Midwest. Ranchers using this sort of program keep their cows an average of 1-2 more years and get 1-2 more calves from each breeding cow over time (and have lower cow and calf death rates) so it can considerably improve a rancher's productivity/return on assets.

Your extension agent and RC&D's Larry Robertson in Shelby have access to a mountain of USDA research on alternative crops and processing/value-adding approaches- it's amazing how many are already documented and doable on a small scale.

DEVELOPING THE HOSPITAL COMPLEX FURTHER

- Cosmetic surgery (Canadian trade?) is the second most popular elective surgery now, only surpassed by corrective eye surgery. As most people don't want to admit to having it done, traveling away to Conrad where neighbors and co-workers won't see them could be quite popular and take advantage of Conrad's dual isolation and centrality. I don't think it's readily available under Canada's medical system (I could be completely wrong about that) so this might have as much appeal to wealth Albertans as going to Canada for cheap laser eye surgery has to us down here. If their program doesn't cover say liposuction, eye tucks, etc., a regular ad campaign in Calgary and Lethbridge could be a huge revenue generator for the hospital and attract additional resident staff.
- Assisted Living Centers and Alzheimer's Houses as a client spider web is a concept Jim Klessens and I have just started toying with for our rural hospitals. The Conrad hospital for instance would operate small 8-12 patient assisted living homes in say Brady, DuPuyer, Valier, and Cascade. They'd use staff from the hospital/nursing home for skilled care and local residents for basic care so it used some of the capacity of the hospitals' nurses, docs, physical therapists, pharmacists, etc. That would provide a very high standard of care at a very efficient cost and generate new revenues into the hospital while also providing area residents a place to live with help close to their home, farm, and family.
- Develop more geriatric orthopedics (hip replacement) as a market center given strong nursing home/follow-through care resources.

- Pursue regional market for obstetrics/gynecology. My uncle is an ob/gyn and one of our neighbors in Great Falls was. While they develop a strong relationship with their patients, I've noticed the patients are uncomfortable seeing their ob/gyn socially so traveling a distance to Conrad might actually be more appealing than anyone would expect. That would naturally draw more of the baby deliveries and post-natal care to the hospital and help maintain its capabilities.

TACTICS FOR REDUCING SUBSTANCE ABUSE PROBLEMS

A common belief in smaller communities is that if there was more for kids to do, they'd avoid drugs and alcohol. While the state's Office of Public Instruction's annual Youth Risk Survey shows there's some truth in that with usage rates lower and ages later for city kids vs. small town kids in Montana, it's still a problem that affects the majority of students throughout Montana according to the kids self-reporting.

If it was the boredom of small town life that led to drugs, shouldn't kids in the most exciting places on Earth, i.e. Manhattan, Hollywood, Orlando, etc. be virtually drug free then? Shouldn't entertainers and pro athletes with frantic schedules, vast success, and over stimulation of their senses be drug free then as well?

If it were true boredom, then the hallucinogenic drugs would be the most popular ones while instead we find mood-altering drugs are far more popular. Some users self-medicate to address biochemical imbalances in the brain like bi-polar disorders according to Dr. Donald Harr, chief psychiatrist at the Billings Mental Health Center. Others are operating in a low state of arousal, due to impaired prefrontal lobe or limbic system activity, and use drugs to reach a normal state of arousal (like Ritalin dampens down a high state of arousal into a normal or low state of arousal by over stimulating the over stimulated mind.)

For most kids it's an attempt to blend in with more dangerous/exciting peers/adults, overcome their own awkwardness/nervousness, and to rebel. One of the primary attractions to cigarette smoking turns out to be the fact that it is so deadly-it appeals to the nihilistic, apathetic streak according to recent research in the tobacco prevention campaigns.

While after school activities programs have turned out to have at best a very mixed result in curbing youth drug use over the tests in the 1990's (some actually facilitated it by bringing buyers and sellers together at the activities in a more convenient transaction environment!) more success has been coming from applying the concepts of virology to this. Thinking of the drug dealer like a virus that has to spread to survive but gradually changes and destroys those it infects makes using what we've learned about containing contagious diseases surprisingly useful. By separating the dealer from easy selling opportunities, making it much harder for them to enlist help in distribution, keeping them from establishing bases of operation or drug sales sites, and disrupting their access to existing customers works surprisingly well. A dealer's interest is not in the occasional sales for social use but in moving a customer up into a physically or psychologically

addictive drug (more frequent purchases, less ability to shop prices, more customer loyalty/control, opportunities to move the customer into criminal activity that provides more profit than the drug sales like shoplifting, burglary, prostitution, vehicle theft, robbery, etc.). So the dealer acts far more as a criminal mentor, isolating the customer from positive influences in their lives (family, friends, church, school, work) and moves the customer into steadily more criminal activity (since the purchase and consumption already break laws). Thinking of drug dealers like the friendly bartender at the local tavern or the store clerk selling cigarettes is far too kind to the drug dealer.

Trading Cards is a Billings-based program your schools could easily replicate. Sports cards are created for each outstanding high school Senior/Junior who signs a written pledge not to use tobacco, alcohol, or drugs this year. The cards could be produced with a digital camera, an inkjet printer, and the high school's laminating press so your primary costs would be inkjet color cartridges and laminating film. The cards are then handed out by elementary school teachers as rewards for good behavior.

The participating seniors will periodically go have lunch with the little kids, autograph cards, talk about their activities, and encourage the kids to lead drug-free lives and still have fun. This is an effective way of showing young kids that their local role models don't need to get wasted to have fun and also strengthens the older kids with the realization that they'll let down specific kids if they use this stuff. Several hundred high school students participate in the Billings high schools now, about 7 years into the program, and the grade school kids remain quite enthused about it. Contact the Principal at Billings Skyview High School for more info as it was two teachers there who created it. My Exchange club has been one of the 4 funders of it since inception (they print thousands of cards) and it's one of the few programs we've funded or seen that was cleverly thought through and very low cost to operate while hitting more than one grade level.

Homeowners' Insurance risks notices: One thought I'd had listening to my County's DUI coordinator was a way to address the problem of parents who let teens party at their home or land is to send a notice of these events from the police to the parents' homeowners' insurance agent. Keggers greatly increase the potential liability for DUI crashes, manslaughter/vehicular homicide, assault, rape both forcible and statutory, narcotics sales, vandalism, and burglary rather than are just good clean old-fashioned fun so this behavior should be of interest to the insurers and result in either dropped coverage or significantly raised insurance premiums. Just as we found the most reliable way to get a drunk to stop drinking was to point out they were out of money, perhaps raising insurance rates will motivate more responsible behavior than the many other negative consequences. Keggers/house parties are a tremendous locus for all sorts of criminal behavior and cutting it off can and does save lives and futures.

Reuben Greenberg's red tape squad: This was pioneered by the amazingly effective police chief of Charleston, S.C., Reuben Greenberg, and described in detail in his book "Taking Back Your Streets" available through interlibrary loan from the Billings Parnly Library. Greenberg responded to houses with suspected drug trafficking or "party houses", "crash pads", etc. by showing up with the fire marshal, building inspector, county sanitarian, and if appropriate child protective services. They found virtually any

of these houses would be in violation of so many basic building codes/regs. The inspectors could condemn it or close it down until substantial repairs were made, thus evicting or substantially discomfiting the drug seller. Most of these guys were quite familiar with using a lawyer to get them out of jail but completely lost when snarled in code enforcement issues. Greenberg has many other tactics for disrupting criminals proactively and achieved tremendous results (20-40% crime reductions) with the existing budget and manpower just through innovative tactics. The character on the CBS show "The District" is based on Jack Maple and William Brannon's similar innovations in New York City policing-again achieving what conventional wisdom said was impossible.

Disruption of efficient drug markets is surprisingly effective, simply by making it inconvenient, risky, and too visible for transactions between sellers and buyers. This is a primary reason for strolling faculty/staff in parking lots and/or video cameras as school parking lots are a very efficient site for drug distribution. Random searches by a drug dog in the parking lot makes it too risky for the dealers to bring quantities of drugs to school (generally remaining in their cars rather than switching to backpacks or lockers for dealer quantities) so this really slows down their ability to reach and deal with many customers in short periods. Teen keggers and house parties are where a lot of initial drug sales/sampling is conducted so leaving these be as "just kids having fun with beer" so zero tolerance for these will also make it much harder for drug sellers to recruit new customers and advance existing customers into more physically addictive drugs (where the reliable weekly income stream kicks in.) Most assaults up through fatal and sexual ones occur at house parties, the alcohol impairing judgment sufficiently for violent, stupid actions to occur pretty reliably so these events are much more than a substance abuse risk to the participants and community. This based on the experience of the school resource police officers and community policing officers in Billings (and elsewhere) as well as other research.

Focus on nicotine and alcohol first. In Drug Czar Gen. Barry McCaffrey's testimony to Congress a few years ago on the drug war, he cited new research that showed that kids smoking cigarettes was really the starting point down the slippery slope of substance abuse. It was typically the first substance and taught them to hide a habit, find money or steal, break the law, and choose friends/associates based on their substance use rather than their character/personality. This makes a self-reinforcing cycle, much of it through switching to a peer group more defined by substance use/abuse.

Billings has been finally enforcing with regular stings against store clerks who sell alcohol to underage buyers which has to be having a chilling effect since the fines fall on the clerk and the store can lose it's license to sell alcohol.

SOAR program: For about 7 years this simple, almost costless program has been helping at Billings High Schools. Students spend an informal class period listening to and asking questions of people who've recovered from life-wrecking addictions to various drugs, alcohol, gambling, etc. It's power is that the speaker can describe just how miserable their existence was, greatly de-glamorizing the fast life, and because it's their own life experience of just a few years ago, it's much harder for the most cynical "street-smart" kid to reject its hard truths. The one in Billings originated out of a Gamblers Anonymous group, I think, and finding addict support groups in the area would

be a source of speakers. Law enforcement and the hospital should know of local individuals' who's lives would be great cautionary tales and who might be willing to warn kids about their road. The Great Falls prerelease center would obviously have a hundred plus potential speakers and they could be brought up by the Chief, Sheriff, or perhaps Highway Patrol as they're not allowed to travel that far unescorted. Paul Corey is the Director of the Great Falls PreRelease Center, which has both men and women, convicts. The Golden Triangle Mental Health Center would also be a source for former addicts who could speak well.

Funding: There may be some opportunities by partnering with the other Golden Triangle counties (multi-county applications are rare and attractive) to pursue U.S. Dept. of Justice grants, most of which are funneled through the Montana Board of Crime Control in the MT Dept. of Justice. These would be applied for by a police or sheriff's dept. so getting 3-4 sheriff's offices to collaborate would be the first step. Multi-jurisdictional drug task forces are generally much more effective than strictly local efforts as criminals are quite mobile and otherwise use jurisdictional coverage against law enforcement. The move with meth labs in the state has been to isolated rural structures so the odors, wastes, and visitor traffic is less obvious so a multi-county approach could yield excellent results. It also makes undercover buying operations much easier both in staffing, swapping officers with other jurisdictions to get unknown faces, funding drug buys, and running long surveillances. The U.S. Dept. of Justice puts out quite a few detailed guides on this through their National Institute of Justice publications list each month and your chief and sheriff can get most of them for free, others for nominal charges.

Crimestoppers reward fund is already in place in Conrad but in my 10 years with it here, it's consistently the most effective when it's used to stimulate criminal associates, friends, family, rivals, and accomplices to call in. They provide far more information than a normal citizen who saw something and give Crimestoppers a 90%+ conviction rate. Surprisingly it's still cheap as we only pay out a \$1,000 for an unsolved murder (sometimes this solves 2-3 murders in a year that would otherwise go unsolved) while career criminal drug dealers, burglars, etc. we typically only pay \$200-\$300 and that's been plenty of motivation. Crime pays actually very badly (it takes \$6/hr. 40 hrs. a week to earn more than a career criminal does) so small amounts of money to make rent, bail, utility payments, etc. go a surprisingly long way.

Criminals scare and abuse those around them continually so the "code of silence" is pretty much a movie screenwriter conceit, criminals will typically "rat out" each other quite readily to gain any personal advantage. The biggest challenge with Crimestoppers is getting the word out continually in criminal networks that identifying another criminal is the quickest way to solve a personal cash flow problem. Displays with the number, i.e. matchbooks, in rough bars, jails, probation offices, pre-release centers, etc. can be the most productive. This is about the cheapest way to find and convict major criminals; it just takes a more criminal-informant focus than citizen watchfulness focus. For as few people as there are in Conrad, it doesn't seem like the local drug market would support more than 2-3 significant/active dealers at best so this could have a profound cleaning up effect.

Great resources on real criminal behavior, which is generally opposite what's on television, movies, or crime novels:

Dr. Stanton Samenow's "Inside the Criminal Mind"

Dr. Samuel Yochelson "The Criminal Personality"

Dr. John Douglas/FBI "Mindhunter"

Dr. James Q. Wilson "Thinking About Crime"

Dr. Wilson & Dr. Herrnstein "Crime & Human Nature"

Chief Reuben Greenberg "Taking Back Our Streets"

And the many U.S. Dept. of Justice publications which are based on current facts and law enforcement insights from across the country.

Further leveraging from the particularly-strong churches in Conrad

The number and effectiveness of Conrad's 14 or so churches has obviously made a considerable positive impact on the community and according to research cited in Dr. Robert Puttnam in his book on social capital "Bowling Alone", it also is the best predictor for overall community involvement and the community's effectiveness in getting projects done. I saw a considerably stronger faith-based community than in many places I've been and that seems to translate to how many quite ambitious community projects Conrad has accomplished while others just spin their wheels.

Some thoughts on further utilizing this tremendous resource:

1. Recruiting retiring ministers as new residents for Conrad through a word-of-mouth program up through the regional/national associations for each faith, emphasizing the affordable, numerous houses for sale, great medical care, high quality of life, and many amenities. While these folks are scraping by on small pensions and social security in most cases, they're a wealth of experience, energy, and insight that provides fresh volunteer and mentor resources far in excess of their cash purchasing power. For small churches, retired ministers in the Congregation are a great backup for illness, vacation, or travel needs of the often solo minister.
2. Using those same routes to encourage ministers in other communities to mention Conrad as a place to retire to for their congregation members who've decided to leave town. The profusion of affordable houses for sale is again an unusual asset as well as the other surprisingly complete infrastructure for serving aging folks. This could be a no-cost, long-producing tool with the new arrivals being connected into this community by their new local church family. Many times new arrivals move out because they have difficulty forming personal relationships with enough of the neighbors to avoid lonely isolation.
3. Marketing through ministers' regional/national connections as an affordable, safe place for parishioners to retire to. Many large city parishioners may be looking for a quieter, safer, cheaper, simpler place to live now that their kids are gone and their need to commute to that job is done. The church of their faith here would be an easy conduit for getting information and getting settled here with a quick set of new friends and neighbors.

FURTHER RECRUITING OF POPULATION FOR CONRAD

Outmigration of young people continues to be a problem for rural areas and small towns for about 6,000 years across human society. If one can go to a place where no one remembers them as a child or gawky adolescent or judges them based on their family's reputation/quirks, that's very appealing to insecure young people in their teens and twenties, desperately trying to choose their adult identity. The other compelling issues of a different dating pool to find a mate in, the chance to party and thrill seek without parental knowledge, to have to live alone, to pursue more intense education or life experiences, different work, and a sense of being at the place where things are happening are compelling drives we really can't overcome. The West is already the most urbanized part of America with over half its residents living in its cities (even in Montana) so it's not a battle any town is likely to win.

A local job fair (contact Montana Job Service for help) would likely make more of the teens (and adults) aware of current job opportunities throughout Pondera County and would be worth considering, say every April?

Where I see the opportunity is focusing on people OVER 30 instead of 16-24 year olds. As you'll recall, when you get married, have kids, and own a home your priorities all change enormously from what they were as a young single person. Now taking care of your family becomes paramount and all of the advantages of Conrad suddenly become incredibly relevant while Conrad's lack of nightclubs with cutting edge music etc. suddenly becomes far less important. Trend-analyst Faith Popcorn calls it "cocooning" where your attentions focus inward to family and home. So rather than try somehow to remake Conrad into something that will retain youths through their 20's, you can do far better if you look to ways to retrieve Conrad kids now in their 30's-60's and adults who've never lived in Conrad but always sought a place like this. That's a marketing message you can efficiently deliver and makes compelling appeal.

A major advantage for Conrad in getting people to move there is that it's a demonstrably much better place than most people live in now. Plus the fact that you have houses available right now in many shapes, sizes, ages, and generally very affordable price ranges (many nice places in Montana have nowhere to live unless you bring in manufactured homes or build your own.)

Rather than wait for people to discover Conrad and move there, a bad choice with well over a hundred houses on the market, a more active recruiting campaign perhaps modeled on that of the railroads when they filled this empty land between 1880-1920, bringing 300,000+ new Montanans.

People are generally moving away from what they know and can't stand anymore rather than to a place they know much about. So commuting times, house costs, crime rates, poor schools, neighborhoods of strangers, indifferent/rude crowds, crowded stores and crowded anywhere else you want to go, snarled masses of traffic for hours each day, dirty air, costly golf courses, many miles from natural landscapes, gray skies, gangs,

muggings, no place to park a car, etc.. Conrad represents an ideal community that most of these folks don't realize still exists.

TACTICS within Conrad's resources:

1. Run some small ads in the military newspapers (each service has one) focusing on people soon to retire from the service. Their access to Malmstrom's PX and base hospital are considerable amenities, while Conrad's advantages are easy to show to people who've lived many places and want to put down quiet roots. This would bring in folks who mostly have families and typically have considerable technical training and management experience as well as military pensions that at the Captain level are equal to the average Montanan's wages. The available housing, recreation, and social capital is a very appealing package. Pulling together a strategy team out of the many existing veterans and military retirees in Conrad would be a good first step followed by doing some web research and contacting bases. California bases like Ft. Ord, Camp Pendleton, El Toro, San Diego's naval base, Edwards AFB, etc. seem like particularly good sources given the high cost of off-base housing. Camp Lejeune, NC, Great Lakes Naval in IL, the DC/Virginia/Maryland bases, Colorado Springs/NORAD, etc. seem like other places where the retirees are less likely to stay.
2. Another would be to pursue the migrant farm workers families. Many have settled, bought homes, and raised families in Billings over the past hundred years. Settling down is their only real chance for a solid, uninterrupted education for their children as well as a chance to earn decent wages, greatly improve their living conditions, and become members of a community again. They still have more children than average which would help the schools (and the community) and have the entrepreneurial drive to fill many of the service business opportunities I noticed as well as provide young and mature hard-working employees for local businesses. Area farmers could sponsor a family, the first-time home-buyer program run through the RC&D (ask Doreen King of Conrad about it since she teaches it) coupled with the Rural Employment Opportunities office in Great Falls and probably help from Opportunities Inc. in Great Falls would go a long ways. The Montana Migrant Council in Billings would likely have some insights as well. HUD's Rural Housing & Economic Development grants, USDA Rural Development's Rural Housing program, MT Dept. of Commerce's HOME funds program (contact Leslie Edgecomb), would all be good potential tools for making this happen.

Excellent resources for planning your campaigns to gain population:

Robert Puttnam "Bowling Alone", particularly pages 293 forward

Jill Fraser "White Collar Sweatshop"

Juliet Schor "The Overworked American"

Barbara Ehrenreich "Nickled & Dimed, on not getting by in America"

Stephanie Coontz "The Way We Really Are" and "The Way We Never Were"

Landon Jones "Great Expectations"

Ken Dyctwald "AgeWave"

David Brooks "Bobos in Paradise"

Neil Strauss & William Howe "Generations", "The 13th Generation"
MT Dept. of Commerce TravelMontana Montana Tourism & Recreation Plan 2003-2007
University of Montana Forestry School's Institute for Tourism Research
U.S. Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis FED GAZETTE back issues
Journal of Community Development back issues
Expansion Management magazine (state to state comparisons)

I've appreciated the opportunity to learn so much about Conrad and the hospitality, honesty, and energy of the people of Conrad has been much appreciated by myself and the rest of the team. You have an outstanding community and tremendous resources, particularly the people already living in Conrad and already in place to do great things. Conrad has tackled and accomplished so many community projects that other towns still just talk about at their local cafes or council meetings. Remember it's the people that truly determine economic development, not natural resources or distance or capital or technology or universities or taxes or the other factors people talk about as the controlling factors. And Conrad is rich in the right people already.

Lawrence Gallagher, CRE
Operations Specialist
Office of Field Policy and Management
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
Helena Field Office
7 West 6th Avenue, Power Block
Helena, MT 59601
Telephone – direct line: 406.447.1480
Fax: 406.449.5052
Email: lawrence_gallagher@hud.gov

*(Note to the reader: The best way to access all of the information provided in this report is to download the full report from the Montana Rural Development Partnership, Inc. Web site: <http://www.mtrdp.org/> You will find the reports through the **Projects** and/or **Resource Assessment Teams** links located in the LH column of the MTRDP web site. Scroll down to Resource Team Assessment and click. You may also access the MTRDP and MEDA membership contact information & directories through the <http://www.mtrdp.org/> site.) Once you have downloaded the report, you can use the Hyperlinks provided in the report to access the information referenced. This method of review will also help you become familiar with how to access the data you will need to help you decide and what you want to undertake in Conrad/Pondera County.)*

My opinions in this report reflect 33 years of hands-on experience working with Montana’s dedicated community leaders to seek and implement solutions to improve neighborhoods and housing, retain businesses and jobs, and create new economic opportunities for Montana citizens. The comments, observations, suggestions and/or recommendations contained are my own and do not necessarily reflect the official views of my employer, the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

I will offer my opinions while suggesting possible approaches the **Pondera Coalition For Progress** may want to consider for projects already identified as “community needs” during this Assessment. The report will also include a description of the myriad “tools” currently available to help Conrad and Pondera County citizens accomplish what they want to do.

As background and as part of the bigger picture, it is interesting to note that the needs identified by the Resource Assessment Team correlate closely with HUD’s Mission:

“A decent, safe, and sanitary home and suitable living environment for every American; Creating opportunities for homeownership; Providing housing assistance for low-income persons; Working to create, rehabilitate and maintain the nation's affordable housing; Enforcing the nation's fair housing laws; Helping the homeless; **Spurring economic growth in distressed neighborhoods; Helping local communities meet their development needs.**”

To complement its Mission, HUD has also established National Strategic Goals for FY 2003, several of which relate directly to what the Conrad/Pondera County community wants to do. Applicable goals are:

- Helping Families Move From Rental Housing To Homeownership
- Improve The Quality Of Public And Assisted Housing And Provide More Choices For Its Residents
- Strengthen And Expand Faith-Based And Community Partnerships That Enhance Communities
- Support Community And Economic Development Efforts

Because *spurring economic growth in distressed neighborhoods* and *helping local communities meet their development needs* could be considered a prerequisite to accomplishing what the community has identified it wants to do, I will focus most of my comments on activities to accomplish that mission. Also it is my belief that housing objectives can best be met by assisting the Pondera Coalition For Progress with identifying the ways and means to stimulate economic opportunities (new & expanded business, employment & tax base) for its citizens and providing the essential infrastructure to help assure a suitable living environment for Pondera County's residents.

While there are many similarities between HUD's Mission and Goals and the findings of the Resource Assessment Team in Conrad/Pondera County, most of my recommendations are not dependent on HUD's programs because the majority of the programs involve competitive grants. Instead, I emphasize the broad and skillful use of the numerous "local tools" currently available to units of local government. Most of the "tools" I will describe have been used successfully throughout Montana for years. There are many best practices and examples already at work in other Montana communities and there is a growing cadre of experienced practitioners able and willing to help Conrad and Pondera County with suggestions of what to do.

It is much to the advantage of the Pondera Coalition for Progress that, beginning in the late 1960's, Montana's legislators began to respond to the evolving community development/redevelopment needs identified by community leaders around the state. The legislature did an outstanding job of providing a full toolbox of options which were actually designed by and for Montana's community leaders to help fix problems while providing many incentives to encourage private investment in communities.

However, like any tool, these are only helpful in the hands of community leaders willing to learn how to use them effectively. One of the best ways is to use them to leverage other state and federal programs' specific grants and loans necessary to stimulate the essential private investment, which in turn will create the jobs and tax base needed to prosper. Private investment is encouraged and nurtured through the formation of public/private partnerships.

It is important to reemphasize that programs from HUD and other federal agencies are most effective when they are used as the leveraged extensions of local tools skillfully used for a single purpose or for comprehensive projects. Thus, my

objective with this report is to encourage consideration of using local, state and federal “tools,” in that order and in (leveraged) combination, to accomplish all of the desired results.

What is necessary for success is for the community to agree on what it wants to accomplish, assign responsibility, and engage a staff that is passionate about the challenge and is experienced or willing to learn how to use local tools. As the community plans projects, keep in mind Daniel Burnham’s advice: “Make no little plans; they move not men’s souls.”

For over 33 years I have been blessed with rewarding work and my involvement in many community development successes. I will admit, however, that it has been the trials and a few mistakes that taught me the most valuable lessons. So throughout this report I will try to convey some “lessons learned” as I offer advice to the dedicated citizens who are truly interested, willing, and eager to continue the important work of maintaining and enhancing the quality of life for all of us who choose to call Montana home.

Our Assessment Team visited with high school seniors who will soon be making a choice to stay in the community or to move on and away from Pondera County for good. Some will take a temporary leave of absence to further their education with the goal, or even a remote hope, of returning “home for good.” Not without surprise, we learned that only 20% of these young people felt confident that they would or could realistically continue to make Pondera County their permanent home. Their departure, along with deaths of residents, is termed “out-migration” by socio-economic demographic profilers and all too often becomes “net out-migration” if these losses to community are not replaced by births or new people moving-in in greater numbers than those departing. The purpose of this report is to help stem the trend of net out-migration.

The Team heard from many dedicated long-time residents who have remained --- never leaving Pondera County because they were tied to the land or family businesses or simply were content with the status quo and with the place. When one of the residents observed, “Our kids and bright young people in the community are a strength,” another noted with irony, **“27 years ago we were the new kids on the block, and today we are *still* the new kids on the block ---just look around.”** Enough said.

Most long-timers expressed what I term *Montana optimism* and observed: “There is nothing wrong that couldn’t be cured with a little more moisture, a more reliable source of year-round water for drinking and irrigation, \$5.00 wheat, \$1.00 calves and lower freight rates.” In other parts of the state the *Montana optimists* sometimes refer to \$450.00 gold, \$35.00 oil, \$.80 copper and unrestricted access to dwindling and remote timber resources, front-range gas and oil, methane gas, and a return to the good old days when electricity was cheap. Statewide, most would agree that lower freight rates and better access to markets would improve their lot in life.

The Team listened to others who were returning “home for good” to a community where they grew up, received their early “quality” education and downloaded their memory banks with pleasant recollections of the “qualities of life” unique to most of Montana’s cities and towns. They have returned with the hope of rediscovering, or if necessary even recreating, fondly remembered homegrown qualities and a peace they were unable to discover anywhere else in the world.

The Team also discovered, in addition to long-timers and home-for-goods, a surprising number of relative newcomers who had carefully and deliberately selected Conrad as a place to retire because of its people and active faith community, affordable and/or assisted housing, good hospital, nursing home, and other unique qualities which, in their view, offered a quality of life superior to any other community they could choose to call home. These “actively retired” citizens are a contributing and very important part of the fabric of Conrad. Many expressed a desire to not just maintain but to improve upon the qualities that held them or brought them back to Conrad in the first place. They, too, acknowledged that it is absolutely essential to stimulate the local economy to hold and attract the young families and businesses, which are the lifeblood of any community.

Our visit to Conrad affirmed that after years of change ---some for the better but unfortunately far too much of it for the worse--- the community retains many redeeming qualities worth preserving and restoring. It is these qualities which offset multiple exogenous forces like drought, falling world commodity prices, and high freight rates, just to name a few negative impacts on Montana’s agrarian economy.

I sincerely hope this report will prove a useful resource and a primer on how to recognize and use the multiple “local tools” available to community leaders to retain, restore and even improve upon the unique qualities that have enabled Conrad and Pondera County to remain “home by choice” for so many remarkable Montana citizens.

The long-timers, youth, home-for-goods and recently retired all want to repair the town’s wounds and weaknesses. They recognize that something must be done to heal or eliminate ills and impediments apparent to most townspeople and outlying residents as reasons for the area’s stagnant or declining economy. There is awareness that economic diversification and adding value to agriculture products are essential, and that even more effort must be placed on attracting tourists and other visitors while, at the same time, encouraging locals to shop at home by providing something for them to shop for.

There is a general perception that the area lacks, or has failed to identify and offer, an extensive pool of skilled or even unskilled labor, ready to go to work in a new or expanded industry. There is growing awareness that without a stable and expanding advalorem tax base, individual homeowners and local businesses will have to pay more for services and to maintain quality schools and medical facilities. It is because of this acknowledged awareness of ills and impediments and the need to address them that there is hope for the future. The town can be made to heal itself; all that is

needed is to recognize the healing forces and to provide a catalyst to set them in motion.

The Need:

Instead of reiterating needs covered in the more detailed reports generated from listening sessions, I will summarize just a few. However, I want to urge the reader to review each individual listening session report as a prerequisite to reading the full report. In reviewing the citizens' comments, watch for the repeated statements regarding the problems/challenges, major strengths and assets and, more importantly, what each group would like to see accomplished in the next 2, 5, 10, and 20 years.

There is clearly a need **to improve the year-round supply and delivery of water** by installing a new Lake Francis Intake. Without a dependable year-round source of water, the town can't grow, new businesses can't locate in the area, existing businesses can't expand, and farmers/ranchers can't add value without reliable (peak growing season) irrigation water. To the community's credit, there appear to be solutions in the works to address this problem.

Most residents acknowledged the need to **redevelop Conrad's aging business and industrial districts** to provide more places for new businesses to locate and for existing business to expand. Everyone wanted more shopping and dining opportunities and agreed that currently there is little to draw travelers off the Interstate or to attract and hold tourists. There was repeated recognition of the importance of keeping and attracting young families and that, to do so, there had to be a growing supply of new and expanded businesses and employment opportunities paying living wages. There were many ideas for tourist attractions and how to fill shopping voids, all of which would strengthen and diversify the local economy while encouraging balanced growth and improving the tax base.

Several groups said they would like to see the former Albertsons/Buttrey Food store reused, retail **business expansion in Conrad**, more industrially zoned land made available for existing and new added value businesses, and the **paving of Front Street**. There were ideas offered for a **new industrial park** adjacent to a proposed new I-15 access and rest stop.

High school students told us that some special classes, including language **classes had already been cut** and that more were on the chopping block. Youth groups, educators, law enforcement, church groups and even the retired community recognized the need for a **youth activity center, improved athletic fields/gym and a skateboard park**. Several mentioned the **need for museum funding and pedestrian links to existing recreation complexes**. An **improved tax base** would make it easier to address these needs.

Most response groups mentioned a growing concern with increasing **illegal substance use by youths**. This included tobacco, alcohol and other drugs. The Team was told that 91 percent of the high school's student body had tried illegal substances and that 60 percent had attended school under the influence. Several

commented on increasing problems with **vandalism**. Law enforcement officials commented on the need for **more parental involvement, a juvenile detention facility, age appropriate youth activities**, and acknowledged there was **little “accountability” for minor offences**. On the plus side they observed there was little or no anonymity for offending youth in Conrad; yet there seems to be a growing problem.

The recognition of what needs to be done is rooted in the history of the area and the state. In spite of the economic doldrums of agriculture, Pondera County and Conrad have thus far prospered and remained more resilient than many other agriculture based areas because of the simple pragmatism of its citizens. Its founders, today’s community leaders, and an involved citizenry have demanded solutions, sought answers, and worked together to reach consensus and do what has to be done, mindful that it takes commitment, planning, human and financial resources ---and time.

I would suggest that part of the solution is the formation of public/private partnerships willing to address the problems and accept the challenge by utilizing “local tools” to leverage state and federal programs designed to help accomplish the task.

Reasons for a Public/Private Partnership:

Conrad and most of Montana’s cities and towns were built by the private sector. Why now does local government need to get involved? The magnitude of the problem!

The existence of problems and challenges in Conrad is mostly the result of the inability of one or several investor-developers to deal with all of the problems found, both public and private, and still realize a reasonable profit on the investment. Although investor-developers are socially conscious, city betterment is not their sole concern. Singly, the private sector cannot provide a new water intake for the benefit of an entire community and irrigation district. Buildings may be unavailable, may need to be cleared, or land may be too expensive or hard to assemble or clear for business expansion or redevelopment. Streets and access and parking may be inadequate and the area in general not conducive to private investment. Developers cannot deal with the greater neighborhood problems and must rely on local government assistance and cooperation. While there are lesser tools for single purpose projects, the Montana Urban Renewal Law provides the power necessary for local government to prepare and implement comprehensive plans for the provision of public improvements, acquisition and reselling of property for private redevelopment, and for exercising of the power of eminent domain, if necessary and in the public interest. Local government can also use its powers to obtain financing for project activities, thus providing incentive for private investment. A full description of the Montana Urban Renewal Law can be found in the Montana Code Annotated (MCA): Title 7.Local Government, Chapter 15. Housing and Construction, Parts 42 & 43. Urban renewal: http://data.opi.state.mt.us/bills/1999/mca_toc/7_15_42.htm

The benefits to the local government and community exercising urban renewal powers are an improved tax base, more jobs, and a more livable environment for the

citizens of the community. When impediments to private investment are addressed and eliminated, there is often a direct reduction in the cost of providing city services, particularly fire and police protection. Utilities, streets, parks and other public infrastructure and amenities are provided and/or improved, further reducing the cost of repair and/or maintenance. Community pride can be restored and older central business districts and adjacent industrial areas can become economically viable, restored to their pre-eminence as a center for trade, jobs and culture. The economic well-being of the state of Montana is dependent upon the health and vitality of places like Conrad, the centers for regional commerce.

Local government is endowed with legal powers not delegated to the private sector. It can coordinate programs and devote a variety of resources to eliminate blight; it can aid in single and/or multiple purpose project financing through the use of city Special Improvement Districts (SID's) for street and utility improvements, lighting and landscaping, Business Improvement Districts (BID's), and other tools described in MCA Title 7 Chapter 12: http://data.opi.state.mt.us/bills/mca_toc/7_12.htm. There are financing tools to help pay for the cost of public parking, too, if it is essential to attract and/or retain business investments dependent on public parking. There is still industrial development revenue bond (IDRB) authority to aid in the retention and expansion of basic industry, and tax increment financed urban renewal or industrial district revenue bond (TIF & TIFID) financing for comprehensive projects. TIF & TIFID financing is described in the MCA - Montana Urban Renewal Law, Title 7, Chapter 15, Parts 42 & 43: http://data.opi.state.mt.us/bills/mca_toc/7_15.htm. Local government can also apply for and receive state and federal loans and grants to aid in project financing. Through the use of these powers, local government can provide the incentive and act as the catalyst to encourage private investment.

What are the benefits to the Private Sector?

Private businesses exist to make a profit by providing goods and services. The investor-developer is interested in a profitable return on dollars invested in real estate and/or plant and equipment. Investor-developers are also motivated by opportunities to shelter regular income from income tax through real estate investments. These tax shelters have become major incentives to save historically significant buildings and to provide housing for low-moderate income tenants. Existing property owners, especially commercial lenders located in the community, have an opportunity through their participation in redevelopment to protect their investments. The deleterious effect of blight on property values is easy to document. If a public/private partnership is formed, whether or not urban renewal powers are employed, the private sector can work collectively to solve problems beyond the capacity of individual investor-developers and merchants. By working with local government, the private sector may be able to take advantage of low interest loans, grants, and other incentives. There are risks involved as with any investment; however, most risks can be reduced through proper planning and the total commitment of both local government and the business community.

What other state and federal resources are available?

There are federal programs administered by the HUD, EDA, USDA/RD, EPA and SBA and others that may be beneficial individually or in combination. I will list and identify how to get information about some that may prove helpful by providing assistance to units of local government, public/private partnerships, not-for-profit development corporations and businesses addressing identified housing and economic development needs and strategies. However, it is important for the reader to remember federal loans and grants-in-aid are not a panacea, nor are they absolutely essential to implementing projects. True, federal programs can be important, but generally they cannot work alone. None will work effectively without local commitments, leverage of local resources, and the private sector's willingness to invest in the community.

Most important to Conrad and Pondera County will be a working knowledge of how the HUD Small Cities Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG), administered for HUD by the State of Montana's Department of Commerce, can be used to complement local water and economic development projects.

Information about how this CDBG tool can be used in combination with the Montana Treasure State Endowment Program (TSEP) program and other state of Montana loan and grant programs for sewer and water projects is available from the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation's web site link to the Water, Wastewater and Solid Waste Action Coordinating Team (W₂ASACT) web site: <http://www.dnrc.state.mt.us/cardd/cardd.html> . Specific information for the Small Cities CDBG program can be found on the Department of Commerce Site: http://commerce.state.mt.us/cdd/CDD_FAQ.html#cdbg. The details of the TSEP grant program is also available to the Department of Commerce web site link: http://commerce.state.mt.us/cdd/CDD_FAQ.html#tsep

USDA/RD program information may be accessed through its Montana Web site: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/mt/> which will provide a direct link to the Rural Utility Services (RUS) program information: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/mt/RUS/rus.htm>. Information about EDA programs may be accessed on its web site: <http://www.osec.doc.gov/eda/>. Contact information for each state or federal agency and the individual representatives designated to assist you is available from the web sites listed above. Also, you will discover most of them are members of the Montana Rural Development Partners and MEDA and you can find the contact information on the Montana Rural Development Partners <http://www.mtrdp.org/> web site.

In addition to the HUD's Small Cities CDBG program administered by the state of Montana, there are HUD community and economic development grant programs targeted to help accomplish what needs to be done. Most are competitive grant programs and are announced through an annual NOFA - Notification of Funding Availability. HUD has an outstanding user-friendly HUD Internet web site where clients can access all the details and full applications as well as Webcasts providing details and definitions. You may access this information directly at: <http://www.hud.gov/>. The funding availability information will not be published until the FY 2003 budget is approved and program funding established. However, I would

suggest that you become familiar with the HUD NOFA process and information about the grants and awards for last year (FY 2002). Use the upper right-hand corner of the page to access the Search/Index or the right-hand column for links to programs of interest. The left-hand column "Working with Grants" will link you to funding information and listing of grants available:

<http://www.hud.gov/offices/adm/grants/fundsavail.cfm>

I suggest you spend some time becoming familiar with the grant programs available through HUD including the Rural Housing and Economic Development Grant Program (RH/ED). Many Montana not-for-profit housing and development corporations have used RH/ED grants to fund capacity building and innovative housing and economic development projects. HUD's RH/ED grant program is explained at: <http://www.hud.gov/library/bookshelf18/supernofa/nofa02/grprural.cfm> and, if the program is included in the FY 2003 budget, it will more than likely involve changes from the FY 2002 offering. Even if not approved for FY 2003, understanding its objectives and leverage suggestions will aid you in seeking funding from other state and federal sources.

During our listening sessions, most citizens identified an inadequate source and supply of domestic, industrial, and irrigation water as the #1 need and major impediment to the area's growth and prosperity. Many noted the existence of blight in the central business district and adjacent industrial area as well as a lack of land for business, manufacturing or industrial expansion. There is a perceived lack of grocery and retail general goods and services, especially ladies' apparel. Many commented on limited evening and weekend dining choices, vacant-unused or underutilized buildings, unpaved streets (Front Street), lack of a skateboard park, dangerous traffic conditions and limitations due to freight train blockages, and the lack of available land with the necessary infrastructure to attract and expand industrial uses and tourist attractions.

The cumulative impact of the problems enumerated above may have contributed to the area's stagnant or eroding local tax base. Records indicate the local tax base has not kept pace with inflation and there is little evidence of increases in value attributable to property value appreciation or new (offsetting depreciation) private investment. The trend has necessitated increases in local mills levied to finance city and county services and schools. Recent Financial and Governmental Characteristics reports for Conrad and Pondera County reflect disturbing trends, due in part to state legislated changes in tax rates and reimbursements to provide incentives for new business investment.

According to Montana Municipal and County Profiles – Financial and Governmental Characteristics: <http://www.montana.edu/wwwlgc/Profiles/profiles.html> provides recent valuation and tax history for Conrad and Pondera County.

MUNICIPALITY: CONRAD
Financial and Governmental Characteristics

Financial	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Mill Value					
.....	2,746.28	1,948.29	2,702.38	2,518.86	2315.74
GF Mills					
Levied.....	66.44	66.40	60.51	68.77	78.97
Total Mills					
Levied.....	93.76	97.76	80.03	106.27	117.10
GF					
Approps....	673,889	703,251	666,497	714,531	776,247
Total Funds					
.....	809,993			909,019	982,831
Per Capita					
Expend....	234.56	244.78	299.59	251.24	281.96

County: PONDERA
Financial and Government Characteristics

Financial	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Mill Value					
...	16,245.73	16,153.88	15,855.97	15,585.66	13,562.68
GF Mills					
Levied..	40.00	40.00	22.00	23.39	31.20
Total Mills					
Levied..	116.60	115.10	114.60	125.91	130.04
Gen. Fund					
Approps...	1,258,038	1,264,308	1,009,464	928,048	1,031,874
22 Fund					
Approps.	3,339,834	3,172,625	3,585,446	3,660,894	3,996,635
Per Capita					
Expend..	519.33	493.33	560.05	586.31	622.14

The Per Capita Expenditure is based on a 2000 Census count of 2,753 persons for Conrad, (-4.8% change from the 1990 Census); and, a 2000 Census count of 6,421 persons for Pondera County, (-0.1% change from 1990).

The Team was told there is a steadily increasing inventory (103 as of October 2002) of vacant or soon to be vacant single-family homes listed for sale in Conrad. This is further evidence of a declining real estate market. We were told that single-family homes were being offered at bargain prices, a positive for families seeking homeownership opportunities. There also appears to be true fair market value devaluation and depreciation of vacant or underutilized commercial buildings and rents were reported as stagnant or declining. Increasing vacancies and declining rents and property values have a real impact the tax base and in turn on schools and local government's ability to continue providing quality education and services without increasing school and city/county tax levies. The table above indicates that local

government has had to increase both general fund (GF) and Total Mills levied in FY 2000 and again in 2001. Although I did not have the information for FY 2003, I suspect there were additional mill levy increases for this fiscal year as well. The trend can only be improved by increasing the tax base or cutting services.

Further Solutions/Suggestions:

Before embarking on efforts to attract new businesses to locate in Conrad, I recommend conducting a formal Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E) Survey. This involves interviewing all existing businesses in Conrad to determine their plans for the future, learning how they view the business environment, identifying impediments to retention or expansion and how the community could encourage both retention and expansion of all existing businesses. The Montana Ambassadors, Kalispell Area Chamber of Commerce, and David Sharp of the MSU Extension Service in Bozeman can provide advice and MSU can also provide technical assistance.

Community leaders or their designee should begin a dialogue with the owner or owner's representative of the former Albertsons/Buttrey store to determine interest in redevelopment and availability and/or any impediments to the sale and adaptive reuse of the building. There are other vacant or partially vacant buildings in the core area that should be inventoried and owners should be contacted to determine the level of interest in participating in a redevelopment of the area. There appears to be enough vacant and/or underutilized land and commercial buildings in Conrad's core area to accommodate most if not all of the suggested stores, restaurants, youth center, and other redevelopment ideas discussed during our listening sessions. Redevelopment and tax base enhancement is far preferable to starting new on the edge of town or across the Interstate.

For an example of a community's pairing of an abandoned building with the desire for a community museum, contact Kalispell who used tax increment to finance the \$2.3 million historic preservation and adaptive reuse of the old vacant and abandoned Central School, turning it into the Northwest Montana Museum and Cultural Center -- now an asset rather than a liability.

In response to a need expressed by the youth, there are ways and means to build a skateboard park in Conrad. Several cities have developed them and the Montana Municipal Insurance Authority (MMIA) will even provide insurance coverage for the city should it decide to build one. Contact the City of Helena Parks and Recreation Director, Telephone: (406) 447-8463 and ask for help. They have the most recent experience with building one.

A suggestion for addressing substance abuse and other "minor offences" by youth, it may be helpful for individuals, a group of parents, or perhaps faith-based community leaders involved with the youth, to consider looking into creating a Pondera County Peer Court. Flathead County has had outstanding success with dealing with first time youthful offenders and several years of start-up and operating history and is willing to share how-to-do-it experience. Contact: Kelly Russell, Director, Flathead County

Peer Court, telephone: (406) 257-7400; email: fcpeercourt@in-tch.com. They are located in the Kalispell's downtown K-M Building located on 1st Avenue East.

Regarding the paving of Front Street and the need for more industrially zoned land, I contacted Pat Keim, Director of State Government Affairs, Burlington Northern & Santa Fe Railway, 139 N. Last Chance Gulch, Helena, MT 59601; telephone: (406) 447-2301; email: patrick.keim@bnsf.com. I asked Mr. Keim about reported BN&SF objections to the formation of a SID to pave Front Street and also about the potential of including the Railway's land in a tax increment financed urban renewal or industrial development district created to not only help pay part of the cost of paving the street but, more importantly, to provide incentives to redevelop the entire area for its highest and best use. Mr. Keim said he felt confident the Railway would be more than willing to discuss and explore all of these possibilities with Conrad's community leaders. He also suggested contacting Michele Keller, BN&SF Railway's manager of Economic Development, (406) 763-782-3473.

I also informed Mr. Keim about the multiple comments the Team had received regarding trains frequently blocking cross-town and emergency access for extended periods of time creating emergency situations and inconvenience. Mr. Keim suggested that this matter should be discussed with Larry Rehardt, BN&SF Railway's Train Master, located in Great Falls, telephone: (406) 791-3355. Mr. Keim acknowledged that he had been aware of the issue a few years ago but thought it had been resolved when BN provided or opened an emergency crossing. The Train Master should be contacted when problems occur.

The BN&SF Railway has been part of many public/private partnerships throughout the Northern-tier states and understands the benefits of tax increment financed redevelopment and industrial development. Its objective is to increase revenues from assets held (land and buildings) and from rail shipments. It is possible both of these objectives can be enhanced and met in Conrad's core area without building another industrial park or rail spur.

Many of these ideas could be incorporated immediately into a comprehensive tax increment financed redevelopment plan (urban renewal) for the core area.

A community-wide sense of common purpose is needed as a catalyst and source of energy. It appears to me that enough citizens recognize that Conrad's priority system may be in need of adjustment and that they may not want to throw away the old city, with its established systems, affordable housing, and time mellowed amenities, while pursuing the course of decentralization. Conrad's residents will find that it is infinitely wiser, cheaper, and more rewarding to fix up the established town than to build new or expand on the outskirts.

I have not addressed all of the opportunities and ideas I have for Conrad/Pondera County citizens to consider but I have run out of time and space. My job with HUD is to assist Montana's cities and towns with the formation of public/private and faith-based partnerships to enhance community and to accomplish HUD's Goals. Time and budget permitting, I will be available to continue providing assistance as

community leaders determine a course of action to implement some of these ideas.
Thank you for the opportunity to be part of the MRDP Community Assessment Team
and your outstanding hospitality and participation in the process.

LISTENING SESSION NOTES

Recorder: Doreen King

What are the major problems and challenges in your community?

AG BUSINESS

- infrastructure has not been updated correctly and in a timely fashion—water system, 1972 request to have overpass for fire and ambulance has not been done, wheat and cattle prices, not allowed to mine, drill or log, things cannot be changed that have been mandated out of state, main sewer outlet is right through industrial park, finding qualified people is hard because of laws and regulations on ration of journeymen to apprentice
- water system is a problem for city and farmers, ditto on overpass being part of ambulance crew, talked of Canadian Exchange and that farmers will go to Canada to buy cheaper equipment, keep farmers in town, CRP causing auction sales to sell equipment cheaper than a dealer can
- talked of natural gas explosion on east side when all three crossings were blocked, BN did not see need for overpass, ditto on CRP, government should offer compensation for CRP impact, below production cost farm prices, low population base, does mostly agriculture work in business
- Canadian Exchange rate is a real problem as well for building materials, CRP is a hindrance for our Main Street and a real mixed bag of blessings with most being negative, ditto on overpass issue and acres of CRP bordering BN tracks—if a fire, what could be lost without an overpass, lost prison

BANKING, FINANCIAL AND PROFESSIONAL

- farming community with many agriculture related problems including price of grain, federal crop insurance and when agriculture hurts, everyone hurts, problems with healthcare and kind of care elderly patients are receiving
- stuck in a rut and nobody wants change or try anything new, ditto on youth needing more to do, remodeled park and hoops and bathrooms were vandalized within 48 hours
- ditto on agriculture declining and as few people on farms hard squeeze to provide essential services in town, continual decline of students, business opportunities for 20-40 year old groups in town, getting older, need more organized activities for those kids who do not want to commit to those other activities which requires more parental support
- ditto on agriculture economy, need for diversification, CRP has severely impacted community, not max on enrolled acres but close, people concerned that their donated monies stay within the community

- forward progression with more businesses
- 1st Liberty Credit Union (new business)
- astounding number of people commuting from Conrad to Great Falls, when new projects come up, not everyone's opinion is appreciated—the more diversity of opinion the better, referred to prison argument
- lack of jobs to hold youth and young families and problems grow from that root, ditto on CRP—originally banker's friend but now, we basically took 25% of productive farmland out of county which has also taken away from implement dealerships, became a retirement program, nature of farming is to lease farm out to neighbor and took and off market and made a generation skip, etc., land will eventually sell to larger corporation units, lack of activities for youth—no skateboard park, movie theater, need to bring something in that's not agriculture related, Hutterite colonies are becoming a challenge in farm sector because they never sell—we need to make them a valuable asset to the community—they are a very dependable and reliable workforce to the community for the right industry and work very well as a team with their own bosses and pecking order
- interstate to GF is a weakness to our community but could be used as a transportation line for industry—turning into a suburb of GF, CAVE people who seem to rally more to the issue rather than those in support, shrinking population on educational and healthcare institutions—trickle down effect, alarming increase in current usage and abuse of illegal substances such as alcohol, drugs and tobacco (91% in a class has used once and over 60% have come to school high or drunk which contributes to vandalism, teenage pregnancy, etc.)

CHURCHES

- lack of good jobs for our young people
- lack of tourist or traveler support based businesses and missing opportunity off of the interstate, Wheat MT business would be fantastic, Golden Triangle Wheat Co. combined with a gift shop or a restaurant to be a stop for tourists, keeping educational system funding strong while population is shrinking, downtown needs a facelift and a unified effort on the surface is needed
- no cooperation between city and county government, lack of communication, volunteer for Golden Triangle Facilitation and we need to get him more involved in our community—Steve Horowitz
- moved from Nevada and Texas, red tape is keeping businesses out, Montana has facilities, land and space to do so—would welcome growth, need to hold young people here also (chose Conrad because she likes the people), lack of nicer motel

- an aging community and our population is declining, need employment opportunities for younger and middle-aged people, continued economic viability of our hospital and feared by community, feels it is affecting the quality of our schools and education
- ditto about jobs being our main concern, additional school activities for our young people, schools are shrinking and that presents challenges because each year they end up shifting teachers around just to keep them
- born and raised in Conrad, widow raising six children with three that have left community for lack of employment, concern of drinking, drugs and cigarettes with nothing much to do, in favor of skateboard park, ditto on job issue, something unique that draws people off of interstate, lack of places to dine, town will not survive with everyone shopping in GF and we have lost many businesses because of that, people and businesses are afraid of competition

Craig asked about local implement dealerships and how they can survive???

- need incentives for new businesses, better signs on interstate, new onramp that makes Conrad more visible, concerns with time involved to get businesses running with regulations, lack of tax incentives, state needs to help local government make those processes more feasible
- retired school teacher and interested in discussion

CITY, COUNTY LAW ENFORCEMENT

- keep spending in Conrad and with motive travel, Great Falls and Canada are accessible. Businesses need to learn to be competitive and appreciate the business. CRP is a blessing and devastation. Taxes stay here but the spending is gone. No government program to help everyone else out. More to communities than just farmer and rancher. Youth do not have farming knowledge to fall back on now.
- loss of business there is a loss of population. Ditto on CRP issues, etc.
- loss of business. People that volunteer are volunteered out and the rest are happy doing what they do and don't want to get involved.
- lack of youth activities, 12-16 keep this age group out of mischief. Need assistance from parents to support youth programs. Drug topic is difficult and talked of manpower and time. Bringing someone in to help would be very nice. Al asked about illegal cigarette smoking and Gary talked of anti-tobacco program along with DARE program. Decrease in younger kids as far as tobacco is concerned.
- ditto on drug topic
- ditto on lack of you activities and growth. Ditto on drug concerns.

– relocating move water pump station (water problem), decent accent to east side of Conrad, need economic growth challenge, sewer lagoons need work, rehab of older housing

– ditto on youth activities – youth in general

Will questioned youth groups

– answered that kids don't necessarily cause problems and told of her son's free time but not in trouble.

Al asked about part-time jobs

- answered that businesses are good about hiring for part-time jobs.

– ditto on youth and job market. Minimum job wage brings advantages and disadvantages—allows jobs but not to support families. Small business and industry growth would be wonderful. Developed into retirement community—not adding vibrancy.

– kids and adults need involvement as a family. Increase of costs with inmates needing to see dentists, etc. and with the release of inmates and picking them back up again, money increase in dealing with all of that.

– declining tax base and will continue if legislature continues to make cuts. Lack of consensus when it comes to economic development – lots of groups with different views.

Al talked of medium business such as ITB and those seem to be the boom in communities

– ditto on tax base. Said schools don't feel we have a drug problem here and community needs to wake up and take care of these problems to help police dept. Regarding restaurants, nothing on Sundays.

– decline in farming and ranching economy

– state neglects to consider the frontier aspect of our communities (Conrad not the same as Helena). What impacts a large community does not impact us the same way. County commissioners that went on to Helena forgets what rural is all about – big disconnect. State government tries to push ideals on to local government. Trickle down effect. We want to appeal to tourists but there is no reason for them to stop in Conrad—restaurants, motels, etc.

– lack of resources for drug investigations and crime. Al asked about drug dog – none available. Goes down from adults to kids. No money available to purchase equipment for surveillance, manpower.

CIVIC GROUPS & HOMEMAKERS

- lack of teenage activities for students not involved in HS or JH activities so we need weekend, summertime activities. In summertime it would involve mostly all the kids in town—200 kids. Same group of kids that are involved in everything. Need more towards teenage focus. Community pride can get in the way of development.
- Businesses going—not thriving, bring more in
- ditto on businesses—we are very close to GF and when businesses die out, kids do not come home to find good employment. Great job with educating and then they have to go on to somewhere else and are encouraged them to go elsewhere. Coming back to the farm can't support like it used to. Everything that would lend itself to growth has gone down. Talked of people wanting to LIVE here but not SUPPORT here. Want the best of both worlds.
- ditto on farm idea. Works in town and added that all farm wives and even the men have outside jobs. This has stressed job situation in town. Although a stable workforce, we need more jobs or ones to do at home. Trying to do after school programs at the library and added that these programs are full.
- lack of vision for improvements in our communities from our local leaders. Talked of task to get local government to agree on park project. Mayor and town council put up roadblocks whenever they could—never a thank you. Negative of elective leaders is a real hardship to overcome. Cannot buy necessary items in Conrad—kid shoes, clothing for kids and adults. This is a problem for a town that is a retirement community. Talked of aunt that lived here and moved on because basic needs could not be met. Not enough jobs for labor force—husband was farmer and now drives to Great Falls to work.
- very resistant to change. Talked of prison in our community. Prison came in closer than original thought but other county received benefits. Board member of EDC and has a plan to relocate rest stop to north of town to increase industrial park area—need expansion in that direction. Negativism to overcome but fact remains that transients that come to town are small but do need the travelers to spend money locally. Stores that have been established elsewhere are from local entrepreneurs but we can't find someone to actually run a store.
- lack of money and sagging economy including tax base. Because of that, we have no attraction to bring people off of the interstate. Need major attractions.
- Trying to rebuild and renovate movie theater. Concert series is not outlined in depth in advance—no planned series. Lack of movies so young people have something to do. Montanans need to have a better perception of promoting the state. Other people think our weather is awful. Need to promote Conrad and the state.
- need a large manufacturing prospect. Transportation needs to be on top of the list—talked of expense of shipping grain. That would effect a manufacturer that would come in to have something to ship out.

– negativism in Conrad for growth and need to pull together. Where we are situated we can pull together with a vision—looks more like a ghost town. Town buildings need cleaning up on Main Street. Doctor that would like to open up a clinic and commissioners turned down. Any progress is always shot down. Opportunity for McDonald's was turned down also. Community needs to work together. Very good location.

- Football, BB, Baseball and soccer. Shrinking population base has shrinking tax base. Funding from state is all tied to enrollment. Faced with reducing programs, accreditation standards. Alarming rate of CAVE people. Point is why we can't rather than why we can. We are facing an alarmingly increasing rate of youth and adults in the illegal substance abuse in our community. Indirectly effects our economy—high substance abuse problems turns people that want to relocate to here. Also on Board for school districts. Surveys in classes – 91% have tried illegal substances in student body. Over 60% have attended school drunk or high. There is an increasingly acceptance by those in authority—parents, law officials, etc. Need to combat that issue in addition to all others.

EDUCATION

– lack of activities for young people and visitors that have family. People go around Conrad and not through Conrad because nothing is here to attract. Views I-15 as a bad thing because people are not forced to drive through. Many families have been here for years and years and want their town survive but are also not willing to accept radical changes for businesses, etc.

– not enough students – funding for schools – feeling the crunch based on the fact that we are losing students. Water is a huge problem with Lake Francis.

– business closing downtown, Rachel – ditto. Interested in average age in Pondera County and commented on very experienced staff. Feels from a taxpayer point of view the average age may give wrong perception. Hutterites will not be selling land to individuals and they do not buy local—young farmers are having a hard time getting started

– would not have moved back if not for family—grew up here all her life.

– lack of well paying jobs that will keep jobs here – ditto by M and she felt pay range being

Al added that \$12/hr for a single person without children.

- Came here 20 years ago because of one of the highest pay in the state. Every building and school needs a mission statement but the town doesn't and the town needs to know where it is going—effort but a long way to go. Wages for teachers are not keeping pace and lack of community planning. Ag was good twenty years ago along with the oil.

- agreed with all
- the economy
- agreed to keep people here with higher wages. Lack sports facility which encouraged hotels and restaurants to host tournaments, etc.
- after school activities and summertime and not just baseball or swimming pool. All year round activities that are age appropriate and just do not stop at certain ages. Needs to have facilities or event center for other events also that are not just sport oriented. More businesses to draw people to our community. Concern also with wages in town. Felt a lot working at poverty level. Feels major businesses are being represented but not smaller ones.
- Ag depressed for a number of years and we are feeling ripple effect. Not a lot being done to pull tourists off of interstate. Poor marketing—need to advertise to get people to stop.
- rising taxes and impacting our development and jobs and money are not there to continue to raise those. Shifting and aging population that does not accept changing times.
- at risk kids are looking for something to do and the need for some place to go and the end of the Youth Center which is not functioning right now. Not a lot of jobs available for high school aged kids.
- everyone going to Wal-Mart and how Sunday is basically closed here and the only thing open is the grocery store and of the vicious cycle. Not coming back into the community what we do have. Sense of competition between people – hospital for hospital staff, school for school staff and a sense of clickiness and not playing as team. Group Ditto. High cancer rate and concerned of the reason why.
- CRP taking land out of production which affects local implement dealers and how it did not really help.
- all of young people move away for better job opportunities
- ditto on people moving away for better jobs
- diversification of economy
- need to get away from agriculture as soul source of income and to have a viable business plan
- lack of diversification

FARMERS & RANCHERS

– effect of CRP on farming community and Conrad—loss of money that doesn't go through businesses and young farmers face the fact they can't afford to pay the farmers what they are receiving for CRP payments, another round of CRP is coming around and not sure how it will be implemented, many farmers waiting for that program to come into effect again, raises barley for Busch, wheat and cattle, catch with new farm program is fixed payments is the way the program works when prices are high and there is no grain to sell—paid on average so your crop share is low every year, perception of what farmers really get for payments, need to try and pull trucks off the interstate for us to package the beef, Canadian trucks come here easy but difficult for us to cross

–after 27 years here still new kid on the block, talk of kids moving away and farm cannot support two families, raises barley, wheat and cattle

– too dependent on agriculture, we are dysfunctional unit as a whole and cannot get everybody to come together—county is divided, cannot see the common good, raise wheat and barley, when trying to create something the application process and fees are outrageous and difficult if people aren't understanding what you are trying to do

– raise Busch barley, alfalfa, wheat and cattle, operating costs are rising astronomically mostly in insurances, income is not keeping up to the costs, need added value to see more income

– no way to recapture the costs where other businesses can raise their rates and the only way is to reduce expenses but only so much you can do

– cattle, wheat and barley, raise commodities here but all shipped away, would like to see them processed in this area and keep local, talked of health insurances and the rate increase and have tried higher deductibles but lose so much coverage

– raise wheat, barley and wife is school teacher—lack of population which creates workforce, poor ability to market assets to outsiders, any business that comes here needs to know more about clean air, etc., hanging on just because of agriculture sector, farmers do a very poor job of PR work for themselves

– cattle and barley for Busch, capitalism has led agriculture down a path that it looks like a death nail, assets are water, land, etc., attracting industry is tough, need wind generation hooked into grid and have a reasonable price paid for that and easier access to that, reliable water supply needed, need some competition for BN, everyone drives to GF for grocery stores

– wheat and barley, ditto on CRP program—throw so much money at this program and we need some incentive to young people to come in because we are disappearing in numbers, not enough people to support local businesses, need incentives on state and federal level

– raise wheat and barley, transportation issue as captive shippers in Montana needs to be addressed

– should not be in a position where part of our costs are controlled by a monopoly, ditto on CRP program and opportunities for young farmers to get established

MEDICAL COMMUNITY

– took years of school to get back to rural Montana, hard to stay and hard to come back

– Medicaid cuts from state and federal government and this being a retirement community it will be a major problem

– community needs enough population for facility to survive and thrive—need volume, bringing in employees is hard, healthcare personnel have the option to drive to GF for higher paying jobs, volume of OB is down

-ditto on maintaining population and employees

– ditto on overpass—fire dept. and EMT people live on the other side of the tracks

– not much in community to draw people off of interstate—need for shoes and clothes, shops online or GF

– same issues in any rural community and expression of policies at state level, talk of new business but roadblocks at state level or at least perception, things need to be addressed at a higher up level

- paving of some streets, shopping in town

– not opportunity to shop at home, owners just cannot compete with buying at a higher rate

– need a balance of promoting a retirement community and to have a health community we need the young people, declining population

– farming community cannot afford to keep individual on the farms anymore and nothing to bring the son back, retirement community lives on a fixed budget, ditto on difficulty to open businesses, has a B&B and his toughest competition was the State of Montana, everybody is leaving community

– need to leave town to get good prices

– need for overpass, better choices of fine dining, concern and need for teen activities, need for theater, increase in drug use—choose to not recognize or involved themselves as parents

- to be competitive we need to have more population and more open minds for bigger businesses, we need young people to come back here, teenagers cannot wait to leave and go elsewhere
- need industry in town that will supply competitive wages that are better than minimum
- from farming generation family, great place to raise kids, economic base is suffering and needs to be broadened, 187 empty houses, gradual decline that people don't notice such an impact, interstate touches community in a unique way—goes by and gradually turns, need to bleed business from drive-by, need to be lower based agriculture
- need for senior citizens to have transportation after hospital stay

Sheets:

1. Resistant to change, to person charged with “getting up and making our community a better place economically. Shelby has Port Authority and we need something similar
2. Too much red tape to be attractive or else business is attracted to area and red tape foils the plan
3. Need to let community know when companies are interested in our area so we could encourage them by writing letters, etc.
4. Need to utilize empty buildings in town and find ways to attract business
5. No choice entertainment or shopping
6. County Fair and Rifle Range
7. Connect to Lewis & Clark Expedition for 2007 (?), expected tourism

RETAIL, BUSINESS & UTILITIES

- restaurants with wheel-chair accessible to restrooms except for Lobby, welcome sign in north takes too long to read and what can we do to bring people into Conrad and interstate has not been good for us, RV parking needs to be addressed and/or designated, need another grocery store, small gas stations close because of competition, Ben Franklin closed
- keeping jobs in community

- need industry to come in to keep people, need Front Street paved and used as a truck bypass—truck traffic is tremendous on Main Street
- economic base—too dependent on agriculture and need different economic dollars into our community
- ditto on RV parking and everything in Conrad says “no” and only place welcomed to park is Town Pump
- shipping products in and out of area is expensive
- younger people into community and the need for jobs
- economic diversity
- water supply straightened out
- not so much attracting new businesses but running into roadblocks with the state – need the help in facilitation, we are diversified but aggravating about jobs then Forest Service is closing trails to motorcycles, hunters, etc. If we lose recreation, two jobs in Conrad will be lost. Henry McGonigle project and it came down to color in report
- ditto in getting past state regulations
- overall community revitalization—were prosperous in the 70s and agriculture was doing wonderful, all about land and the dollars made off that land, support agriculture people for higher prices, we need to be creative in a reason to stop here
- ditto on water, people and jobs, need signs from both ways

RETIRED COMMUNITY

- dying community, lack of retail, no clothing store, stores diminishing, loss of grocery store, need for overpass
- water supply, cannot grow without water—development people feel we do not have adequate water, faced with cuts in Medicare and Medicaid, transportation—farmers deal with freight rates, state regulations on elevators pose problem in center—needs to be in stairwell or build an addition, relief for Senior Citizens, issue of getting back after a visit to the hospital—becomes a personal support and volunteer hospital
- lack of emphasis on local entrepreneurship and work locally on what we have to build on
- need for new Senior Surrey—awful lot of wheelchair patients

- CRP participants are not buying anything in town as far as machinery, etc.
- ditto on water situation
- more economic development
- ditto on more business
- problems with Senior Center that need repairs, need elevator, ditto on water and new stores—especially grocery store

SENIOR CITIZENS

- economic development, growth is needing to come from within the community, first \$5000 of equipment is tax exempt—problem is that it cut county budgets and have to shift and up the mill levy, etc., brothers in Pendroy are working on a straw-plastic material to build fencepost, and neither Choteau nor Conrad has gotten behind it, malt barley plant is practical but you will be competing against plants in GF, CRP, Hutterite colonies do not buy locally, our closeness to GF is a hindrance, legislature would rather have counties raise taxes so they aren't the blame
- getting people to understand and use the center, suggest contributions to help with funding the center, money is always an issue, rural area poses a problem with outreach, transportation for senior citizens (currently pursuing new bus for Conrad area), bus pulled from Valier area (service 20-24 at center in Valier), need more people to help with the center, high prescription costs, combination of local law enforcement to one entity
- need for a new gym
- getting people to stay in a small community such as nurses, problems in winter with the streets and how they are maintained and the danger of walking or driving, city doesn't get out enough and plow, sand, etc., need two grocery stores

Bill talked of nurse co-ops that can deliver the services to home and are based out of a medical facility.

YOUTH - Seniors

Asked on how many coming back to Conrad – 5-6.

- discrimination towards people who skateboard

- ambulance and fire control for Sollid Road needs to be improved. Concerned of overpasses
- IGA has monopoly over town being only store
- variety of jobs in Conrad
- improve our water sources and actually have water
- develop identify and set goals that are strived for
- fear of change, lot of elderly people, fear of new things such as prison
- better medical facility such as surgeries – people get shipped to GF
- more variety of jobs
- some streets need to be improved – Front Street in particular
- ditto on jobs and things for people to do.

Al asked who worked—most do and work more than one job. Two over \$6/hr. One runs heavy equipment for \$15/hr. mostly backhoe, excavator, dozers, rollers. The other, CAN

- draw in other businesses, some turned away because industrial park is full
- step away from Ag and focus on technology field more
- ditto on more technology and bring college grads back to Conrad
- less pizza places and more entertainment
- ditto on more business, circulate money in Conrad instead of GF
- law enforcement is too much—do not need all of that
- need for more classes in the school system
- ditto and expand industrial park to bring in families, people outside of city limits can use city water
- need something to bring in tourism
- need more outside money coming in and bring people in
- agree and need for class courses for college bound

–ditto on everything

– agree on IGA issue and prices are too high with one store

Blanket Discussion – feels there is a big drug problem

What are the major strengths and assets of your community?

AG BUSINESS

- groups of people, young people that are still here, talked of daughter living in California and not a chance of her moving back to Montana, kids won't be moving back, MMI (Montana Milling) and ITB are very prosperous businesses
- schools, kids, low crime rate, medical professional, right on interstate of people needing parts
- excellent infrastructure in town, ditto on schools and hospital, streets, good base for a community of our size
- clean facility, active service groups, a plus for CRP is that some of best pheasant hunting, newest modern airport, plenty of eating establishments, close proximity to GF and Canada, cross section of people that will help people in time of need, quality of life

BANKING, FINANCIAL, AND PROFESSIONAL

- businesses that are here are very strong and loyal and seem to be community oriented and majority of people here have a desire to see Conrad expand,
- need to make interstate a strength and get remaining wealth moving into something proactive, tremendous students that if opportunity was here could base industry on them
- best place to raise family, Dollars for Scholars – just started in 1995 but community has overwhelming supported with about \$40,000/year, Genevieve Rankin Anderson Trust that funds community projects (9-12,000/year)
- strength and involvement with everyone in the community, which starts generations ago
- people seem committed and involved
- schools, adult population of Conrad is quite educated but under employed, ditto on commitment and involvement
- ditto on educated people, great work ethic and easy to hire good employees, freeway goes both ways to GF
- very strong volunteer base, outstanding service based section of our economy, outstanding financial institutions along with health facilities, wonderful attorneys, and accountants

CHURCHES

- great Building Center and commented that the owner wanted good products, a good supply and at a competitive rate, finds prices on tires, etc. are competitive, strong school system, churches, location—close to interstate and mountains, close to Malmstrom for medical care being retired from the military, climate, shops local
- very educated town and that college graduation is a priority, clean, pride in appearance of town, reasonable housing, strong correlation between good people is church
- had not lived in a small place when moved here, everyone is accepting of outsiders
- people rally around people in need
- commented that business owners are willing to deal with the customer but they also have to make a profit also
- safe place to live and nice place to raise kids, quiet group that commute out of town for jobs and are not as active in the community and church, need to cut the need for commuting
- ditto on safety and how they rally around to help people in need, farmers help during harvest, musical and artistic talent in the area and Arts Council is working hard to provide live entertainment by renovating the theater—goes back to well educated people in our area—loyal audience in attendance to art, churches work well together
- ditto on friendliness, arts, churches, location to mountains and lakes, cleanliness
- ditto on above and the strength of the community that makes it what it is, ditto on location

CITY, COUNTY, LAW ENFORCEMENT

- very progressive city. Strive hard to meet demands and regulations sent down from higher ups, excellent facilities for aging, options of public and private school, great hospital, upgrade at airport will allow traffic again but no fuel available, EDC and PCP group striving to make community good. Sam added that a credit card program is being looked into but is quite expensive. Agnes has hunting clients fly in and they have to go to Shelby to fuel up so they tend to stay in Shelby.
- nice community, infrastructure is good other than pump station and lagoon but both are being worked on, nice parks, ball field is excellent, PEOPLE is best asset
- 4-H program is good and has increased over the last few years and extension agent is good (105 in county fair participated), new younger ministers have come in to town, several churches have excellent activities – dances, youth center when it was open, excellent volunteers. Child rearing and work ethics are wonderful and talked of living in bigger cities.

- ditto on nice community, commented on friendliness, commented on turnout at assessment
- well kept, friendly and does not regret decision moving here
- wonderful place to raise kids, safe, people from out of area comment on attractiveness, certain volunteers worked to death
- good streets, water mains, sewer systems, 3 major implement dealers that brings people to town, PMC is an asset, Horizon Lodge and Blue Sky Villa
- close-knit community, whose kids are whose and what they are doing, parents inform each other
- school system is great, one on one with the size we are dealing with and good components to add variety, good community raise kids in, police department—24 hr. patrol and more condensed watch of city, other communities that have combined do not get the service
- “Mayberry of the North”, low crime rate, clean neighborhoods, school systems, nice location with close to border and parks—good hunting and fishing
- nice location with Lake Francis and Tiber, ditto on low crime rate
- expanded on PMC—diagnostic equipment (CAT) available, instant connection with Kalispell (partnership involved), excellent Extended Care and Special Care Unit—occupancy rate is in the high 90% and neighboring communities are about 59% because of quality of care and reputation, no odor is a common comment
- south side entrance to Tiber and close to Lake Frances, elk and deer hunting along with fishing, bird hunting in all of Pondera county and waterfowl
- desirable place to live with low population and quiet—low key
- lots of empty buildings for businesses to relocate, fabulous technical infrastructure, fiber optics throughout, access to business development support

CIVIC GROUPS & HOMEMAKERS

- lots of community of pride but sometimes gets in the way of future developments.
- people eager to volunteer in time of need. Good hospital and many talented and generous people. Talked of theater project and generosity. Clean and safe for family. Good retirement community. Stepping stone effect as elderly people progress.

– ditto on clean, nice location near mountains, Canada, GF airport, rush to help people in time of need

– one of the nicest libraries in the state on national historic register. Voters passed new levy and this is due to interest in education. Lots of Civic Groups that continue to grow. Ditto on volunteer system. Businesses support fundraisers. Businesses have in budget how much they will donate each month. We are the county seat.

– school system, community spirit, hospital. Nice city park and swimming pool, PARC is wonderful. Things available for younger children are great.

– ditto on library, Volunteer Fire Department, ditto on parks and swimming pool, ball diamonds. Retirement facilities are superb—Blue Sky, Horizon Lodge, Beehive, etc. Beautiful streets.

– determined people in town to get things done and keep after things, community pride, benefit turnouts, sound infrastructure—wonderful churches and are missing Methodist Church.

– explained lack of Methodist Church—adhered to principal of churches in small towns. Strong congregations. Ditto on everything. Pondera Players is an asset and active Garden Club.

– well-educated population, strong work ethic. People are eager to hire kids that come from our community. More positive feelings than negative about our community. Museum is an asset and positive aspect—faithfulness by a lot of people.

– Location of Conrad could bring in tourism and right in the middle of national parks, close to border, etc. Traffic needs reason to come into Conrad. Indian Reservations and Hutterites are an asset, hunting, fishing. Lots of reasons to tour this area. Lewis & Clark history also.

– ditto on school system and currently being used as a model in school improvement throughout the state, excellent service-based industry (accountants, banking, attorneys, etc.) Al added much richer and broader mix than larger communities. People that have moved back here have caused that mix to happen.

EDUCATION

– good school system. Students well prepared. History plays a part and the generations involved that still have pride for this—value to this history.

– good hospital facility

– most giving people – Girl Scouts, community organization fundraisers and people do care about their fellow man.

– Ditto about giving people. When someone has problems, people go together.

- people want to live in Conrad because it is clean and town is kept up. People work out of town but want to live here because of appearance, etc.
- high standards – school, cleanliness, work ethic. Added America Reads program is outstanding. Good volunteers in community
- safe community to raise children in.
- large denominations of churches and public library is outstanding.
- feels sports programs, 4-H, church programs and feels there are a number of things for kids to do if they choose to do it.
- golf course but does need community involvement to continue..
- lots of empty houses which are opportunities for people to move in—good available housing.
- excellent baseball program
- very caring people that are willing to work in spite of the wages. Good work ethic.
- nice place to raise a family
- Ditto on nice place to raise family
- streets are very nice and even though people get upset over paving streets, it shows effort and continues to look nice
- bringing new things into community brings change but maybe getting some people that fight the change to support would create a tremendous amount of energy—people willing to work hard.,

Group Input - Nice park, airport, community service groups, supportive taxpayers on levies along with the businesses supporting schools, free parking, arts council, water treatment plant, nice cemetery, great businesses (implement dealerships, building center, banks, etc.), Pondera Historical Society and Museum, Whoop-Up Days (not just money in bars but for all businesses), renovated theater, location being halfway between Canadian border and Great Falls

FARMERS & RANCHERS

- nice clean place to live, safe with kids walking down the street, good location for possible packing plant
- strongest asset is the people that will benefit whatever cause, people are always willing to help

- culturally tolerant, welcome most people into community, good variety of spiritual choices—13 churches, access to transportation with railroad, new airport which will be available for night landing soon and will be set up for instrumentation
- strong agriculture base and community that reflects on people that we have, strong family values
- ditto on agriculture base with implement dealers and elevators with support for infrastructure
- good experiment station with good area to raise products
- location with GF and Canadian border on both ends
- ditto on location for farmland, great water resources if snow, natural resources, land and water need to be preserved
- schools, hospital
- sense of community, which seems to bond together and are advocates for good or bad situations

MEDICAL COMMUNITY

- hospital is a good employer with decent wages and health insurance, good schools with a variety of classes, one on one nursing
- blanket ditto, streets, hospital, quiet, safe, schools, golf course
- quality medical facility, adequate staff to provide good care
- great place to live and raise family, wealthy community, getting balances on hospital financial stability
- ambulance and fire service, great response time
- pass
- pass
- pass
- nice medical community, provide PT and occupational therapy, Home Health, hard working employees, maintained parks and pool
- pass

- caring community that volunteer to help
- nursing care of medical facility is excellent, ditto on schools and community
- variety of active churches
- ditto on churches and respond to needs in community
- ditto on everything
- great place to live, born and raised here
- lots of volunteer work, associated with schools and churches mostly but more than other communities

Sheets: Newspaper, Whoop-Trail

RETAIL, BUSINESS & UTILITIES

- nice town, good streets and water system with water, good sewer system, located on interstate
- good people, Whoop-Up and people from Ireland attended
- business people are very strong, business people donate to many fundraisers, low crime
- interstate is an asset but need to tap into it
- baseball complex and swimming pool
- ditto on people and support businesses give to children and activities
- schools
- great medical facility and retirement facility, clean and well-maintained town, productive workforce within business community
- ditto
- clean, quiet, peaceful, very attractive and people here are full of pride with yards kept up, houses maintained
- safe neighborhood, ditto everything else, good Art in the Park
- golf course with clubhouse and place to eat

RETIRED COMMUNITY

- hunters benefit community that buys gas, food & lodging
- neat area, quiet, enjoys driving in this area, good schools and sports programs
- strong retirement community—Horizon Lodge, Blue Sky and BeeHive—3 types – seniors that like no change, seniors with family and the ones out in the community helping out, covenant city has with government regarding Blue Sky—cannot expand or have any subsequent buildings and would not count as collateral for financing—need support to allow them to expand, Horizon Lodge is a HUD operation and need consultant to keep everything within regulation, Section 8 program is used to good advantage in this village
- talent and leadership among retired population that has carried on for years, theater project which has been a cooperative venture, great library, museum, retirees do not always resist change and support issues good for the community, reputation for leaders in this community, good Hospice program, Easter Seals and WestMont
- good schools but classes are diminishing, good retirement community but leaving houses for sale in town, good hospital, new dental clinic, good banks and auto dealers
- great religious community that have wonderful education programs, first town that had organized developmentally disabled homes, sheltered housing and workshops and independent living, done a lot to build on sports complexes – pool, baseball
- community spirit is wonderful, good nursing home
- agrees with all
- food pantry does well and very much supported
- greatest asset is people
- nice community
- nice community
- one of the best Home Health facilities, Home Chore Program—if you are unable to vacuum, wash windows, dusting, dishes, laundry, good churches, pride with real estate

SENIOR CITIZENS

- potential for wind energy, aggressive people

- availability of LEAP program and HUD services in our community, Beehive and Horizon Lodge available, Alzheimer wing currently in the works, lots of steps for the elderly as far as resources for living, nursing service available, small enough that everyone knows each other and willing to help, seniors are getting younger instead of older and like progress, schools offer adult education classes, seniors are passing on talents such as quilting, sewing
- good medical people along with the police department, community is willing to help in time of need, senior center is available, very clean and everyone takes care of their yards, no shoe or children stores
- wide streets and no hill, pretty town, senior citizens in Valier would like to see their community grow, interested in the arts, natural resources in the state and the potential involved, feels that each segment of our society is represented

Dale asked from a senior citizen's perspective, are they in favor of a growing town or do they like it the way it is?

- not enough young people stay here. As far as senior citizens are concerned, the help is there and it just needs to be asked for. Would like to see the community grow and more industries.

YOUTH - Seniors

- community itself is willing to help out each other locally
- clean town, well kept, good streets, good city workers
- everyone knows each other, low crime rate
- ditto on clean and safe
- ditto on clean and safe
- ditto on clean and safe
- community is supportive, good financial support
- lots of grain marketing opportunities
- ditto on everything previous
- ditto on everything previous
- ditto on everything
- close to interstate, two exits, just need an overpass or improved exit would help
- very united as a community and willing to help
- schools and hospital are very strong
- ditto on schools except for variety of classes
- nice place to raise a family
- nothing
- even though shy for a few jobs, businesses to a great jobs to employ kids are good to work around school activities
- good law enforcement and fire department and emergency services

What projects would you like to see accomplished in your community in the next 2, 5, 10 and 20 years?

AG BUSINESS

- Pondera Coalition for Progress—we feel that for our community to move forward was to align these people in this group to work on projects, hopefully in two years the water infrastructure will be upgraded, close to announce that overpass will be built, ten years is a maximum of thinking of any project, 2nd grocery store,
- water system and overpass
- ditto on water and overpass
- ditto on water and overpass which could also aid in rest area and possibly another industrial park

BANKING, FINANCIAL, AND PROFESSIONAL

- something for farming community which would benefit entire community, different business opportunities to get economy flowing to address other problems
- improvement of access off of interstate and appearance is not as attractive as it should, need skateboard park
- need to continue to fund Elaina’s position, feels city fathers would use excuse of non-insurable for skateboard parks
- more involvement for kids and ditto on skateboard park
- finishing of theater project which will have a performing arts center and will have a movie screen, along with the museum idea we should have an historic street to make it look nice to attract people, need to preserve our own history
- need to hold youth and talent, water system needs attention, freeway access
- try to reverse line of thinking with the first response being why we can’t other than why we can, try to come up with a community-wide program whether it is an intervention team not only covering at risk youth but also challenge to keep the good kids in line also—troubled kids get all the attention and good students need attention to, educational system for the parents—gave example of kids filling up pop cups with alcohol also

CHURCHES

- wind farm which is a clean industry and would create several jobs, develop value-added to industries we already have – example..ready-mix plant that could branch off to make cellars, culverts, need for tourists to get off of interstate and a possible idea would be an RV park right next to the interstate –use an attraction such as teepees to attract kids, flea market possibly in the Albertson’s store and incorporate a farmer’s market, expanding Blue Sky Villa—they are full so build some more, internet industry needs to be updated/upgraded
- restaurant tourist/traveler support, market the empty houses for the retirement community that is forming in our area, which will create jobs in the form of service,
- actually bypassed Conrad in the beginning so there is a huge need to pull people off of the highway, not any advertising or promotion of tourism
- need tourist trap to sell local crafts and Hutterites make beautiful furniture, maybe tours of Hutterite colonies
- need agricultural demonstrational museum and add on other things that are done in this area, need to change perception that there is a need to move away, churches could get together to for a youth center
- need for nice restaurant, need some sort of mentoring system, lack of number of people at this meeting is not due to lack of church participation
- need to appeal to retired people because they have money and are willing to spend their money, ditto on restaurant, bed and breakfast, improve golf course and another grocery store
- ditto on above, open other side of interstate and put in a rest area, fast food restaurant that has visibility from interstate

CITY, COUNTY, LAW ENFORCEMENT

- walking path developed along highway out towards golf course for safety, more activity for youth—bike and motocross developed that is safe, possible indoor shooting range, 4-H has group but they have to go to Ledger so Albertson’s building is a possibility, evening dining, businesses such as fabric and moderately priced clothing
- pump station moved to new location so we are drought resistant, overpass project completed and move industrial part to other side of interstate, train tracks—emergency problems, underground sprinkler system, new restroom at Legion Park (nice park, nice trees)
- stores, grocery store, shoe store, buy socks and underwear in town, skateboard park, completion of Enhance 911

- working on skateboard park with about a dozen kids that are committed, police dept needs to continue to build up and work with kids—have seen improvement in behavior since skateboard park project
- an arcade or youth center
- place for kids to see a movie. Troy added that possibly movies on a part-time basis but not like before. Ditto on Overpass project and talked of living on that side and the wait not to mention not being able to get emergency people to that side, museum project, shoe store, keep people here and not going to Great Falls
- multi-jurisdictional drug force, youth detention service and probation services available—juveniles are “hands off” and they know that and we cannot detain them, talked of grant working on for a facility in Albertson’s store, legislature keeps taking away any authority that we have, talked of MIPs and drug paraphernalia and coming out of HS. Joe talked of four-hour hold in Wolf Point. We need some redirection
- nothing more
- try to attract internet type business—live here and do their work. Al asked about gunsmiths and talked of other viable businesses of that sort that he knows of and thought hunting mix would be good
- need more positive
- expansion of Special Care Unit, talked of dedicated employees and fundraisers and trying to do this and not expense to taxpayers—limited space for dining etc. Airport—fuel issue will be take care of in the future—need chain link fence to prevent people entering with cars—parties, etc. Need private pilots to build hangars to improve—no funds available at county level. Al talked of airport bonds
- nothing more
- public water system for Dupuyer and could promote business there
- rest area development, business incubator, port authority and value added agricultural business that employees more than 50 people

CIVIC GROUPS & HOMEMAKERS

- attraction for teenage activities – game room/dance hall in old Albertson’s building and also new gymnasium to host tournaments to help community businesses such as restaurants, hotels, etc.
- a plant to create jobs with benefits; wind generation idea

- ditto both on Kit
- cooperative mercantile
- museum
- new water system and need this within two years, overpass project and rest area
- ditto on museum, tourism destination and how to treat tourists
- finish theater and get something to bring in tourists
- process continue to get bike path to schools—parts of town without sidewalks, ditto on theater and museum—include cultural aspects
- clean up town, overpass and get tough on drugs
- drug education/intervention but problems seem to come from home (ignorance and not just stupidity), keep youth involved

EDUCATION

- would like to see younger people wanting to stay in community
- more business whether large or small that are environmentally sound to bring students in and help schools.
- non-humongous corporations and more private that will pay decent salaries. Private businesses seem to have a little more heart. Build onto Intercontinental Truck Body – cluster development. Need to recognize that land changing (few owners and bigger conglomerations) we have less people to deal with. .
- 18 hole golf course and compared it to Shelby and the tournaments held there. Native American history that can draw tourists (teepee rings) and lots of historical aspects available.
- businesses that are not agriculture dependent so when bad ag years, not everything is bad. So overriding that Ag hurts everything. Travel into Great Falls is not ideal and wondered what Conrad as a town could do about that and that we can drive to Missoula and get cheaper flights. Regional jets as a solution.
- needs something uniquely Conrad that is not in any other town – something to set us apart. Industry playground such as a maze – parents looking for a place to stop. Fast internet hook-up.
- Community Center reopened and joint effort and interaction not only with church groups but youth also.

– better access off interstate with Wheat Mt Franchise, rest area. Industry based community college based on Conrad. Tours in our area, entrepreneurs to get people out and about.

– pass

FARMERS & RANCHES

– improved water supply in Conrad and for irrigation projects

– funding mechanism and path to follow available for people that want to do projects such as feedlot and resources available to help

– overpass development, rest area, industrial park and agriculture business that employs more than 50 people

– need young families back to school system, need added value for our grain and beef

– value-added products that goes back to the farmers and ranchers, money will be put back into improving land

– get good employment

– 2 years – maintain businesses we have, 5 years – Lake Francis project completed, 10 years – industry besides farming, 20 years – see population growth and less dependent on agriculture commerce

– reliable transportation competitive with region in general before anything else can occur—structure is already here, needs a core person on staff like Elaina to focus all projects

– better mechanism in place to achieve value-added ventures—interest is lost because of fees, etc.

– draw on infrastructure we have in place because of proximity for short and long term planning to make value-added business a reality

MEDICAL COMMUNITY

– a young working class with a stable industry to help and build from the bottom up, other issues would be solved with working families, survival is the goal of the facility even though there is an enormous potential, people need to use local hospital

- pharmaceutical industry is reaping \$45 mil a year for sinus problems and maybe a research in our area, create a specific oncology care center geared towards lung cancer with new treatment that will be out in a year that can detect spots on lungs early
- industry, expansion, new things to do
- new hospital in 15-20 years—just updated in 1995
- ditto on everything
- pass
- pass
- increase in costs, even though a wealthy local base we have gaps with services that can be provided—possibility of development internally, niche marketing,
- pass
- another grocery store, variety store, fabric store and craft store
- specialty areas in town—antique, airplanes, cowboys, theme for a town
- industry that is self-supporting that doesn't depend on government with a good solid base that will stay
- pass
- need for dialysis, chemotherapy treatment, monies needed to train existing staff, sleep study, ditto on grocery store, ditto on theater, youth center, skateboarding facility
- ditto on fine dining
- need for outlet malls
- plastic surgery for wealthy people, ditto on outlet malls

Sheets: Chinese Restaurant, specific incentives for appropriate businesses, skateboard facility that would provide recreation for our own youth and provide more customers for local restaurants

RETAIL, BUSINESS & UTILITIES

- traveled in RV and stops at something that says “free”, has a proposal for agricultural interpretive center—Jack expanded with the need to have a gimmick people to come in—questions as to why all ground is not farmed, etc. Targeted audience will be families with children traveling through area and there is a need to get vehicles stop and the people out. Concerned if Conrad really wants people to stop anyway. If you can get one RV to stop,

the word will spread and it needs to be a community effort. Written proposal available. Center will have displays of grains, pictures of fields in different stages, equipment and the process. Learn about area and educational.

– letdowns with prison and McGonigle group—younger people are in their 40s and younger people are needed to buy homes so a good project would be to have Buck do an article to give people around here something to look forward to. Public needs something positive. Hits in agriculture and recreation, timber and mining have made huge impact. People come to Conrad because of less pressure like in car dealerships so we need other ways to bring people in.

– exit with rest area and industrial park, talked of actual sized missile being discussed as a tourist attraction—people do not have any idea how many are out here

– house plant fertilizer by using current fertilizer with repackaging, etc. with hopes to be distributed nationwide to privately owned businesses. Montana Growth Through Ag is being used. Running into a wall with national distribution and in the midst of doing right now.

– need a big hit but they do take longer to develop, retirement facility is result of grand slam and we have been impacted heavily through government.

– operated farmers market that ended about ten years ago and was held at Laundromat with Hutterite colonies, local people and Mennonites

NEEDS: Runs, farmers markets, Hutterite colonies, bike runs

RETIRED COMMUNITY

- Need for medical transportation after hours

– see the museum project completed and need grants to finish because much is taken up by architecture of the project, artifacts that will go in will be lost if not done quickly

– something done with old nursing home

– water situation, revise overpass—sharp corner, overpass for east side of time, expansion of retirement community

– theater and museum completed, buildings on Front Street needs to be cleaned up, Ed's Tavern is an embarrassment

– need for a theater, lack of fine dining

– value-added agriculture business

– pass

- water problem solved
- agrees with all
- younger people move in to fill up schools
- ditto on fine dining
- agree with all

SENIOR CITIZENS

- need for an overpass to the east side of the tracks (Chamber is currently pursuing that project), need for a skateboard park because kids are using other resources around the area that are not safe, kids not in sports need more to do

Craig added that the county needs to recognize a project such as an overpass as a priority. Commissioners need to recognize this.

- keep businesses we have before worrying about anything else, retirement community aspect needs to remain strong, good economic development organizations, straw-plastic business in the works, garbage issue be considered
- need for an arts center to hold dance, drama that could be contracted out to individuals, great potential for coal bed methane

YOUTH - Seniors

- skateboard park and youth center to do something besides drugs and alcohol
- economic growth and expansion on what is already here. Give college graduates a reason to come back here.
- a YMCA
- more entertainment such as a theater
- ditto on entertainment to keep kids busy to avoid drug scene
- legalize hemp as an Ag product in Montana
- utilize interstate more and draw people in. People only stop for gas.
- another shopping center for more businesses
- ditto
- ditto with everyone previous
- ditto on youth center and more businesses
- see land used and more use of empty buildings
- ditto with Grant on hemp—more alternative crops. Jump on other opportunities such as prisons, hog plant
- overpass project started, concern of emergency problems
- ditto on overpass and ditto on empty building concern and something for younger kids to do

- bigger mall, more stores and theater
- ditto on youth center, agree with Matt on utilizing interstate to draw people
- need more economic development, use more of city, county government funds and cut back on law enforcement and use that money for R & D
- need to utilize space available for businesses
- new gym and track to host tournaments to help local businesses
- ditto on empty buildings to keep people in town
- need to bring more families to Conrad to increase population
- ditto on gym and more business for tournaments
- ditto on shopping center to bring people here from Canada and Great Falls and with the new gym idea—facilities for elderly people to watch games
- YMCA need or athletic facility
- things need to change at the state level before a lot of these things can happen and the state as a whole needs to become more business friendly.

Blanket Discussion – Craig asked about a “better job”

—more job options for kids involved in activities

Larry mentioned who we have met with previously and all emphasized the need of a youth club and church club organizations—a few raised their hands as being involved in church organizations.

