

# **RESOURCE TEAM ASSESSMENT REPORT**

**for**

## **DARBY, MONTANA**

### **OCTOBER 20, 2004**

**In partnership with  
Montana Department of Commerce, Montana Economic Developers Association,  
USDA/Rural Development, Real World Development, Montana Community  
Development Corporation, and Beaverhead-Deerlodge Gallatin National Forests  
and the people of Darby.**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

What a privilege to spend time in Darby, Montana. Not only was the scenery beautiful and the community a delight, but the people of Darby are truly a great asset. Thank you for your hospitality, your time, and for sharing with the team the vision you have for Darby.

Before presenting the report, I would like to give recognition to Montana Department of Commerce (MDOC), USDA/Rural Development and MEDA – Montana Economic Developers Association. MDOC sponsors Resource Team Assessments across the state, while USDA/Rural Development provides funding for training team members and follow-up costs. MEDA provides the contractual services that make Resource Teams possible. You can join MEDA and become a part of this economic development network at <http://www.medamembers.org>.

Special thanks are due Mayor Rick Scheele and Becki Linderman for making the assessment possible. Rick and Becki served as champions making sure everything was organized and ready for the team. Rick and Becki had help from the community, but in every project there has to be those people that say, “let’s do it” and then make it happen. Thank you, Rick and Becki.

More thanks are extended to the Flying R guest Ranch, Traveler’s Reest, Trapper Creek Job Corp, Darby Library, Robbin’s Café, Darby Clubhouse, Darby Public Schools, Darby Downtown Association, Bear’s Lair, Darby Civic Club, the City of Darby and Nancy McKinney. Without this support as well as all of the people that came to the Listening Sessions, the assessment could not have been a success.

In addition, I applaud each and every team member that dedicated hours of work and travel in order to participate on the team: Melinda Anderson and Myrt Webb of Real World Development, Steve Grover, SBDC Director for Montana Community Development Corporation, Dani Price, Grants and Agreements Specialist for Beaverhead-Deerlodge and Gallatin National Forests and Karyl Tobel, Program Manager for Montana Department of Commerce Community Development Block Grant program. Each team member’s contact information is provided in the following report. Please feel free to call on any of us for additional information or support. It would be our pleasure.

The stage is now being set for Darby’s future. There are a number of short term and long term accomplishable recommendations that the resource team has provided in this report. Each of you individually must decide what it is that you want to do—what kind of project you want to tackle. It is also important for the entire community to be involved in finding 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. It can be done. It is your choice, your decision; you can do it!

Gloria O’Rourke, Montana Economic Developers Association

## **PROCESS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THIS REPORT**

Montana Economic Developers Association (MEDA) provided staff support for the coordination of a resource team to assist Darby, Montana, in evaluating the town's assets and liabilities and in developing suggestions for improving the environment, social and economic future of the area. Real World Development volunteered time and resources to compile a pre-assessment of Darby and made it available for the team's use.

Becki Linderman served as the local contact and local team leader for the project. Becki took the lead in agenda development, logistics, budgeting 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 region. The team members were selected based on their fields of expertise that Darby officials indicated would be needed to respond to the problem areas identified.

The Resource Team interviewed well over 50 people on October 20, 2004. The notes from the community input sessions are included in this report. The team was available for listening to the following groups: Business owners, Darby Downtown Association, Financial Institutions, Local Government, Law Enforcement, Forest Service, Emergency Services, Churches, Senior Citizens, Community Groups, Volunteers, Non-Profits, Timber Workers United, Darby High School Student Officers/Representatives, Teachers, Administrators, Educators and Board Members.

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

Upon completion of the interviews, the team met in a work session to compare notes and share comments. The team then agreed that each team member would 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 this final report to Darby.

A preliminary oral report and a summary of group recommendations were presented to the people of Darby the evening of October 20th.

Following the oral report, this formal written report was prepared and is presented to Darby. Copies will be made available in print and electronically. The report is available on the MEDA website at <http://www.medamembers.org>.

A meeting is planned to review the report with the people of Darby and to set priorities and initiate action plans.

**DARBY, MONTANA  
RESOURCE TEAM  
OCTOBER 20, 2004**

**Melinda Anderson, Principal  
Real World Development  
P.O. Box 361  
Coos Bay, OR 97420  
Ph: 541.266.8431 Fx: 707.929.1621  
Email: [melinda@realworlddevelopment.com](mailto:melinda@realworlddevelopment.com)  
<http://www.realworlddevelopment.com>**

**Steve Grover, SBDC Director  
MT Community Development Corp.  
110 E. Broadway, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Missoula, MT 59802  
Ph: 406.728.9234x206 Fx:  
Email: [sgrover@mtcdc.org](mailto:sgrover@mtcdc.org)  
<http://www.mtcdc.org>**

**Gloria O'Rourke  
MEDA/MEDS  
118 E. Seventh St.; Suite 2A  
Anaconda, MT 59711  
Ph: 406.563.5259 Fx: 406.563.5476  
[gloria@medamembers.org](mailto:gloria@medamembers.org)  
<http://www.medamembers.org>**

**Dani Price, Grants and Agreements Specialist  
Beaverhead Deerlodge and Gallatin National  
Forests  
420 Barrett St.  
Dillon, MT 59725  
Ph: 406.683.3919 Fx: 406.683.3844  
Email: [dlprice@fs.fed.us](mailto:dlprice@fs.fed.us)  
<Http://www.fs.fed.us>**

**Karyl Tobel, Program Manager  
Montana Dept. of Commerce/CDBG ED  
P.O. Box 200505  
Helena, MT 59620-0505  
Ph: 406.841.2733 Fx: 406.841.2731  
Email: [karylt@state.mt.us](mailto:karylt@state.mt.us)  
[www.commerce.state.mt.us/brd/BRDPCDBG.htm](http://www.commerce.state.mt.us/brd/BRDPCDBG.htm)**

**Myrt Webb, Senior Associate  
Real World Development  
P.O. Box 2925  
Columbia Falls, MT 59912  
Ph: 406.892.4684  
Email: [myrtwebb@centurytel.net](mailto:myrtwebb@centurytel.net)  
<http://www.realworlddevelopment.com>**

**DARBY, MONTANA  
RESOURCE TEAM ASSESSMENT**

## AGENDA

**OCTOBER 20, 2004**

- 6:30 - 7:15am Team orientation & working breakfast - Montana Cafe
- 7:15 - 7:45 Darby Tour
- 8:00 - 9:00 Business Owners, Darby Downtown Assoc., Financial Institutions – Darby Library
- 9:00 - 10:00 Local Government, Law Enforcement, Forest Service and Emergency Services – Town Hall
- 10:00 – 11:00 Churches and Senior Citizens – Darby Library
- 11:00 – 1:00 Community Groups, Volunteers, Non-Profits – Darby Clubhouse  
Pizza served around 12:00
- 1:30 - 2:30 Timber Workers United, et al - Darby Clubhouse
- 2:30 - 3:15 Darby High School Student Officers and Representatives - Darby High School
- 3:30 - 4:00 Teachers, Administrators, Educators, and Board Members - Darby Cafeteria
- 4:00 - 6:00 Work session and working dinner for the team – Bear’s Lair Conference Rm.
- 7:00 - 8:00 Darby Town Meeting - Darby Cafeteria

For more information contact Becki Linderman at 821 – 3643 or [blinderman@darby.k12.mt.us](mailto:blinderman@darby.k12.mt.us)

**DARBY RESOURCE TEAM ASSESSMENT  
DARBY, MONTANA  
October 20, 2004**

**MAIN TOPICS AND ISSUES IDENTIFIED**

**Note: the people of Darby identified these issues during the seven listening sessions, which were designed to determine the challenges, strengths and future visions for the community.**

**MAIN TOPIC: PLANNING AND GROWTH**

- **GROWTH POLICY**
  - What do we protect?
    - Small town feel, natural surroundings, Main Street
  - How many people are coming?
    - Affordable housing (see Main Topic), attracting families
  - Where do you want to influence growth?
    - Prevent sprawl
  - What infrastructure do we need?
    - Water, sewer, broadband, law enforcement, walk-able community
  - How do we pay for it?
    - Grants, loans, community investment

**MAIN TOPIC: HOUSING**

- First Time Home Buyers
- Housing Rehab Program
- Visible Improvements
- Enforcing Decay ordinance & Demolition
- Lack of Mid-Priced Housing
- Multi-Family Housing
- More owner based residential homes

**MAIN TOPIC: JOBS**

- Living wage jobs
- Sustainable industry
  - Natural resources management and education
  - Workforce training
- Improve small business environment
  - Training and education
  - Expand market for products
- Tourism/destination community
- Main Street
  - Consistent appearance, i.e. old west theme
  - Lighting, signage, parking
  - Remove eyesores – blight

**MAIN TOPIC: COMMUNICATION**

- Re-engagement between Forest Service and community
- Re-invigorate the Civic Club group
- New people/ideas/money mesh with the long time locals
- Continue to engage the school programs with the community residents
- Improved communication among community organizations
- Web site improvements and marketability
- Capitalize on positive leadership (council, mayor, etc.)

**MAIN TOPIC: RECREATION**

- Biking/Walking Trail
- Multi-Purpose Center
  - Youth (see Main Topic, too)
  - Senior Citizens
  - Performing Arts
  - Pool
- Skate Park
- Sports
- River Front Park
- Year Round/All Season activities

**MAIN TOPIC: YOUTH**

- After School Activities
  - Mentoring/Tutoring Program
  - Lack of programs for 7 – 12
  - Lag time after school/before event
- Sports
  - Improved community support
  - More choices
- Jobs (high school employment plus future jobs)
- Bring D.A.R.E. back (or some drug education program)
- School enrollment (declining)

**MAIN TOPIC: MISC. COMMUNITY ISSUES**

- Clubhouse – balance between utilization, pricing, staffing and costs
- Volunteer Burnout
- Domestic Abuse
- Drug Use – meth labs
- Public transportation
- Repeat previous success path

## **REPORT BY: KARYL TOBEL**

**Karyl Tobel, Program Manager**

**Montana Dept. of Commerce/CDBG ED**

**P.O. Box 200505**

**Helena, MT 59620-0505**

**Ph: 406.841.2733 Fx: 406.841.2731**

**Email: [karylt@state.mt.us](mailto:karylt@state.mt.us)**

**[www.commerce.state.mt.us/brd/BRDPCDBG.html](http://www.commerce.state.mt.us/brd/BRDPCDBG.html)**

### **INTRODUCTION:**

Darby is a charming town in a scenic area with huge potential for residential and commercial growth. The downtown reflects a rustic, but chic atmosphere influenced by its wooded surroundings and western location. Citizens stated that they appreciate the “small town feel” that Darby offers, the natural surroundings, and knowing that a close-knit community comes together in times of need.

During the listening sessions, the citizens expressed concern that while growth was occurring, they did not want to see sprawl. Growth commands a need for an increase in public facilities services, affordable housing, and the need for a master plan that deals with anticipated community changes.

### **MAIN TOPIC: PLANNING AND GROWTH**

#### **ISSUE: GROWTH POLICY**

The town adopted a community action plan in 1999. This plan is now five years old and needs to be updated. Before the action plan is updated, the town needs to adopt a community growth policy that meets the criterion for local government “growth policies” as described in Senate Bill 97 passed by the 1999 Legislature (76-1-601, MCA). From this growth policy, the town can develop an action plan with a list of goals and preferred projects.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Darby can apply for grant funding from the Montana Department of Commerce to hire a consultant to complete a growth policy and action plan. Two programs in the Montana Department of Commerce offer planning grant funding each year for the development of growth policies and action plans.

#### **RESOURCES:**

Please contact the following people for information on annual planning grant competitions, and visit their websites for additional program information:

Gus Byrom, Program Manager  
Community Development Block Grant Program  
Public Facilities and Housing  
301 S. Park Ave.  
Helena, MT 59620  
Phone: 406-841-2777



Email address: [gbyrom@state.mt.us](mailto:gbyrom@state.mt.us)  
CDBG Website:  
[http://commerce.state.mt.us/CDD\\_CDBG.asp](http://commerce.state.mt.us/CDD_CDBG.asp)

Jim Edgcomb, Program Manager  
Treasure State Endowment Program  
301 S. Park Ave.  
Helena, MT 59620  
Phone: 406-841-2785  
Email address: [jedgcomb@state.mt.us](mailto:jedgcomb@state.mt.us)  
TSEP Website:  
[http://commerce.state.mt.us/CDD\\_TSEP.asp](http://commerce.state.mt.us/CDD_TSEP.asp)

## **MAIN TOPIC: HOUSING**

### **ISSUE: LIVEABLE AND AFFORDABLE**

Darby's housing stock is a mix of high-end, expensive housing; sub-standard housing; and a sprinkling of newer, affordable housing units. Citizens expressed repeatedly that finding housing in Darby that was affordable and of satisfactory condition was very difficult. Many people who owned businesses or worked in Darby lived in outlying areas where it was easier to find suitable housing in a mid-priced range.

While the town has a decay ordinance, Darby has many homes in need of renovation or demolition. Sub-standard housing needs structural and visible improvements. With a young population, decent and affordable housing is a real issue for potential buyers who want to reside in Darby but cannot find housing in good condition within the \$100,000 - \$150,000 price range.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Darby can apply to the Montana Department of Commerce for grant funding for assistance with its housing issues. The town can apply for funding to hire a consultant to conduct a housing condition assessment (see Resources in Planning and Growth section). From this assessment, Darby can decide which housing activities it wants to focus on for a local housing program.

The town can consider a first-time homebuyer's program, a housing rehabilitation program, and possibly new construction of single family and multi family housing. For housing rehabilitation, a local revolving loan fund can be set up with terms and conditions that the town determines are suitable for its population. This could include low-interest or deferred loans.

The setting-up and management for a local housing program can be handled in two ways:

- 1) A housing program could be managed by the town's staff. The Department has many examples of local housing programs that can be used as templates for other communities;  
or
- 2) A portion of proceeds from loan payments can be used to hire a consultant or consulting firm to assist with program management.

**RESOURCES:**

Please contact the following people for information on housing grants:

Julie Flynn, Program Manager  
HOME Program  
Montana Department of Commerce  
301 S. Park Ave.  
Helena, MT 59620  
Phone: 406-841-2818  
Email address: [juflynn@state.mt.us](mailto:juflynn@state.mt.us)  
HOME website:  
[http://commerce.state.mt.us/housing/Hous\\_HM.asp](http://commerce.state.mt.us/housing/Hous_HM.asp)

Mat Rude, Program Manager  
Multi-Family Housing  
Montana Department of Commerce  
301 S. Park Ave.  
Helena, MT 59620  
Phone: 406-841-2845  
Email address: [mrude@state.mt.us](mailto:mrude@state.mt.us)  
Multi-Family Housing website:  
[http://commerce.state.mt.us/housing/Hous\\_BOH\\_MF.asp](http://commerce.state.mt.us/housing/Hous_BOH_MF.asp)

Gus Byrom, Program Manager  
Community Development Block Grant Program  
Public Facilities and Housing  
Montana Department of Commerce  
301 S. Park Ave.  
Helena, MT 59620  
Phone: 406-841-2777  
Email address: [gbyrom@state.mt.us](mailto:gbyrom@state.mt.us)  
CDBG Website:  
[http://commerce.state.mt.us/CDD\\_CDBG.asp](http://commerce.state.mt.us/CDD_CDBG.asp)

**MAIN TOPIC: JOBS****ISSUE: ENHANCE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Downtown Darby houses attractive specialty shops, eating establishments, bars, motels, and supportive services. Residents expressed a desire for Darby to become a destination where people would come and stay a day or two and patronize local establishments.

The town at one time supported a thriving lumber industry, which has lessened considerably due to environmental and regulatory constraints. The public school's enrollment has declined in

recent years even though the population has continued to grow. People moving to Darby are not bringing with them new industry or potential for livable wage jobs.

The listening sessions contained many comments about two areas that would enhance economic development in Darby:

- 1) Development of Darby as a tourist destination which would provide
  - a. A stronger customer base for existing businesses in Darby;
  - b. Downtown revitalization effort to provide continuity in appearance, lighting, signage, parking; and
  
- 2) Development of sustainable industry and business expansion which would provide
  - a. Livable wage jobs;
  - b. Job training and education

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The town could apply for grant funding to develop a downtown revitalization strategy that would provide for upgrades and continuity in street lighting, signage, designated parking areas, and storefronts. This downtown continuity would strengthen its outside attraction and encourage more tourists to visit Darby. Once a downtown revitalization strategy is in place, the town could seek grant funding for downtown infrastructure improvements to create its ideal image.

To consider new industry development, the town could send representatives to small business development workshops and examine the potential for new businesses developed locally with existing resources. These workshops are usually at minimal cost and held frequently by the Small Business Development Center at the Montana Department of Commerce.

Existing small businesses with plans for expansion are encouraged to contact their Montana Department of Commerce Regional Development Officer for information on grant funding for workforce training opportunities, and low-interest loans for working capital and equipment purchases. A small business development loan could create a revolving loan fund for economic development activities. An economic development revolving loan fund could be managed by local staff, or proceeds from loan payments could be used to hire a consultant or local development organization for fund management. The Department has many examples of this type of program for communities to use.

**RESOURCES:**

For information on grant funding for an downtown revitalization, or economic development study contact:

Karyl Tobel, Program Manager  
Community Development Block Grant Program  
Economic Development  
Montana Department of Commerce  
301 S. Park Ave.  
Helena, MT 59620

Phone: 406-841-2733  
Email address: [karylt@state.mt.us](mailto:karylt@state.mt.us)  
ED Website:  
[http://commerce.state.mt.us/BRD\\_CDBG.asp](http://commerce.state.mt.us/BRD_CDBG.asp)

For information on grant funding for downtown infrastructure improvements (sidewalks, lighting, etc.) contact:

Gus Byrom, Program Manager  
Community Development Block Grant Program  
Public Facilities and Housing  
Montana Department of Commerce  
301 S. Park Ave.  
Helena, MT 59620  
Phone: 406-841-2777  
Email address: [gbyrom@state.mt.us](mailto:gbyrom@state.mt.us)  
CDBG Website:  
[http://commerce.state.mt.us/CDD\\_CDBG.asp](http://commerce.state.mt.us/CDD_CDBG.asp)

For small business development workshops and information contact:

Ann Desch, SBDC Director  
Small Business Development Center  
Montana Department of Commerce  
301 S. Park Ave.  
Helena, MT 59620  
Phone: 406-841-2746  
Email address: [adesch@state.mt.us](mailto:adesch@state.mt.us)  
SBDC Website:  
[http://commerce.state.mt.us/BRD\\_SBDC.asp](http://commerce.state.mt.us/BRD_SBDC.asp)

For information on workforce training grants and small business loans contact:

Karyl Tobel, Program Manager  
Community Development Block Grant Program  
Economic Development  
Montana Department of Commerce  
301 S. Park Ave.  
Helena, MT 59620  
Phone: 406-841-2733  
Email address: [karylt@state.mt.us](mailto:karylt@state.mt.us)  
ED Website:  
[http://commerce.state.mt.us/BRD\\_CDBG.asp](http://commerce.state.mt.us/BRD_CDBG.asp)

To contact the Regional Development Officer for the Town of Darby:

Eric Hanson, RDO  
Montana Department of Commerce  
15 Depot Park, Suite 210  
Kalispell, MT 59901  
Phone: 406-257-2259  
Email address: [nwrdo@kalispellchamber.com](mailto:nwrdo@kalispellchamber.com)

## **MAIN TOPIC: RECREATION**

### **ISSUE: RECREATION CENTER**

It was stated several times at the listening sessions that a multi-purpose center was needed for youth activities, senior citizens, and performing arts.

Darby has a community center that is available for rent to the community. Rent is being charged to help pay-off the current debt of \$30,000 plus dollars on the facility. The largest room in the center is used for a pre-school during the week with a commercial kitchen and dining area comprising the remaining space. Although the town has the community center, it is not specifically for seniors or for youth. Darby does not have a designated senior center or a youth center.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

One thing the town may consider is to raise funds to pay off the current debt on the facility, and plan to build an expansion on to the community center with grant dollars. This “new” facility could be considered a “multi-purpose center” which has designated areas for senior activities and youth activities.

A multi-purpose center is an eligible activity under the CDBG Public Facilities Program. A CDBG application for a multi-purpose center would have to have an emphasis on health and safety issues. Other communities with multi-purpose centers offer health services, such as workshops on health issues, flu shots, meals on wheels, etc. CDBG has funded other multi-purpose centers in Montana, which have been very successful.

### **RESOURCES:**

#### **For information on funding multi-purpose centers, please contact:**

Gus Byrom, Program Manager  
Community Development Block Grant Program  
Public Facilities and Housing  
Montana Department of Commerce  
301 S. Park Ave.  
Helena, MT 59620  
Phone: 406-841-2777  
Email address: [gbyrom@state.mt.us](mailto:gbyrom@state.mt.us)

## **REPORT BY: GLORIA O’ROURKE**

**MEDA/MEDS**

**118 E. Seventh St.; Suite 2A**

**Anaconda, MT 59711**

**Ph: 406.563.5259 Fx: 406.563.5476**

**[gloria@medamembers.org](mailto:gloria@medamembers.org)**

**<http://www.medamembers.org>**

### **INTRODUCTION:**

What a privilege to spend time in the wonderful community of Darby. Over and over the team heard that your greatest strength is in your people. As this is truly the case, Darby already has the key factor required for community and economic development success. All of the programs, all of the grant money imaginable, cannot work without great people to make things happen. Darby truly does have great people – and therefore, a bright future.

### **OVERALL RESOURCES:**

I would like to share with you some overall resources that could be useful in just about every project you undertake. First, Montana Economic Developers Association is a great organization to meet other economic and community development worker-bees. Countless times, I have sought the advice and input from a MEDA member. If he or she did not have an answer, they knew someone who did. Join MEDA at <http://www.medamembers.org>

Second, visit the Thriving Hometown Network: Case Studies at <http://www.smallcommunities.org/ncsc/THN.htm>. At this website, you can find a community similar to Darby that has gone through a similar situation – whatever it may be – and learn from their experience.

Third, print out or mark in your “favorites” the Economic and Community Development Resource Directory. It is located at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/mt>. This directory is like a “bible” in that it lists just about every agency and organization imaginable that is involved in community and economic development in our area.

Fourth, visit from time to time <http://www.ourfactsyourfuture.org>. This is the Department of Labor Research and Analysis Bureau information site. You will find interesting data that could affect decisions you make in Darby.

And finally, a terrific financial resource website is <http://www.mtfinanceonline.com>. From this website, you will find all sorts of avenues for funding, resource information and project direction.

## **MAIN TOPIC: JOBS**

### **ISSUE: YOUTH RETENTION AND ATTRACTION, etc.**

The information below could serve as information for several topics: engaging school programs with community residents, improving the small business environment, as well as training and education.

The following article seriously examines what needs to be done to attract and retain our youth. The article was written by Milan Wall and Vicki Luther, Co-Directors for the Heartland Institute of Leadership Development. It is obvious by reading the article, that attraction/retention tools are available, we just have to put them to work!

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

#### **Listening To and Encouraging Youths**

If we live by the adage, "Children should be seen and not heard," it won't be long before we completely lose sight of them, because they will have left us behind! Community leaders must make a point to actively listen to and engage young people. This is going to need to happen on both an informal and a formal basis.

Informally, adults need to take the lead in initiating conversations, asking young people about how things are going, get specific, and keep probing, because having an adult (other than a teacher, parent or minister) pay attention may be a total surprise to many young people. What is important to this young person? How does s/he feel about some community issue? What are his or her dreams and passions? When we listen to their answers, however, we must refrain from our natural tendency to interrupt them or to offer unsolicited advice. Imagine if every youth in our community had at least one adult whose role was simply to listen to them and encourage them.

There are lots of ways to listen to our youth in a formal situation, but these need to be more than just token efforts. Young people need to know that their opinions matter and that we take their ideas seriously. Consider holding formal youth forums outside of the school environment, but collaborate with the schools to encourage participation. For example, give youths an assignment and invite them to participate at village board or chamber meetings. Go beyond "the usual suspects" by rotating participation. For example, all 10th graders whose birthdays fall within a given month are expected to participate in that month's meeting. Consider sponsoring regular young adult focus groups to brainstorm ideas on both personal and community issues, and consider holding these events where the young adults normally gather, which may be at the local bar instead of the corner cafe.

#### **Scholarships and Apprenticeships**

Again, go beyond the usual suspects, and don't wait until high school graduation. If a young person is a gifted artist, support her participation at a regional summer arts camp. There are numerous statewide conferences, workshops and seminars for youth in every subject from government to environmental stewardship to entrepreneurship, as well as religious retreats and music institutes. Take a risk. Don't send the first young person who comes to mind. Send the young person who will remember and appreciate the ne\v opportunity he was afforded. And

then hold that young person accountable. Give that young person an opportunity to report back at service clubs, classrooms, or town meetings.

Provide community-based college scholarships to young people who want to return to the community after graduation and gaining some career experience. Match up business opportunities in the community with student education goals. For example, if the community needs more construction contractors, why not sponsor a student who is planning to get a degree in construction management and then help him get his business established locally or buy an existing business from a retiring contractor in the region.

Encourage business owners to offer apprenticeships that teach real skills. For example, young people who mow lawns should also be taught about advertising, bookkeeping and machine maintenance. Then make this relationship reciprocal by asking for assistance with computer maintenance or Internet research. Create learning environments where trust and commitment can grow.

### **Financial Planning Tools**

Young people have high levels of energy and creative ideas, but most lack the experience-the know-what and the know-how-to put their plans into action. Even if our schools offer business courses to students, nothing replaces real life and real time learning. Communities need to provide experienced people (either volunteer or paid staff) who can share models for financial management, marketing strategies and accounting methods that relate directly to the young person's entrepreneurial venture. The most effective way to deliver this service is on a one-to-one basis, which again reinforces feelings of mutual trust, understanding, accountability and commitment between the young person and his/her community.

### **Micro-Lending Pool**

The earlier young people begin to try out business ventures, the more likely they will eventually succeed. Or as Robert Kiyosaki puts it in his book, Rich Dad/Poor Dad, small failures when you are young give you time to recover and learn from your mistakes. In some communities, local businesses contribute small amounts of capital and collaborate with banking institutions to support a micro-lending pool for young entrepreneurs. These small loan programs provide the seed money for emerging ventures, and they also create a network of interested investors who can provide additional support in the form of coaching, mentoring and consulting.

### **Business Incubator and Support Services**

With or without walls, business incubators can be a helping "hand-up" that a young person needs to survive during the early stages of an entrepreneurial venture. An incubator can provide a group of young business people shared equipment and services such as Internet access, copy and fax machines, bookkeeping services, answering services, legal advice, assistance with securing patents and intellectual property rights, or anything else a group of young entrepreneurs may be able to share. Even a common space, such as a large conference room, can be a significant community contribution.



### **Peer Networks and Adult Mentors**

The tools discussed above can lead to the development of peer networks and adult mentorships with youths. These relationships will be significantly strengthened and sustained if they are formalized in some manner. By "formal" we actually are talking about making a specific effort to nurture opportunities for peers and mentors to come together on a regular basis, even if it is in a very "informal" manner. As with all relationships, networking and mentoring requires time, which is often in short supply. But having an ongoing support group, in an environment where progress, ideas, setbacks and encouragement are all shared, can be well worth the effort. This is where solutions emerge and where opportunities for collaboration can arise.

### **Generational Business Transfer**

Losing established small businesses in rural communities can severely impact economic sustainability. Community leaders and citizens must commit themselves to supporting local businesses, encouraging their youth, and working with people who can help them successfully implement business transition plans. Most importantly, local leaders must start early if they are to be successful, perhaps five or ten years before the current owner plans on retiring. This period allows the new buyer time to learn the business, build the equity needed to secure financing, and perhaps create new economic enterprises within the business. This period also provides the current owner the opportunity to plan for transition out of the business on their time schedule.

### **RESOURCES:**

Milan Wall and Vicki Luther  
Heartland Institute  
1.800.927.1115  
<http://www.heartlandcenter.info>

### **MAIN TOPIC: JOBS**

#### **ISSUE: IMPROVE SMALL BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT**

According to research conducted by the National Commission on Entrepreneurism (NCOE), the 5% or so of all companies that are classified as entrepreneurial growth companies account for two-thirds of net new jobs, one-third of economic growth differentials and one-half of technological innovation in the U.S. Is it any wonder that the economic vitality of a community is correlated with the relative ability to support entrepreneurs? If Darby is going to thrive, some sector must be devoted and available to the support of fostering entrepreneurs.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Here are some thoughts from David Bayless, a successful entrepreneur in Bozeman, MT:

- Think in terms of generational change – consider Economic Gardening  
<http://www.littleton.org/bia/economicgardening/default.asp>

- Economic change occurs as a result of sustained effort over a generation or more – not the next election cycle.
- Realize your community may have to work twice as hard for twice as long as Montana's larger communities.
- Work at making your community more receptive to newcomers.
- Find ways to support the entrepreneurs that already exist in your town. Peer networks <http://www.peerspectives.org> are a great place to start.
- Celebrate entrepreneurial effort and success.
- Recognize that early, relatively inexpensive failure is an essential feature of entrepreneurial learning  
<http://radio.weblogs.com/0111718/stories/2003/11/26/economicDevelopmentAndTheStigmaOfFailure.html>

**RESOURCES:**

Come Home Montana

<http://www.comehomemontana.org>

Darby needs to join the Come Home Montana website (there is no cost.) This project showcases small rural communities and puts the communities in touch with young (or old) professionals that want to “come home” to Montana. Darby has so much to offer those that want to come home. Contact Julie Foster at [jmfoster@montana-jobs.net](mailto:jmfoster@montana-jobs.net). It is quick and easy to get on board.

**MAIN TOPIC: JOBS**

**ISSUE: COMMUNITY OWNED CLOTHING STORE**

Information was requested as to how Darby can open a community-owned clothing store.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

When on a tour of Malta, Montana, for a resource team assessment, the team visited Malta's community owned store. Another community store is in Colstrip - with the name Got Sox - as it was impossible to buy a pair of socks in Colstrip. The idea is not to compete with big name stores, but to supply specific needs and products for your community.

One method of opening a store is to form a cooperative with individuals purchasing stock options in the store. Do contact Anne Boothe and Jim Atchison for details. (See below.)

**RESOURCES:**

Anne Boothe

PhillCo Economic Growth Council

P.O. Box 1637

Malta, MT 59538

406.654.1776

[phillco@ttc-cmc.net](mailto:phillco@ttc-cmc.net)

Jim Atchison

Southeastern MT Development Corp.  
P.O. Box 1935  
Colstrip, MT 59323  
406.748.2990  
semdc@mcn.net

## **MAIN TOPIC: COMMUNICATION**

### **ISSUE: SOCIAL CAPITAL**

Comments were heard in Darby that are heard in just about every town these days: we need more people involved, we need better communication among our groups, better coordination and improved leadership; we want to maintain our close-knit community.

What Darby is talking about is called Social Capital. Social Capital is coming to be seen as a vital ingredient in economic development around the world. What it boils down to is...the people. If a community does not have caring people willing to use their talents and abilities to contribute something to the community, the community cannot thrive. Social capital is all about building relationships within a community.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The baseline of all economic development comes down to the people within a community. This social capital is built through hundreds of actions, large and small, that we take every day. Here are some ideas from the Heartland Institute as to how Darby can build "social capital" and through your relationships, build the Darby community:

1. Invite local government officials to a lunchtime discussion with your staff and volunteers.
2. Host a blood drive for employees, volunteers, and clients.
3. Provide release time to employees for volunteering.
4. Provide meeting space for local community organizations.
5. Form a fitness/health group with your co-workers.
6. Think about how to involve different types of volunteers. If you serve the elderly, how can you bring in children? If you serve children, how can the elderly help?
7. Join the United Way campaign.
8. Form social groups-softball teams, hiking clubs, bridge circles, theater clubs, etc.
9. Have a barbecue picnic for staff and nearby residents.
10. Schedule a half an hour "get together" before staff meetings.
11. Log into [www.bettertogether.org](http://www.bettertogether.org) and learn more about the growing national discussion around strengthening social capital.
12. Participate in your local United Way Day of Caring or Make A Difference Day.
13. Have a movie night at your organization-with popcorn during and discussion afterward.
14. Establish a matching grants program: match charitable contributions by your employees.
15. Set up a voter registration table in your organization.
16. Invite school groups to have a field trip at your site.
17. If a plow clears the snow from your lot, offer to plow the lot of the local

- daycare center.
18. Invite kids from a community or school art program to paint a “community mural” on the side of your building.
  19. Hold staff and/or volunteer discussions about social capital, and what you can do to help increase it.
  20. Your ideas:
- 

**RESOURCES:**

"Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community" by Robert D. Putnam  
<http://www.bowlingalone.com>

Better Together: a social capital website report. <http://www.bettertogether.org>

Heartland Center for Leadership Development  
1.800.927.1115  
<http://www.heartlandcenter.info>

**MAIN TOPIC: RECREATION**

**ISSUES: MISC. OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES**

I have just a few resources to share regarding recreation activities and opportunities in Darby.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

As Darby has great natural beauty and wonderful natural resources, the community is interested in utilizing these assets to increase the quality of life.

\* Skatepark: you are off to a great start in building a terrific skatepark. Best of all, the students are involved in the project. A website that is stuffed with great ideas - everything from design to fund raising to liability issues - is <http://www.skatepark.org>. It is like a one-stop-shop for skateboard parks.

\*Walking/Biking Trail: A complete walking/biking trail was so often mentioned in the team's listening sessions that I have no doubt one day the dream will be a reality.

Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks has five programs to fill outdoor recreational needs. Two of these would apply to projects in Darby. Please see the information below.

**RESOURCES:**

Skatepark: <http://www.skatepark.org>

Outdoor Recreation Grants: MT Fish Wildlife and Parks. Recreational Trails program - grants up to \$35,000, matching funds required = 20% of project cost. Eligible applicants: federal state,

county sovereign Indian nations, private non-profit associations and clubs, but not individuals. This program encourages partnerships between private organizations and public land managers.

The second Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks program: Land & Water Conservation Fund. This program grants up to \$75,000 with a match required of 50% of project cost. Eligible applicants include any political subdivision of the state or sovereign Indian nation: incorporated cities or towns, counties, school districts, state agencies and tribal governments. Outdoor recreation facilities such as ball fields, open space acquisitions, public parks, swimming pools, skating rinks, picnic facilities and walking trails.

Please visit <http://www.fwp.state.mt.us/parks/grants.asp> for full details.

## **MAIN TOPIC: YOUTH**

### **ISSUE: AFTERSCHOOL ACTIVITIES**

Darby is so very fortunate to have in place a Century 21 program. Becki Linderman and crew are doing marvelous work. The team did hear, however, that there needs to be something to do, a place to "land" for students after school and before an evening event begins.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

It would be great to build on the afterschool program that already exists to meet the needs mentioned above. A great place to start is the Afterschool Alliance program. "The Afterschool Alliance is a nonprofit organization dedicated to raising awareness of the importance of afterschool programs and advocating for quality, affordable programs for all children. It is supported by a group of public, private and nonprofit organizations that share the Alliance's vision of ensuring that all children have access to afterschool programs by 2010."

This link takes you step by step through what can be done to start a program:  
[http://www.afterschoolnow.org/start\\_a\\_program.cfm](http://www.afterschoolnow.org/start_a_program.cfm)

### **RESOURCES:**

Visit <http://www.afterschoolnow.org> for lots of ideas on how to begin and build an after school program. Again, this program should supplement or work hand-in-glove with the Darby's current after-school program.

## **MAIN TOPIC: MISC. COMMUNITY ISSUES**

### **ISSUE: CIVIC CLUB, VOLUNTEERISM, PARTICIPATION and LEADERSHIP**

In Darby (as in other communities) comments are heard such as:

- \* we need new members/volunteers
- \* we need younger members/volunteers
- \* the same people are doing all of the work

- \* people are getting burned out
- \* how do we get people to stop talking and start doing?

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The Heartland Institute has some suggestions for dealing with the problem. "Take a look around you at your next meeting. Who is missing? Why are they missing? What has been done to invite missing residents? What would strengthen your association? Is it communication?" Answer these questions and actively make changes in your group.

Be sure that barriers are not keeping folks from participating. For example:

- \* **Place** - look at the place you are meeting (is it accessible? comfortable?)
- \* **Purpose** - examine your purpose for meeting - is it of interest to a wide variety of people?
- \* **Promotion** - is everyone keeping informed about the meeting?,
- \* **Price** - how much time do we require of volunteers? Dues expensive?
- \* **People** - are new folks welcomed? Do new people receive training? Do you try out different meeting formats so everyone is comfortable?

The Heartland Institute also has some key qualities that need to be found in local leadership. Look for people that meet some of these qualities and ask them to get on board:

- \* Positive mental attitude
- \* Commitment to the goals of the group
- \* Ability to listen and reflect
- \* Neutrality (hear both sides of an issue without prejudice)
- \* An awareness of what is NOT being said
- \* The ability to "seize the moment"
- \* Good interpersonal communication skills like equal treatment and listening.

### **RESOURCES:**

Hold a half day or one-day meeting to focus on strengthening your organization's membership. Using tools provided by the Heartland Institute, I would be happy to conduct a "Strengthening Membership" workshop with you.

Gloria O'Rourke

406.563.5259

gloria@medamembers.org

**REPORT BY:**



*Economic & Business Strategies*

[www.realworlddevelopment.com](http://www.realworlddevelopment.com)

Melinda Anderson, Principal, [melinda@realworlddevelopment.com](mailto:melinda@realworlddevelopment.com)  
PO Box 361, Coos Bay, OR 97420 541-266-8431  
Myrt W. Webb, Senior Associate, [myrt@realworlddevelopment.com](mailto:myrt@realworlddevelopment.com)  
406-892-4684

**MAIN TOPIC – Planning and Growth**

Western Montana is growing rapidly. Ravalli County, on a percentage basis, is the fastest growing county in the state. Retiring “baby boomers” and others who can work anywhere in our distributed national economy are attracted to small communities in scenic areas. Western Montana’s milder winters, the increasingly scarce water supplies and worsening weather in more southern states have made Western Montana a very desirable place to live and work.

Darby is on the edge of this population explosion but the chances are the community will feel the full effect in the next ten years. New people coming into Darby are not something the present community can prevent. Growth cannot be turned off or on because it is caused by larger economic and demographic trends the community has little influence over. While growth cannot be prevented it can be influenced.

**ISSUE: The key issue for the Southern Bitterroot Valley is how can the present community accommodate growth and at the same time retain the essential characteristics that make the community an attractive place to live?**

**RECOMMENDATION: Complete a growth plan for the Southern Bitterroot Valley**

The plan should answer the following questions:

What area should we plan for?

The plan should include more than the Town of Darby. The entire southern valley area is tied economically and socially together. What occurs outside of Darby affects the town as well as the reverse. A map examination shows that the area from Charlos Heights south to the Montana-Idaho border might be a suitable planning area.

Who else do we need to talk to?

Planning cannot be done effectively in a vacuum. The Darby community is part of a county that is also concerned with planning for the future. Any plans completed for Darby must be coordinated with the county and other influential nearby communities like Hamilton.

### What do we want to preserve?

New people mean change in the community. Not everything will stay the same. What are the essential aspects of the Darby community that make it what it is? What are the community values that if preserved will retain the unique characteristics that people are attracted to?

What a community values is different for each area. Typical values for Western Montana communities are:

- Retaining a scenic river corridor.
- Protecting water quality.
- Preserving air quality so scenic vistas are not degraded.
- Keeping unobstructed mountain views.
- Preserving a vibrant downtown.

### How many people are coming and who are they?

How many people may come into an area and their demographic/economic characteristics are the basis for any future planning. People drive all the essential characteristics of a community from infrastructure to housing and recreational amenities. New people may be younger moderate income families escaping from higher cost areas and will likely locate in the low priced housing in Darby; or they may be affluent households without children who will build high priced residences outside of town that will only be occupied part of the year.

Understanding who is moving to the Darby region is critical prior to developing an effective strategic plan to move Darby's identified issues forward. Some of the new residents have opened retail outlets which are readily visible in Darby. If Darby is similar to other small Western towns (we think it is), there are very likely other, non-visible new residents who have opened businesses in their homes, ranches or guest-houses. But there may also be new older residents who have moved to the area who contribute economically by purchasing services and goods in Darby.

Without doing a full-scale demographic and economic survey of Darby and its surrounding region, it's difficult to say who lives around Darby now or create projections for the next 5-10 years. We recommend that such a survey be completed. A local university or economic development department may be able to complete such a survey or Darby leaders may decide to hire a private consultant.

### How does the community want to influence growth?



Growth cannot be halted but it can be influenced. Once a community projects the number and type of people that are likely to come and what needs to be preserved, the present residents can decide where they want to encourage development and where they want to discourage development. A growth plan includes development policies and typical policies may be:

- Increasing set backs to river development
- Encouraging closer-in higher density development that is easier and less costly to support.
- Discouraging strip development along the US93 corridor between Hamilton and Darby.
- Encouraging affordable housing to retain young families with children.
- Encouraging supporting business to locate in or near the town.

### What infrastructure do we need?

Infrastructure includes more than water, wastewater and streets. It is all the facilities and systems that support the economic life of the community. Included are:

- Municipal utilities (water, wastewater, streets, parks)
- Transportation (air, state highways, pipelines, rail)
- Solid waste disposal
- Energy (electrical, natural gas)
- Telecommunications (data, voice)
- Public safety (fire, police, emergency services)
- Education (pre-school thru post graduate)
- Healthcare
- Residential housing
- Commercial/industrial property
- Cultural/recreational facilities

Once the community decides where growth should be encouraged infrastructure can be used as a means to support that decision. Infrastructure is the most powerful tool a community can use to influence growth. As the community grows the infrastructure must grow concurrently.

Darby infrastructure's ability to support future growth is mixed.

### **Strengths are:**

- Highway system – the presence of a well maintained federal highway is an advantage. There is one narrow bridge north of town that needs improvement.
- Education – the school system with a low staff to student ratio and the presence of a state university an hour drive away is a strength.
- Recreational facilities – the presence of quality outdoor recreation is appealing to many people.

- Rail – the presence of a rail line is attractive to industrial business or tourism opportunities.
- Public safety – fire department has an ISO level 5 rating. That is an asset for many businesses.

**Weaknesses are:**

- Potable water – the town’s potable water system needs immediate attention. The system has undersized mains and insufficient storage capacity. A 2001 preliminary engineering report (PER) lists \$455,000 of needed improvements. In addition the system needs another storage tank. An updated PER needs to be completed as soon as possible so the town can obtain funding for improvements.
- Wastewater – the town’s wastewater system also needs immediate attention. The present lagoon treatment system needs more capacity so that increased flows can be stored safely during the winter. A PER needs to be completed as soon as possible so costs can be determined and funding assistance secured. Once a PER is completed for the water and wastewater systems a rate study should be done to determine how user rates should be structured.
- Telecommunications – the lack of broadband communications is a serious deficiency. Creative entrepreneurial individuals or businesses looking for a community to locate in will require broadband data access to compete in our competitive digital world. Having competitively priced, adequately-sized broadband is as important to the community and the economy as telephones were in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. New methods such as Wimax and power lines for digital communications are being developed and will probably be ready for use next year. The community will need to monitor these technologies closely and determine a method to finance the most promising technology for Darby.
- Healthcare – healthcare in the Darby area is very limited as would be expected in a small community. It is likely that many new residents will be retirees who will require more healthcare capabilities. As the Darby population increases it is important to emphasize concurrent development of health care facilities.
- Housing is either too expensive or too substandard for middle-income households. Darby should develop plans to encourage housing that is affordable to middle managers or other professionals who are moving into the area.
- Information on commercial/industrial property is not available. Businesses that may be interested in a place like Darby are unlikely to consider the area if they cannot obtain accurate information on the town’s commercial/industrial properties and its supporting infrastructure.

## How do we pay for the infrastructure improvements we need?

Infrastructure lasts a long time but paying for it is very expensive. There is no one size-fits-all strategy. The community should make some judgments on how the costs should be proportioned between present and future residents. The popular sentiment that growth pays for itself, since the new residents get all the benefit, is neither accurate nor realistic. Growth has benefits to the present community. New residents with new housing create jobs for construction and the increased services new development will need. As more residents are added to the community, better services such as improved healthcare and shopping opportunities are added that benefit both new and present residents.

Common infrastructure funding mechanisms that may be used alone or in combination are:

- Property taxes – an unpopular tax that remains the most important source of funds for local government. This tax can best be used if the benefits clearly help the area being taxed.
- Improvement Districts – a district is formed for a specific set of properties to fund a project or service. A common example is a street improvement district where each property is assessed according to the linear feet of street adjacent to the property. The assessments can only be used for the reason the district was formed. Viewed by most residents as more equitable than increasing property taxes.
- User fees – water and wastewater utilities are known as “enterprise funds” and are run similar to a private business where the users pay for the service according to the amount used. Darby has water meters so use can be accurately determined for both water and sewer. Since water is a system that is designed to accommodate peak demand, different types of users can have very different effects on the system’s cost. A rate study is the best way to insure that rates are properly apportioned between different classes of users.
- Impact fees – fees paid by new development to mitigate the cost of supporting that development. A common impact fee called a “plant investment fee” is often charged for new water/sewer connections. One concept is that the present users have an investment in the utility and anyone joining the “club” must pay their fair share of what exists. Impact fees are highly controversial and poorly supported impact fees are often the subjects of litigation by developers. Impact fees should only be used if they are fully supported by a professional study.
- Public/private partnerships – often used for economic development projects to create new jobs in the community. A common example is the community constructing a new building for a business in return for jobs at a certain salary level.
- Federal tax credits – often used to construct affordable housing. A private firm builds affordable housing for which the firm receives federal tax credits. These credits are sold to other firms to reduce their federal tax liability. A very specialized and complex

arrangement best left to firms that specialize in this type of enterprise such as community development corporations.

- Grants – grants are available for a wide range of infrastructure projects. Common uses are water, wastewater, streets and housing. Grants are highly competitive and in Montana the funding cycles are every other year. Grants are usually considered “gap” funding. When a community has used all of its resources to fund a needed project but there is still “gap”, grants are often used to close that gap. Grants have become more difficult to obtain in the last five years.
- Low Interest Loans – Montana has several revolving low interest loan programs for most infrastructure projects. Insure that the loan term does not exceed the useful life of the improvement.
- Bonds – bonds based either on the taxing authority of a local government or revenues from an enterprise fund can be used. Bonds have a high administrative cost so they are usually only used for large projects (\$500,000 and up).
- Commercial loans – for smaller projects local banks may be a quick source for needed funds.

Growth planning must include a realistic strategy for funding the infrastructure required to accommodate the anticipated new growth.

### **RESOURCES:**

Flathead County has completed several Neighborhood Plans that would be a good example of the type of documents suitable for Darby. Copies of the plans can be obtained by contacting the Planning Office at: <http://www.co.flathead.mt.us/frdo/>

Example neighborhood plan from Gallatin County:

[http://gallatincomt.virtualtownhall.net/public\\_documents/GallatinCoMT\\_PlanDept/GallatinCoMT\\_LRPlan/GallatinCoMT\\_PlanNPs/](http://gallatincomt.virtualtownhall.net/public_documents/GallatinCoMT_PlanDept/GallatinCoMT_LRPlan/GallatinCoMT_PlanNPs/)

### **Infrastructure funding resources:**

Treasure State Endowment Fund:

[http://commerce.state.mt.us/CDD\\_TSEP.asp](http://commerce.state.mt.us/CDD_TSEP.asp)

Community Development Block Grants:

[http://commerce.state.mt.us/CDD\\_CDBG.asp](http://commerce.state.mt.us/CDD_CDBG.asp)

MT Board of Investments for economic development funding:

<http://www.investmentmt.com/>

Department of Commerce website on local funding:

<http://www.mtfinanceonline.com/locdev.html>

**Telecommunications resources:**

Access Consulting is a firm that specializes in communications engineering. They may be a good resource to assist the community in acquiring broadband communications:

<http://www.access-consulting.net/>

**Wimax resources:**

<http://www.intel.com/netcomms/technologies/wimax/>

<http://www.wimaxforum.org/home>

**Federal low income tax credit program:**

[http://research.aarp.org/consume/fs74\\_credits.html](http://research.aarp.org/consume/fs74_credits.html)

**MAIN TOPIC : JOBS**

Given Darby's scenic environment, tourism is and will remain an important source of jobs. Jobs can come directly from tourist related businesses or indirectly from a former visitor moving to the community and starting a new business. Many people don't like tourism because of the real and perceived notion that they don't provide living wages or good benefits. Tourism can help a community in a number of ways. It can provide jobs for family members that may not want a full-time job or career (children, spouses, retirees). Tourism jobs are really great for kids to help them gain job skills and confidence as well as create a better understanding of the importance of work.

Tourism can also bridge the transition from one economy to another. An example is Sisters, OR. Sisters is a small community like Darby. Its economy was once focused on ranching, logging, and mill work. Now, due to the influx of new residents, many tourists, a state highway, and a national forest next to it with numerous outdoor recreation opportunities, Sisters is much healthier.

Sisters has a beautiful and thriving downtown retail economy with many events scattered throughout the year to bring in visitors. Sisters has also quietly built up a high technology manufacturing and service economy due to the people who visited and decided to move there. Some thought they might retire but since they are Type A personalities, it was only a few weeks before they decided they couldn't golf and ski the remainder of their lives so they started businesses. Many of these businesses are now thriving and have begun employing workers.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**Develop a Business Retention/Expansion program (economic gardening) to encourage local businesses to grow.**

A national study has shown that 85%-90% of all jobs are created by local businesses – not businesses that have been recruited to a community or region. Most recruitment campaigns work best when the community can show a thriving local business climate. As discussed in the Planning and Growth section, there are likely many residents who own home-based businesses that are all so small they operate under the local radar. But they can be found.

Most business owners are very good at the technical aspect of their business otherwise most would not be in business. However, many small business owners don't understand their market, don't know how to effectively market their business, don't have usable financial statements (thus not knowing if they are even profitable), and could use some help improving their operations.

Many regions around the country have developed formal programs that call on local business owners, discover the owners' goals, determine the obstacles to their growth, and then help the owners get the resources they need to overcome those obstacles. This program is usually separate from a Small Business Development Center which generally provides business assistance (such as that described above) to small business owners. One such program in Littleton, CO even provides market research through the use of various databases to help provide that information to their local businesses. Many communities are now attempting to follow their lead.

During the drive from Hamilton to Darby it is apparent that an industry cluster that is important to Darby are the log-home builders. Apparently there are 22 such businesses in Ravalli County. This is an important aspect of the local economy as well as one of its larger employers. That industry could be a place to begin a concerted business retention/expansion (BRE) program.

Larger cities often have their own BRE programs since there are many businesses to call upon and they have often have support from the community to operate such a program. Smaller, more rural communities will often band together to develop such a program. Darby may not have the resources needed to support its own BRE program but may want to work with the Bitterroot Chamber of Commerce and/or the Ravalli County Economic Development organization to develop one that helps focus on Darby-area businesses.

**RECOMMENDATION: Make the downtown area more attractive for visitors.**

Examples:

Develop a downtown development plan utilizing the National Main Street's organizational structure ([www.mainstreet.org](http://www.mainstreet.org)) to create an exciting vibrant downtown Darby. Determining the right mix of stores, offices, and public institutions will ensure that residents and visitors spend their time and money downtown. A stimulating visual presence and diversified downtown events will create a buzz which will be matched by downtown businesses offering goods and services keyed to residents' and visitors' interests.

Create a walkable downtown addition using side streets off US93. The street area between the community clubhouse, town hall and the library could be an ideal place for a pedestrian mall. The central location of these often-used facilities would create visible pedestrian traffic that will encourage tourists to stop.

During high tourist traffic periods encourage local residents and downtown employees to park on side streets or designated lots leaving US93 available for visitor parking.

**RECOMMENDATION: Take advantage of the Lost Trail Ski area.**

The Lost Trail Ski area is an excellent alpine ski area that will have an increasing amount of visitors as Ravalli County and Missoula grow. Lost Trail is in a remote but easily accessible area south of Darby on US93. It is an expansive area with a large vertical drop affording many exciting ski runs for skiers of varying abilities from beginner to expert. Its altitude of 8200 feet and northeast orientation will produce and maintain excellent snow conditions without being uncomfortably cold. The area will also attract cross country and back country skiers as well as ATV enthusiasts and snowshoers.

Lost Trail currently has few amenities and Darby is the closest developed community to this high potential recreational area. Package deals that include lodging and a ski pass are popular and encourage visitors to spend more around Darby.

**RESOURCES:**

Business Retention/Expansion:

<http://www.ruraleship.org/>  
<http://www.littletongov.org/bia/>  
<http://www.nreda.org/>

Technical Business Assistance

[www.mtcde.org](http://www.mtcde.org) (Steve Grover, SBDC Director)  
[www.bvchamber.com](http://www.bvchamber.com) (Diane Wolfe, Director)

Downtown Development:

<http://www.mainstreet.org/>  
[http://www.smallcities.org/Downtown\\_Development/DD\\_non.htm](http://www.smallcities.org/Downtown_Development/DD_non.htm)  
<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/cced/publicat/letstalk.html>  
<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/communities/news/ComCon51.html>

Ski Area and Resort Development:

<http://www.skimag.com/skimag/feature/article/0%2C12795%2C410175%2C00.html>  
[www.econw.com](http://www.econw.com) (Eco Northwest – consulting firm)  
[www.segrp.com](http://www.segrp.com) (SE Group – consulting firm specializing in ski and winter resort development)

## **MAIN TOPIC: YOUTH**

One of the concerns for youth is providing meaningful after school activities and jobs. Developing a co-op to be run by youth would address both issues as well as instill a sense of entrepreneurialism, confidence, and management skills.

There are many examples of communities that have created various kinds of work or ownership opportunities for youth. Some have been thought of and created by the kids themselves with help from the adult community. Successful co-ops or businesses are ones that have identified a clear need in the community that this enterprise can address. An opportunity that is not only needed but will be financially supported by the community. A retail or service leakage study and a local economic survey that includes income, education, and lifestyle interests would help determine a number of opportunities.

Tiny Arthur, Nebraska – population 129 and 60 miles from the nearest grocery store – decided they needed some sort of food store in their community even if it were only for convenience items. Joy Marshall and others started a non-profit organization with the purpose of opening a food co-op. She realized that this was a golden opportunity to utilize the kids in town to develop, implement, and manage this project. They successfully opened the market and it continues to operate. The Wolf Den Market opened up in a former house and has been written up in the Wall Street Journal and People Magazine.

It was funded through grants, state help, private donations, fundraisers, cooperative memberships, in-kind contributions, and sweat equity. Contact Joy Marshall at 308-764-2252 or [jmarsha@neb-sandhills.net](mailto:jmarsha@neb-sandhills.net) for more information. Scott Biehle with the Heartland Center is another source of information on how to engage youth ([scott.biehle@heartlandcenter.info](mailto:scott.biehle@heartlandcenter.info)).

## **RESOURCES:**

Youth Entrepreneurial Education:

[http://www.cednc.org/initiatives/student\\_programs/future\\_entrepreneurs/](http://www.cednc.org/initiatives/student_programs/future_entrepreneurs/)

<http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/docs/entre36/index.html>

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

<http://www.arc.gov/index.do?nodeId=1993>



## **REPORT BY: DANI PRICE**

**Dani Price, Grants and Agreements Specialist  
Beaverhead-Deerlodge and Gallatin National Forests  
420 Barrett St.  
Dillon, MT 59725  
Ph: 406.683.3919 Fx: 406.683.3844  
Email: [dlprice@fs.fed.us](mailto:dlprice@fs.fed.us)  
Http://www.fs.fed.us**

### **INTRODUCTION:**

The community of Darby goes beyond the city limits. It stretches north to Charlos Heights and south to Painted Rocks Lake (West Fork) and Lost Trail Pass (East Fork). This area is surrounded by National Forest, which encompasses 3 Ranger Districts: Darby, Sula, and West Fork. Also within this area is Trapper Creek Job Corps. These offices have several employees -- all of whom work, live, and recreate in the local community.

### **MAIN TOPIC: COMMUNICATION**

#### **ISSUE: CONNECTION TO LOCAL FOREST SERVICE OFFICES**

It was mentioned throughout the listening sessions that there used to be a stronger connection to the local Forest Service offices: that the Forest Service used to be more involved with the community activities, and that community members were more informed/involved regarding National Forest decisions and opportunities.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Rejuvenate the relationship between the Forest Service and the community. With fairly recent turnover in local Forest Service leadership, it is prime time to reconnect. Embrace collaboration and pursue opportunities to work together. By working together, decisions are shared and mutual interests and benefits are met. Continue to utilize the Job Corps for projects; they have a great resource in the young adults that are educated there. Also, continue to connect with the State & Private Forestry side of the Forest Service, which can offer grants to local communities for various projects, as well as a network to other sources. Some of these grants are demonstrated in a couple of recent successes: Darby Library and Darby School (<http://www.fuelsforschools.org/>)

#### **RESOURCES:**

Darby District Ranger, Chuck Oliver, 406-821-3913;  
Sula District Ranger, Tracy Hollingshead, 406-821-3269; West Fork District Ranger, Dave Campbell, 406-821-3269; Trapper Creek Job Corps Director, Linda Woods, 406-81-3286; and State & Private Forestry Coordinator, Nan Christianson, 406-363-7113.  
Forest Service and partner websites that offer information about partnerships, conservation education, and funding opportunities:  
<http://www.fs.fed.us/r1-r4/spf/>  
<http://www.partnershipresourcecenter.org>  
<http://www.natlforgest.org/>

## **MAIN TOPIC: COMMUNICATIONS**

### **ISSUE: IMPROVING THE COMMUNITY WEBSITE AND ITS VISIBILITY**

The world wide web: friend or foe? Some fight or even fear the internet, others embrace it. The internet is simply a communication tool. Unfortunately or fortunately, the internet is flooded with websites. There are several things to consider when putting together a website, of which the most critical are: who is the audience, what's the message, and how do you get the user to come back to it or mark it as a favorite? The site needs to be easy to navigate, pleasing to the eye, informational, and dynamic.

So how does one find Darby, Montana on the world wide web? Or better yet, what will one find when he/she searches the web for Darby?

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

As I perused the web for information about Darby, I considered the direct approach:

[www.darbymontana.com](http://www.darbymontana.com)

I also considered, the Travel Montana link: [www.visitmt.com](http://www.visitmt.com)

and the Chamber of Commerce (<http://www.bvchamber.com/>)

But, then I came across yet another site through GoNorthwest.com

(<http://www.gonorthwest.com/Montana/northwest/Darby/Darby.htm>)

These are obviously not all the sites available to help someone looking for information about Darby, but they were a start.

I found that many of the local businesses have already incorporated several methods of advertising on the web, some of which draw a large amount of internet traffic to the individual businesses. Travel Montana has resources available to help with electronic marketing for Montana businesses (reference the following site <http://www.travelmontana.org/>). Also for more about marketing, see information provided under JOBS/TOURISM.

I'd like to focus this section on the community website.

Without knowing how the existing community website came together, and without knowing why it was produced, I offer the following questions for consideration:

- 1) what is the purpose of the website?
- 2) who will it attract?
- 3) how will it be managed and upgraded?
- 4) does the local community know about it? how to access it? and how it can be used?, and then
- 5) is there a way to find out how well it's being utilized?

### **RESOURCES:**

Depending on how the community website is to be used, and based on the above, it's likely Darby has most, if not all, the resources it needs to complete this task locally.

Designing (or improving) a community website can continue the dialogue as well as open the lines of communication between the school, the businesses, local government, community organizations, and individual citizens. It can be an efficient way to share information and successes in the community and beyond.

Utilize high school students who are "plugged into" the technology--perhaps a marketing curriculum or web design curriculum, or both. Possibly an after school program, or an adult-ed program--maybe through the library. Use local artists/photographers.

Again, depending on what type of website the community wants, will determine how much money to spend and who to involve.

### **MAIN TOPIC: RECREATION**

Darby is a community rich in natural beauty, both in terms of its "great outdoors" and the people that live there. We heard it mentioned many times that folks are drawn to Darby because of this reason. Diverse cultural and recreational opportunities can improve the quality of life in a community.

### **ISSUE: ENHANCE CULTURAL AND RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES**

Several folks mentioned the need to enhance the cultural and recreational opportunities to all citizens, including those that travel to and through Darby. Some ideas presented were: Biking/Walking Trail; Performing Arts Program/Center; River Front Park; and Skate Park. Most of these ideas have started to take shape in concept, and in the case of the Skate Park, in form.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

For some funding opportunities, it's a good idea to prioritize the projects to identify those that serve a diverse public, as well as find ways to connect the projects to each other and to the natural resources whenever possible. This will help provide for broader community consensus and make projects more competitive for some types of funding.

### **RESOURCES:**

Recreation and Natural Resources:

The Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks administer the Recreational Trails program to help establish recreational trails. Additional information can be obtained by searching the following website: <http://fwp.state.mt.us/parks/grants.asp> or calling Bob Walker at 406-444-4585.

The USDA Forest Service Rural Community Assistance (RCA) program can help fund community planning, needs assessments, project design, and construction projects. Project proposals are usually requested in the winter with monies being granted in the spring. Contact Nan Christianson, Bitterroot National Forest, 406-363-7113, for additional information.

The USDA Forest Service, Urban and Community Forestry Program that is delivered through the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Forestry Division, can help to develop and beautify parks/communities, by providing technical expertise and funding for

inventory, maintenance and planting of trees in the community. Contact Paula Rosenthol, DNRC, at 406-542-4284, for additional information.

#### The Arts/Culture:

The Montana Arts Council's mission is to boost the local economies, revitalize communities, and improve education through the arts. They have technical assistance support and funding for art projects. They can be contacted at 406-444-6430 or [mac@state.mt.us](mailto:mac@state.mt.us).

The National Endowment for the Arts and National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities fosters excellence, diversity, and vitality of the arts in the United States and helps to broaden public access to the arts. Contact information is 202-682-5441 or [www.nea.gov](http://www.nea.gov)

The Forest Service has a grant program in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts. The purpose of this grant is to help demonstrate the importance and the value of the arts in rural economic diversification and cultural resource conservation in forest and/or natural resource dependent areas. Contact Nan Christianson, 406-363-7113, for additional information or browse the following website:  
<http://arcai.cgweb.org/>

#### Tourism/Recreation:

Travel Montana has a number of grant programs to promote tourism development and education. Some of the grant projects completed with TIIP (Tourism Infrastructure Investment Program) and CTAP (Community Tourism Assessment Program) have been quite similar to those mentioned above. Reference the following website for more information about these programs:  
<http://www.travelmontana.org/OURPROGRAMS/TourismDevEd.shtm>

## **MAIN TOPIC: JOBS**

### **ISSUE: SUSTAINABLE RESOURCES/INDUSTRY**

Times have changed for Darby; a community whose economic history has been very dependent on the natural resources, specifically referenced --timber. During the listening sessions, the phrase "since the mill closed, ..." was heard several times. One of the strongest frustrations shared was that there are many resource-dependent businesses that have been forced to travel away from Darby for work, when there is an abundance of raw materials out their back door. However, these same folks acknowledged that "you can't continue to do business the same way, and that there are regulations that you just can't continue to fight." They recognize the need to diversify, to re-train, and to pursue other avenues related to the timber industry. I commend these citizens for their ingenuity, adaptability, and resourcefulness.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The opportunity for growth in the wood industry is to create sustainable markets for small diameter wood through 1) full utilization of this renewable material, thus eliminating the concept

of waste, 2) targeting value-added products while pursuing a broad array of possible uses, 3) developing capacity for wood processing and product manufacturing that promotes local economic stability.

Potential value-added uses for small wood include:

1. biomass energy
2. molded wood floor products
3. landscape timber
4. log construction
5. post and pole construction
6. wood fiber composites
7. surfacing material
8. specialty furnishings

### **RESOURCES:**

Craig Rawlings, Montana Community Development Center, Smallwood Enterprise Agent, [crawlings@mtcdc.org](mailto:crawlings@mtcdc.org), phone: 406-728-9234. Craig serves as a conduit to a large network of organizations, agencies, businesses, etc. regarding the use of small wood.

Bitterroot Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D), Hamilton, MT; 406-363-1444 Ext. 5, or the following website for information <http://www.bitterrootcd.org/>

Forest Service Rural Community Assistance - Economic Action Program - National Fire Plan: This funding provides technical and financial assistance for long-term economic and social health of rural areas, by helping communities develop opportunities and enterprises through diversified uses of forest resources. Funding will provide marketing assistance to communities emphasizing utilization of hazardous fuels byproducts. Funding is also provided to increase the utilization and marketing capabilities in each state. Local Forest Service offices are identifying and forwarding projects for funding. Delivery is through a variety of partners: state, federal, county, local, tribal governments, and not-for-profit corporations. Funds are cost-shared 80:20. Contact: Dave Atkins (R1/R4) (406)329-3134 or Nan Christianson, Bitterroot National Forest, 406-363-7113

Forest Products Lab, Madison, WI; <http://www.fpl.fs.fed.us/>  
A local contact is Dean Graham, Missoula, 406-329-3230.

Forest Service, Wood in Transportation (WIT): WIT is a technology transfer program to assist local governments and federal agencies to plan, design and use wood in local transportation systems. The main focus is on modern timber bridge designs and use of under-utilized wood species in bridge construction. The program benefits include:

- 1) Improved rural transportation systems
- 2) Sustainable and diversified local wood based economies because of expanded markets for wood products.

Contact: Dave Atkins (R1/R4) (406)329-3134 or Nan Christianson, Bitterroot National Forest, 406-363-7113

## **MAIN TOPIC: JOBS**

### **ISSUE: THEME OF DARBY**

The businesses and community of Darby have established an "Old West" theme to Main Street and would like to expand upon it. Several folks also mentioned the desire to capitalize on tourism and make Darby a destination community.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

In another section of this report, Melissa Anderson has offered very good recommendations and resources regarding tourism and retail.

An additional recommendation is to work with Travel Montana (Department of Commerce) to develop tourism markets and programs. Travel Montana's Tourism Development and Education efforts are focused on helping the state's communities and businesses utilize tourism as a tool to improve the local, regional and state economy while protecting or improving the quality of life for Montana's residents. The guidelines for these efforts are provided by the Montana Strategic Plan for Tourism and Recreation 2003-2007.

<http://www.travelmontana.org/newsandupdates/strategic.shtm>

The components of Travel Montana's Tourism Development and Education programs include:

- rural tourism development;
- statewide tourism infrastructure improvements grants and technical assistance;
- financial and technical assistance in creating new, ongoing special events as part of a community or region's economic development efforts
- assisting Montana's Indian people in their tourism efforts;
- helping create cultural tourism partnerships and products statewide;
- coordinating tourism and recreation policies, programs and initiatives of federal and state agencies, communities, and the private sector;
- providing customer service and tourism education training programs.

### **RESOURCES:**

Go to the following Travel Montana website to find out more about the following programs:

<http://www.travelmontana.org/OURPROGRAMS/TourismDevEd.shtm>

Montana's Community Tourism Assessment Program (CTAP)

Special Event Grant Program (SEGP)

Low or No Cost Marketing Opportunities, which include:

the Montana Travel Planner;

the Montana Winter Guide;

the Montana Calendar of Events; Group/Meetings/Convention Publications;

Meeting Planner's Guide;

Group Tour Planning Guide

Also included in this reference is information about: Electronic Marketing  
Jan Wirak, Web Content Specialist  
841-2889, FAX 841-2871, [jwirak@state.mt.us](mailto:jwirak@state.mt.us)

Travel Montana operates a number of Internet websites that provide information about Montana's travel opportunities and services, statewide. Like the publications, these are free listings for Montana's tourism-related businesses, attractions and organizations. The free listings include detailed descriptions, directions, and up to six photographs or images. An additional service for businesses with their own website is to link their listing with Travel Montana's website for a small annual administrative fee.

Travel Montana's websites have been reporting well over 2 million visitor sessions annually.

## **MAIN TOPIC: PLANNING AND GROWTH**

### **ISSUE: MAIN STREET The continued enhancement, preservation, planning, and investment of Main Street--its identity, accessibility, and economic potential.**

Main Street is a symbol of community economic health, local quality of life, pride, and community history. These are all factors in industrial, commercial and professional recruitment.

- A vital Main Street retains and creates jobs, which also means a stronger tax base. Long-term revitalization establishes capable businesses that use public services and provide tax revenues for the community.
- Main Street is also a good incubator for new small businesses -- the building blocks of a healthy economy. Strip centers and malls are often too expensive for new entrepreneurs.
- A vital Main Street area reduces sprawl by concentrating retail in one area and uses community resources wisely, such as infrastructure, tax dollars and land.
- A healthy Main Street core protects property values in surrounding residential neighborhoods.
- The traditional commercial district is an ideal location for independent businesses, which in turn:
  - Keep profits in town. Chain businesses send profits out of town.
  - Supports local families with family-owned businesses
  - Supports local community projects, such as ball teams and schools
  - Provide an extremely stable economic foundation, as opposed to a few large businesses and chains with no ties to stay in the community
- A revitalized Main Street increases the community's options for goods and services: whether for basic staples, like clothing, food and professional services or less traditional functions such as housing and entertainment.
- Main Street provides an important civic forum, where members of the community can congregate. Parades, special events and celebrations held there reinforce intangible sense of community. Private developments like malls can and do restrict free speech and access.
- Many Main Street districts become tourist attractions by virtue of the character of buildings, location, selection of unique businesses, and events held there.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

A very successful method is using the Main Street USA method and resources.

National Main Street Center:

The Center's mission is to empower people, organizations and communities to achieve ongoing downtown and neighborhood district revitalization based upon the principles of self-determination, resource conservation and incremental transformation represented through the comprehensive Main Street approach.

Website: [www.mainstreet.org](http://www.mainstreet.org)

Based in historic preservation, the Main Street approach was developed to save historic commercial architecture and the fabric of American communities' built environment, but has become a powerful economic development tool as well.

The Program is designed to improve all aspects of the downtown or central business district, producing both tangible and intangible benefits. Improving economic management, strengthening public participation, and making downtown a fun place to visit are as critical to Main Street's future as recruiting new businesses, rehabilitating buildings, and expanding parking. Building on downtown's inherent assets -- rich architecture, personal service, and traditional values and most of all, a sense of place -- the Main Street approach has rekindled entrepreneurship, downtown cooperation and civic concern.

It has earned national recognition as a practical strategy appropriately scaled to a community's local resources and conditions. And because it is a locally driven program, all initiative stems from local issues and concerns.

The Main Street program's success is based on a comprehensive strategy of work, tailored to local needs and opportunities, in four broad areas, called the Main Street Four Point Approach:

(1) Design: Enhancing the physical appearance of the commercial district by rehabilitating historic buildings, encouraging supportive new construction, developing sensitive design management systems, and long-term planning.

(2) Organization: Building consensus and cooperation among the many groups and individuals who have a role in the revitalization process.

(3) Promotion: Marketing the traditional commercial district's assets to customers, potential investors, new businesses, local citizens and visitors.

(4) Economic Restructuring: Strengthening the district's existing economic base while finding ways to expand it to meet new opportunities -- and challenges from outlying development.

The Four Point Approach succeeds only when combined with the following eight principles:



(1) Comprehensive: A single project cannot revitalize a downtown or commercial neighborhood. An ongoing series of initiatives is vital to build community support and create lasting progress.

(2) Incremental: Small projects make a big difference. They demonstrate that "things are happening" on Main Street and hone the skills and confidence the program will need to tackle more complex problems.

(3) Self-Help: Although the National Main Street Center can provide valuable direction and hands-on technical assistance, only local leadership can initiate long-term success by fostering and demonstrating community involvement and commitment to the revitalization effort.

(4) Public/private partnership: Every local Main Street program needs the support and expertise of both the public and private sectors. For an effective partnership, each must recognize the strengths and weaknesses of the other.

(5) Identifying and capitalizing on existing assets: One of the National Main Street Center's key goals is to help communities recognize and make the best use of their unique offerings. Local assets provide the solid foundation for a successful Main Street initiative.

(6) Quality: From storefront design to promotional campaigns to special events, quality must be the main goal.

(7) Change: Changing community attitudes and habits is essential to bring about a commercial district renaissance. A carefully planned Main Street program will help shift public perceptions and practices to support and sustain the revitalization process.

(8) Action-oriented: Frequent, visible changes in the look and activities of the commercial district will reinforce the perception of positive change. Small, but dramatic improvements early in the process will remind the community that the revitalization effort is under way.

## **RESOURCES:**

Montana Department of Transportation has programs that can help with Main Street enhancement and access, as well as the idea of a walkable community. One grant opportunity is the Montana Transportation Enhancement Program which provides funding for transportation related projects that are designed to strengthen the cultural, aesthetic, and environmental aspects of Montana's intermodal transportation system. CTEP allows for the implementation of a variety of non-traditional projects. More information can be found by calling Ross Tervo at 444-9209, or at <http://mdt.state.mt.us/ctep/>

Community Partners (CP) assists preservation organizations, local governments and community development corporations in revitalizing historic properties, central business districts and urban neighborhoods. CP functions as a family of several integrated programs that offer financial and technical assistance as well as real estate consulting services.

Website: [http://www.nationaltrust.org/community\\_partners/](http://www.nationaltrust.org/community_partners/)

**REPORT BY: Steve Grover, SBDC Director**  
**MT Community Development Corp.**  
**110 E. Broadway, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor**  
**Missoula, MT 59802**  
**Ph: 406.728.9234x206 Fx:**  
**Email: [sgrover@mtcdc.org](mailto:sgrover@mtcdc.org)**  
**<http://www.mtcdc.org>**

**MAIN TOPIC: JOBS**

**ISSUE: LIVING WAGE JOBS**

A primary concern heard several times during the assessment is the lack of good-paying or living-wage jobs.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

As primary industry businesses have closed, tourism and service-based businesses are becoming the primary employers in the area. Unfortunately these jobs tend to pay lower wages than the primary industry jobs they are replacing. These businesses will continue to play a major role as employers for the foreseeable future. If the community can develop the image of a “destination”, the market can be improved for the tourism business, which can result in more employment opportunities including increases in wages. Re-establishing a sustainable primary industry employer/employers in the community would also provide significant improvements in employment.

**ISSUE: SUSTAINABLE INDUSTRY**

Natural resources management and education.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Many community members believe the abundant natural resources in Southern Ravalli County provide the most significant job opportunities for the community. This attitude is understandable based on the history of the Darby economy. Recent forest fires have increased the awareness of the need to manage the natural resources and can provide opportunities for collaboration. There were encouraging discussions between forest management professionals, the Forest Service, and community members concerned with protecting the natural beauty of the area during our brief assessment. These parties must continue to communicate and provide common goals to pursue if natural resources are going to once again play a major role in the local economy.

**ISSUE: WORKFORCE TRAINING**

**RECOMMENDATION:**

The major shift in the types and quantities of jobs in the community continues to increase the need for quality workforce training. The local job service is the primary provider of all aspects of workforce training. A community member should be designated as the workforce training advocate and take the responsibility to ensure all workforce-training opportunities are pursued and developed.

**ISSUE: IMPROVE SMALL BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT - Training and education**

**RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESOURCES:**

The Small Business Development Center is very interested in working with the community to develop Business Basics, NxLevel, and Adult Education business training in the community. Steve Grover will continue to work with Rick and Becki to develop this training within the community.

**ISSUE: EXPAND MARKET FOR PRODUCTS**

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The limited local market size makes it very difficult for local retailers to maintain a sustainable volume. It is critical that the community support the local retailers if they want to have the products and services available in the community. In addition to the local support, the businesses need to pursue opportunities to expand their market beyond the local community. Internet, catalog sales, and direct marketing should all be explored to determine the market potential.

**RESOURCES:**

**Montana Department of Commerce**

P.O. Box 200501, Helena, MT 59620

Mark Simonich, Director

[www.commerce.state.mt.us](http://www.commerce.state.mt.us)

**Board of Investments**

P.O. Box 200126, Helena, MT 59620

Carroll South, Executive Director

[www.investmentmt.com](http://www.investmentmt.com)

**Regional Development Bureau**

Andy Poole, Division Administrator - 841.2707- P.O. Box 200505, Helena, MT 59620

Gary Morehouse, Bureau Chief - 841.2732 - P.O. Box 200505, Helena, MT 59620

**Regional Development Officer**

Eric Hanson (North West)

15 Depot Park, Kalispell, MT 59901

257-2259

**Trade and International Relations Bureau**

Mark Bisom, Bureau Chief - 841.2752 - P.O. Box 200505, Helena, MT 59620

**USDA Rural Development**

**Rural Business/Cooperative Service.**

P.O. Box 850, Bozeman, MT 59771

John D. Guthmiller, Program Director [www.rurdev.usda.gov/mt](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/mt)

[John.Guthmiller@mt.usda.gov](mailto:John.Guthmiller@mt.usda.gov)

406-585-2540

## BUSINESS & COOPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES

### Montana Department of Commerce

**Made in Montana** .....406-841-2756  
Montana Department of Commerce 406-841-2711 FAX  
P.O. Box 200505, Helena, MT 59620  
[www.madeinmontanausa.com](http://www.madeinmontanausa.com)

**Micro Business Finance** ..... 406-841-2751  
Montana Department of Commerce 406-841-2711  
FAX  
P.O. Box 200505, Helena, MT 59620  
Janice Wannebo, Program Specialist

**Small Business Administration** .....406-441-1081  
10 West 15th St., Suite 1100, Helena, MT 59626 406-441-1090  
FAX Michelle Johnston, District Director  
[www.sba.gov/mt](http://www.sba.gov/mt)

### Small Business Development Centers

[www.sba.gov/mtlmtsdbc.html](http://www.sba.gov/mtlmtsdbc.html)

#### Helena - Lead Office

Department of Commerce ..... 406-841-2746  
P.O. Box 200505, Helena, MT 59620 406-841-2711 FAX  
Ann Desch, Bureau Chief  
[adesch@state.mt.us](mailto:adesch@state.mt.us)

#### Missoula

Montana Community Development Corporation ..... 406-728-9234  
103 East Main, Missoula, MT 59802 406-542-6671 FAX  
Steve Grover, Director  
[sgrover@mtcdc.org](mailto:sgrover@mtcdc.org)

## BUSINESS & COOPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES

### Cooperative Development Assistance

**Mission Mountain Market** ..... 406-676-0676  
*A Project of Lake County Community Development Corporation* 406-676-5902 FAX  
P.O. Box 722, Ronan, MT 59864

Jan Tusick, Ag & Coop Development Specialist  
[www.mtmountainmarke](http://www.mtmountainmarke)

**Montana Cooperative Development Center** ..... 406-265-3771  
207 Brockmann Center, P.O. Box 7751, Havre, MT 59501 406-265-3776 FAX  
Ty Duncan, Center Director  
[mcdc@msun.edu](mailto:mcdc@msun.edu)  
[www.mcdc.coop](http://www.mcdc.coop)

**U.S. Department of Commerce**  
**Economic Development Administration**  
John Rogers, Economic Development Representative  
P.O. Box 578  
Helena, MT 59620  
406-449-5380  
406-449-5381 FAX

**MAIN TOPIC: TOURISM**

**ISSUE: DESTINATION COMMUNITY**

Some community members discussed establishing Darby as a destination resort as a viable alternative for economic development in the area.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

This idea has merit, but it may require the most change socially and economically of all the ideas discussed. These impacts need to be taken seriously and significant research should be conducted before any major decisions are made. The idea will also require majority support from all of the community stakeholders if it is going to have any chance of succeeding.

**RESOURCES: TOURISM**

Marketing and Training Assistance:

CTAP/TOURSIM  
**Community Tourism Assessment Program**

Montana Department of Commerce/Travel Montana manages the (CTAP) Community Tourism Assessment Program and the (TIIP) Tourism Infrastructure Investment Program. Both programs work with local entities to develop their Tourism industry.

CTAP communities in the area that have received funding are:

*\$15,000 CTAP grant to Libby was awarded in April 1996; the Libby Area Chamber of Commerce used its CTAP funds to convert a portion of a "new" city hall building into a meeting and convention facility.*

*2002 – 2003 – Eureka, St. Ignatius and Sanders County are the three communities participating in the CTAP process.*

Tourism Infrastructure Investment Program (for brick and mortar projects related to tourism):

Special Events Grants Program

This program will help market events or start new ones to have people come to the area.

Contact: Victor Bjornberg  
406-841-2795  
victor@visitmt.com

Planning Grant funds from the Montana Department of Commerce Business Resource Division

Contact: Eric Hanson  
406-257-2259  
nwrdo@kalispellchamber.com

Listed here are Montana firms in advertising and public relations:

Maverick Marketing  
495 Dutch Hill Rd  
Hamilton, MT 59840  
406.363-2390

Ad Scripts, Inc., Advertising & Public Relations  
% Kathryn D. Hubbell, APR  
Box 8168, 700 Simons Dr  
Missoula, Mt 59807  
406-728-4595  
[adscript@montana.com](mailto:adscript@montana.com) or [www.adscript.com](http://www.adscript.com)

Advantage One Marketing LLC  
% Michael Utter, President  
210 Cirque Dr.  
Bozeman, Mt 59718  
406-587-5779  
[michael@advantageone.com](mailto:michael@advantageone.com)

Applied Communications  
% Kathleen McMahon, President  
2732 Evergreen  
Great Falls, Mt 59406

406-452-9780  
[kmcmahon@initco.net](mailto:kmcmahon@initco.net) or [www.appcom.net](http://www.appcom.net)

Marketing Works  
% Leesa Nopper, President  
3175 Fieldstone  
Bozeman, Mt 59715  
406-539-3499  
[lnopper@attglobal.net](mailto:lnopper@attglobal.net)

Munson Consulting  
% Vicki Munson, President  
8505 East Shore Route  
Polson, Mt 59860  
406-887-2126  
[vmunson@cyberport.net](mailto:vmunson@cyberport.net)

Ripple Marketing LLC  
% Kitch Walker, President  
Box 10221, 2245 West Koch, Suite C  
Bozeman, Mt 59719  
406-585-8168  
[kitch@ripplemarketing.com](mailto:kitch@ripplemarketing.com) or [www.ripplemarketing.com](http://www.ripplemarketing.com)

Wendt Kochman  
% Carl Kochman, President  
615 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave. N.  
Great Falls, Mt 59401  
406-454-8500  
[ckachman@wedntkochman.com](mailto:ckachman@wedntkochman.com) or [www.wedntkochman.com](http://www.wedntkochman.com)

### *Tourism Infrastructure Investment Program*

#### **TIIP grant awards in the area:**

*2001 - \$ 30,000 - Northwest Montana Historical Society / Central School Museum Timber Products Industry History Exhibit, Kalispell*

*1999 - \$ 20,361- Friends of Savenac – Historic Savenac Nursery Infrastructure Restoration, Haugan*

Cultural Tourism Corridors  
Contact: Mark Martin  
Missoula Cultural Council, 721-9602 or [mcc@bigsky.net](mailto:mcc@bigsky.net)

## **MAIN TOPIC: MAIN STREET**

### **ISSUES:**

- Consistent appearance, i.e. old west theme
- Lighting, signage, parking
- Remove eyesores – blight

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The majority of the main street merchants have done a reasonable job maintaining the “old west” theme that appears to have been informally adopted by the community. To ensure the continued development of this theme and open opportunities for funding, the community should formally adopt the theme and develop ordinances to ensure consistent development.

### **RESOURCES - Historical Renovation and Tax Credits:**

Place Economics

Donovan D. Rypkema, Principle  
1785 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.,  
Washington, D.C. 20036  
[www.placeeconomics.com](http://www.placeeconomics.com)

*This is a consulting firm that specializes in the revitalization of downtowns and redevelopment of historic properties.*

U.S. Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
Cultural Resources/Heritage Preservation Services  
Preservation Tax Incentives  
Technical Preservation Services  
1849 C Street, NW  
Washington D.C. 20240  
[www.2cr.nps.gov/tps/tax/index.htm](http://www2.cr.nps.gov/tps/tax/index.htm)

State of Montana – Montana Historical Society  
State Historic Preservation Office  
1410 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Helena, MT 59620  
<http://www.his.state.mt.us/shpo/servicesdir.asp>

Internal Revenue Service

[www.irs.gov/businesses/small/industries/article/0,,=95799,00.html](http://www.irs.gov/businesses/small/industries/article/0,,=95799,00.html)  
[www2.cr.nps.gov/tps/tax/IRS.htm](http://www2.cr.nps.gov/tps/tax/IRS.htm)



**DARBY RESOURCE TEAM ASSESSMENT  
DARBY, MONTANA**

**LISTENING SESSION NOTES  
OCTOBER 20, 2004**

**BUSINESS OWNERS, DARBY DOWNTOWN ASSOCIATION, FINANCIAL  
INSTITUTIONS**

**Problems and Challenges**

- Do not want sprawl
- Ditto on sprawl – does not want Darby to become another Hamilton
- Property owners don't keep their properties up
- Need parking that's clearly marked
- Need continuity in activities
- Darby needs to be more welcoming
- Darby needs to be a destination
- Ditto on not becoming another Hamilton
- Ditto on Darby becoming a destination
- Need development downtown
- Need education for the residents – 60% literacy rate
- Ditto all of the above
- Limited customer base
- Loss of mill
- Middle class housing is difficult – hard to rent
- Darby is not as unified as in the past
- Need to cut down the burned timber
- Need more economic development opportunities
- Need creation of jobs and job base so people will move to Darby
- Ditto on unification of the people
- Too much vandalism

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT, LAW ENFORCEMENT, FOREST SERVICE AND  
EMERGENCY SERVICES**

**Problems and Challenges**

- Controlled growth
- Pre-planning to prepare for the future
- Something for our youth to do – active and worthwhile
- Make it place people want to live – more owner based residential homes
- More volunteers to help with our services
- Ditto
- More participation from outside folks

- More emphasis on residential areas instead of MainStreet
- More support for law enforcement – become a more watch able community
- Preventative actions for vandalism problems
- Highway better patrolled for speeders
- Rundown places that attract people to run them down more
- Drug activity – can be overwhelming at times
- Separation between organizations such as forest service, not tied in with the community.
- Housing purchase challenge – no middle income housing.
- Incomes are not high enough to be able to purchase housing here
- Ditto
- Planning for growth and getting the policies down on paper

## **CHURCHES AND SENIOR CITIZENS**

### **Challenges**

- Economic problems – effect our churches
- Price of fuel – people travel long ways for worship
- Training for work force that is available here
- Domestic violence is a problem here – often tied with economics
- Ditto all of the above
- Concerns for improved city services – but realize taxes have to raise to pay for them, i.e. – sidewalks, streets
- Concerns to get clubhouse paid for and more parking
- Abandoned service center should be bombed
- High dollar development – but town is moderate to low income
- Major future problem – addressing the baby boom bubble – integrate them and remain a core community for the south valley
- Lack of things for youth to do – if not involved in sports
- Ditto growth problem and concerns
- Clubhouse – can be left dirty and without supplies

## **COMMUNITY GROUPS, VOLUNTEERS, NON-PROFITS**

### **Challenges**

- Finding people to volunteer or be involved in community groups.
- 4-H program is dwindling
- Keeping a cohesive group together
- Keep plans together so that we do move forward
- A few people doing a lot of work
- How do you get people engaged
- Growth – being able to control in a positive manner
- Burnout rate
- DART – continually tries to get community and school involved
- More for kids to do
- Instill pride in our community so that our kids can be proud
- Finish the skatepark – tired of skaters on the sidewalks

- Paying off mortgage on Clubhouse – owe \$33,000 – will be paid off in five more years

## **TIMBER WORKERS UNITED**

### **Challenges**

- Not enough logging going on right now
- Diesel prices are high – hard time with truckers
- Everything is more expensive
- Darby to create some jobs – and at a livable wage
- Families have to leave here to find work - makes us feel very bad
- Darby relies on tourism – and we are fading fast
- No good paying jobs – only government jobs – that we try to support
- Takes more money to work away from home
- Surrounded by 20 million acres of forest and we are starving to death
- Environmental groups have bigger voice, even though they are the minority
- Forest service seems to have environmentalists on board – in excess
- Need industry here
- Tourism dies in the winter
- Need diversified economy
- “It is okay to cut a tree in Canada, but don’t cut one here”
- Harder and harder for our families to stay here
- You can only get shut out so often and then you shut down
- Not enough for kids to do
- Teachers salaries – tied with logging industry
- Licensed day care not readily available
- Professional jobs needed here
- Store fronts need a bit of cleaning up
- Logger’s Days needs more help from other groups in the town

## **DARBY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT OFFICERS AND REPRESENTATIVES**

### **Challenges**

- Jobs – we need better paying jobs –
- Lack of interest in the community toward school – not very many people show up to our games
- More for kids to do to help us stay out of school
- Not enough sports – i.e., girls soccer
- Community responds well to problems
- Helpful community
- We feel safe here
- A drug problem, but probably the same as any other community
- Kids will experiment with drugs
- If we had more things to do, less time to do drugs or get into trouble

- We spend our money in Hamilton or Missoula
- Have scholarships but they are small, but do have a lot of them
- Not a lot for kids to do between the years of junior high and high school
- A few teachers that won't stay late to help you when "stuck"

## **TEACHERS, ADMINISTRATORS, EDUCATORS AND BOARD MEMBERS**

### **Challenges**

- Economy in general – and how it effects our school and students
- We have a transient community – 22% turnover rate – people come, can't find a job, then they are gone. Already lost 14 kids this year.
- Ditto – too many kids bouncing in and out of the area
- Hard to find classroom supplies in town, i.e., orange yarn
- Teachers live in Hamilton – mostly for housing reasons
- Valley wide perception that people in Darby are less intelligent than other areas
- Ditto – "Darbarians"

## **MISC. HANDWRITTEN COMMENTS:**

### **Challenges**

- Too many bars
- Fireworks going from June through the end of July. Neighborhood kids sending off bottle rockets – some have landed on my fuel tank. For a full month I have to keep my dog inside.

**DARBY RESOURCE TEAM ASSESSMENT**  
**October 20, 2004**

**BUSINESS OWNERS, DARBY DOWNTOWN ASSOCIATION, FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS**

**Strengths and Assets**

- New projects that have been accomplished as of the last action plan, i.e. the library
- Ditto with the projects completed
- Visitors are impressed with our community – should stay a walk-able community
- People feel comfortable and warm in our community
- People say that our community is clean
- Lots of potential in Darby – small size is good, lots of energy
- Community pulls together in the time of tragedy
- Darby is community-oriented
- People are very nice
- In Darby you know your neighbors
- The boundaries of Darby go farther than the city limits
- Visitor information center at the top of the pass
- Love the small size, walk-able town
- Great outdoors
- Darby is an inviting town
- Ditto on potential, could have growth without expansion
- Great youth population – youth are courteous
- Ditto on the need for good jobs
- Ditto on the small population
- Great library project
- Darby has energy, enthusiasm
- New money from outsiders
- Ditto on small town and knowing everyone
- Main Street is one of the last closed downtowns
- We have architectural integrity
- Town has a great staff, enthusiastic council with a vision for the future
- Great link between the school and the community
- Trapper Creek Job Corps is an asset

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT, LAW ENFORCEMENT, FOREST SERVICE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES**

**Strengths and Assets**

- Our volunteers and those committed to the community – very dedicated
- Ditto
- People help each other out – whether you know them or not
- Town government works pretty darn well
- Nancy – our City Clerk
- Volunteers and support of public entities is very good
- National forest land surrounds us – outdoor recreation
- Library - incredible
- A lot of livable space
- One of the best volunteer ambulance crews in the area
- Good school system
- Best city government that Darby has had in the past 30 years
- No town like Darby as far as support from other people – people are willing to testify – like a Neighborhood Watch
- Darby has over 400 cases per officer in their annual reports – community is so helpful (other small towns may have 60 cases per officer); a lot of watching goes on – very positive and safe community
- Even with growth, Darby maintains a small town feel
- Community and the council works well together – sometimes accept time payments if a financial hardship occurs
- People that work for Darby and the knowledge that they have
- Community is willing to step out and help
- When controversy occurs, we deal with it and go on
- Some people have a lot of energy and foresight to make things happen
- School heated by biomass fuel system
- Library and new fire hall
- Skatepark is happening
- Darby has a lot of heart – after the mill closed, people brushed themselves off and kept going

## **CHURCHES AND SENIOR CITIZENS**

### **Strengths**

- Council on aging
- Our location
- Quality of the people
- Appreciate the spirit of community and services
  - the library, museum, emergency clinic, ambulance service, well trained providers,
- Relaxed atmosphere
- Plentiful rentals – so family can move here
- Ample churches
- Mainstreet is good – except the bomb site and the empty lot by Ray Realty
- Physical therapy is here
- Health Club
- Seniors are in tune with the school system – and are pleased with the school
- Ditto

- Pace of life
- Spirit of community when they want good things to happen here
- People here want to be here
- Biggest asset is the Lord that gave us a wonderful place to live
- Can do spirit
- School system
- People in the school, Becki
- Extreme Team – after school program
- Woman’s Club
- Catholic Church
- Lots of friends
- Pinochle Club – first Monday of every month
- Diversity and knowledge of our population – just have to keep tapping into it
- Natural beauty
- Woman’s Club sponsors a boy/girl for Boys and Girls State – student comes and tells of their experience and what they learned
- Youth is a huge asset – very respectful and well behaved students – and has historically been true
- Ministerial association
- Fifth Sunday Singing

## **COMMUNITY GROUPS, VOLUNTEERS, NON-PROFITS**

### **Strengths**

- Montana Community Foundation and the Darby Town Endowment Fund
- Kid’s First of Ravalli County
- Greater Ravalli Coalition
- DART
- Library – terrific community cooperation, and it is paid for
- Grant writing
- After school population in the library – provides a need for out-of-town students to do homework while waiting for basketball practice to start
- Tutoring available at the library
- Library can offer fillers for “nothing to do” in the town
- Friends of the Library
- Darby Main street Association
- Health Club
- Darby Club House – operated by volunteers
- Bitterroot Bus System
- Women’s Club
- Interest in new business here – Main Street architecture and effect
- Community that has character
- Spirit of cooperation and partnership in getting a project finished
- Ditto
- Community always supports the school
- Ditto

- Care and concern for the community
- Ditto
- Ditto
- Ditto
- New potential that surrounds us in the form of new people, new energy, new money, new brains
- We are Montana Made
- Library,
- Clubhouse
- New school with boiler
- Great things going on with Darby right now
- AmeriCorp
- School parent group
- Meals on Wheels

### **TIMBER WORKERS UNITED**

#### **Strengths**

- Small town – everyone knows each other
- Beautiful and great location
- Surrounded by the raw product to do a multitude of things...if....  
And “if” seems a long ways out there
- The people—must have great people here or we wouldn’t stay
- Logger’s Day – involves a cut for all of the non-profits involved –
- Logger’s Day – a great money raiser for the community – but we need more help
- Darby Days Berry Festival
- Location – railhead, timber

### **DARBY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT OFFICERS AND REPRESENTATIVES**

#### **Strengths**

- Booster club – although it is closed group
- Small – you know all of your teachers and everybody here
- People are always nice because you are related to others
- Ditto
- You know everyone in the school and everyone is nice
- Scholarships – but they are small
- Newer technology available in our school – we have really great technology
- Greenhouse – great student resource
- Pilot program for the heating system
- Advanced language class –
- Advanced technology classes
- Partnership with forest service
- Technology here helps the whole community



## **TEACHERS, ADMINISTRATORS, EDUCATORS AND BOARD MEMBERS**

### **Strengths**

- New library is just beautiful
- The merchants have done great work downtown – fun place to shop
- Community that comes together
- Often have more donors than recipients when it comes to asking for assistance
- Will have people phone out of the blue to say they want to donate \$\$\$\$
- Family atmosphere – families helping families
- Community takes care of each other – i.e., someone is ill, fires, etc.
- Location of Darby – huge asset, sheer beauty
- Caring, friendly and helpful community – teachers find a lot of help when they ask
- Our mayor
- Kids First

## **MISC. WRITTEN COMMENTS**

### **Strengths:**

- A strong constable
- A community that supports the school budget
- A new public library (too bad it wasn't built near the school)
- Small, friendly town tied to the rest of the Bitterroot Valley by Hwy 93 and the Bitterroot River
- Western flavor
- Relaxed environment
- Children still seen riding both bike and horseback
- Open spaces and outstanding mountain views

**DARBY RESOURCE TEAM ASSESSMENT  
OCTOBER 20, 2004**

**LISTENING SESSION NOTES**

**BUSINESS OWNERS, DARBY DOWNTOWN ASSOCIATION, FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS**

**Projects for the Future**

- Integrated complex at the rodeo grounds with a swimming pool and performing arts center – all ages
- Community college
- Ditto on the above
- Darby has made many great strides towards being a destination
- We need to capitalize on the tourism industry
- Darby trail head along the rail bed
- Swimming pool
- Bike trail
- Activity center by the fairgrounds
- Need walk-around area, designated parking
- Western fronts
- Sleigh rides
- Do two or three things very well
- Ditto on doing two or three things very well
- Get all of the community working towards the same goal
- Ditto on working towards the same goal
- Town has a Big Fork, Sun Valley, Jackson Hole feel
- Become a destination with downtown open and lit-up
- Development of a river front park
- Bike trail
- Reorganization of the Darby civic group
- Enough industry in Darby so that it could get the railroad through here again

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT, LAW ENFORCEMENT, FOREST SERVICE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES**

**Projects**

- Stronger ordinances to clean up residential places
- Address drug activity problems
- Enforce decay ordinance
- Improve participation of forest service with community
- Housing – affordable middle income housing

- Law enforcement staff needs increased
- Grant writer for Ravalli County to go after available funds
- Economic development – work at restoration and maintenance
- Rec/community/pool center – support opportunities for activities for our youth and community
- Non motorized walking path to encircle Darby
- Web page that advertises our government structure, businesses,
- Improve services such as sidewalks, non-motorized path
- Clean economic growth
- Water/sewer infrastructure improved
- Forest Service - Sustainable use for “waste” products, i.e, library, fuels for schools; encourage entrepreneurs
- More community involvement to work with commodity folks and preservation folks – more of a melting pot group
- Decay ordinances sharpened and enforced – utilize what we have, too
- Restore active involvement with the Forest Service office in Darby
- A grant writer – that didn’t take all of the money!
- Get our growth policy completed
- Better maintenance around town – i.e., weed problem
- Remove old station in the next two years
- Clubhouse paid off
- Streets paved to standard width
- Alleys upgraded
- Town water filtration system – we have lots of iron and minerals – will cause continual problems
- Biking/hiking trail – within five years
- Upgrade water/sewer systems
- 20 years? I don’t care, probably won’t be alive. ☺
- Fire trucks upgraded

## **CHURCHES AND SENIOR CITIZENS**

### **Projects**

- Training for workforce that is available here
- Need to involve our talented community members – bring them to the forefront and put them to work
- Town planning, zoning that is in place and adhered to...i.e., Violet Street – now has trailer houses
- Hiking/biking path as we have limited sidewalks
- Clubhouse paid for
- Darby’s small businesses are what drive us – so small businesses need resources, training, assets to help them maintain and grow their businesses
- Increase the amount of safe clean affordable housing for Darby area
- Need pharmacy to compliment our medical center
- Increase shopping opportunities so a wide range of what can be purchased here
- Increase in public transportation – reduce risk of trying to drive ourselves

- Streetlights and sidewalks
- Integrate our seniors more with our community center – doesn't get used enough
- Need to pay off the clubhouse so it can be reasonable to use – expand the assets of it; Darby Community Clubhouse Board
- More input for the Darby Community Clubhouse Board
- Include sustainable forest products in Darby's economic future – build a consortium in the area

## **COMMUNITY GROUPS, VOLUNTEERS, NON-PROFITS**

### **Projects**

- Engage new people for volunteer work and projects
- Better utilize Kids First – work closely to fill the family needs in the area
- Cultural change to help kids see the opportunities around them –that there are things to do
- Coordinate school library with public library
- Getting library on board for Interlibrary loan
- Revive the Darby Civic Group –
- Payoff \$33,000 remaining on Clubhouse – should be paid in five years
- Bitterroot Bus Service – expand kids services into Darby
- Capture new energy, new money of new people in town
- Market our Darby made products
- New industry to come in for jobs – school enrollment dwindles without jobs
- Grant writer is needed -
- Bike path/walking path
- Cooperative web page through town of Darby and businesses
- Value added products
- Overlap groups somehow so that input from fire dept and library group and Kids First, etc., keeps us going and informed – keep lines of communication open
- Expand library services, GED classes, Adult Ed in the afternoon, etc.
- Join public meetings so that county commissioners can know what we are doing
- Diversify wood products industry – come up with more uses
- See a Marriott with pool or Holiday Inn Express with western frontage
- Lampposts all the way down the street
- Holiday lighting at all time
- Unified decoration amongst the businesses
- After school location - possibly next to the gym
- Signage – new signs or moved signs farther out of town
- Make community aware of costs and budget for Clubhouse so that they can buy into the facility
- Council of Aging more involved in Darby

## **TIMBER WORKERS UNITED**

### **Projects**

- Sustainable industry here – don't want the town to get huge, but sustainable

- Businesses that employ several people
- Get federal sales to go through
- Fuels for schools really take off
- Co-Gen plant – heat the entire down of Darby; perhaps a plant between Hamilton and Darby
- A mill here – to put people back to work
- Value added wood products
- Education – need the public to understand the issues
- Bring in professional jobs
- Involve the forest service more in the community work here
- Must have some kind of industry back here or it will fold up
- Darby and Montana as a whole need to become more business friendly
- Invite Timber Workers United to Forest Service meetings
- Groups to come together – new leadership is here, now is a great time

### **DARBY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT OFFICERS AND REPRESENTATIVES**

#### **Projects**

- DARE program here – (lost funding previously)
- School automotive club – rebuild cars, engines, etc.
- Wider variety of clubs – chess club,
- Theater – bigger stage, more performance opportunities
- Teen center would be good, but need to get input from kids what to have in it – then, perhaps kids that live outside of town couldn't drive in
- Teen center would be good for the time gap after school and prior to a football game
- A store to shop at – i.e., Kmart – would give us some shopping place
- After school outlet for mentoring/tutoring for tough subjects and/or younger kids
- CAD class is doing signs for Lewis and Clark project
- Growing native ponderosa pine seedlings to put out in the community
- Darby Education Foundation – new within the last year

### **TEACHERS, ADMINISTRATORS, EDUCATORS AND BOARD MEMBERS**

#### **Projects**

- Develop mechanisms to bring families here – if it is such a great place to raise families, find a way to bring them
- Living wage jobs –
- Performing arts center, community center where we can put on performances as we have a good fine arts program in the school
- Ditto – ability for families to make a living
- Industry or economic stability
- Ditto
- Affordable housing
- Place for community to come together

## **MISC. WRITTEN COMMENTS**

### **Projects:**

- Welcoming roadside lighting and parking areas
- Hitching rails put up to continue to allow for horse back riders
- More promotion of the bike trail – provide bike racks and signs
- Safety flags up for bikers/horseback riders crossing Hwy 93
- Old Darby Bridge – put up picnic tables or covered pavilion for performances/musical events; sand volleyball court, horseshoe pits
- Indoor/Outdoor ice skating rink or public swimming pool
- Use development to support our preference to open spaces
- Continue to promote efforts for community projects, i.e., high school students picking up trash – spotlight them in the newspaper.
- CARP program brought back – community arts
- Enforcement of some type of fireworks regulation.
- How about a “designated spot” for kids to go and light off fireworks?



*Economic & Business Strategies*

## DARBY, MONTANA

### DEMOGRAPHIC, ECONOMIC & INFRASTRUCTURE OVERVIEW

October, 2004

The information provided within is for informational purposes only and is limited in scope and detail. Economic data primarily focuses on Ravalli County as there is very little at the town level (Darby). **Our purpose is to supply Resource Team Assessment members with information about Darby and Ravalli County which may help their assessment process.** All information was gleaned through Internet-based information and limited contact with local officials.

Melinda Anderson  
Myrt Webb

## **DARBY – RAVALLI COUNTY ECONOMIC & DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS OCTOBER 2004**

Darby, MT is a scenic community nestled in the Bitterroot National Forest. While it has grown since it was settled in 1882, its population is still under 1,000 (2002 population = 764). Given that the average commute time is 27 minutes it may be safe to assume most of its residents make a living outside of town and spend at least a portion of their earnings outside Darby.

Due to Darby's small population (it accounts for 1.9% of Ravalli County's population), much of the economic data found relates to Ravalli County as a whole. Almost no community operates in a vacuum and the same is true for Darby. What impacts the county affects Darby.

According to the Bitterroot Chamber of Commerce website Darby began its economic life in mining and fur trading. The early 20<sup>th</sup> century focused on timber harvesting, for the Anaconda Mining Company, as well as the "Apple Boom". Later on the community focused on agriculture, cattle ranching, and the timber industry. Residents most likely know what drive Darby's current economy today.

Good news for Darby is that its median age is only 32 years. That is young compared to the county and Montana as a whole. A younger population generally means a larger labor pool, propensity to spend their income, and more likely to support various bond measures. However, that is tempered with the fact that Darby's median family and household incomes are lower than average, its poverty rate is higher, and education levels are lower. Ravalli County's unemployment rate is low, as is Montana's; that is good for Darby.

### **DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION**

Darby's population grew by 13.6%, the labor force grew by 12.2%. With Darby's small population these numbers are probably not statistically significant enough to have any meaning. Suffice it to say that the labor pool and the population growth kept pace with each other.

Darby's median age actually declined from 1990 when it was 33.1 years. In 2000 those 65 and older comprise 9.3% of the population while they were 17.3% of the population in 1990. That is significant as it shows that the newcomers moving to Darby were younger than the general population that moved to Ravalli County during the same time period.

In 1990 Darby's percentage of high school graduates was only 67.5% compared to 2000 when it had risen to 81.9%. The percentage of Darby college graduates rose slightly (1990=10.6%, 2000=11.3%). The number of Darby residents who had less than a 9<sup>th</sup>-grade education declined sharply from 9.5% in 1990 to only 3.6% in 2000. This is all good news as to the employment outlook.

Darby's labor force has also changed dramatically – in 1990 only 34.3% of the labor force was female. As of 2000, it was 48.5%. One of the reasons could be that married-couple households in Darby declined from 50.2% in 1990 to 41.9% in 2000 which means more women may be in



the workforce for economic reasons. However, another reason could be that more women under the age of 18 took jobs.

**Table 1 - Demographic statistics (Census):**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Darby</b>	<b>Ravalli County</b>	<b>Montana</b>
Population, 2002	754	37,730	909,453
Population, 2000	710	36,070	903,416
Population, 1990	625	25,010	799,065
Population, 1980	581	22,493	786,690
Labor Pool, 2002	326 (2000)	18,123	578,210
Unemp. Rate, July 2004	Unknown	3.9%	3.9%
Commute (minutes), 2000	27.1	23.0	17.7
Median Age, 2000	32.7	41.1	37.5
Median Family Income, 2000	\$27,500	\$38,397	\$40,487
Median HH Income, 2000	\$25,221	\$31,992	\$33,024
Poverty Rate, 2000	19.5%	9.6%	10.5%
Poverty Rate, Female HH	29.3%	36.0%	33.2%
Education - <9 <sup>th</sup> grade, 2000	3.1%	2.7%	4.3%
Education – HS degree, 2000	81.9%	87.4%	87.2%
Education – College degree, 2000	11.3%	22.5%	24.4%

Source: Census, 2000; MT Dept of Commerce, Dept. of

L&I

The population increase for Darby, Ravalli County, and Montana was quite high from 1990-2000. The sharp increase was due to in-migration rather than to natural reasons (birth/death). This fast growth has had some major consequences which we discuss more fully in the Infrastructure section. As of 2000, only 36% of Darby's residents were born in Montana, which is similar to Ravalli County's statistics.

According to Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) data, Ravalli County is ranked #1 from 1969-2002 in the state with its 3.02% share of overall Montana population growth. The 2<sup>nd</sup> highest ranking goes to Gallatin County with its 2.46% share. This is a large difference.

### **INCOME INFORMATION**

As you can see from Table 1, Darby's family and household income are significantly lower than both Ravalli County and Montana while the poverty rate is significantly higher. BEA doesn't provide data for small cities so it's difficult to determine precisely why these factors exist without interviewing Darby residents. Several theories are: 1) education levels are low so residents may not have the skills needed for higher-paying jobs, 2) there may be more seasonal, part-time jobs available than full-time, regular jobs, or 3) day-care or transportation may be problematic making it difficult for parents to get to jobs.

Figure 1 below shows how Ravalli County's personal income has grown in relation to Montana – from 1.7% to 3.7% which means that the county had captured a larger share of all Montana's income by 2002. Part of the reason for this increase may be due to the influx of new, older residents that have brought their income with them in the form of rents, investments, and retirement income. But as is shown in later graphs and tables, industrial earnings have also grown more in the county than in Montana as a whole.

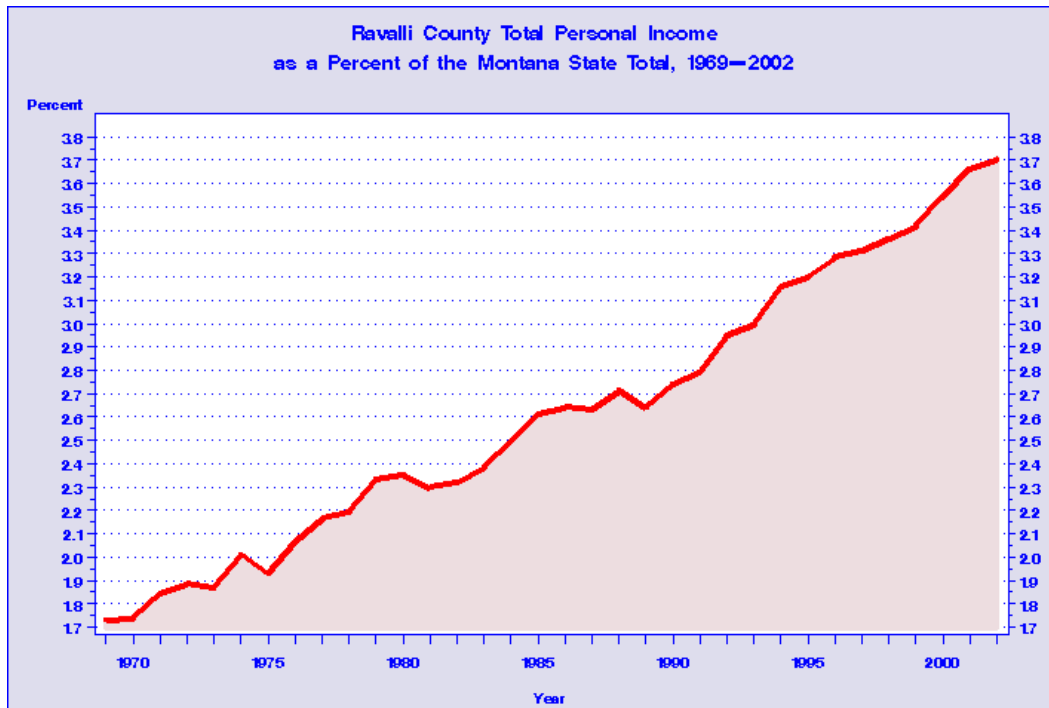


Figure 1

Source: NIIP - WSU

Figure 2 shows that Ravalli County's personal income growth has outpaced both Montana and the U.S. each decade since 1970 with the exception of the 1980s when the U.S. outpaced Ravalli by less than one percent.

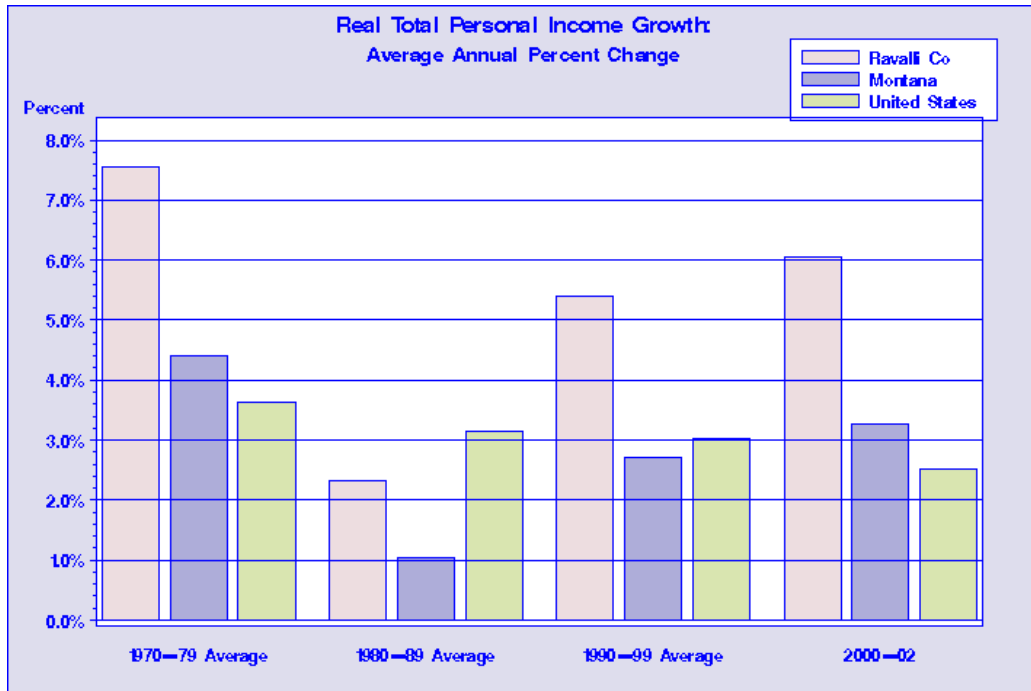


Figure 2

Source: NIIP – WSU

## ECONOMIC & EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION

A shift/share analysis of Ravalli County employment from 1970-2000 from the Northwest Income Indicator Project of Washington State University shows that almost all industrial sectors grew faster in Ravalli County than in the U.S. as a whole, except for the federal government. Actual growth was a net 12,025 jobs for a 243.5% gain. If it had grown at the national level, it would have gained a net 4,083 jobs for an 82.7% gain. Ravalli County jobs even grew faster than industries did regionally.

Because Montana has no sales tax we use personal income data (1998-2002) from BEA gathered by industry to determine how various industrial sectors and the general economy are doing. Table 2 shows the breakdown. Passive income consists of rents, royalties, investments, retirement income, and transfer payments.

As you can see from the Table, total income has increased at a faster pace in Ravalli County than in Montana as a whole. Since county non-farm earnings have risen faster than the state, our guess is that is due to a higher percentage job growth rate here grew compared to Montana. Other good news is that Ravalli Co. work earnings have increased much more quickly than passive income since 1998 which is a sign of a healthier economy. But non-farm earnings are still only 55% of Ravalli County's total economy compared with 61.5% for Montana. This may mean that more county residents rely on passive income when compared to the state.

Manufacturing has not only grown in Ravalli County but it holds a much larger share of the overall economy in the county when compared to the state. Wood products played a major part in the 1998-2002 growth of the manufacturing sector as did fabricated metals and nondurable

goods manufacturing. These sectors had double-digit rates of growth since 1998 and could continue to be a very important source of income to Ravalli County residents.

Government, Retail Trade, and Health Care are also important local economic sectors as well as for Montana. It could be useful for economic development practitioners to grasp the economics and trends for these sectors to determine if they should be part of an overall business recruitment and economic gardening strategy.

**Table 2 – 2002 Components of Ravalli Co. Personal Income (\$000s)**

Category	\$ Amount	% Change from 1998	% of Total	MT%1998 Change	MT % of Total
Total	\$837,371	+32%		+20%	
Passive Income	373,739	+24%	45%	+16%	38.5%
NonFarm Earnings	414,224	+38%	55%	+22%	61.5%
Manufacturing	54,771	+13%	38.5%	-07%	06.1%
Construction	48,260	+12%	51.0%	+24%	07.5%
Retail Trade	44,324	**	10.7%	**	09.6%
Transport/Warehouse	10,418	**	02.5%	**	04.3%
Finance/Insurance	15,997	**	03.9%	**	02.2%
Real Estate/Leasing	7,925	**	01.9%	**	04.5%
Prof/Technical Svcs	25,856	**	06.2%	**	06.3%
Health Care/Social	34,839	**	08.4%	**	12.4%
Lodging/Food	11,629	**	02.1%	**	03.8%
Government	86,451	+37%	21.0%	+23%	23.1%

\*\*=no % as category mixes have changed

Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis

Even though we were not able to determine how all these sectors have changed since 1998, our estimate is that they have all grown even if only slightly. That assumption is based on the shift/share analysis that shows that all industrial sectors in Ravalli County grew much faster than national or regional counterparts did.

### Employment

The cumulative growth indices in Figure 3 compare the long-term growth of Ravalli County's employment over 1969-2002 with the state and nation. The indices express each region's employment in 1969 as 100, and the employment in subsequent years as a percent of 1969. Although they differ in size, one can directly compare the long-term employment growth of Ravalli County's with that of the state and nation.

Ravalli County's employment posted a 262.0% gain over 1969-2002, ahead of the growth statewide (93.1%), and above the increase nationally (83.4%).

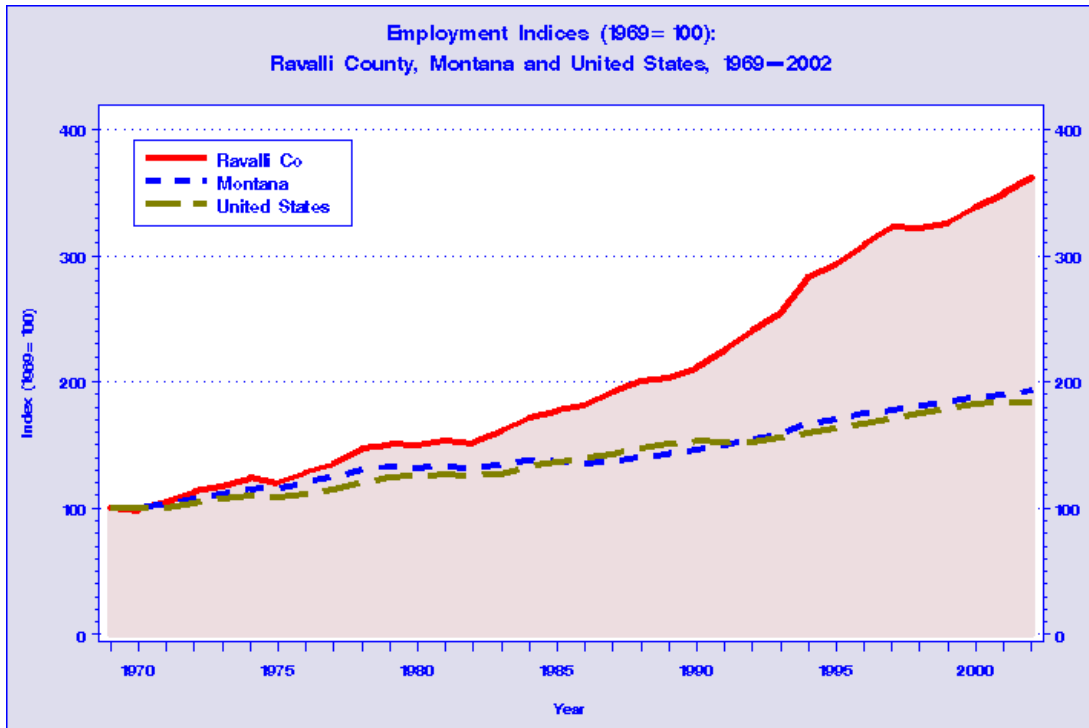


Figure 3

Source: NIIP - WSU

Figure 4 indicates another way of highlighting the growth of Ravalli County's employment compared with the state at large – trace its share of total state employment. A rising share means the county's employment grew faster--or declined less--than the state, while a declining share shows it grew slower.

In 1969, Ravalli County's employment made up 1.68% of total employment statewide; in 2002, it accounted for 3.15%. Job growth often follows population growth so that accounts for at least some of the rise. As you recall, Ravalli County ranks #1 in population growth.

As of August 2004 (Montana Dept. of Labor & Industry), the labor pool for Ravalli County is 19,136. There are neighboring counties that could be both sources of employees and employers, as well as Idaho since Ravalli County borders on that state. Employers in rural areas tend to look at a much larger geographical region for potential employees than in large cities. Rural residents are generally more willing to travel longer distances.

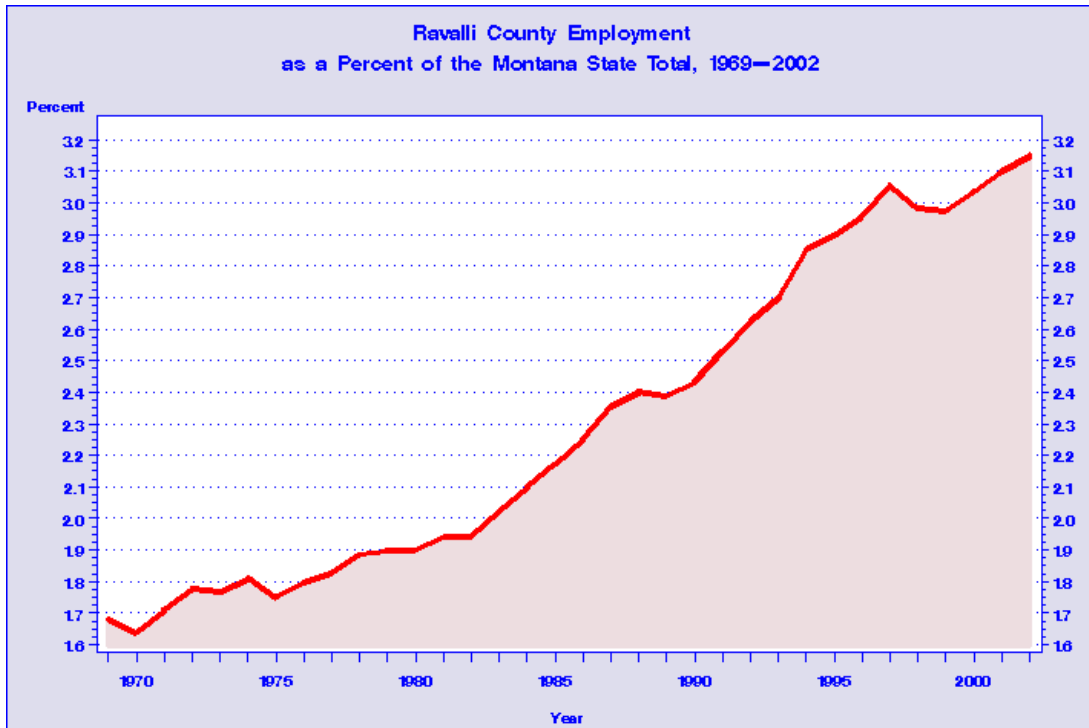


Figure 4

Source: NIIP - WSU

### Wages

While Ravalli County's personal income and employment figures have grown impressively, wages in Ravalli County are still less on average than for the state. In 2001 (ES 202 data) the total average wage for Ravalli County was \$22,917 versus the state's at \$25,194. This is an annual wage rather than hourly earnings. The annual wage may be lower due to more jobs that are considered part-time rather than full-time. A wage/hour survey would be very helpful to determine the reasons for the county's work earnings.

Ravalli County manufacturing jobs paid an average annual wage of \$30,781 compared with \$32,353 for Montana, though lumber manufacturing paid \$34,029 in Ravalli County while only \$32,797 for the state.

There are fairly wide gaps between Ravalli County and Montana for Construction, Transportation/Communication, and FIRE with Ravalli County jobs paying significantly less. Wholesale Trade and Mining jobs in Ravalli County pay at least 10% more than the state but the County's share of these jobs compared to Montana is low.

### **DEMOGRAPHIC & ECONOMIC SUMMARY**

No community, whether it's urban or rural, large or small should depend on one or two economic sectors. It's critical to diversify the economy while strengthening the sectors that are present. The trend in Ravalli County is that work earnings are growing at a faster rate than passive income. That is important as it takes the economic reliance off of retirees and creates more diversity.

That said Manufacturing, Government and Construction are very important to Ravalli County's economy in terms of personal income. It would be helpful to better understand what makes up these sectors here to determine what assistance they can use to grow and create more jobs.

Darby's population has become younger while Ravalli County's has grown older and wealthier. Darby's labor force comprises many more women, yet the poverty rate for family households rose from 17% in 1990 to 19.5% in 2000 and is much higher than in the county. This may mean that the jobs they have are not only lower paying (adjusted for inflation) but may also be more seasonal and part-time than in the past. Typically retail, lodging, dining, janitorial, and other consumer service jobs make up that type of employment.

Darby's labor force is also better educated than it was in 1990. It probably means that a good portion of Darby's labor force is underemployed but also means that there is a skilled workforce at the present for new jobs to be created.

Even though income levels may not have kept pace with Ravalli County there still seems to be a good base from which to build a job- and wealth-producing economy in Darby. Fully understanding Darby's economic drivers and business community will be a key aspect of determining which direction it should go in.

Infrastructure is also a critical piece of determining Darby's destiny. The next section focuses on specific infrastructure information. Similar to this section it is simply focused on certain aspects of the current infrastructure capacity. We make no recommendations as to any improvements that might be needed. To make such recommendations would first require a more in-depth survey of the demographic and economic variables and a deeper understanding of Darby and Ravalli County residents' vision for the future of their community.

Lastly, Darby residents' ability to recognize the need for and ability to create change will be the third leg of their continued ability to establish the conditions for an improved and diversified economy. Certainly from a review of their 1999 Community Action Plan, it seems they may have the critical mass of commitment in the community.

## **DARBY – RAVALLI COUNTY** **INFRASTRUCTURE ANALYSIS** **OCTOBER 2004**

For this report infrastructure is defined as all the facilities and services that support a community's economic activity. This includes:

Transportation (air, road, rail, pipelines)	Potable water system
Wastewater system	Solid waste disposal
Energy (electric, gas)	Telecommunications
Public safety	Education
Health care	Residential housing
Commercial/Industrial properties	Cultural/recreational facilities

When infrastructure is assessed there are a few general points to keep in mind.

- The deterioration of infrastructure is more a function of time than use. Seldom is infrastructure replaced because of overuse.
- Infrastructure deterioration accelerates as time progresses. A facility with a 20-year life will deteriorate more in the last 3 years than it will in the previous 17.
- Increasing use is normally gradual. Improvements must be made in large and expensive steps.

Topography – infrastructure is heavily influenced by the topography of the community. Darby is at the south end of a north to south valley formed by the Bitterroot River. At the valley's wide north end, 67 miles distant, is the regional trade center of Missoula. South of Missoula, and 19 miles north of Darby, is the local trade center and county seat of Hamilton. As the valley runs south of Hamilton, toward Darby, it narrows substantially. Darby is in a narrow southern section of the valley between two mountain ranges. The valley floor near Darby has the right of way for US93, a rail line and the floodplain of the river. Infrastructure for Darby is significantly constrained by the scarcity of level terrain that will support development.

Logistics – improving economic activity is dependent on the community's ability to move things and information in and out of the local economy. Moving things/information in, adding value, and then moving them out is how a community's economy improves. Darby is at the end of a long cul-de-sac. There are important economic centers to trade with to the north but not to the south. Things moving into the economy must enter from the north and leave in the same direction. Information likely will flow the same way. Cul-de-sacs are not as efficient as a corridor, where things/information can flow multiple directions, but it is better than isolated communities that have neither.

**TRANSPORTATION** – as a cul-de-sac community, transportation to the north is critical to Darby's economic vitality.

Roads – US93 an all weather highway on the federal aid system provides good access. US93 links to Interstate 90 at Missoula. Local city roads have been identified in a 1999 community plan as in "poor condition."

Rail – Montana Rail Link, a class II rail carrier, provides service north to Missoula. This route links to Burlington Northern, which accesses the major market areas of Seattle and Chicago. The line from Hamilton to Darby may not be in active service.

Air – a full service scheduled airport is at Missoula. A general aviation field is at Hamilton.

Pipelines – none have been identified.

**MUNICIPAL UTILITIES** – these are the core infrastructure facilities of potable water, wastewater, solid waste, energy and telecommunications.

Potable water – groundwater system with an estimated 300 connections. The 1999 community plan identified the water system as needing additional water supplies. According to the state



financial assistance website no water projects have been completed since 1982. This system is likely near the end of its useful life.

Wastewater – type of system unknown but likely a lagoon system that needs a large area. No wastewater projects have been completed since 1982. The system is likely near the end of its useful life.

Solid waste – the county has a private contractor that collects throughout the county and transfers the waste to a landfill near Missoula.

Energy – natural gas is not available. Electrical energy is available but the capacity is unknown.

Telecommunications – POTS (plain old telephone system) is available, broadband communications, such as DSL/cable or T1, are not available.

**PUBLIC SAFETY** – this includes the services of police, fire and emergency services.

Police – according to the 2002 state report Darby has one sworn police officer.

Fire – a volunteer fire department serves the community and surrounding area. The department has five pieces of apparatus. The newest piece of equipment was manufactured in 1990. In 1999 the community received financial assistance (\$131,000) for a fire station.

Emergency services – disaster planning and coordination is provided by the county from Hamilton.

**EDUCATION** – businesses assessing a community's education resources consider daycare through postgraduate studies.

Daycare – available, costs unknown, two pre-school programs, no active HeadStart.

K thru 12 – Darby has its own school district with 3 buildings serving all K-12 grades. Latest data(2002-2003) shows the district with 512 students and 42 teachers. Student numbers have declined slightly in the last 5 years. Student staff ratio is lower than the state average. Basic skills standardized test scores are at the state average for reading and above the state average in math. Forty nine percent of the K-6 students, 45% of grades 7,8 and 42% of grades 9-12 are on the free/reduced cost lunch program.

There is no current facility plan for the school district. Last major facility project was in 1972. Last bond issue passed but support for previous bond issues has been erratic.

There are no private schools in the community.

Adult education programs are available. After school programs are active.

College/University – college/university resources from community college programs through graduate studies are provided at the Community Tech College and the University of MT in Missoula.

**HEALTHCARE** – Darby has limited healthcare in the community. Most services are provided from Hamilton.

Ravalli County healthcare information shows fewer people on Medicaid compared to the state, but more on Medicare. Infant mortality is less than the state other indices, for example; leading causes of death or incidence of cardiovascular disease, are close to state data.

The closest hospital is the Marcus Daly Memorial Hospital in Hamilton. The hospital has 48 beds and provides general medical care. Hamilton is listed as a medically underserved area. Specialized care is provided in Missoula.

**RESIDENTIAL HOUSING** – Darby has 316 housing units.

Based on 2000 census data: The percent of renter occupied housing is much higher (52% to 27%) than the state and the percent of owner occupied housing is much less than the state (36% to 60%). The median age of Darby housing is similar to the state median and housing costs are less than the state average.

**COMMERCIAL/INDUSTRIAL PROPERTIES** – Unknown

**RECREATIONAL FACILITIES** – according to a 1999 Darby Community Action Plan, a major strength of the community is its outdoor recreational opportunities.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT** – local government is included in this assessment because it is often the owner/operator of key community infrastructure.

Expenditures for Darby increased substantially during the period 1998-2002. Per capita expenditures in 1998 were \$143; in 2002 they were \$365. The town's general fund increased from \$121.5 K to \$252.1 K during the same period. This is a typical pattern for small communities in areas with growing populations.

#### **INFRASTRUCTURE SUMMARY:**

This classification of Darby's infrastructure does not assume any specific economic development strategy. Depending on that strategy some of the strengths or weaknesses may not be applicable. For example, the lack of natural gas is only a weakness if the community seeks to attract or expand a business that needs that specific resource.

**Infrastructure Strengths** – systems and facilities that encourage economic development

Road system – the presence of US93

Education – the local school system and the presence of the University of MT within commuting distance.

Recreational facilities – the presence of quality outdoor recreation

**Infrastructure Weaknesses** – systems and facilities that discourage economic development.

Roads – the poor condition of the town’s street system.

Energy – the lack of natural gas.

Telecommunications – the lack of broadband communications

Potable water system – lack of recent upgrades on an older system means this system is near the end of its useful life.

Wastewater system – same comment as the water system.

Healthcare – limited resources in the community; the listing of Hamilton as a medically underserved area.

**Uncertain Infrastructure** – systems and facilities where incomplete information does not enable us to make an assessment.

Rail Transportation – the rail line may or may not be active but it is important to determine if the right-of-way remains.

Public Safety – both fire and police.

Residential Housing – unknown condition.

Commercial/Industrial properties – no information available.