

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

2023 MBAC/GEDD
2027 Tri-County Region



Acknowledgments

We thank the cities, counties, and local chambers of commerce, economic development organizations, and the citizens of the region for their active participation in this process

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Electronic copy of the 2022-
2026 CEDS document
available at:
<http://www.mbac.biz>

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WHO WE ARE

The Montana Business Assistance Connection (MBAC) catalyzes community leaders, stakeholders, and opportunities driving prosperity, our economy, business vitality, high quality job growth, and the enhancement of quality of life throughout

The Montana Business Assistance Connection (MBAC) and Gateway Economic Development District (GEDD), which for the remainder of this document, will be referred to as “MBAC,” was created with the express purpose of improving the economy and livability of Lewis and Clark, Broadwater, and Meagher counties. We help businesses start up, improve, expand, relocate, or transition to new ownership.

MBAC’s mission is to catalyze community leaders, stakeholders, and opportunities driving prosperity: our economy, business vitality, high-quality job growth, and the enhancement of the quality of life throughout the US Economic Development Administration (EDA) Gateway Economic Development District (EDD), which includes Broadwater, Lewis and Clark, and Meagher counties. In addition to the US EDA District, MBAC also works closely with Jefferson County on economic development.

MBAC’s mission includes work in the following areas:



MBAC works to sustain existing businesses and industries and protect existing jobs in the region.



MBAC focuses on attracting businesses and/or industries that will generate new employment opportunities and bring new wealth into the region.



MBAC provides comprehensive technical assistance in areas such as business, natural resource development, commercial properties, and community revitalization.



MBAC focuses on the creation, promotion and management of public and private loan funds to support capital formation.



MBAC partners with local communities to improve and develop local infrastructure to sustain long-term growth.

MBAC's ultimate goal is to improve the standard of living for all citizens by enhancing the area business climate, diversifying the local economy, expanding the tax base, and enhancing local employment opportunities. Since our inception in 1999, we have leveraged private and public capital resources and professional business development assistance to directly create and retain thousands of area jobs and injected millions of dollars of capital into the regional economy.



Townsend Residents at Fall Fest

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Montana Business Assistance Connection region Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) provides guidance for local and regional economic and community development planning. It builds upon established initiatives to create jobs and increase capital for businesses and economic development. In addition, it focuses on issues that enhance the quality of life for residents in the region.



Art in the Wild, Lincoln MT

Broadwater, Lewis and Clark, and Meagher counties are diverse and rich areas, abundant in natural beauty and wildlife, as well as rich in mineral, agricultural, and forest resources. However, local economies have, and continue to be, negatively impacted by these industries' downturns and workforce and labor shortages spurred by the COVID-19 pandemic. Further, housing and childcare shortages have continued to impact local businesses' ability to attract quality workforce into the area. Despite these issues, parts of the tri-county region continue to grow at an unprecedented rate, leading to high housing prices and new wealth filtering into the area. With this growth, many local residents are being outpriced and have voiced considerable frustration with the steadily-rising cost of living in the area.

To address these issues, area leaders are focusing on the diversification of industries, workforce development, and collaborative solutions to provide much-needed housing, childcare, and other local needs to their areas.

The Montana Business Assistance Connection (MBAC) region CEDS guides local and regional economic and community development planning. It builds upon established initiatives to create jobs and increase capital for businesses and economic development. In addition, it focuses on issues that enhance the quality of life for residents in the three-county region and looks to create a regional approach to solving key issues and encourage community-oriented solutions.

The CEDS process utilizes local partnerships with the cities, counties, regional chambers of commerce, and local Economic Development Organizations (EDOs), and as such relies on a considerable amount of public feedback, from both virtual surveys and focus groups, and in-person public hearings and presentations. Additionally, much of the key data used throughout the document is collected from the US Census Bureau and other data-gathering tools.



Townsend ATV Run

Throughout this process, MBAC has made considerable effort to ensure that the identified strategies and goals reflect the input provided by counties and communities and are best fitted for promoting the desired outcomes and best return on investment. MBAC’s strategies and goals are formulated based on three organizational-focused pillars: **livability, entrepreneurial and business support, and professional development.** These three pillars are vital and co-supportive in creating thriving and sustainably growing communities.

LIVABILITY

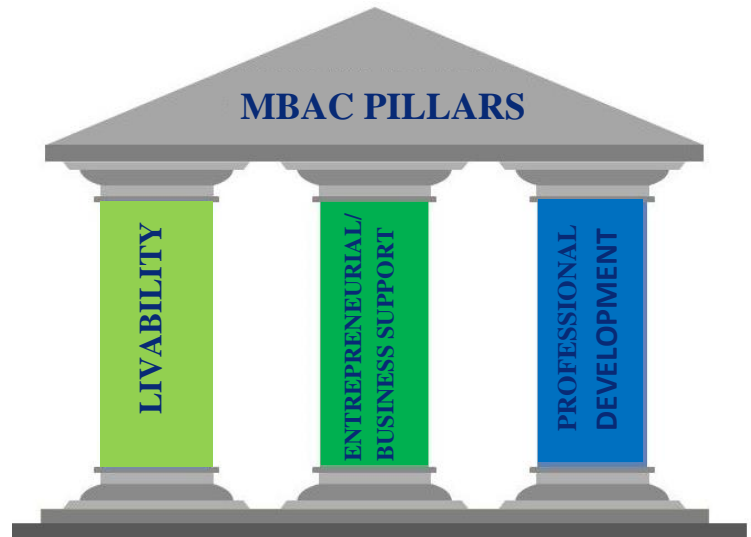
PILLAR 1:

MBAC works to promote and garner community improvements that foster enhanced livability in our region. This includes supporting efforts that promote local community livability, including creating communities with amenities that stimulate growth, promoting entrepreneurship environments and increasing access to career fulfillment.

ENTRPRENEURIAL & BUSINESS SUPPORT

PILLAR 2:

MBAC works to increase support for Montana entrepreneurs and businesses through providing technical support, access to capital, building infrastructure to support local businesses, and supporting the local workforce to provide greater access to consumers.



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

PILLAR 3:

MBAC supports professional and career opportunity fulfillment through further access to quality education and a skilled workforce, supporting the creating of community amenities that further access to career and training opportunities, and supporting wage options that promote wealth development.



Downtown Helena, MT



White Sulphur Springs Pocket Park



White Sulphur Springs Business Assistance Clinic

CEDS PROCESS: ORGANIZATION & MANAGEMENT

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), updated every four years, is a local planning and implementation process designed to create jobs, foster stability, diversify economies, improve living conditions, and provide a mechanism for guiding and coordinating the efforts of persons and organizations concerned with all aspects of urban and rural economic development.



Accelerated Startups Program, Helena MT

This planning process is key in analyzing local conditions, identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, as well as designing strategies to achieve organizational and community goals, and coordinating activities to implement the identified strategies and evaluate accomplishments. MBAC understands that planning for successful economic, community, and rural development is a continuous process. The goals and action items identified in the CEDS will be accomplished in collaboration with a wide variety of groups, communities, and agencies.

MBAC's planning and economic development activities will influence future activities by improving regional economic conditions through coordinated community development efforts. MBAC will assist local governments in planning public works and coordinating public and private investment. By taking an advisory role, MBAC will assist in achieving the area's goals and objectives. Key elements of the CEDS Process include the following:



ANALYSIS: The analysis assesses the state of the regional and local economy, the threats and opportunities posed by external trends, and the availability of partners and resources for economic development.



VISION & GOALS: The community's vision and goals, in combination with an appraisal of the regions competitive advantage, establishes the strategic direction for the action plan.



ACTION PLAN: The action plan establishes priority programs and projects for implementation.



EVALUATION: Criteria are established to evaluate the process for periodic updates of the document and its elements. The CEDS document will be evaluated as information changes, and the criteria are used to determine the success of the action plan being implemented.

The work plan recognizes current situations and trends to help communities plan for future needs. By looking at past demographic trends and future demographic projections, it is imperative that communities continually assess their infrastructure and plan for future needs.

Planning for community economic or rural development is a continuous and ongoing process. The action items identified in the CEDS reflect the desires of the citizens who participated in the CEDS and Broadwater County Community Review process in Broadwater, Lewis and Clark, and Meagher counties, and will be accomplished by many different groups, communities, and agencies. There are many worthy projects in the action plan of this document; however, due to the District's resources and staffing limitations, this organization may not be able to work on all of them directly.



Broadwater County Marketing Design Charrette

CEDS COMMITTEE

The CEDS committee oversees the formal revision and monitors the annual updates to ensure that the staff work plan continues to meet the goals and objectives of current and future community needs.

The MBAC Board of Directors and CEDS Committee members represent city and county governments, local economic development agencies, job centers, businesses, and other interested parties. Both the CEDS Committee and the Board of Directors oversee the CEDS process. The broad representation of both the CEDS Committee and Board of Directors ensures that all viewpoints of the communities are considered. The representatives promote the utilization of local skills and resources in the program formulation and implementation.

MBAC is required to appoint representatives to the Board of Directors and CEDS Committee that will represent the views of the following sectors:

- 1) **Elected officials:** Public leadership is essential for the coordination necessary to develop and implement the CEDS.
- 2) **Private business representatives:** Members contribute their own experiences in business toward economic development initiatives.
- 3) **Economic development organization:** Members contribute their organizational/county focus towards economic development initiatives.

- 4) **Employment and training sector:** Links to labor force skills, initiatives and focus are crucial.
- 5) **Community organization and other special interest groups:** Members contribute unique perspectives so that all issues are appropriately considered.

MBAC BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEMBERSHIP ROSTER

1. GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES

Name	Jurisdiction	Position (Title and Appointment)
Jim McCormick	Lewis and Clark County	County Commissioner
Andy Shirliff	City of Helena	City Commissioner
Wesley Feist	City of East Helena	Council Member
Victor Sample	Broadwater County	Broadwater County Designee
Vickie Rauser	City of Townsend	Council Member/ MBAC Vice President

2. NON-GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES

A. PRIVATE SECTOR REPRESENTATIVES

Name	Company	Position/Title
Dustin Stewart	Edge Marketing	MBAC Board Secretary
Jenny Taylor	St. Peter's Health	MBAC Board Treasurer
Klint Fisher	SMA Architecture and Design	MBAC Board President
Kali Wicks	Blue Cross/Blue Shield	Board Member
Jackson Rose	Meagher County Stewardship Council	Board Member
Eric Seidensticker	Jefferson County Appointment	Ex Officio

B. STAKEHOLDER ORGANIZATIONS

Name	Organization	Position/Title
Callie Aschim	Helena Area Chamber of Commerce	Ex Officio
Darrel Folkvord	Broadwater County	Ex Officio

MBAC CEDS COMMITTEE ROSTER

1. REPRESENTATIVES OF OTHER ECONOMIC INTERESTS

Name	Company	Position/Title
Kirk Keysor	Meagher County	Resident
Rob Brandt	White Sulphur Springs Hospital	CEO
Jackson Rose	Meagher County Stewardship Council	Executive Director
Adam Six	Broadwater County Development Corporation	Member
Vic Sample	Broadwater County	Resident
John Hahn	Broadwater County Development Corporation	Member
Craig Vietz	Broadwater County	Resident
Karli Mosey	Ten Mile Brewery	Service Manager
Ashly Tubbs	Bell Hotel	Co-Partner
Dave Allard	McDantim Manufacturing	President
Craig Rickart	Rickart Development	Owner

2. PUBLIC SECTOR REPRESENTATIVES

Name	Affiliation	Title
Cal Moore	White Sulphur Springs Schools	Principal
Rick Nelson	White Sulphur Springs City Council	Mayor
Burt Herwitz	Meagher County	County Attorney
Nicole Brown	Broadwater County	Planning Director
Vickie Rauser	City of Townsend	Council Member
Brandon Pendergast	Visit Helena/Tourism Business Improvement District	Sales Manager
Ann McCauley	Lewis & Clark County	Grants Director
Wesley Feist	State Workforce Innovation Board (SWIB)	Director
Ellie Ray	City of Helena	Planner

REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION PLAN & VISION

MBAC works to catalyze community leaders and regional stakeholders to create opportunities that drive prosperity in our economy. These goals and actions grow business vitality, create high-quality job growth, and enhance the quality of life throughout the region, which includes Broadwater, Lewis and Clark, and Meagher counties.

The CEDS outreach process has created an economic development mission and a series of goals that the Montana Business Assistance Connection (MBAC) has adopted. Through their implementation, this vision and associated goals will create a roadmap to guide the economic development priorities of the region and the organization for the next five years.

MBAC has emphasized a comprehensive and creative approach to garnering public feedback and analysis. The community-based approach has fostered a wide variety of unique concerns and has brought about key opportunities for each county. From community feedback, MBAC has created an overarching strategy and plan with specific objectives to reflect and address each county's concerns.

In addition to the CEDS strategy, MBAC has also developed a list of key priorities which will inform our work as an organization.

- 1. Workforce Development and Access to Training:** MBAC sees workforce development as a key undertaking in creating economically thriving communities. Efforts include the following:
 - Supporting programs and activities that support pathway development, upskilling and professional development to obtain new levels of proficiency for high school graduates just entering the workforce, and for existing personnel and staff of local businesses and industries.
 - Supporting efforts of the K-12 school system to develop necessary skills needed for regional businesses, including encouraging efforts with continuing education initiatives, including internships, apprenticeships, and 2-4 year degrees.
- 2. Physical Infrastructure:** MBAC plans to support and develop funding opportunities focused on the build-out of required utilities key in supporting local business operations. This work will include the following areas of focus:
 - Supporting hard part development, including roads, water, sewer, and broadband distribution;
 - Encouraging the development of amenities that support local business development and talent attraction, including childcare, eldercare, social and mental health services for local populations;
 - Working with local entities to support building and business site development to create “shovel-ready” sites for businesses to build and operate.
- 3. Access to Markets:** MBAC will continue to support efforts focused on expanding local access to markets, both foreign and domestic. Efforts will include:

- Supporting broadband expansion initiatives, access to rail hubs, and encouraging key opportunities for import and export collaboration and expansion.

HISTORY OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE REGION

Historically, the CEDS document grew out of the East Helena Area Economic Adjustment Strategy (EAS) completed in 2002. The closure of the East Helena smelter in 2001 motivated the study as a way of finding new directions for the newly unemployed smelter workforce. One of the recommendations of the EAS was to form an Economic Development District under the auspices of the Economic Development Administration (EDA). An EDA prerequisite to forming an Economic Development District is the compilation of a regional CEDS. This allows the Economic Development District to qualify for assistance from the EDA for public works, economic adjustments and planning projects.

Soon after, work began to form the Gateway Economic Development District (Gateway EDD) with its own 501(c)(3) designation. In 2004, the CEDS document was submitted to the EDA and in November of 2006, the three counties were designated as the Gateway Region. In March of 2007, Gateway EDD received its first planning grant. In 2011, Gateway Economic Development District became a subsidiary of the Montana Business Assistance Connection with the same board of directors.



Historical General Merchandise Building, Augusta MT

Broadwater County

Broadwater County Development Corporation is a local Economic Development Organization (EDO) that was formed in August of 1980. The organization is active and currently has a membership of 61, with a 7-member board of directors. There is no paid staff.

Lewis and Clark County

Helena Area Development Corporation (HADCO) was formed in the Helena region to perform economic development activities. This organization grew into Gateway Economic Development Corporation, with the addition of Gateway Economic Development District in 2006.

Meagher County

Meagher County joined Northern Rockies RC&D and Montana Business Assistance Connection at the same time. They relied on MBAC to provide a Small Business Development Center (SBDC) and lending capabilities and Northern Rockies RC&D to work on housing and resource development. In 2013, Northern Rockies RC&D ceased to exist as an organization.

MBAC REGIONAL OVERVIEW

Montana Business Assistance Connection (MBAC) serves the central portion of the State of Montana, east of the Continental Divide, including the Capital Region of Central Montana and Lewis and Clark, Meagher, and Broadwater Counties. Large mountain ranges with expansive river valley bottoms define the region. The modern history of the region evolved out of placer gold deposits that spurred agriculture and logging to support the boom towns of the region.

LEWIS & CLARK COUNTY:

➤ City of Helena:

➤ City of East Helena:

Population: 72,223

Population: 33,120

Population: 2,103

Square Miles: 3,458

BROADWATER COUNTY:

➤ City of Townsend:

Population: 7,288

Population: 2,152

Square Miles: 1,192

MEAGHER COUNTY:

➤ City of White

Sulphur Springs:

Population: 1,964.

Population: 955

Square Miles: 2,391

COMMUNITY PROFILE

3 Counties
Geography: County

81,955	1.26%	2.31	26.0	43.9	\$72,249	\$322,323	\$171,065	20.5%	58.5%	21.0%
Population Total	Population Growth	Average HH Size	Diversity Index	Median Age	Median HH Income	Median Home Value	Median Net Worth	Age <18	Age 18-64	Age 65+



13.7%
Services

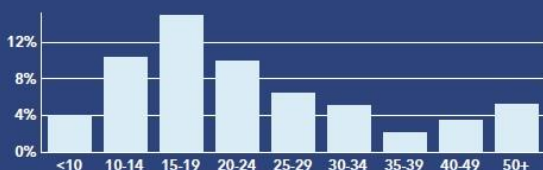


16.9%
Blue Collar

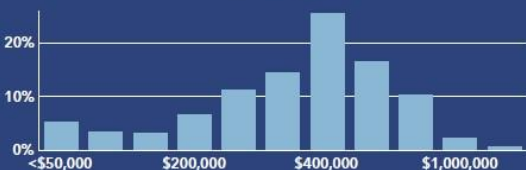


69.5%
White Collar

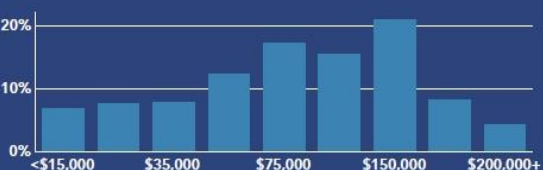
Mortgage as Percent of Salary



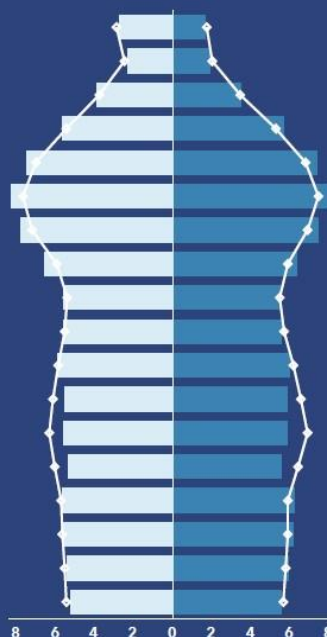
Home Value



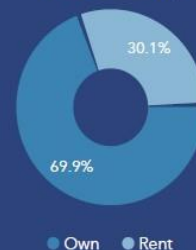
Household Income



Age Profile: 5 Year Increments



Home Ownership



● Own ● Rent

Housing: Year Built



● <1939 ● 1940-49 ● 1950-59
● 1960-69 ● 1970-79 ● 1980-89
● 1990-99 ● 2000-09 ● 2010-13
● 2014+

Educational Attainment



● < 9th Grade ● No Diploma
● HS Diploma ● GED
● Some College ● Assoc Degree
● Bach Degree ● Grad Degree

Commute Time: Minutes



● < 5 ● 5-9 ● 10-14
● 15-19 ● 20-24 ● 25-29
● 30-34 ● 35-39 ● 40-44
● 45-59 ● 60-69 ● 70+

LEWIS AND CLARK COUNTY: HISTORY OF THE REGION

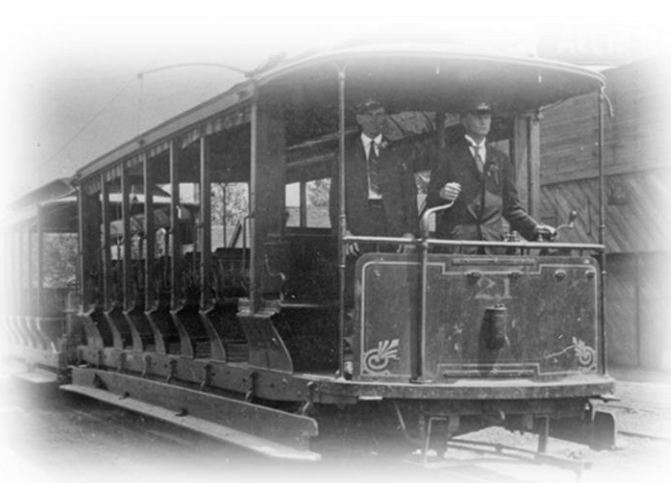
Lewis and Clark County was created in 1864 within the Montana Territory, originally called Edgerton County after the first Territorial Governor Sidney Edgerton. The region was renamed Lewis and Clark County in 1868 after the Lewis and Clark expedition. The Corps of Discovery first came through the region in July of 1805.



Gates of the Mountains Recreation Area

Fur trappers founded a small trading outpost in 1840, in the Canyon Creek region north of Helena. Later, on July 14, 1864, the City of Helena was founded with the discovery of placer gold deposits in present day Last Chance Gulch by the Four Georgians. On October 30, 1864 the local population authorized the layout of the streets and chose the name Helena.

The region grew quickly, spurred on by placer gold mining which transitioned into Lode tunnel mining. Agriculture sprang up quickly in the river valleys to supply goods to the mining communities in the region. Investors and businessmen took root in Helena making it the financial, political, and cultural center of Montana. In 1875, Helena was made the capital of the Montana Territories and by 1883 the Northern Pacific Railroad had reached the bustling community, with the Great Northern soon following. By 1890 the City of Helena had become well known as a “civilized” community with a streetcar system that stretched from the State Nursery in the west to the smelting facility in the east. Many thought that Helena would become one of the great cultural communities that would rival Denver and San Francisco. The “Silver Panic” of 1893 brought those aspirations to a close.



Original City of Helena Trolley



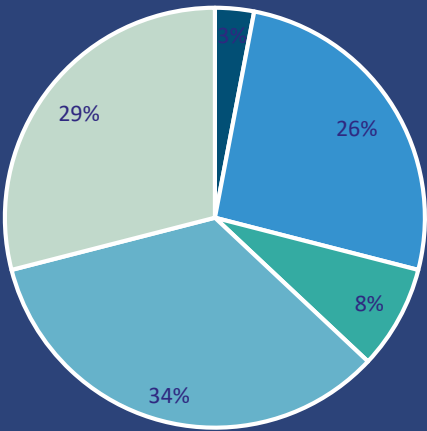
Historic Helena Fire tower, Helena MT

LEWIS AND CLARK COUNTY OVERVIEW: HELENA

Helena, the area’s biggest municipality and state capital, has served as the county’s economic center since the 1870’s. The Helena area employs **36,272** workers per year, while the county at large employs **44,269** in a wide range of sectors. The biggest employer in the area is the State of Montana, with nearly 60% of the workforce connected to State government positions.

Job Demand By Education Level

- Higher than a Bachelor's Degree
- Bachelor's Degree
- Some College (less than four years)
- High school diploma equivalent
- No formal educational credential



Quick Facts:

82% of the Lewis and Clark population lives in the greater Helena area.

78% of businesses in the Helena Area have 10 or less employees.

Historically, Helena has the most stable economy of the larger cities in Montana.

COMMUNITY PROFILE

2 ZIP Codes
Geography: ZIP Code

62,018	1.02%	2.28	26.7	43.0	\$76,225	\$337,034	\$172,059	20.7%	58.7%	20.6%
Population Total	Population Growth	Average HH Size	Diversity Index	Median Age	Median HH Income	Median Home Value	Median Net Worth	Age <18	Age 18-64	Age 65+



12.9%
Services

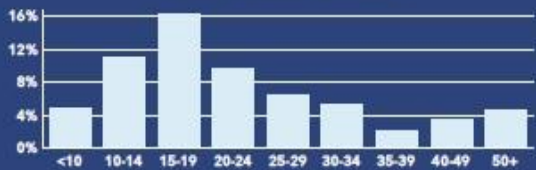


14.4%
Blue Collar

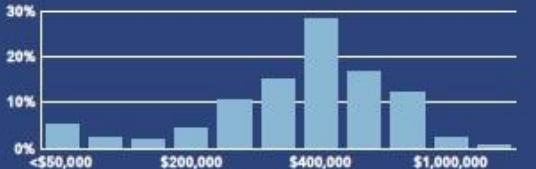


72.7%
White Collar

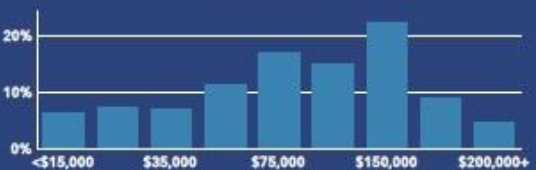
Mortgage as Percent of Salary



Home Value



Household Income



Age Profile: 5 Year Increments



Home Ownership



Housing: Year Built



Educational Attainment



Commute Time: Minutes



LEWIS AND CLARK COUNTY OVERVIEW: EAST HELENA

The City of East Helena, approximately five miles east of Downtown Helena, is part of the Helena Micropolitan Statistical Area. The majority of East Helena residents work in Helena.

Top Employers in Lewis and Clark County



East Helena has seen a population growth jump from 7,681 in 2020 to 8,174 in 2022.

To keep up with this growth, an additional 2,000 new housing units are expected to be built, expanding on the existing 3,148 homes already in place.

COMMUNITY PROFILE

59635 (East Helena)
Geography: ZIP Code

8,174	2.80%	2.57	27.9	38.1	\$70,234	\$280,839	\$172,784	23.6%	61.5%	14.9%
Population Total	Population Growth	Average HH Size	Diversity Index	Median Age	Median HH Income	Median Home Value	Median Net Worth	Age <18	Age 18-44	Age 65+



13.4%
Services

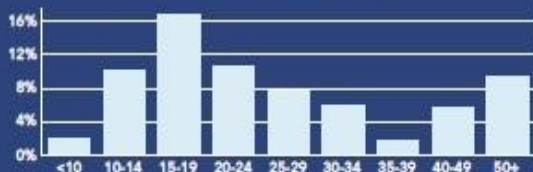


21.4%
Blue Collar

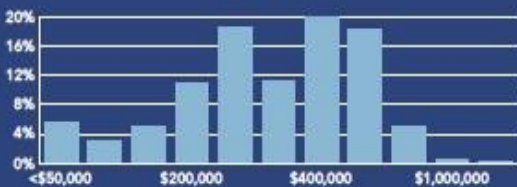


65.2%
White Collar

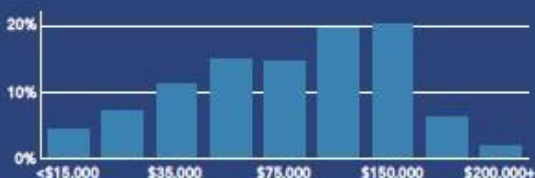
Mortgage as Percent of Salary



Home Value



Household Income



Age Profile: 5 Year Increments



Home Ownership



Own Rent

Housing: Year Built



Educational Attainment



Commute Time: Minutes



BROADWATER COUNTY: HISTORY OF THE REGION

Broadwater County was created February 9, 1895, from the Missouri River valley portions of Jefferson and Meagher Counties. This was to make everyday life more efficient for the 4,000 people of the valley. Commerce and government interactions required a long trek over mountain ranges to the county seats in White Sulphur Springs or Boulder. The county's creation was made possible by hard work of the then State Senator Gordon Watt and Lieutenant Governor A. E. Spriggs. Newly created Broadwater County included 1,238 square miles of the headwaters of the Missouri River basin.



The region was first explored by the Lewis & Clark – Corps of Discovery on July 24, 1805. Gold was discovered in the region on Confederate Gulch in 1864, creating a gold boom to the region. 580,550 ounces of placer gold were removed from this mining district alone. At today's prices, this district produced \$775 million dollars of gold, most being recovered over 5 years.

The region grew consistently from the early days with mining, logging, and agriculture dominating the economy. In 1883, the Northern Pacific Railroad created the rail-stop that became Townsend, the county seat of Broadwater County.



Opening of the First Train in Townsend, MT

In 1940, the Toston Dam was completed on the Missouri River with an accompanying irrigation canal that brought much-needed water to the fertile soils of the basin miles to the north. The dam was retrofitted in 1989 with a 10 MW run-of-the-river hydroelectric generation plant. In 1954 the Canyon Ferry Dam was completed on the Missouri River, creating Canyon Ferry Lake which dominates Broadwater County. The hydroelectric unit has an installed capacity of 50 MW. The filling of the lake displaced the town of Canton. Many of the homes in Townsend were moved from the Canton town site.

The most notable home was the A.B. Cook mansion. The home is now a bed and breakfast.

BROADWATER COUNTY OVERVIEW: TOWNSEND

Broadwater County, stretching a total of 1,238 square miles, is a highly agricultural county. The top employer in the county is the Wheat Montana Bakery in Wheatland, on the southern end of the county. Townsend is the county seat and the only incorporated city in the county.

2020 Median Household Income

\$57,723

4.74% 1-Year Decline

2020 Median Property Value

\$238,000

7.11% 1-Year Growth

Quick Facts:

61% of land in Broadwater County is classified as farmland.

27% of the county's workforce is employed in agricultural production.

Farming is the primary occupation of 51% of the county's agriculture producers.

Broadwater County has 296 farms, the average size of which is 1,577 acres.

COMMUNITY PROFILE

59644 (Townsend)
Geography: ZIP Code

4,618	1.01%	2.27	21.5	48.5	\$57,638	\$226,119	\$177,809	19.5%	54.8%	25.5%
Population Total	Population Growth	Average HH Size	Diversity Index	Median Age	Median HH Income	Median Home Value	Median Net Worth	Age <18	Age 18-64	Age 65+



20.7%
Services

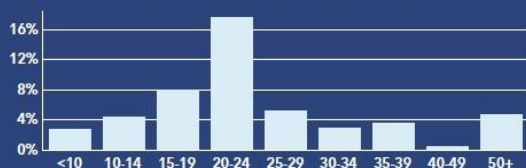


29.8%
Blue Collar

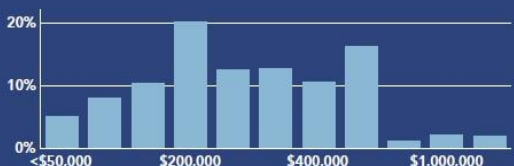


49.5%
White Collar

Mortgage as Percent of Salary



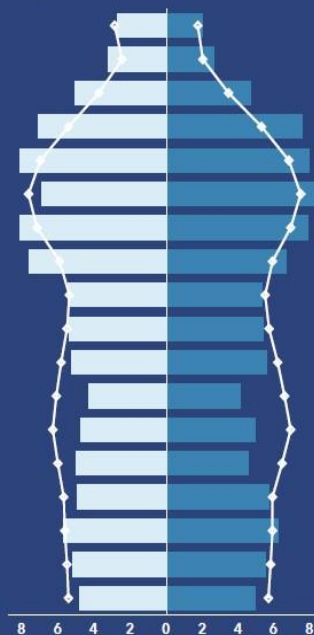
Home Value



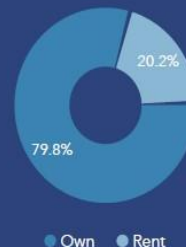
Household Income



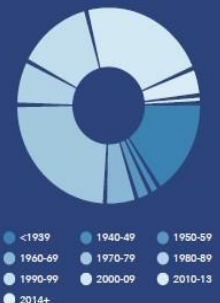
Age Profile: 5 Year Increments



Home Ownership



Housing: Year Built



Educational Attainment



Commute Time: Minutes



MEAGHER COUNTY: HISTORY OF THE REGION

Meagher County was created in the Montana Territory in 1867, and named after the colorful general Thomas Francis Meagher, the acting Governor of the Montana Territories from 1865 to 1867. The County was carved out of Chouteau and Gallatin counties and originally totaled 20,000 square miles. From 1867-1920, portions of the Judith, Musselshell, Smith and Missouri River basins were removed from the original Meagher County, creating new counties. By 1920, Meagher County was 2,395 square miles.



*Original White Sulphur Springs Lake
and Gazebo*

The County seat was moved from Diamond City to White Sulphur Springs in 1880. James Brewer founded White Sulphur Springs in 1866 at the site of Trinity Springs, a thermal hot spring that was frequented by the Flathead Indians as well as many other tribes and considered neutral territory because of its medicinal value. Initially called Brewer's Springs, the facility was sold to Dr. Parberry in 1876 and renamed White Sulphur Springs.

The region grew rapidly with the discovery of gold in Confederate Gulch at Diamond City in 1864. The population of the region swelled to more than 5,000 people by 1868, driven by placer gold deposits in the Big Belt Mountains. But by 1870, the placer deposits of Diamond City and Confederate Gulch had played out and the population moved on looking for new mineral deposits and riches in towns like Castle, Copperopolis and Neihart.

The grand valley of Meagher County became the bread basket to the mining cities and supplied timber and agriculture to the surrounding region. The valley in the early days was dominated by sheep ranches such as the C.M. Bair ranch in Martinsdale, but later transitioned to cattle ranching and hay production. The region still remains a productive ranching community.¹

The panic of 1893 brought lead and silver mines in Castle to a standstill, but construction continued on the Montana Railroad (Jawbone Railroad) from Lombard to Ringling then Loweth, with the hope that the rail line would facilitate the reopening of the mining districts. In 1908, what remained of the Montana Railroad was sold to the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad Company, which later became the Milwaukee Road. The region also includes the communities of Martinsdale, Checkerboard, Lennep and Ringling.

¹ Excerpts taken from Meagher County: An Early-Day Pictorial History, 1867-1967:
<http://cdm103401.cdmhost.com/cdm/collection/object/collection/p15018coll43/id/11744>

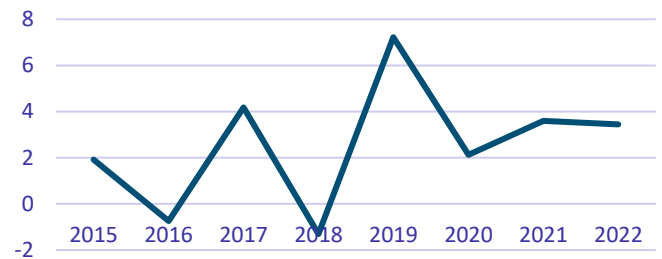
MEAGHER COUNTY OVERVIEW: WHITE SULPHUR SPRINGS

Meagher County, (pronounced “Mar”) covers 2,395 square miles and has a population nearing 2,000. The county seat, White Sulphur Springs, is located three miles southwest of the junction of US Highways 12 and 89 and has a population of 1052. Meagher County’s economy employs 877 people, with the largest employers being agriculture, forestry, and recreation-related industries.

As of the date of this document, natural resource development as an industry in Meagher County has seen steady growth which is expected to continue. However this growth could balloon exponentially with the opening of the Black Butte Copper Project of Sandfire Resources America, Inc. In the original impact plan documentation, Sandfire anticipates a need for 200 contractors during the construction phase. In addition, following the construction phase, 235 mineral development employees are expected to be needed. While not all employees will reside in the community, or in Meagher County, the company estimates an approximate population increase of 258 people as employees may bring family members with them. Sandfire estimates that the added mineral development taxable value is projected at peak copper production to be \$8,235,000. The expected increases if the mine project goes through will provide opportunities for the county and neighboring communities.

Meagher County has experienced changes in taxable value since 2014 that started to steady around 2020. While the percentage increase has fluctuated during the last few years, it hovers between 2-3.6% increases each year.

Taxable Value Percent Change



COMMUNITY PROFILE

59645 (White Sulphur Springs)
Geography: ZIP Code

1,687	0.32%	2.32	17.9	55.9	\$49,449	\$178,935	\$140,372	14.5%	54.9%	30.9%
Population Total	Population Growth	Average HH Size	Diversity Index	Median Age	Median HH Income	Median Home Value	Median Net Worth	Age <18	Age 18-64	Age 65+



20.8%
Services

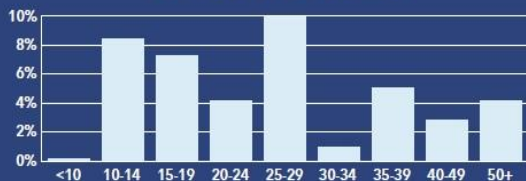


29.4%
Blue Collar

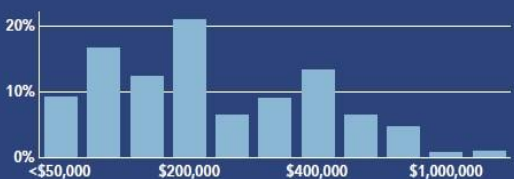


49.9%
White Collar

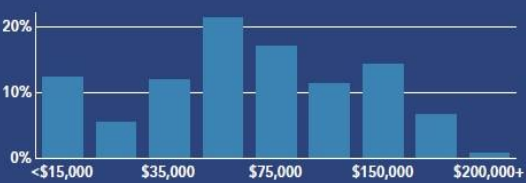
Mortgage as Percent of Salary



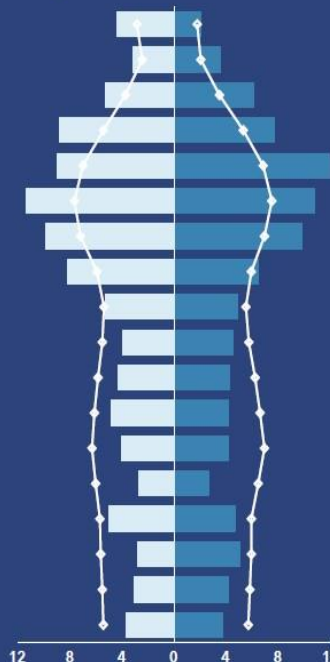
Home Value



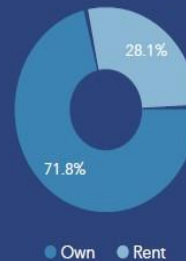
Household Income



Age Profile: 5 Year Increments



Home Ownership



Own Rent

Housing: Year Built



<1939 1940-49 1950-59
1960-69 1970-79 1980-89
1990-99 2000-09 2010-13
2014+

Educational Attainment



< 9th Grade HS Diploma Some College
No Diploma GED Assoc Degree

Commute Time: Minutes



< 5 5-9 10-14
15-19 20-24 25-29
30-34 35-39 40-44

MBAC EVALUATION

MBAC’s organizational performance is continually evaluated by the numerous state and federal agencies that have entrusted our District with performance responsibilities relative to the proper management of their specific programs. These evaluations include, but are not limited to, financial audits, regularly scheduled reporting obligations, and frequent communication with the respective agencies.



*Re-use and Renovation of the Power Townsend Building,
Townsend MT*

As a matter of course, the Montana Business Assistance Connection Board of Directors is responsible for evaluating and reporting CEDS “Action Plan” progress. The Board will continue to comply with all EDA reporting requirements. Our District’s effectiveness is evaluated on an ongoing basis by our Board of Directors and CEDS committee via staff communication on the progress of current projects. Project updates occur through such means as our Board of Director’s meetings, personal contacts, meetings of member entities, MBAC’s newsletters, as well as the EDA Annual Report and CEDS update. The status of activities and progress, including achievement of goals, will be reviewed at each quarterly Board of Directors meeting. A “Project Evaluation” chart, updated by MBAC staff for each Board meeting, corresponds specifically to projects in progress and outlines the project’s title, its CEDS category, financial partners, funding levels, and anticipated date of completion. A chart detailing “Completed Projects” to date is also provided. While activity will be ongoing, the evaluation of progress will be done at the Board of Directors’ meetings.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES:

Performance measures will be tied directly to the long-term economic development goals as previously identified in this document. The following criteria will be used to measure our performance as an Economic Development District (EDD).

- ❖ The level and frequency of participation by government, business, and community leaders in projects, including Board and CEDS committee meetings.
- ❖ The level at which we comply with all EDA Planning and Technical Assistance Grant award and administrative conditions.
- ❖ The level and frequency to which District staff interacts with communities in the region to provide assistance toward identified infrastructure deficiencies.

- ❖ The level at which we meet the criteria established by the Montana Department of Commerce’s Certified Regional Development Corporation Program.
- ❖ Number of jobs created or retained per project.
- ❖ The amount and types of funding leveraged per project.



Historic Preservation Round Table, Townsend MT



Meagher County Courthouse, White Sulphur Springs MT



Historic Preservation Roundtable, East Helena MT

LESSONS LEARNED

Throughout the evaluation and planning process of this document, MBAC staff took a comprehensive look at the previous CEDS and the strategies that came out of it. From this process, a list of lessons learned was developed to assist in the strategizing process going forward:

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY:

Due to organizational staffing limitations, MBAC has been more constrained with efforts in the past five years. Now, with more staff, capacity, and collaboration, MBAC can expand outreach initiatives and take on larger and highly collaborative projects throughout the region and the state.

PLANNING EFFORTS:

In 2022, MBAC participated in a community review effort with Broadwater County, Montana State University, and Broadwater County Development Center (BCDC). This process has been instrumental in creating organized efforts to support sustainable growth throughout the county. With this in mind, MBAC hopes to continue organizing these types of efforts in the next year or two, specifically in East Helena and White Sulphur Springs.

LOCATIONAL FOCUS:

MBAC has historically worked more closely with our rural areas. Going forward, MBAC will be more vocal and involved with metropolitan areas (the City of Helena and East Helena) to encourage development and collaborative efforts. This focus is especially pertinent with the large influx of residents and industry into these areas.

CHANGING MARKETS:

Industries in Helena and the tri-county region as a whole are changing far more rapidly than previously anticipated. MBAC has historically worked extensively with manufacturers and businesses working in these areas. With the large influx of new residents and new industry, MBAC is excited to pursue more opportunities in the technology and niche manufacturing sector, and supporting businesses that promote value-adding industry and products. MBAC expects to utilize the increased staffing capacity and cross-regional collaborative relationships to pursue larger projects.

GROWTH METRICS:

Historically, MBAC has measured success by the amount of “net new” jobs and number of new jobs in the area. With changing industry and massive fluctuations of population and business development, MBAC will work on identifying other metrics to more accurately measure growth, including the number of well-paying jobs and the increase/decrease in taxable value.

Project Spotlights

Memorial Apartments sat at the gateway of Downtown Helena, within the Railroad URD TIF boundary. Directly adjacent to Helena’s Memorial Park, the apartments had been vacant since 2016. TIF funding was requested to assist with the removal of the structure and related environmental abatement. Once removed, the newly-cleared lot is available for redevelopment and commercial opportunities. Currently, plans include a boutique hotel on a portion of the available property.



Project Leads, Ashly and Karli



Property under Demo



Property Post-Demolition



Memorial Apartments Prior to Demolition

The Original Montana Club Cooperative Association was awarded planning grant funds through the Big Sky Trust fund in addition to funds secured through the State Historic Preservation Office and the Lewis and Clark County Heritage Tourism Council to produce a feasibility study. The Original Montana Club building sits in the middle of downtown Helena. While the Club was originally founded in 1883, the current building was designed by architect Cas Gilbert after a fire in 1903 destroyed the clubhouse. The feasibility study included assessment of the existing conditions in the historic building and sketches of re-envisioned spaces to utilize the building to its greatest potential for continued use of the building. In addition, there is an EDA CARES working capital loan for the Montana Club.



Montana Club Restaurant, 2nd Floor



The Montana Club, Helena MT



Hotel Lincoln

Lincoln, MT is in the process of completing a master plan focusing on the Hwy 200 corridor. The completion of the project with funding from the Big Sky Trust Fund, Montana Main Street Program, private donors, and MBAC will set a framework for future projects in the community focused on safety, business accessibility, and overall opportunities for economic development and attraction of tourism throughout the year. MBAC plans to continue working with the community as the members set the priorities from the plan and look to implementation.



Lincoln Community Center



Downtown Lincoln, MT (Photo Credit: Continental Divide Trail Coalition)



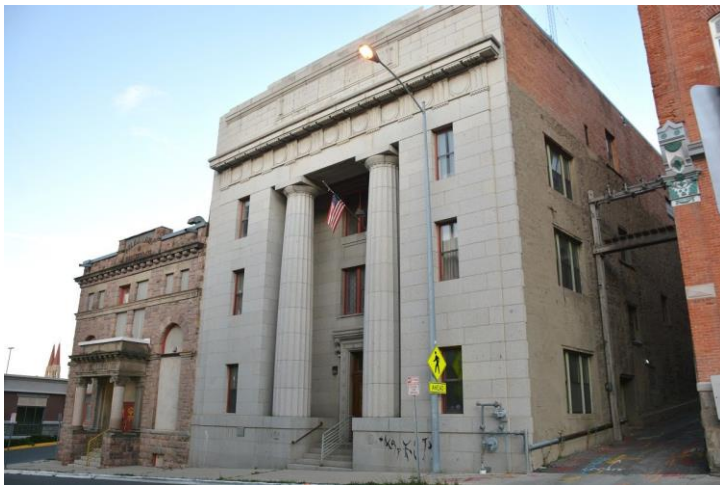
Old Salt, Helena MT (Photo Credit: Old Salt Website)

Old Salt received a Big Sky Trust Fund planning grant for site selection to determine possible locations for a flagship facility. Old Salt opened a restaurant within a downtown bar during the process of finding a location for the flagship facility. The new facility will provide a meat market featuring Montana meats and a dining experience which will differ from the current restaurant which serves montana-sourced burgers and other locally produced items as part of a limited menu. Old Salt continues to evolve as a business in downtown Helena. Old Salt was also awarded a Montana Department of Agriculture grant to help boost its meat processing efforts in the state of Montana.



Front of the Ming Theater and Opera House (Photo Credit: The Missoulian)

The Ming Theatre and Opera House: The fraternal organization the Algeria Shriners received a Big Sky Trust Fund (BSTF) planning grant for the historic Ming Theater and Opera House to look at alternative uses and options for renovation and re-use of the structure. The Historic Theater has long been a historic destination, yet has sat mostly unused for years. The planning grant, finished in mid-2021, provided an avenue for the Shriners to begin key renovations to return the historic building to its previous grandeur and further open the building up to the public. As a result of the BSTF grant, the Algeria Shriners are looking forward to new key opportunities to encourage historic preservation and re-use in the Helena downtown area.



Ming Theater Main Entrance (Photo Credit: Landmarkhunter.com)



Ming Theater and Opera House from Cruse Ave, Helena MT

Hi Country Snack Foods: For more than 45 years, Hi Country Snack Foods has been a mainstay of the Montana food manufacturing community. Since 1976, Hi-Country has produced high quality meat snacks using traditional recipes and seasonings in the small rural town of Lincoln, MT. Along the way, the company has developed a loyal following for its beef, bison and elk jerky, as well as its wild game seasonings. Hi Country employs dozen of workers, and remains one of the largest employers in Lincoln, MT. Hi Country’s product line is available in stores across the state, regionally, at its popular retail “Trading Post,” and through a



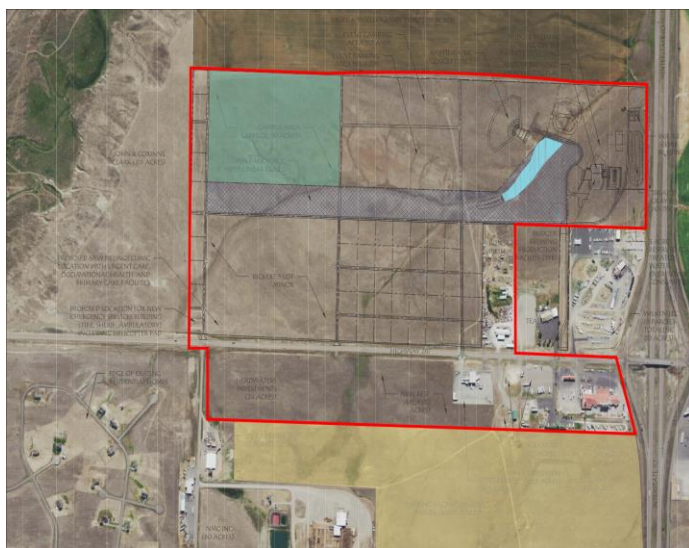
Hi Country Snack Foods, Lincoln MT



Hi Country Jerky

growing online presence. The Trading Post has transitioned to highlighting more, “Made in Montana” products. This label promotes products and services created with the confines of the state.

Hi Country weathered through the COVID-19 Pandemic admirably. The owner has invested millions of dollars into the plant and upgraded the facility’s capacity. For example, there is new automation equipment housed at the facility that allows more processing and packaging volume on a daily business. Overall, Hi Country has been revived thanks to the intuitive thinking of the owner. Hi Country continues to work with MBAC through grant projects and other financing programs. The local bank in Lincoln, MT, Citizens Alliance Bank, deserves credit as well. The bank has helped tremendously in recent years.



Wheatland TEDD District Map, Wheatland MT

Bridger Brewing & Wheatland TEDD District:

The Wheatland Targeted Economic Development District (TEDD) is a special district housed under the umbrella of Broadwater County as a unit government. The district was formed in 2019 with key principals being: – 1.) An administrative boundary 2.) A zoning ordinance 3.) A Tax Increment Financing (TIF) provision 4.) Developing a Comprehensive Development Plan.

Net-new taxes generated inside the district after the January 1, 2019 creation form the increment of the TIF. For example, bumps in property values or large purchases made by a commercial business (i.e., equipment) increase the district’s property tax paid which is captured in the TEDD increment. The most visible project is the Bridger Brewing production facility and a wastewater treatment plant with greywater recovery.



Bridger Brewing, Wheatland MT

The JackRabbit Pub is currently open as part of the expansion of the Bridger Brewing facility. The taproom and restaurant have created 70 new full-time equivalent jobs in the Broadwater County region. Of the new jobs, 17 are part of a current CDBG-ED funded project. Nine of those jobs will be Low and Moderate Income (LMI) eligible. This new business is providing not only new opportunities for employment, but also creates an atmosphere of community and opportunity including events and future community services in the coming years. The facility is currently manufacturing product not only for service within the pub and taproom, but is also canning for Montana and multi-state distribution. This project showcases the opportunities available when vastly needed infrastructure is created using alternative funding methods such as a TEDD tax increment. This created infrastructure is an example of shovel ready space with the added benefit of a greywater recovery system that conserves this vital commodity.



The JackRabbit Pub



Bridger Brewing in the Wheatland TEDD District

Project Spotlight Conclusion

MBAC works with a wide variety of Montana businesses to support sustainable growth, capital stack improvement, business expansion, and technical support. The project highlights listed above are just a few examples of the projects that have come to fruition in our local communities. Through working with small and large business owners and entrepreneurs on these initiatives, MBAC staff have had the opportunities to connect with local communities, government officials, residents and individuals in a wide range of sectors. This work has been invaluable and inspiring.



Slice of summer, Heritage Park, Townsend MT

COMMUNITY AND CEDS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK



Fall Fest, Townsend MT

To garner comprehensive feedback from Broadwater, Lewis and Clark, and Meagher county communities to inform our SWOT analysis, (a strategic planning and strategic management technique used to help a person or organization identify Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats related to project planning) and general feedback, MBAC held local listening sessions with the public and respective CEDS committees, as well as facilitated a marketing campaign pushing out information on the CEDS and CEDS process, including a digital survey. This survey allowed us to get additional and substantial feedback from many of our communities, including those that didn't have a big in-person presence at our community listening sessions.

These themes are key to the development of our goals for the next five years, as well as in the creation of our Individual County, as well as district-wide strategy. Below is a summary and SWOT analysis garnered from each respective county.

SWOT ANALYSIS

District Strengths: Helena, as the state capital, provides a high percentage of government jobs and related jobs in service and retail. This sector provides significant economic stability for the region. Additionally, with the rise of remote work opportunities post-Covid, areas of the region that have not historically had access to state jobs now have remote opportunities. This is furthered by programs like the Remote Workforce Initiative, and similar efforts looking to train and match local workforce with remote opportunities.



Ten Mile Creek Brewery, Downtown Helena Walking Mall



Helena WINS Retiree Brunch

District Weaknesses: A consistent weakness in the region for all district counties is the lack of affordable and attainable housing for current and future residents. This has been a huge economic weakness for years, exacerbated further by the Covid-19 pandemic. Rural communities and local businesses are seeing the impact of this in their inability to attract employees for local jobs. Further, the lack of employees to work in key industries, including in childcare services, make it difficult to attract families and employees with childcare needs.

Despite Montana seeing a high influx of growth, local communities, especially rural communities lack the housing and amenities to support the key workforce that comes into the community.



Memorial Park, Helena MT

District Opportunities: The greatest opportunity of the region as a whole is its potential for growth and positive development with the recent influx of new residents, and the recent notoriety from shows such as Yellowstone. The southern end of Broadwater County is seeing a lot of this positive growth, as Bozeman continues to expand industrial development opportunities and housing. Additionally, tech and manufacturing industries continue to expand throughout the region, providing key workforce and development opportunities.

District Threats: The major economic threat to the district is that historical trends continue. Since the last CEDS process, scarce housing has risen to the top of the region's threat list, workforce and childcare are lacking capacity, and lack of connectivity and broadband across the region is further hindering growth and remote workforce opportunities. These issues make it difficult to attract and retain workforce, and attract key industries and larger companies into the region. Additionally, parts of Montana are facing significant growth without the infrastructure to support it. East Helena is a prime example of this, with 2,000 new housing units in the works. This will add considerable housing inventory to the East Helena area, Local officials are assessing existing infrastructure and future expansion to meet the needs of these new homes. The more rural areas of the county including Lincoln and Augusta face challenges with growth, increase of in-migration, housing, and available workforce. Both communities continue to rely on tourism dollars.

District Economic Development Strategies:

The identified economic trends are the reasons MBAC is working to facilitate and support broadband initiatives throughout the state, support the creation of export jobs and import investments, while continuing to support the retention and expansion of existing businesses and entrepreneurship efforts. Retention and expansion of businesses will most likely result in modest job creation and retention. Exporting and entrepreneurial firms are the most likely to create new jobs and attract new investment. Additionally, MBAC is working on collaborative and multi-use space development to support housing and other key industry initiatives. Working to support key housing initiatives, specifically for workforce, is MBAC's first-level priority.



Townsend ATV Run



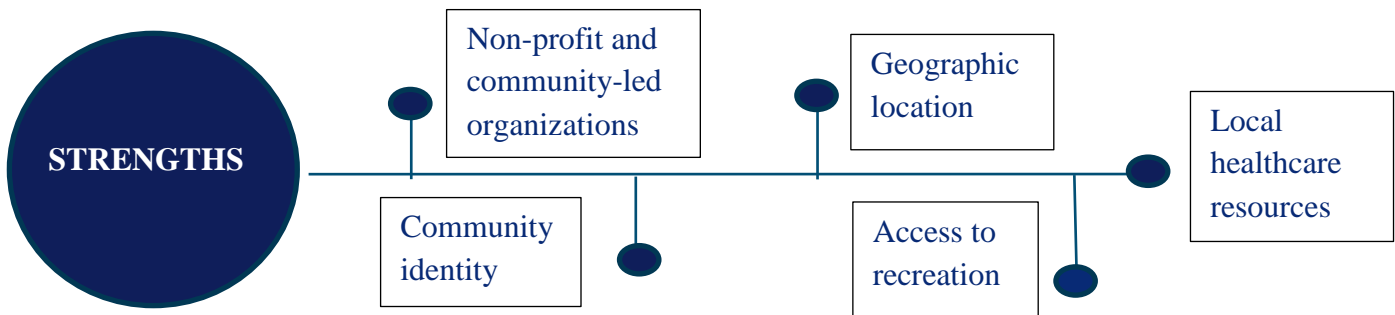
White Sulphur Springs Train Depot



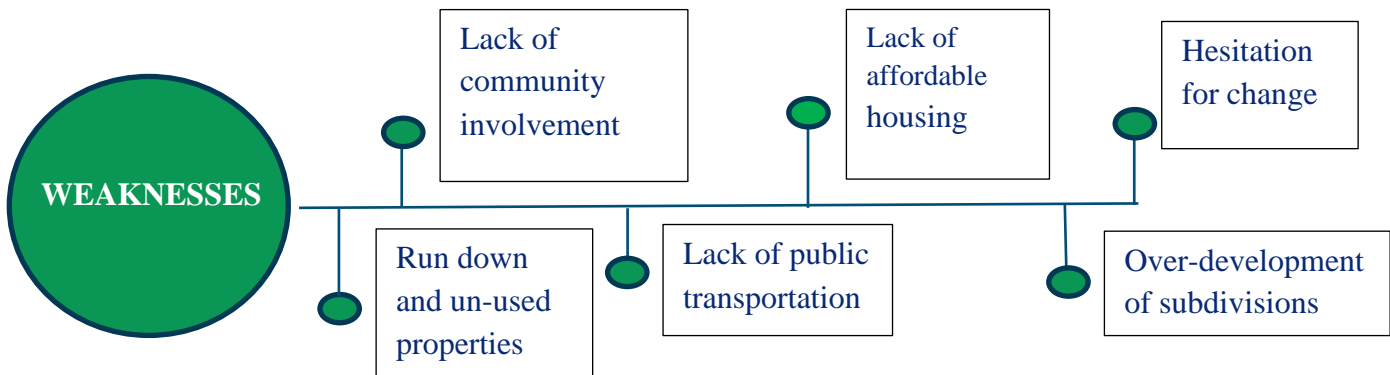
Ringling Bar and Restaurant

BROADWATER COUNTY

MBAC worked closely with Broadwater County Development Corporation (BCDC), Broadwater County, and the City of Townsend to conduct a community review through Montana Economic Developers Association (MEDA) and MSU extension to garner comprehensive feedback on the region. In addition, MBAC conducted a region-wide survey and conducted in-person listening sessions and county working meetings with our Broadwater County CEDS Committee. Out of this work, the identified key issue areas are as follows:

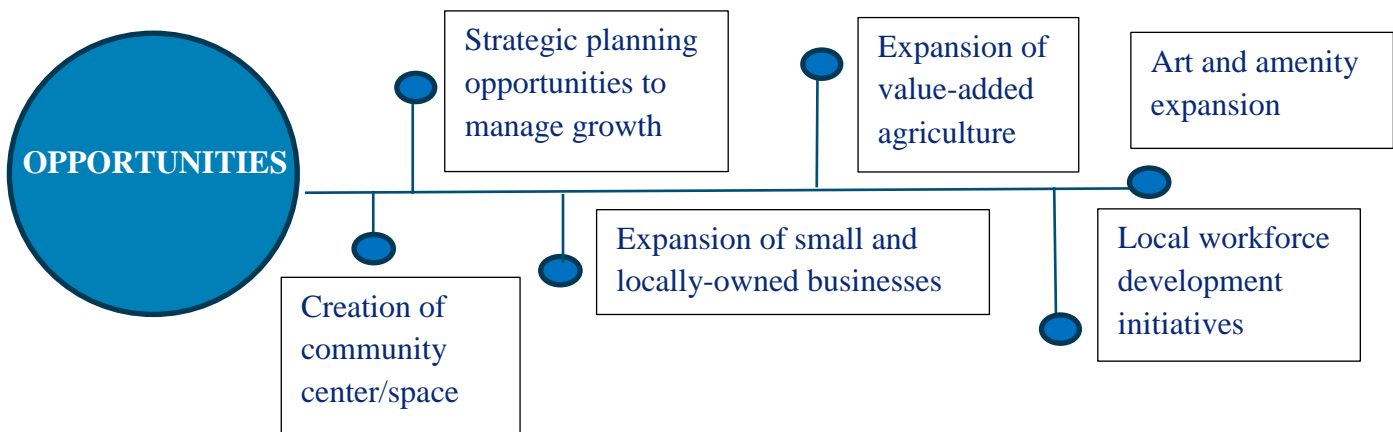


Broadwater County residents voiced above all else that the local community, businesses, and organizations are by far one of the biggest assets in the county, and that one of the highest priorities in maintaining this culture is focusing on strategic, community-oriented and sustainable growth. With the high influx of new county residents filtering into the area as a result of the rapidly-growing Bozeman area, smaller communities like Townsend, and the the southern end of Broadwater County, specifically the Wheatland area, are seeing the brunt of this influx. Bozeman based Bridger Brewing, which had purchased 250 acres in Wheatland several years ago, has completed construction on a new canning distribution facility and resteraunt. This project is expected to be a major catalyst for business growth in the Wheatland area.

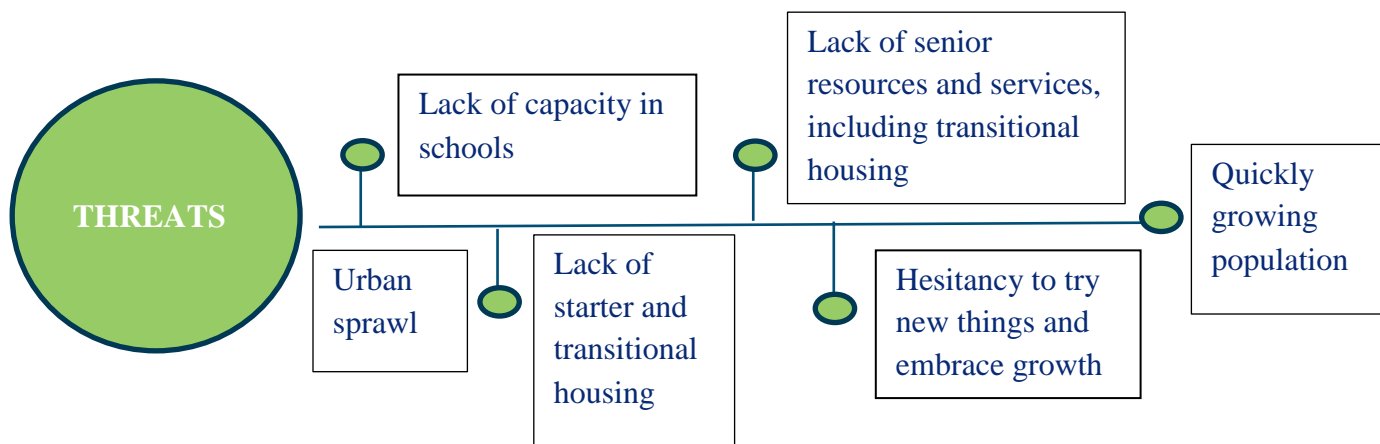


When it came to defining weaknesses, the responses reflected hesitancy toward change. It has been mentioned in different settings across the community for some time now. While organizations within the area provide countless hours of volunteer labor and support of the community, lack of community involvement continues to be discussed. The concern among community members is that while the individuals who do get involved are dedicated to their efforts, it is the same group of people for each board, organization, community project, etc.

Members have found it challenging to involve and engage new individuals to become invested in the community.



Community members have already begun discussions with plans for additional community shared spaces. There is opportunity for a community center that is larger than the existing spaces to be heavily used. Individuals have already taken the steps with smaller spaces and shown that the need and desire for these spaces continues. Whether indoor, such as The Lodge space - which has been used for community meetings, gatherings, theater performances, along with a childcare, individual business offices, and space for youth to enjoy games and fellowship - or outdoor, such as the newly completed skate park, opportunity exists for an increase in the number of these spaces within the community of Townsend and the more rural areas of the county. Local workforce development initiatives including a pilot project in 2022 with American Jobs for America's Youth (AJAY-Montana), resulted in young community members with opportunities to learn workforce skills and develop their career interests while working with businesses and mentors.

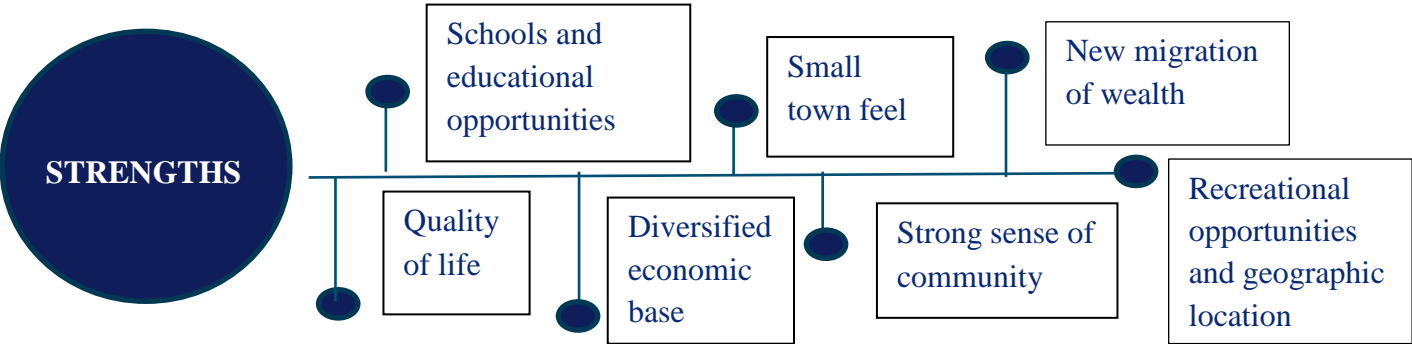


Throughout multiple discussions with various groups, it was clear that community members have a concern about how space will be used by developers as the county experiences growth. While some members of the community are on each side of the development issue when it comes to planning, zoning, or the difference between their property and their neighbor's, as conversations continued, the same theme evolved. Members agreed that housing options are needed to keep the existing residents in homes they can afford, maintaining

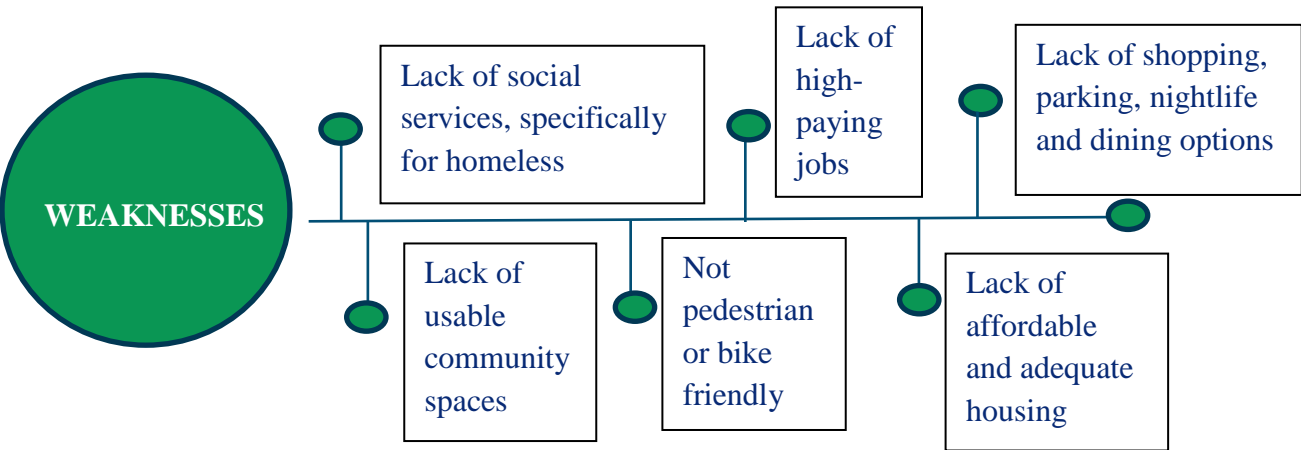
farmland for agricultural uses, and development that respects the safety of the communities and the land. The community lacks inventory of transitional housing options for older members who may want to downsize; therefore, their homes continue to be unavailable for families. Community members are proud of their schools, and fear that as numbers increase, there will be difficulty in recruiting additional teaching staff without attractive pay and housing educators can afford. Community members also came together to discuss the existing services for seniors and what could be done to increase the resources, services, and opportunities for aging community members.

LEWIS AND CLARK

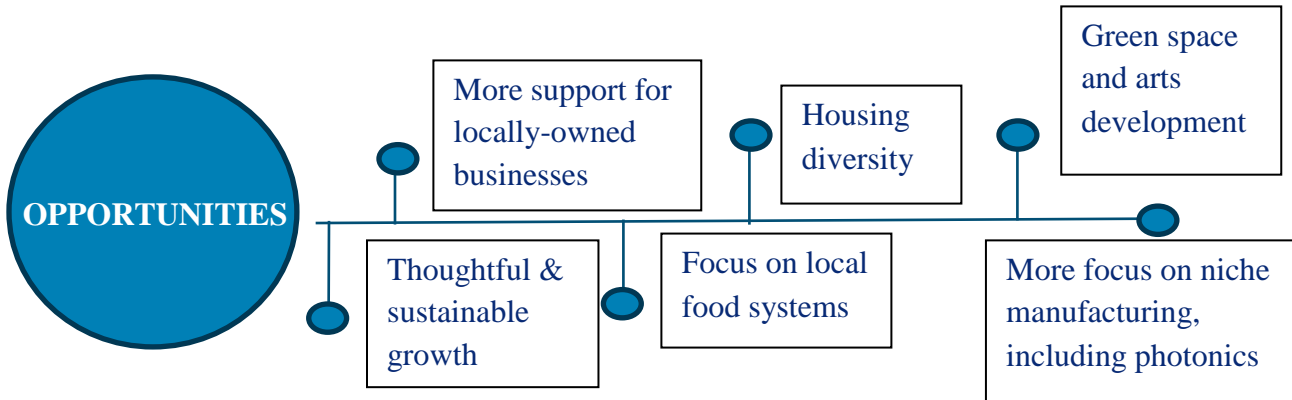
MBAC worked closely with local partners, including representatives from the City of East Helena and Lewis and Clark County, to push out and conduct a robust marketing campaign aimed at garnering feedback from residents throughout the County. Additionally, MBAC worked closely with our CEDS committee to get key feedback on issue areas and trends.



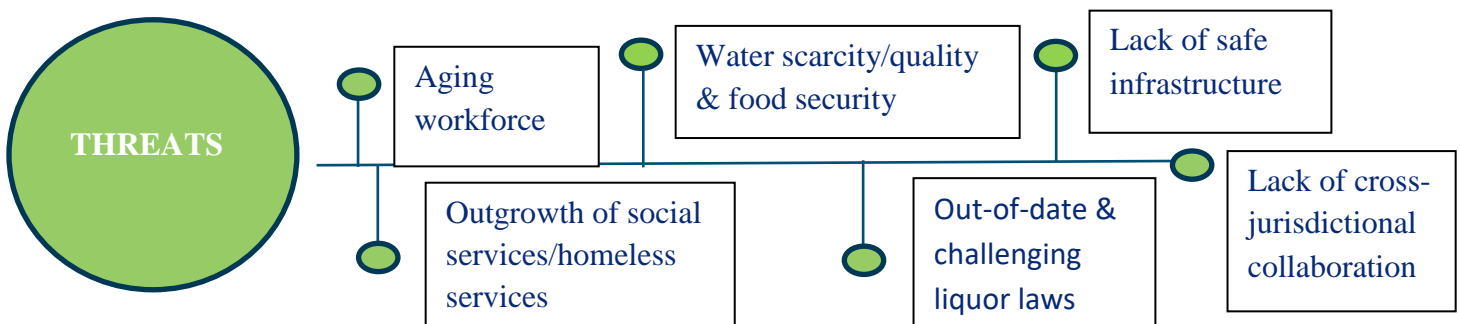
Respondents highlighted the educational opportunities within the region. Community members value education and have supported the renovations and new buildings within the county. The county has two opportunities for higher education: Helena College of the University of Montana and Carroll College, both located in Helena.



With the sense of a shortage in affordable and adequate housing also comes a clear need to increase existing services for community members who are homeless. Social service programs exist but may be difficult for individuals to navigate. Downtown community spaces have become temporary living spaces for individuals and families who are currently not receiving all the services they may need. A general sense of complacency within the community can also impact the economic growth.



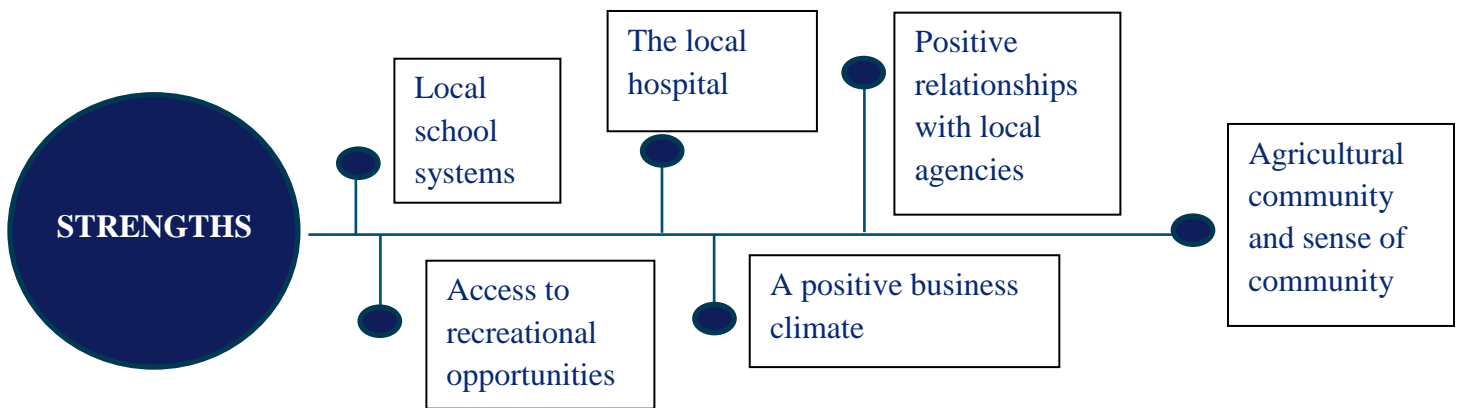
With the increase in population and housing needs, opportunities exist to evaluate what growth will look like in the next 4 years and how best to sustain that growth. As part of the opportunities for sustainable growth, continued focus on local food systems and local businesses within the community can be part of the discussions. Within the Helena area, local restaurants are supporting local producers and showcasing locally-sourced food. Recent businesses opening have increased the opportunities to eat local food and increased awareness of local food systems.



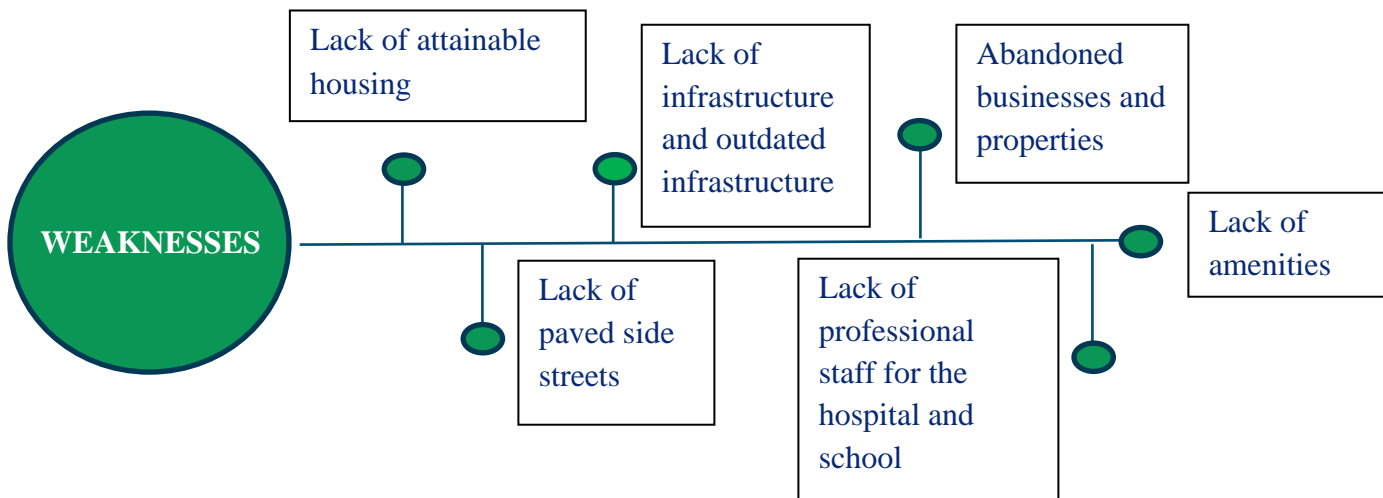
Aging workforce and aging infrastructure both present real threats within the communities. Creative solutions including remote work opportunities and creating environments and spaces that attract younger workers may help with the workforce issues.

MEAGHER COUNTY

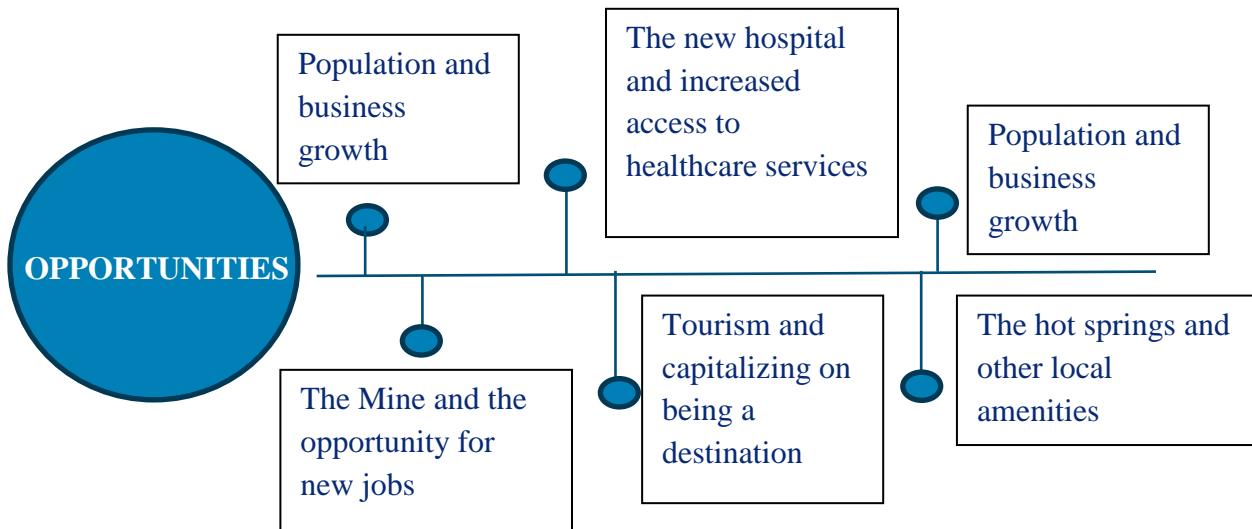
MBAC worked closely with local Meagher County representatives to distribute the local survey to Meagher County residents and get key feedback from local community members on the needs they're seeing in the county. Additionally, MBAC received comprehensive feedback from our CEDS Committee.



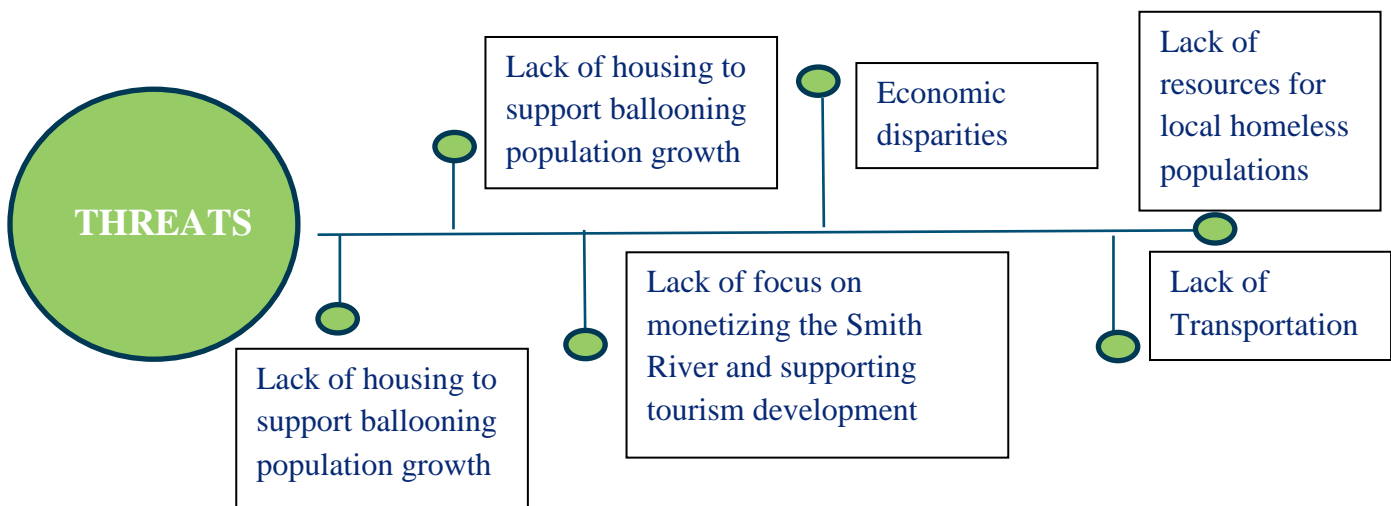
Respondents highlighted the local hospital and school systems within the county as strengths, even though staffing issues are seen as a hindrance. Sense of community and the local businesses continue to strengthen the area. Additionally, respondents emphasized the strong and collaborative business environment, specifically collaboration with local agencies.



Current lack of attainable housing is a major concern as the potential for the increased strain on existing inventory nears with the opening of the Sandfire mine in the White Sulphur Springs area. MBAC has been working with the local Stewardship Council and local leaders to paint a picture of what the growth may look like in terms of housing, job opportunities, and options available to the community, while incorporating lessons learned from the eastern part of Montana during the development of the Bakken formation. While the school system and local hospital are considered strengths to the community members, the lack of individuals qualified to meet staffing needs leaves room for innovative solutions.



Opportunities within the region already exist with increased promotion and awareness of the amenities and local businesses currently established. Community members emphasized the need to focus on being a destination for tourism. With the number of tourists the county sees each year as they come to recreate on the Smith River, community members see an opportunity to provide additional services and advertising to encourage people to stay before or after their float trips in the community of White Sulphur Springs. There are many amenities and the community has expressed interest in ways to capture additional tourist dollars from people who are already traveling to the county.



The popularity of Smith River recreation provides opportunity for supporting additional tourism development and even the reduction of maintenance burden from the local community. However, community members feel that the current lack of monetization of these visitors is a threat within the region.

REGIONAL ANALYSIS

Looking at the entire MBAC region, there are several trends and issues each county is facing, including housing, workforce attraction/retention, and childcare. Local communities are seeing a significant influx of new residents into the tri-county region. With this influx, local communities are having difficulty keeping up with ballooning housing costs and a lack of attainable housing for existing residents. Additionally, businesses are struggling to find qualified and skilled workers. This shortage of workers is exacerbated by the inflated cost of living post-Covid and the lack of amenities and childcare for working parents.



Historic Radersburg Schoolhouse

As seen from the SWOT analysis, one of the biggest assets in the area is the quick access to recreation opportunities. Helena has been working for several years on marketing initiatives focused on marketing the area as a destination for “Live, Work, Play;” however, the tri-county region continues to face housing shortages post-Covid. MBAC and partners have observed that housing issues directly affect workforce development, attraction and retention. Beyond traditional housing efforts, MBAC and partnering organizations are working to address these issues by finding collaborative solutions to housing and childcare, including strategically reusing historic buildings, housing and childcare cooperatives, and multi-use space development. MBAC has done significant planning work over the past, focusing on renovating underutilized spaces in Helena and surrounding areas.

MBAC continues to work with key partner organizations to support workforce attraction and retention efforts, including continuing to support the work of initiatives such as Helena WINS, and the Helena Chamber of Commerce in their work to continue innovative training programs aimed at students and prospective employees. The two-year public college, Helena College, continues to be a collaborative resource that heavily supports these initiatives. Additionally, MBAC has been involved with newer initiatives, including the Teleworks remote worker training program pilot project which has shown early success for individuals in the Helena area. MBAC made a financial contribution to ensure that a pilot program could be tested in the region. The Career Training Institute (CTI) and the local Job Service staff helped bring this project to reality. CTI provided computer lab space, along with an instructor, to help clients of both programs have success in the week-long training course. With this specific program, students from other parts of the state were also able to participate virtually. Throughout the week, courses focus on computer skills,



City of White Sulphur Springs Welcome Sign

interviewing tips, and resume building. The Teleworks staff work with students throughout the week, and by the end of the week have employer partners who make interview and job offers to students. Multiple students have offer letters prior to the end of the course. Teleworks staff continues to work with students after the class to follow up on how the new jobs are going and to assist the students who did not complete applications with partner employers so they can work toward completion and offers of interviews.



MSU Landscape Architects Presentation to Silos Working Group

These initiatives further support the growth of the manufacturing industries in the Helena area. BOEING and Pioneer Aero structures have expanded considerably and are looking to further increase their apprenticeship opportunities for high-school graduates. The MBAC region is in a unique position with the asset of Helena College. Local industries partner with the school to collaborate on coursework planning and specific training needs so students have the skills that the businesses in the area specifically need. Helena College is looking to the future with addition of new programs based on industry needs.

CONCLUSION

Within the MBAC region, similar themes emerged across the counties. While the specific needs of each community and area differ, many general topics are similar. Housing needs exist in every part of the region. Workforce housing may look different in each corner of the MBAC region, but is essential for the economic growth within each community. As previously mentioned, Broadwater County respondents voiced concerns about the lack of transitional housing for older populations, while Meagher County is facing a housing shortage



Lakeside Distillery Mural in Downtown Townsend

when it comes to availability for workers at and supporting the new mine. Lewis and Clark County has a lack of adequate number of beds for people who are under-housed or facing homelessness. Overall, the solutions and strategies within each community will be tailored to the local needs in conjunction with local, state, and federal partners.

MBAC has facilitated discussions with local leaders and will continue to do so throughout the region. Access to childcare is also a common theme across the region as it affects the availability of individuals to participate within the local workforce. Opportunities for collaboration between public and private partners exist in each of the counties served. Each county's members were also proud of the outdoor recreation and spaces available throughout the region.

While the types of recreation vary, the desire to promote the areas and entice visitors continues. Along with visitors comes the discussion of how best to protect the natural resources and how to mitigate financial impacts from usage of the areas and local infrastructure. Throughout the region, a strong sense of community identity and pride emerged in each of the gatherings and discussions.

As MBAC looks to the next few years, common focus areas across the service region are housing, childcare, workforce development, and preservation of sense of community. MBAC will work with partners to address these areas as they specifically affect each of the individual counties and towns. Solutions may differ in each area, but the common themes have been heard from across communities of varying size and across stakeholder groups. MBAC plans to build on the foundation already created in these theme areas. Multiple recent planning projects MBAC has facilitated are nearing the next steps for the future actions.

Utilizing feedback from the SWOT analysis in all three counties, and considering current trends, MBAC has developed a new 5-year action plan for the region. This action plan includes priorities, objectives, timeframes, action items, and resources to carry out the mission of the CEDS.



Historic Downtown Helena Walking Mall

MBAC REGION 2023 -2027 ACTION PLAN & SCHEDULE

<u>CEDS STRATEGY</u>	<u>PRIORITY</u>	<u>OBJECTIVE</u>	<u>LEAD AGENCY</u>	<u>TIME FRAME</u>	<u>JOBS</u>	<u>ACTION ITEM</u>	<u>RESOURCES</u>
Loan Program	A	Provide loan programs that expand and attract business growth in the MBAC region	MBAC	2023 - 2026	300	Prioritize targeted industries & clusters and target succession planning for aging businesses	BOI, SSBCI, EDA, MEDEQ, Private Equity, DOC
Business Technical Assistance	A	Provide competent & proactive business consulting.	MBAC <i>SBDC SCORE</i>	2023 - 2026	50	Coordinate with SCORE, SBDC, and Helena College to provide services.	SCORE SBDC, Helena College, MBAC, Job Service
Business Attraction	A	Develop a targeted approach to attract businesses to the region	MBAC <i>MDOC</i>	2023 - 2026	100's	Use TIA to specify specific Niche Markets that have highest potential	MBAC, Chamber, BID, MMEC, MDOC
Cluster Development	A	Exploit the strengths of the region	MBAC <i>Wheatland TEDD Helena Airport Authority</i>	2023 - 2026	100's	Promote Helena WINS initiatives, expand fintech, machining & manufacturing clusters	MBAC, Helena College, MMEC, Helena Airport Authority, Chambers of Commerce
Workforce Development & Attraction	A	Provide opportunities to increase the performance and efficiencies of the workforce, generate apprenticeships, and opportunities for entrepreneurs.	Helena Chamber <i>MBAC</i>	2023 - 2026	100's	Targeted workforce training, expand apprentice opportunities, develop career pathways, and promote upskilling accessibility.	Job Service, Helena College, Carroll College, AJAY, MYAP, CTI
Commercial Property Development	B	Develop/assist property options that address the area's needs.	MBAC <i>Preserve Montana</i>	2023 - 2026	N/A	Identify properties that need redevelopment/infill	Brownfield, Developers Association, Preserve Montana
Infrastructure	A	Identify & expand all utilities needed to support further business and community growth	MBAC <i>Cities, Counties</i>	2023 - 2026	N/A	Prioritize properties and costs associated with infrastructure expansion	Municipalities, MBAC, MDOT, Dept. of Commerce
Energy	B	Promote alternative energy resources and initiatives.	MEDA <i>MBAC</i>	2023 - 2026	N/A	Distributed production	MBAC, NWE, AmeriGas, Private Investment
Transportation	A	Promote efficient use of highway and rail corridors	MBAC <i>Cities & Counties</i>	2023 - 2026		Prioritize road and rail projects	MBAC, MDOT, MRL/BNSF

LEWIS AND CLARK COUNTY

<u>CEDS Strategy</u>	<u>Priority</u>	<u>Objective</u>	<u>Lead Agency</u>	<u>Time Frame</u>	<u>Jobs</u>	<u>Action Item</u>	<u>Resources</u>
Housing Solutions	A	Defining market segments and supporting collaborative solutions	Helena Housing Task Force <i>MBAC, Habitat for Humanity, Helena Housing Authority</i>	2023-2026	N/A	Active participant	City of Helena, MBAC, HUD, Rocky Mountain Development Council, Habitat for Humanity, Helena Housing Authority
Workforce Development/Attraction	A	Attract talent and develop training programs	Chamber of Commerce <i>MBAC</i>	2023-2026	100's	Active participant	Chamber, AJAY, MYAP, CTI, Job Service, Helena College, DLI, SWIB
Redevelopment of impaired properties	A	Identifying potential locations & educating regional investors	MBAC	2023-2026	N/A	Funding of planning documents and attracting investment partners	Brownfields, Preserve Montana, Invest in Helena
Tourism Development	A	Attract tourists who may be future resident (entrepreneurs/employees)	Visit Helena	2023-2026	50's	Active participant	BID, TBID, Chamber, Vision Helena, City of Helena
Manufacturing Cluster	B	Creating networking opportunities for regional businesses to interact	MBAC <i>MMEC</i>	2023-2026	100's	Foster networking sessions	MMEC, Southwest Montana Manufacturing Coalition
Transportation	B	Prioritization and funding of transportation initiatives	City of Helena	2023-2026	N/A	Active participant	MDOT, City of Helena, Lewis and Clark County, Jefferson County, City of East Helena
Amenity Development	B	Comprehensive regional planning of facilities that are financially viable	City of Helena <i>Chamber of Commerce, MBAC</i>	2023-2026	N/A	Facilitator	City of Helena, School district, Carroll College, Lewis and Clark County, Lewis and Clark County high schools.

BROADWATER COUNTY

<u>CEDS Strategy</u>	<u>Priority</u>	<u>Objective</u>	<u>Lead Agency</u>	<u>Time Frame</u>	<u>Jobs</u>	<u>Action Item</u>	<u>Resources</u>
Housing Solutions	A	Support efforts to create workforce and transitional housing opportunities	BCDC <i>MBAC</i>	2023-2026	N/A	Active Participant	BCDC, MEDA, Broadwater County, City of Townsend
Childcare Support	A	Advance childcare opportunities	Jefferson County Childcare Coordinator	2023-2026	N/A	Facilitator	0-5, RMDC, DPHHS, City of Townsend, Broadwater County School system
Workforce Development/Attraction	A	Attract and retain existing workforce and develop training opportunities	Helena WINS <i>STOKE</i>	2023-2026	10's	Active Participant	Helena WINS, Billings Clinic Broadwater, Broadwater County school district
Tourism Development	A	Identify strategies to monetize recreational activities	MVM <i>Chamber of Commerce, Silos working group</i>	2023-2026	N/A	Active Participant	Southwest Montana, Visit Helena, Montana Main Street, BCDC, Chamber, MEDA
Niche Agriculture	A	Expand niche and value-added markets	MSU Extension <i>MBAC</i>	2023-2026	10's	Active Partner	MSU Extension, Montana food and Ag centers, BCDC Broadwater County
Public Facilities	A	Developing public spaces that promote livability	BCDC <i>Chamber MBAC</i>	2023-2026	N/A	Active Participant	City of Townsend, County, BCDC, Rotary Club, MBAC, Lions Club
Transportation	B	Logistics activities to support businesses	MDOT, MRL/BNSF, MBAC	2023-2026	N/A	Facilitator	MDOT, MRL, City of Townsend, Chamber, BCDC
Natural Resource Development	B	Developing value-added opportunities	MBAC	2023-2026	10's	Facilitator	Forest service, forest business network, BCDC
Park and Trail Development	B	Promoting safe trail and park development	Broadwater County Parks and Rec Board	2023-2026	N/A	Active Participant	Forest service, Forest Business Network, BCDC, MBAC

MEAGHER COUNTY

<u>CEDS Strategy</u>	<u>Priority</u>	<u>Objective</u>	<u>Lead Agency</u>	<u>Time Frame</u>	<u>Jobs</u>	<u>Action Item</u>	<u>Resources</u>
Housing Solutions	A	Support efforts to create a wide variety of housing opportunities	Meagher County Housing Task Force <i>MBAC</i>	2023-2026	N/A	Active Participant	Stewardship Council, Meagher County, Mountain View Medical Center, WSS School District, City of WSS, state and regional housing authorities.
Workforce Development/Attraction	A	Attract and retain existing workforce and develop training opportunities	Meagher County <i>MBAC Stewardship Council</i>	2023-2026	100's	Active participation	School system, Mountain View Medical Center
Tourism Development	A	Identify strategies to monetize recreational activities	Chamber <i>MBAC</i>	2023-2026	10's	Active Participant	Chamber of Commerce, City of WSS, FWP, Stewardship Council, Red Ants Pants, Meagher County
Natural Resource Development	A	Develop a plan to utilize natural resources in a manner that does not change the nature of the community	Stewardship Council <i>Meagher County, Chamber of Commerce</i>	2023-2026	100's	Active participant	Stewardship council, WSS Chamber of Commerce, Meagher County, Black Butte Mining, MBAC
Infrastructure Development	A	Develop and maintain critical infrastructure to sustain and further the community	City of WSS	2023-2026	N/A	Active Participant	City of WSS, Meagher County, Stewardship Council, Black Butte Mining, MBAC

DISASTER, ECONOMIC RECOVERY & RESILIENCY STRATEGY

Montana Code Annotated (MCA) 10-3-103 defines the following:

(3) "Disaster" means the occurrence or imminent threat of widespread or severe damage, injury, or loss of life or property resulting from any natural or artificial cause, including tornadoes, windstorms, snowstorms, wind-driven water, high water, floods, wave action, earthquakes, landslides, mudslides, volcanic action, fires, explosions, air or water contamination requiring emergency action to avert danger or damage, blight, droughts, infestations, riots, sabotage, hostile military or paramilitary action, disruption of state services, accidents involving radiation byproducts or other hazardous materials, outbreak of disease, bioterrorism, or incidents involving weapons of mass destruction.

(7) "Emergency" means the imminent threat of a disaster causing immediate peril to life or property that timely action can avert or minimize.

In the event of a disaster, the Montana Business Assistance Connection (MBAC), in conjunction with its regional partners, is prepared to facilitate planning and recovery efforts as outlined in the following strategy document. However, this brief strategy is in no way intended to undermine or replace existing federal, state, or local disaster plans. This document simply establishes the District's role in both pre- and post-disaster planning and recovery.



Big Belt Fire 2021

Phase I: Pre-disaster Preparedness

MBAC supports and encourages its communities to:

- Engage in pre-disaster recovery and mitigation planning
- Regularly assess the community's risks and vulnerabilities
- Inventory and organize the community's recovery resources
- Engage in business continuity planning
- Ensure resources are available for the elderly and those with special needs
- Identify shelters
- Identify recovery partners, as well as the type of assistance and resources they can provide
- Establish a timeline for recovery activities (immediate, short-term, intermediate, and long-term)
- Develop and disseminate a community evacuation plan
- Establish a communication chain

- Engage the community’s residents in the planning and recovery process

Regional Risks and Vulnerabilities

MBAC region is vulnerable to a wide variety of disasters including, but not limited to, fires, flooding, chemical/biological warfare, dam failure, drought and extreme heat, freeze events and extreme cold, earthquakes, hazardous materials, landslides, tornadoes, vector-borne diseases, volcanic fallout, violence, and terrorism.

Recovery and Mitigation: MBAC Regional Challenges

- Small population dispersed over a large area
- Lack of comprehensive services
- Isolation/lack of access
- Limited options for transmitting information
- Possibility for widespread interruption of services
- High percentage of stationary, at-risk population (elderly)
- Lack of economic diversity, loss of “one” may mean loss of “all”
- Limited transit options
- Limited incomes
- Few liquid assets, significant amount of money tied up in land and equipment
- Vulnerable infrastructure, including historic sites and structures
- Heavy reliance on imported materials and food

Recovery and Mitigation Planning

Without being prepared for the complexity of redevelopment in a compressed timeframe following a major disaster, local officials may struggle with recovery decisions and miss opportunities for public participation in



Street Reconstruction, White Sulphur Springs

reshaping the community’s future. To become more disaster-resilient, local governments should plan for what must happen after rescue and recovery operations are completed in order to return the community to normal or perhaps rebuild an even better community. Through a Post-Disaster Redevelopment Plan (PDRP or Plan), local governments can collaboratively create a long-term recovery and redevelopment strategy in pursuit of a sustainable community.

Plans identify policies, operational strategies, as well as roles and responsibilities for implementation that will guide decisions affecting long-term recovery and redevelopment of the community after a disaster. They emphasize seizing opportunities for hazard mitigation and community improvement consistent with the goals of local and regional comprehensive plans, with full participation from the area’s citizens.

There are three principal benefits to having a well-developed Plan:

1) Faster and More Efficient Recovery

Without a comprehensive, long-term recovery plan, ad hoc efforts in the aftermath of a significant disaster will delay the return of community stability. Creating a process to make smart post-disaster decisions and prepare for long-term recovery requirements enables a community to do more than react, prompting post-disaster action rather than time-consuming debate. By identifying appropriate planning mechanisms, financial assistance, and agency roles and responsibilities beforehand, a community begins the road to recovery more quickly. Being able to show efficient and effective use of taxpayer dollars after a disaster is incredibly important for the public's perception of the recovery.

2). Opportunity to Build Back Better

A disaster, while tragic, can also create opportunities to fix past mistakes or leap forward with plans for community improvements. In the immediate aftermath of a disaster, local officials are under significant pressure to restore the community to its pre-disaster condition. Without a guiding vision, short-term decisions may inadvertently restrict long-term, sustainable redevelopment and overlook opportunities to surpass the status quo. A Post-Disaster Redevelopment Plan (PDRP) strengthens the recovery process, and communities benefit from assessing their risk levels and crafting a long-term redevelopment plan under “blue skies.” Local officials and the public can thoughtfully analyze and debate issues, linking redevelopment goals with other important community plans. Careful thought and planning achieves a more sustainable and resilient outcome than decisions made under emergency circumstances, compromised budgets, and political pressures.

3). Local Control over Recovery

Developing a PDRP provides local government officials, residents, and businesses the opportunity to determine long-term redevelopment goals and develop policies and procedures that will guide redevelopment before well-intended outside agencies and non-government organizations rush to aid the community. While outside resources are needed and welcomed in a major or catastrophic disaster, a locally developed Plan will best channel those resources to effectively meet the community's specific needs and goals. A Post-Disaster Redevelopment Plan (PDRP) will show outside agencies and donors that the community is prepared to play an active role in the recovery process and promote its capabilities to wisely use donated and loaned resources. There will always be rules and, occasionally, strings attached to external sources of funding, but a community that has researched the allowable uses of federal and state assistance can better work within their boundaries in an effort to fund projects that further local and regional redevelopment goals.

CAN A DISASTER PROVIDE OPPORTUNITY TO ADVANCE YOUR COMMUNITY'S VISION?

The MBAC's communities participated in the region's comprehensive planning process. PDRPs can identify disaster scenarios in which opportunities may be present to advance already-stated visions for these communities in a compressed timeframe.

Opportunities to Consider During Post-Disaster Redevelopment:

- Disaster-resilient land use patterns

- Hazard mitigation construction techniques
- Energy-efficient buildings
- Healthy community design
- Affordable or workforce housing
- Alternative transportation networks
- Environmental preservation and habitat restoration
- Sustainable industry recruitment

Tornadoes, wildfires, floods, and other disasters do not confine themselves to jurisdictional boundaries. Displaced residents, compromised infrastructure, changes in economic conditions, hazardous materials contamination, and degradation of sensitive environments are some of the impacts that can affect an entire region after a major disaster. When recovery is slow, neighboring communities also experience these impacts for an extended period of time.

A PDRP is designed to be used in any disaster, regardless of type, as long as the damage will require long-term redevelopment efforts. It is an all-hazards plan addressing disasters identified in each county's Local Mitigation Strategy (LMS) and each community's Emergency Operations Plan (EOP). As an economic development organization serving Broadwater, Lewis and Clark, and Meagher Counties, MBAC will respond accordingly, utilizing the resources and information outlined in the region's CEDS document. Therefore, counties are encouraged to incorporate PDRP strategies into their disaster planning documents.



Meagher County Assisted Living Facility)

Disaster Phases and Redevelopment

Disaster management is typically viewed as a cycle with overlapping phases: 1) pre-disaster mitigation and emergency management preparedness; 2) emergency response; 3) short-term recovery; and 4) long-term recovery and redevelopment.

- ❖ ***Pre-Disaster Phase*** – Mitigation and recovery planning occurs during the pre-disaster phase (unless a community is struck by a disaster before planning is complete). Once a mitigation and recovery plan is adopted, preparatory activities should be implemented on an on-going basis during normal operations, which are sometimes referred to as “blue skies.” Plans should be tested prior to a disaster event, so that all stakeholders with a post-disaster implementation role are familiar with their responsibilities.
- ❖ ***Emergency Response Phase*** - Emergency response activities are specifically addressed in a municipality's EOP and include immediate actions to save lives, protect property, and meet basic human needs. This is the shortest phase of the cycle, lasting only a few days in minor disaster conditions.

- ❖ ***Short-Term Recovery Phase*** – The role of any plan during the short-term recovery phase is to begin organizing for long-term redevelopment activities and guiding short-term recovery decisions that may have long-term implications (e.g., placement of temporary housing or debris sites). Short-term recovery operations are addressed in EOPs, but a recovery plan can provide direction for transitioning to long-term redevelopment during this phase. The short term recovery phase begins as the emergency response phase is winding down and will continue until critical services are restored. The duration of the short-term recovery phase depends on the severity of the disaster and the level of community preparedness.
- ❖ ***Long-Term Recovery and Redevelopment Phase*** – A recovery plan is used most during this phase. Long-term recovery and redevelopment includes efforts to reconstruct and enhance the built environment, as well as recover the economy, environment, and social systems. This phase begins as short-term recovery activities are accomplished and can last from a couple years for a minor disaster to five or more years for a major or catastrophic disaster.

Interaction with Other Plans

The objective of this “Disaster and Economic Recovery and Resiliency Strategy” is to guide the redevelopment decision-making process following a disaster in a manner consistent with local comprehensive plans (especially Future Land Use maps, where applicable), Local Mitigation Strategies, Emergency Operation Plans, and other relevant plans or codes, such as land development regulations. Each of these plans, and potentially others, has pre-existing policies or procedures that affect post-disaster redevelopment. For instance, local comprehensive plans include many policies that determine where and to what extent redevelopment can occur. Ultimately, MBAC will help its counties and communities access the information and resources necessary for making post-disaster redevelopment decisions.

MBAC Region: Disaster and Emergency Services (DES) Contact Information

Brittney Willis - Broadwater County

515 Broadway
Townsend, MT 59644
406-461-0139

[Disaster & Emergency Services – Townsend Montana \(townsendmt.com\)](http://townsendmt.com)

Sierra Anderson – Lewis & Clark County

221 Breckenridge
Helena, MT 59601
406-447-8285

<http://www.lccountymt.gov/des.html>

Rick Seidlitz - Meagher County

P.O. Box 469
White Sulphur Springs, MT 59645
406-475-4043

www.lepc.meaghercounty.net

Phase II: Post-Disaster Planning and Implementation

Disaster Assessment

In the days and weeks following a disaster, MBAC will be available to assist counties and communities:

- Assess the nature and magnitude of the disaster
- Assess the impact on both local and regional economies (business, industry sectors, labor market, etc.)
- Assess the impact on transportation and public infrastructure
- Assess the impact on housing, schools, and health care facilities

Develop and/or Implement Recovery Timeline

Based on the results of the disaster assessment, the MBAC will help regional partners and community leaders move forward with:

- Listing and prioritizing recovery activities to be performed
- Identifying resources (federal, state, local, and private sector) needed for each activity
- Determining the level and type of assistance needed
- Identifying roles and responsibilities
- Determining the timeframe for each recovery activity (immediate, short-term, intermediate, or long-term)
- Establishing recovery benchmarks

Implementing the Recovery Plan (long-term recovery)

In order to accomplish recovery activities quantified as part of long-term recovery, the MBAC is capable of:

- Identifying business, economic, and entrepreneurial rebuild initiatives
- Identifying and utilizing workforce initiatives to employ workers and rebuild the local economy
- Applying for funds from federal, state, and local programs
- Developing management plans to ensure the most effective use of funds

Prioritizing Areas to Focus Redevelopment

Limited time, funds, and materials are going to make simultaneous redevelopment of all damaged areas difficult. Communities may want to encourage redevelopment in areas that correspond to their vision for the future and those less vulnerable to disasters by prioritizing and incentivizing development in these areas. The best way to



Recreation on Canyon Ferry Lake

build resiliency to disasters is to direct future development to safe locations, while minimizing or mitigating highly vulnerable types of development in hazardous areas. After a disaster, targeted sustainable redevelopment areas can provide immediate opportunities for redevelopment since they will have sustained less damage and can be prioritized for infrastructure restoration and expedited permitting. Allowing for rapid redevelopment in safe areas intended for increased future development will minimize vulnerable redevelopment and/or allow time to plan the sustainable reconstruction of areas severely

impacted by the disaster. Designated priority recovery and redevelopment areas can also be used to locate temporary post-disaster facilities more efficiently that are consistent with future land uses.

Historic Preservation and Restoration

The loss of historic resources due to a disaster can have a major impact on the community. Some losses may be unavoidable, but others could occur accidentally during recovery operations if procedures are not in place to watch for these concerns. Historic structures are particularly vulnerable to damage due to their age, and repair of these structures must meet certain requirements to maintain their character and historic designation. There may also be funding opportunities before or after a disaster for implementing mitigation measures to prevent further damage to historic resources. Engaging state and local historic preservation organizations in the planning and implementation process can ensure that the unique considerations involved with preserving and restoring historic structures and archeological sites are included in a community's recovery plan.

Reducing Disaster Vulnerability through Land Use and Development Regulations



1889 Coffeehouse Brownfields Remediation

The best practice for post-disaster redevelopment is to restrict rebuilding in hazardous locations and require mitigation where vulnerable redevelopment cannot be precluded. While this plan of action would ensure optimal community resiliency to disasters, it may be very difficult to achieve and may not be a good choice for the first action to be tackled when implementing any recovery plan. However, with careful consideration of the legal implications concerning property rights and extensive public outreach, there are many regulatory tools for increasing disaster resiliency that may be a possibility for the region, especially if pursued during the post-

disaster “window of opportunity” for future reductions in disaster vulnerability. Potential regulatory methods could include reduced intensity or density of use, special permit requirements, increased setbacks from hazard sources (e.g., a waterway or building, etc.), hazard-specific site design requirements, and/or increased structural mitigation requirements. These methods could be implemented through policies instituting lower damage thresholds requiring nonconforming uses/structures to meet current standards (in certain zones or throughout the jurisdiction), zoning overlay districts, post-disaster specific land development codes, and/or special assessment districts to fund mitigation projects that benefit more than one property.

ECONOMIC REDEVELOPMENT

The ability of a local economy to rebound after a disaster dictates the success of the community's long-term recovery. The return of jobs, tourism, capital investments, and other indicators of economic health are dependent upon housing recovery, infrastructure restoration, environmental restoration, and social service provision. The involvement of the private sector in the post-disaster planning process is imperative for determining the priorities and actions that will be beneficial to restoring the local economy. Consideration must be given to the different obstacles that could potentially hinder economic recovery, such as those that small businesses will face, decisions large employers will have to make about whether to relocate, opportunities for sustainable



Workforce Housing, White Sulphur Springs MT

diversification of the economic base, and job training and workforce recruitment needed to meet altered market conditions after a major disaster.

Resumption and Retention of Major Employers

Rapid resumption of existing major employers is key to a community's economic recovery after a disaster, especially as employment provides a reason for most residents to return and rebuild quickly. Typically, the major employers in the region are already going to have business continuity plans and will not need the basic disaster preparedness education necessary for smaller businesses. These companies are often able to work with local governments as partners in planning for post-disaster redevelopment and provide insight as to what government assistance they will need to ensure rapid resumption. Major employers may also have the means to assist in actions to support workforce retention if included in the planning process. While large company recovery assistance will vary, typically businesses located in hazardous areas or older structures may need assistance to reopen or relocate, temporarily or permanently, within the area.



AJAY Graduation Ceremony

If businesses do not feel a sense of connection to the community or fear that recovery will not be successful, there is a chance that they will relocate their company elsewhere after a disaster. This is especially the case for corporate headquarters and industries that are not location-dependent or whose location choice is tied to quality of life factors. Mitigation and recovery plans provide the private sector with confidence in the community's ability to continue providing the market environment necessary for conducting business. Some factors that may aid the retention of major employers include a high level of communication before and after a disaster about post-disaster redevelopment goals and expectations and/or incentives to ensure retention, if necessary.

Small Business Assistance

A "small business" is often family-owned and provides services solely to the local community. Small businesses comprise the majority of businesses in the MBAC region. Small businesses are more likely than large businesses to either never reopen after a major disaster or fail shortly after reopening.

Several factors may be involved in these failures, including the extent of damage to a community, timing of reopening, and lack of financial reserves. Short periods without cash flow can be damaging, and small businesses often find restrictions and loan arrangements overwhelming. The region's SBDC Director will be on-hand to help guide businesses through the redevelopment process. MBAC also has access to a certain Revolving Loan Funds (RLF) that may be available to businesses during post-disaster redevelopment. Loans are typically based on the pre-event business and tax returns of the firm and require extensive collateralization. Post-disaster market changes, however, may mean the company isn't able to do as well as it did pre-disaster,



Business Assistance Clinic, White Sulphur Springs

and the loan, even at below-market interest rates, sometimes becomes a burden to the long-term survivability of the business.



Plant Re-Growth Big Belt Recreation Area 2022

The Small business Administration (SBA) offers low interest loans for businesses damaged from disasters. In order for the SBA to assist, at least five businesses in your country must have suffered economic or physical damage. More information can be obtained via MBAC's webpage under [Emergency Resources](#).

The Economic Injury Disaster Loan Program (EIDL) can provide up to \$2 million of financial assistance to small businesses or private, non-profit organizations that suffer substantial economic injury as a result of the declared disaster, regardless of whether the applicant sustained physical damage. An EIDL can help you meet necessary financial obligations that your business or private, non-profit organization could have met had the disaster not occurred. It provides relief from economic injury caused directly by the disaster and permits you to maintain a reasonable working capital position during the period affected by the disaster. EIDLs do not replace lost sales or revenue.

Workforce Retention

While trying to retain existing businesses, efforts must also address retaining the workforce that supports those businesses. Actions such as ensuring that schools reopen and childcare is available, allowing temporary on-site housing for employees, and communication of a community's post-disaster plan can assist in getting employees back to jobs as soon as the businesses have reopened.

After a disaster, the market for certain businesses may decrease or be eliminated due to financial troubles or customer demand changes. However, other industries may provide employment opportunities, such as the construction industry, which will boom temporarily due to rebuilding needs. Workforce training programs are important to provide residents with appropriate skill sets to fill newly-available positions due to recovery efforts and to adjust workforce skills to other industries that may take a more permanent hold in the community due to post-disaster business recruitment efforts. Providing locals with first preference for temporary recovery work is important for keeping workers from moving out of the area.

Physical Economic Redevelopment Projects:

In some circumstances, opportunities may arise after a disaster to move forward with planned physical economic development projects or to create new projects that take advantage of post-disaster funding, available land, or public will. Economic development projects that are disaster-resilient and fill a need in the community after a disaster should be a priority for post-disaster funding. In addition, the community can prioritize projects that incorporate energy efficiency and other “green” building design considerations. Business districts can be prime locations to focus post-disaster redevelopment projects since these districts offer financial tools or incentives, such as tax increment financing, reductions on impact fees, and state tax incentives. Economic leaders can also consider ways to expand these business districts and leverage funding that would be available through disaster programs from several federal agencies, including the Community Development Block Grant program and Economic Development Administration Disaster Assistance Program.

Opportunities to Sustainably Restore Economic Vitality

Retaining existing businesses is the first priority after a disaster; however, post-disaster redevelopment may also present an opportunity for businesses to assess their long-term applicability in the local market and take advantage of any changes in demographics or business incentives that may occur due to disaster impacts and an influx in outside funding to the area. For instance, a business that was already struggling before the disaster may need to rethink its business plan and use the disaster as an entrepreneurial impetus unless it happens to be engaged in one of the few economic activities that benefit from a disaster, such as the development industry.



Historic Preservation RoundTable, Townsend

Inevitably, some large and small businesses that bear the brunt of significant damage or indirect losses are going to fail or choose to relocate after a major disaster. This can affect the unemployment rate of the county if new businesses do not replace those that relocate. Ideally, a community would have a diverse spectrum of businesses so that if one industry sector is severely impacted by a disaster, the majority of the workforce will not be affected.

Unfortunately, MBAC region struggles with a lack of economic diversity, which means that in the event of a disaster the loss of one business could mean the loss of all the local benefits provided by that employer/industry. Efforts to diversify the local economy with industries that are less vulnerable to disasters should be integrated into ongoing economic development activities. Industries targeted for attraction and incentive programs after a disaster should be those that will provide a more disaster-resilient and sustainable economy for the community and are appropriate for the post-disaster circumstances.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND PUBLIC FACILITIES

Restoration of infrastructure and critical public facilities after a disaster is a prerequisite for recovery - one that is addressed in local government and private utility and infrastructure companies' emergency response and short-term recovery plans. There are long-term redevelopment considerations for infrastructure restoration, however, that must be weighed in conjunction with land use, environment, housing, and economic redevelopment issues.



**Main Street Beautification and
ADA Update, White Sulphur
Springs MT**

Taking advantage of opportunities to upgrade, mitigate, or even relocate infrastructure or public facilities after a disaster is critical. Advanced planning allows a community to make deliberate decisions about redevelopment that it may otherwise have had less opportunity to do during the post-disaster rush to rebuild. Decisions about infrastructure reconstruction will influence private redevelopment decisions, and using disaster repairs as an opportunity to include hazard mitigation allows a local government to lead by example.

There are many agencies, jurisdictions, and stakeholders involved in providing infrastructure, public facilities, and utility services. Before and after a disaster, these private and public entities need to establish communication and coordination procedures to ensure that long-term recovery and redevelopment occurs in an efficient and organized manner. Each agency or company should have its own recovery plan; however, if any opportunities for directing redevelopment are to be

pursued then coordination and communication are critical.

Types of Infrastructure and Public Facilities to Address in Post-disaster Redevelopment Planning

A community's infrastructure is made up of a number of different systems and structures, each of which should be considered carefully:

- ***Transportation systems*** – The repair of roads, bridges, railroads, airports, and public transit is essential to establishing normal operations within a community. The repair of these and other types of infrastructure is often necessary for other redevelopment efforts to take place. Post-disaster redevelopment can be used as an opportunity to modify, improve, and add to existing transportation networks. Incorporating hazard mitigation into the repair and reconstruction of transportation facilities can ensure that when disaster strikes again, the infrastructure is better able to handle the impacts.
- ***Potable water, sewer, and storm water systems*** – Damage to potable water, sewer, and storm water infrastructure can weaken a community's ability to recover. As with other infrastructure, the community can take the opportunity to include hazard mitigation or other improvements during repairs. In cases of severe damage to infrastructure in highly hazardous locations, relocation could be considered. These opportunities may be missed if pre-planning is not conducted.
- ***Power, natural gas, and telecommunications*** – Recovery from a disaster cannot begin until major utilities, especially electricity, are restored.
- ***Public facilities*** – Rebuilding after a disaster provides an opportunity to mitigate future hazard impacts and build back a more resilient community. Public facilities, such as schools, libraries, and government offices, must be rebuilt to current building codes. However, above-code hazard mitigation may also be a good investment, and post-disaster funding sources may allow these expenditures. Some public facilities in highly hazardous areas could potentially be targeted for relocation during pre-disaster planning.

- ***Parks and recreation facilities*** – While parks and recreation facilities are typically not a priority for recovery, they are important for regaining quality of life as part of long-term redevelopment. Park properties also are often used in staging recovery efforts, such as temporary vegetative debris storage.

Financing Infrastructure and Public Facilities Repair

When a community starts to make decisions about which structures to relocate after a disaster or which mitigation projects it should invest in pre-disaster, they should consider funding availability. Knowing where to prioritize spending requires some basic knowledge of what is covered under insurance policies, which projects will be eligible for federal reimbursement through the Public Assistance Program, which projects can be funded through grant programs, and what financial reserves can be targeted for grant matching funds or local investment. When a community begins to address its infrastructure issues as part of the initial planning process or as a pre-disaster implementation action, it can launch an assessment of county or municipal insurance policies to determine which facilities are covered and for what extent of damage. They can then use this assessment to make decisions about increasing coverage or financing repairs to uninsured structures. They can also determine whether mitigation enhancements would be covered under current policies and Public Assistance or whether additional funding would be needed.



*New White Sulphur Springs Water main,
future site of Mountain View Medical
Center*

Public Assistance: Improved and Alternate Projects

Occasionally an Applicant may determine that improvements should be made while restoring a damaged facility; or even that the public would not be best served by restoring a damaged facility or its function at all. FEMA refers to these projects respectively as improved and alternate. All requests for these projects must be approved prior to construction.

Possible Alternate Projects

- Repair or expansion of other public facilities;
- Construction of new public facilities;
- Purchase of capital equipment; and
- Funding of hazard mitigation measures in the area affected by the disaster.

Possible Improved Projects

- Relocation of public facilities;
- Using improved materials;
- Expanding capacity, and
- Rebuilding to higher codes and standards

Conclusion

In the event of a disaster, the MBAC is committed to:

- Providing local officials, business leaders, and other community partners with access to regional demographic, economic, and hazard vulnerability data
- Developing technical expertise and economic analysis tools for conducting initial disaster assessments and long-term economic impact analysis
- Establishing collaborative relationships with local government officials and non-government organizations that may provide data, funding, technical expertise, and other resources essential to intermediate and long-term economic recovery following a disaster event
- Offering grant writing expertise and technical assistance to regional and local entities, both for pre-disaster resiliency initiatives as well as post-disaster recovery efforts
- Establishing familiarity with traditional economic and community recovery funding sources, including resources for business development assistance programs, such as EDA's Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) programs as well as private, nonprofit, and philanthropic resources
- Providing technical support to impacted businesses
- Encouraging concepts and principles of economic resiliency strategies into the existing planning and development plans and activities within the region
- Leveraging assets
- Offering a neutral forum to convene diverse stakeholders and facilitate discussion and planning initiatives around the issues of economic resiliency preparedness and recovery



Spring Meadow Lake, Helena MT



Canyon Ferry Lake at Sunset



Hauser Dam, Helena MT

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COVID-19 ADDENDUM

CEDS PROCESS: ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT:

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), updated every five years, is a local planning and implementation process designed to create jobs, foster stability, diversify economies, improve living conditions, and provide a mechanism for guiding and coordinating the efforts of persons and organizations concerned with all aspects of urban and rural economic development. This planning process is key in analyzing local conditions, identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, as well as design strategies to achieve organizational and community goals, and coordinating activities to implement the identified strategies and evaluate accomplishments. MBAC understands that planning for successful economic, community, and rural development is a continuous process. The goals and action items identified in the CEDS will be accomplished in collaboration with a wide variety of groups, communities, and agencies.

MBAC's planning and economic development activities will influence future activities by improving regional economic conditions through coordinated community development efforts. MBAC will assist local governments in planning public works and coordinating public and private investment. By taking an advisory role, MBAC will assist in achieving the area's goals and objectives. Key elements of the CEDS Process include the following:



ANALYSIS: The analysis assesses the state of the regional and local economy, the threats and opportunities posed by external trends, and the availability of partners and resources for economic development.



VISION & GOALS: The community's vision and goals, in combination with an appraisal of the regions competitive advantage, establishes the strategic direction for the action plan.



ACTION PLAN: The action plan establishes priority programs and projects for implementation.



EVALUATION: Criteria is established to evaluate the process for periodic updates of the document and its elements. The CEDS document will be evaluated as information changes, and is used to determine the success of the action plan being

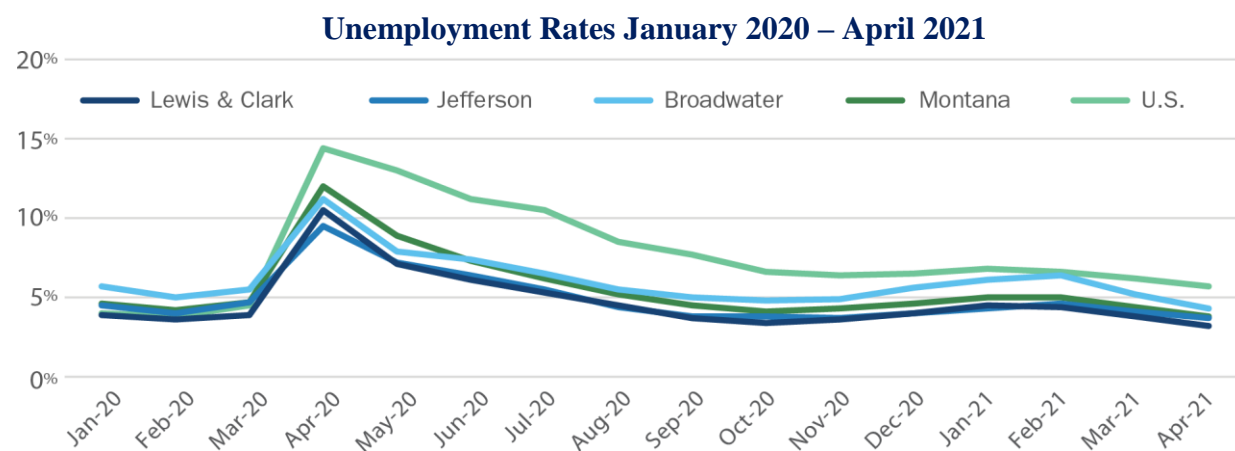
The work plan recognizes current situations and trends to help communities plan for future needs. By looking at past demographic trends and future demographic projections, it is imperative that communities continually assess their infrastructure and plan for future needs.

Planning for community economic or rural development is a continuous and ongoing process. The action items identified in the CEDS reflect the desires of the citizens in Broadwater, Lewis and Clark, and Meagher counties, and will be accomplished by many different groups, communities, and agencies. There are many worthy projects in the action plan of this document; however, due to the limitations of the District’s resources and staffing, this organization may not be able to work on them directly.

COVID-19 IMPACT: OVERVIEW

The region has typically persevered during tough economic conditions. MBAC’s past two CEDS documents were developed based off of economic impacts generated by the 2008 “Great Recession.” The economic injuries and other impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic (“Pandemic”) are still emerging and the full extent is not yet realized. However, some initial data exists and measures the severity of the Pandemic on the region’s economy to help document the need for a cohesive response, recovery, and resiliency strategy.

There are stark differences between the Great Recession and the Pandemic. The Pandemic has significantly impacted socio-economic factors in a manner that far exceeds the repercussions of the Great Recession. An argument could be made that the largest impacts of the Great Recession were made on economic conditions. MBAC does not discredit the negative condition of the Great Recession. However, the Pandemic has had a much larger impact across the board. This is due to the fact that the Pandemic was the result of a global health crisis that drastically shifted economic and social conditions and created a lack of predictability.



Monthly Unemployment Rates

Source: Local Area Unemployment Statistics. Not seasonally adjusted. Available at lmi.mt.gov

Regional Strategic Response

To aid the region’s COVID-19 response, recovery, and resiliency efforts, MBAC, as the region’s EDD will:

- Participate with federal, state, and local organizations and networks to help coordinate resource development and dissemination for member local governments.

- Redefine and expand its role as a data resource for the region, considering new software and research tools to provide member governments and stakeholders with timely, relevant services to enable stronger, fact-based measurement and decision making.
- Partner and coordinate with member local governments and organization across the 3-county region to implement the CEDS and this COVID-19 Addendum.

COVID-19 Strategies | Economic Development

- Continue to work with member local governments and partners to identify economic development eligible projects and funding opportunities.
- Coordinate with the region's economic development stakeholders in an effort to maintain a demographic profile for the region.
- Provide at least one workshop for regional stakeholders with a focus on business response, recovery, resiliency needs, and resources for the most impacted sectors.
- Support member local governments' industrial and business site development efforts to assist in attracting and retaining quality employers.
- Continue to be an active member of the Central Montana Brownfields Coalition. Work with stakeholders to identify new potentially contaminated sites that may have been vacated as a result of the economic downturn.

COVID-19 Strategies | Regional Infrastructure

- Work to expand Geographic Information System Mapping (GIS) services to member organizations that contribute to resilient record keeping practices and provide a better understanding of public assets and infrastructure to aid in economic recovery.
- Provide at least one workshop for regional infrastructure stakeholders on water and/or wastewater system financing that considers the unique impacts and financing challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Seek and apply for funding sources that address local government water, wastewater, and storm water infrastructure needs with a focus on projects that promote economic expansion and improve community resiliency and system viability.
- Analyze the region's economic development infrastructure needs to help regional stakeholders prioritize most strategic investments at existing or additional business and industrial sites.
- Support member local governments in creating and adopting Capital Improvement Plans and Asset Management Plans to guide ongoing infrastructure investments.

COVID-19 Strategies | Community Development

- Support the recovery and enhance the resiliency of the region's community support services sector including their systems and programs in place which help to address the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on historically marginalized populations.

- Determine the financial feasibility of becoming a Food & Agricultural Development Center (FADC). The FADC program is administered by the MT Department of Agriculture. A new position within MBAC would focus on assisting consumers and businesses impacted by COVID-19.
- Study the changing need for affordable housing rehabilitation and development across the region to determine where such development would be most strategic.
- Seek funding for affordable housing development or existing housing rehabilitation and assist member local governments in planning for improved housing stock, with priority focus on areas with recently expanded water or sewer capacity.

COVID-19 Strategies | Workforce Development

- Help grow the supply of healthcare providers by increasing educational and development opportunities in healthcare professions, especially to increase the pipeline of healthcare workers to rural and underserved areas.
- Address the economic impacts of childcare across the region, especially in rural areas that lack this type of infrastructure. Stakeholders, both public and private, will be engaged and asked to help address this critical shortage.
- Develop partnerships with other like-minded entities across the region to deliver programs and resources for high school students seeking to enter the workforce.

COVID-19 Strategies | Gap Financing

- Support businesses across the region by giving them access to financial products that allow “deals to get done.” For example, MBAC will work with financial institutions across the region to package loans for clients. MBAC intermediary loan funds lower exposure and risk for financial institutions AND give clients an extra partner.
- Work with the MT Department of Commerce (MDOC) to deploy the State Small Business Credit Initiative (SSBCI). MBAC successfully deployed “SSBCI 1.0” over a decade ago. Renewing the SSBCI program will help MBAC partner with local financial institutions and diversify the MBAC loan portfolio.
- MBAC will continue to administer the underwriting and credit analysis portion of the MT Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) Alternative Energy Loan Program.

COVID-19 ADDENDUM CONCLUSION

MBAC will continue to monitor the effectiveness of Covid Addendum and update accordingly throughout the next five years that this current 2023-2027 CEDS strategy is in effect. In addition, MBAC will continue to pursue funding opportunities through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to address infrastructure shortages such as housing. For example, MBAC, Lewis and Clark County, and Hi Country Snack Foods, Inc. utilized ARPA funds to bring a workforce housing project to Lincoln, MT.