

February 25, 2019

Missoula County Fairgrounds

Assessing the Redevelopment Plan

Introduction

M+R was hired by the Missoula County Fairgrounds to assess the Fairgrounds redevelopment plan. The goals were to ascertain public preferences regarding the redevelopment plan overall, specific amenities within the plan (such as a new rodeo grandstands), and to explore ways to fund the phase II of Fairgrounds redevelopment.

To answer these questions, we developed an assessment plan consisting of two components:

- A set of one-on-one interviews with key community leaders and Fairgrounds stakeholders, including ice sports enthusiasts, youth agricultural educators and leaders, neighbors, business leaders, local elected officials and others.
- Scientifically valid telephone surveys, which were conducted by Harstad Strategic Research. Harstad is a well-respected research firm, with a long history of conducting community surveys in Missoula on important issues of the day.

The community surveys and the stakeholder interviews were conducted over the summer and fall of 2019. Following the initial telephone survey of 502 voters in July, we determined that because the fairgrounds is complex with many stakeholder groups and aspects to plans, additional research was necessary. Accordingly, after consultation with Harstad and the Fairgrounds director, we conducted a secondary, supplemental telephone survey of another 502 voters. In addition, the Missoula Area Youth Hockey Association (MAYHA), which manages Glacier Ice Rink, determined that they needed an additional supplemental survey based on a scaled back ice facility. In total, this assessment is the result of communicating with 1,450 likely voters via a set of three telephone surveys, and 36 stakeholders and community leaders.

Executive Summary

Key findings and recommendations from both components of the assessment—the interviews and the telephone survey.

- **The Missoula County Fairgrounds are viewed positively and are an important asset for Missoula County and the community.** This was reflected in the both the telephone survey and the stakeholder interviews. Participants recognize that Fairgrounds redevelopment is long overdue and believe the County should continue to move forward with redevelopment. For the most part, the general public associates the Fairgrounds with the Western Montana Fair, while less is known about the many other activities that occur on the site during the rest of the year. An exception to this is general recognition of the Fairgrounds as the home of Glacier Ice Rink. We recommend the Fairgrounds redefine itself to the public beyond the Fair, as there is interest in seeing the Fairgrounds used more throughout the year. This is especially poignant considering the growth of mid-town, and the opportunity for the MCFG to play a bigger role as a mid-town “hub” of public gathering place for leisure, recreation, entertainment and education. As one interviewee suggested, the Fairgrounds could be a “mid-town version of Caras Park.” This identity branding is important for community “buy-in” and future investment.
- **The public has preferences regarding the various components of the Fairgrounds redevelopment plan but generally prefers for phase II to include all components.** The creation of new green/park space within the property is highly valued, as is enhancing connectivity with the surrounding neighborhood via the establishment of through-trails and removal of the exterior fencing. Additionally, voters and community stakeholders expressed a stronger preference for investing in a new livestock and equestrian center than they did a new rodeo arena or ice rinks. However, while voters and interviewees alike were leery of a new \$35 million ice facility, when asked about a lower cost, phased-in replacement for Glacier Ice Rink, respondents were more enthusiastic in support. “Don’t piece it out” “come together” “package together” were common themes in interviews with stakeholders and community leaders. When asked the open-ended question what are some reasons to support a Fairgrounds bond, youth agriculture, parks and public space, and ice sports were mentioned at nearly the same frequency. This suggests that Fairgrounds redevelopment is best served when the approach for Phase II is inclusive.
- **The research shows some level of tax sensitivity with respect to investing public dollars in the Fairgrounds.** When asked about potential funding through new general obligation bonds, survey respondents and interviewees alike expressed some resistance to new bonding, especially if the cost was comparable to recent general obligation bonds like the library and open space bonds. On the other hand, smaller bond amounts—especially when paired with private funds—had voter support. As a result, we recommend the County do exactly that: seek a relatively small, right-sized bond for the Fairgrounds and mix that revenue with private fundraising efforts in order to fully realize redevelopment at the MCFG.
- **The most effective messages when communicating about the need to invest in Fairgrounds redevelopment involve new educational opportunities for our kids, agriculture, more ice and increased safety.** The Fairgrounds are recognized as part of Missoula’s heritage, and a place for families and the community to come together, as

well as a place for youth agricultural education through programs like 4-H. These are also recognized as key needs to be fulfilled by future investment:

- A new livestock and equestrian center will offer year-round youth agricultural education programs like 4-H. This will promote agricultural, science and technology learning for our kids.
- An updated Fairgrounds can provide a cleaner and safer new livestock education facility for youth learning, and new, year-round ice rinks with adequate locker rooms that meet building safety guidelines for sports facilities
- We can support our community and our families by upgrading our Fairgrounds, ice rinks, and green space — while ensuring the next generation learns the skills necessary to sustain our local food and agricultural economy for the future.

Following this executive summary, we present the results from each component individually, the interviews, and then the telephone survey.



Stakeholder and Community Interviews Summary

During the summer and early fall of 2019, M+R conducted community interviews with 36 key stakeholders and community leaders. The goal was to seek to better understand perceptions of the Missoula County Fairgrounds (MCFG) redevelopment plan and how to fund Phase II, including the new ice rinks, rodeo arena, green space and livestock & equestrian center. All of the interviews were conducted in-person. The interview participants represented a broad range of stakeholders—including City and County leaders, ice sports leaders, business and nonprofit leaders, youth agriculture leaders, and community members with ties to more traditional Fairgrounds activities.

Some of the interviewees had extensive interaction with the Fairgrounds, while others had a more limited connection. However, the vast majority of participants were at least somewhat familiar with the redevelopment plan and vision, and only 17 percent were not familiar with it at all. Slightly more participants had a connection to ice sports, including hockey, than to agricultural or traditional fairground activities.

We used a 23-question interview guide to assist in the informal, conversation-style interviews, crafted with input from the MCFG director, board and staff of Glacier Ice Rink, and the Missoula County 4-H extension agent. In-person interviews usually last about 60 minutes. Notes from those interviews have been compiled and show the following findings.

Key Findings from Community and Stakeholder Interviews

- **The Missoula County Fairgrounds provides a community gathering place that allows rural and urban folks to come together in one location and intermix.** Interviewees were almost all positive about the role of the Fairgrounds, when asked what it provides for the community. In fact, the most oft-repeated word in this section was “community.” People have a sense of the Fairgrounds as a public gathering place for all kinds of people to connect with each other, as well as with Missoula County’s history and rural heritage, although this seemed to be mostly related to the annual Western Montana Fair. It is also known as the home of the Glacier Ice Rink. While most comments were positive, a few interviewees felt that the Fairgrounds was underutilized, or even “wasted.”
- **Redevelopment of the Missoula County Fairgrounds should be a priority for the County.** When asked whether Fairgrounds redevelopment should be a priority for Missoula County, nearly two-thirds of participants agreed that it should, while the other third was unsure. Only one person thought that it should not be a priority. Participants recognize that Fairgrounds redevelopment is long overdue, and believe the County should continue to move forward with redevelopment.
- **Favorite components of the plan included “connectivity” and green space, closely followed the livestock and equestrian center and learning center with Butterfly House and Insectarium.** In contrast, the most commonly cited “dislike,” or “room for improvement” component of the plan was the perceived lack of parking or traffic management generally.
- **Funding options—blend public and private funds.** Interviewees indicated that a mixture of public and private monies would be the best option for funding redevelopment, including general obligation bonds, corporate money and private

donations. The vast majority were either uncertain about the political landscape for investing public money in the Fairgrounds. Some felt that it was negative. Interviewees' opinions varied widely as to which particular plan components would be more likely to garner voter support as part of a bond measure, with a plurality believing that all components would be supported. Interestingly, participants overall felt that it was more "reasonable" to ask voters to support a \$15 million bond measure for a livestock center, rodeo and green space than they did a similarly-priced bond measure for a new Glacier Ice Rink.

- **Increasing taxes and "bond fatigue" were cited as the main obstacles to a successful bond measure.** However, interviewees also mentioned the perception that the Fairgrounds is only used once a year during the Western Montana Fair as another challenge to securing support.
- **There is recognition among ice sports participants that demand for ice time exceeds the current capacity of Glacier Ice Rink, but interviewees appear to be somewhat cost-sensitive when considering a new facility.** While only a plurality (40 percent) of interviewees felt that a \$12-\$18 million bond for Glacier Ice Rink was "reasonable to ask the public to support," 70 percent of interviewees thought it would be reasonable to ask the public to support a smaller, scaled-back, \$7 million version of a new ice rink with fewer amenities.
- **Some level of disagreement and strained relations exists between various Glacier Ice Rink users.** There is a perception among some ice sports participants that the current governance structure is not equitable. These issues should be resolved and relationships between ice user groups should be strengthened prior to consideration of any bond measure or capital campaign for a new ice facility, as unity is key to a successful outcome.

What does the Missoula County Fairgrounds provide for the community?



Community Survey Overview

During the summer of 2019, M+R worked with Harstad Strategic Research, the Missoula County Fairgrounds and representatives from the Missoula Area Youth Hockey Association (MAYHA) to develop and implement a 20-minute telephone survey of 502 likely 2020 Missoula County Voters.

Following that initial survey, the Fairgrounds Director, in consultation with Harstad and M+R, decided that additional information was needed, so a second, follow-up telephone survey of an additional 502 voters was designed and placed in the field. Following that, the Missoula Area Youth Hockey Association (in consultation with M+R and the Fairgrounds director) commissioned Harstad for another supplemental survey to better refine and understand community desires. It is not uncommon to do multiple surveys when introducing new ideas and proposals to the community, particularly with a project as complex as the Fairgrounds. Seeking community input and clarity help to refine the future of the fairgrounds as a key community asset and gathering place. This section summarizes the results and key findings from the three telephone surveys.

Key Findings

- The Fairgrounds are viewed very positively by a majority of County voters.
- Fairgrounds redevelopment meets a community need to create more youth agricultural education opportunities by constructing a new livestock and equestrian center.
- The 30- year old Glacier Ice Rink needs to be upgraded and made safer for our kids.
- A renovated Fairgrounds provides unique education and learning opportunities for our kids with programs like 4-H, as well as ice sports.
- The Fairground are recognized as an important part of the Missoula County history and heritage that should be preserved.
- Voters are somewhat cost-sensitive regarding the amount of a potential bond for Fairgrounds redevelopment. The cost is a bigger factor than the specific content. Accordingly, we found support for a scaled-back version of the bond.

Responses to Community Survey Questions

- **Voters feel overwhelmingly positive towards the Fairgrounds**, as well as two other Missoula County community assets. (Negative feelings were in the single digits for all three):
 - Fort Missoula Regional Park (66%)
 - Center for the Performing Arts (58%)
 - Missoula County Fairgrounds (65%)
- **A \$35 million bond issue, including a livestock center, rodeo, park space and two new ice rinks elicits bare majority, soft support.** Only 14 percent of voters say they would definitely vote yes:

“Shall the Board of County Commissioners of Missoula County be authorized to issue general obligation bonds up to \$35 million for the purposes of redeveloping the Missoula County Fairgrounds, including – construction of a new livestock and equestrian center for youth agricultural education programs, a new rodeo arena, ten additional acres of parkland and green space, and TWO new ice rinks for hockey and ice sports and activities?”

Total Vote yes.....	53%
Total Vote no	40%
Definitely vote yes.....	14%
Probably vote yes.....	39%
Probably vote no.....	19%
Definitely vote no	21%
DK/NS	7%

➤ **A \$15 million bond issue, including a livestock center, park space, and new ice rinks (no rodeo) elicits two-thirds majority support:**

“Shall the Board of County Commissioners of Missoula County be authorized to issue bonds up to \$15 Million for redeveloping the Missoula County Fairgrounds including a new livestock and horse center for youth ad education such as 4-H, ten acres of green park space including playgrounds, and new ice rinks for year-round indoor hockey and ice sports. This bond issue would increase property taxes on a \$250,000 home by about \$18 a year.”

Total Vote yes.....	64%
Total Vote no	32%
Definitely vote yes.....	19%
Probably vote yes.....	45%
Probably vote no.....	15%
Definitely vote no	17%
DK/NS.....	2%

➤ **A \$9 million bond issue, including a livestock center and park space (but no rodeo or ice facilities) also elicits two-thirds majority support:**

“Shall the Board of County Commissioners of Missoula County be authorized to issue general obligation bonds up to \$9 Million for the purposes of redeveloping the Missoula County Fairgrounds, including – construction of a new livestock and equestrian horse center for youth agricultural education programs, and ten additional acres of green park space including a band shell, playgrounds, and picnic pavilions. This bond issue would increase property taxes on a median value home in the county by \$10 a year.”

Total Vote yes.....	66%
Total Vote no	30%
Definitely vote yes.....	23%
Probably vote yes.....	43%
Probably vote no.....	17%
Definitely vote no	13%
DK/NS.....	4%

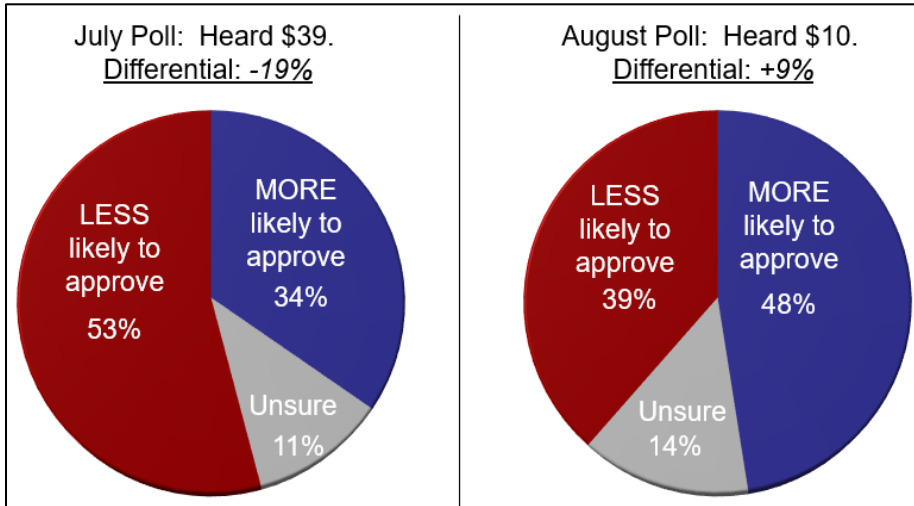
➤ **Voters are much more likely to support a bond measure for construction of ice rinks, when it is paired with private fundraising effort to cover the full cost of new ice rinks:**

“Suppose the building of the new ice rinks from this bond issue were supplemented with a commitment to raise several million dollars in private fundraising to help cover the full cost of building the ice rinks. Would this additional private fundraising make you MORE likely or LESS likely to vote to approve this bond issue for the new fairgrounds, park space, and ice rinks?”

MORE likely to approve it 72%
 LESS likely to approve it..... 14%
 Difference: More-Less +58%

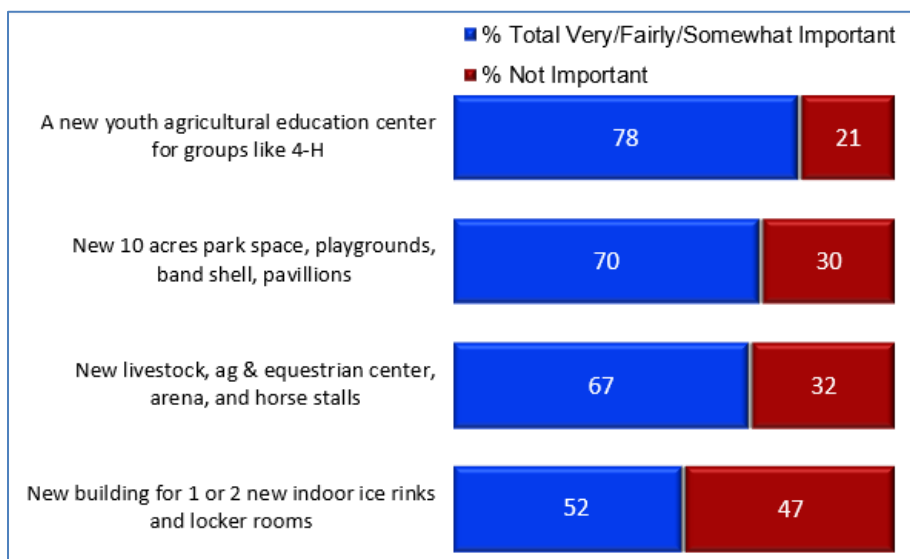
- **Not surprisingly, voters react much better to a \$10 annual tax increase than a \$39 annual tax increase.** Hearing that a \$35 million bond measure may cost about \$39 per hear moves voters significantly in a negative direction, while a \$10 tax increases support for a \$9 million bond:

“Suppose this bond issue would increase yearly property taxes on a median value home by...”



- **Voters clearly prioritized youth agriculture education, park space, and a new livestock center over other facilities:**

“Let me read you some new facilities that could be part of the broader bond issue for the Missoula County Fairgrounds project. For each one, please tell me how important you consider it to be included in this proposed construction project at the fairgrounds – very important, fairly important, just somewhat important, or not that important.”



- **No one dimension or feature alone accounts for the volunteered reasons to support the Fairgrounds bond issue.** Prompted self-generated reasons offered by voters in support of public funding to redevelop the Fairgrounds can be generalized into three broad categories: 1) supporting year-round opportunities and educational activities for our kids, 2) building community and connecting to our heritage, 3) upgrading facilities to improve safety.

SUPPORT YOUTH / RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES (NET)	63%
Support youth agricultural education / 4H	25%
More constructive year-round activities for kids / off the street	20%
Like the parks / green space / trails / pavilion	16%
Like the winter activities / ice rinks / skating	14%
Favor parks and recreation / gives people something to do	10%
Like the rodeo arena / horse center	7%
Like the hockey / family and friends play hockey	6%
Better access / expand schedules for ice time	6%
It is what we do for fun	4%
Family and friends use the facilities	3%
People here like the outdoors	2%
COMMUNITY / HERITAGE / BRINGS TOGETHER (NET)	52%
Brings the community together / good for community	20%
The fair is a community attraction / value to Missoula	19%
Good for economy / jobs / draws visitors to the area	16%
Keeps it in town / accessible to all	8%
Missoula is growing / meet needs of growing population	7%
FACILITIES NEED UPGRADE / SAFETY (NET)	43%
Fairgrounds need updating / improve safety	33%
Makes good use of location / currently wasted space	11%
Need to fix grandstands / accident waiting to happen	6%
FUNDING COMMENTS (NET)	17%
It is worth it / small tax increase for needed improvements	14%
Nice to have private funding sources / not just tax increase	4%
Too expensive / taxes already too high	2%
None / nothing in particular	1%

Net mentions of youth ag, 4-H, equestrian – 28%
 Net mentions of parks, pavilions, recreation – 23%
 Net mentions of ice or hockey – 21%

- **The five most convincing arguments in FAVOR of a bond for Fairgrounds redevelopment include the identified need for a facility for expanded youth agricultural education programs, ensuring food and agricultural sustainability, and preserving the history and traditions of the Fairgrounds:**

Year-round youth ag & stem type education – This investment will provide for the first time a livestock and horse center to offer year-round youth agricultural education programs like 4-H.
 TOTAL CONVINCING = 66%

Ensure food & ag sustainability – Investing in a new livestock center for youth agricultural programming ensures that the next generation learns the skills necessary to sustain our local food and agricultural economy into the future.
TOTAL CONVINCING = 59%

Inadequate ice rink needs locker rooms – The current indoor ice rink & livestock building has inadequate locker rooms. The girls’ changing rooms are located outdoors in a temporary trailer, and some of the boys locker rooms are made of plywood with only space heaters. It doesn’t meet building safety guidelines for sports facilities. TOTAL CONVINCING = 60%

Preserve county history and heritage – The fairgrounds have been a vital part of Missoula County for over 100 years and contain many historic buildings. We should invest in preserving our fairgrounds and our connection to our agricultural heritage and traditions.
TOTAL CONVINCING = 56%

Major draw for families – This new livestock center and parkland would be a major fresh draw for our residents. It would include 10 acres of green space including park space, playgrounds, a band shell, picnic pavilions. It would become a much-used attraction for pedestrians, bicyclists, and families in an underserved neighborhood with heavy traffic.
TOTAL CONVINCING = 57%

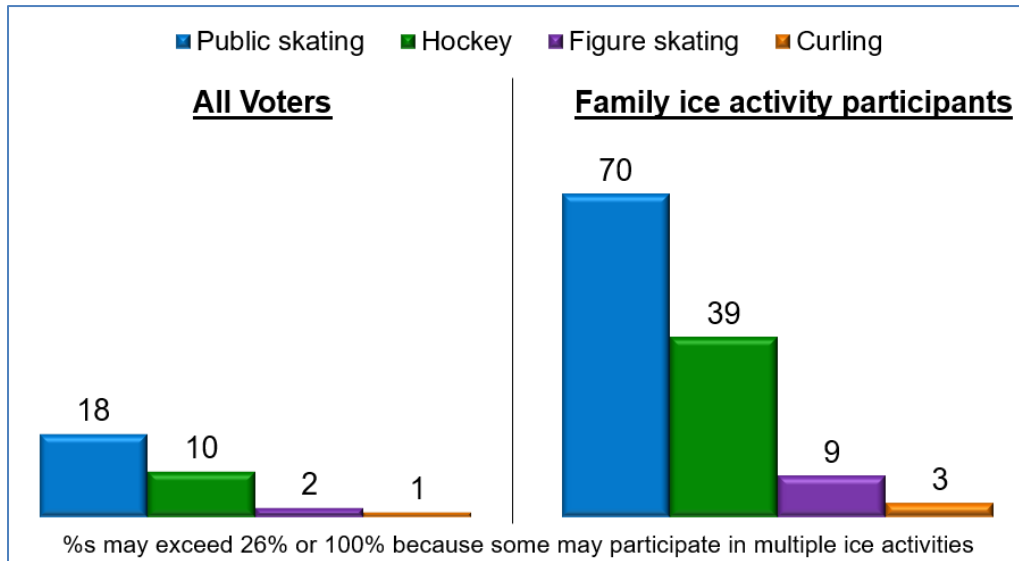
➤ **The most convincing argument AGAINST a bond for Fairgrounds redevelopment revolved around “taxes”:**

Taxes – This is NOT the right time to raise property taxes.
TOTAL CONVINCING = 62%

Move to rural & sell current land – The Fairgrounds have been neglected by the county for decades -- in SPITE of many broken past promises to restore it. At this point, maybe it should just be moved out of town – or just torn down altogether. TOTAL CONVINCING = 21%

Not worth it without horseracing – The county took away horseracing, which was the heart and soul of the fairgrounds. Without horseracing, the fairgrounds is simply not worth the investment of more tax money.
TOTAL CONVINCING = 35%

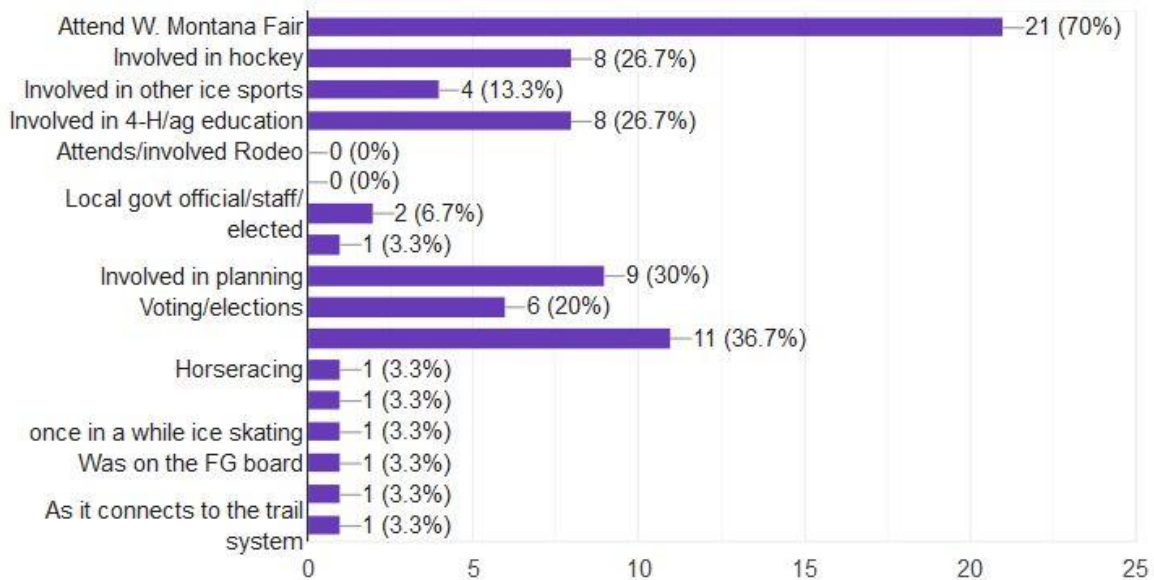
- **About 26 percent of county voters or a family member participates in an ice sport at Glacier Ice Rink. Among them, public skating is the dominant activity, followed by hockey:**



Appendix A: Responses to Specific Stakeholder Interview Questions

Following is a list of questions asked of those interviewed and an overview of their responses. Notable quotes from respondents are included.

In what ways do you interact with the County Fairground? (30 responses)



In what ways does the Fairgrounds serve the community? What does it provide? (30 responses)

- A neighborhood, community place where people can come together (20)
 - Diversity—blends rural and urban people (11)
- A place to do ice sports (9)
- A place for large events, including the W. Montana Fair (8)
- A place to connect with our cultural heritage, traditions, history (7)
- A place for agriculture-related things (6)
- Open space/urban park (3)

“A place where we can literally bring all population regardless of demographics together for something that is meaningful to them.”

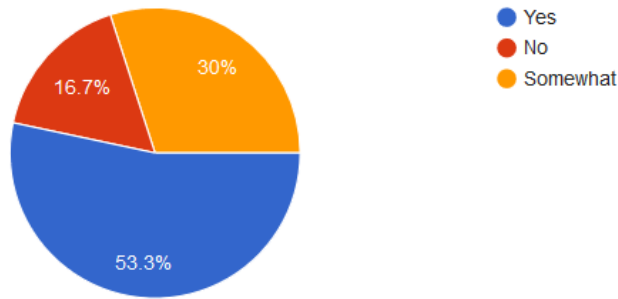
“It provides us an opportunity for people to come together and establish social and political common ground – on common ground.”

“Provides an opportunity to have a county fair and for a little bit of rural life to be up close and personal for people who live in the city.”

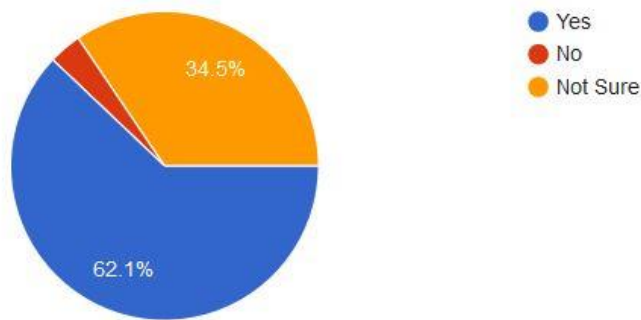
“It’s a revitalization of a central, historic landscape that holds our cultural heritage.

“Provides a great amount of joy to vast amount of people.”

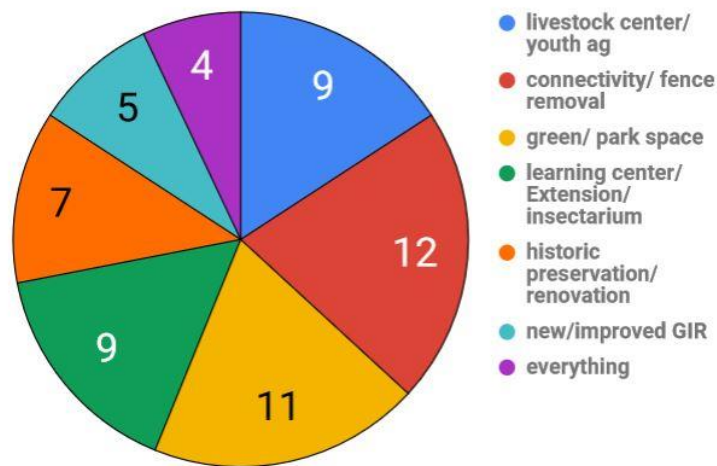
Are you familiar with the Fairgrounds redevelopment plan? (30 responses)



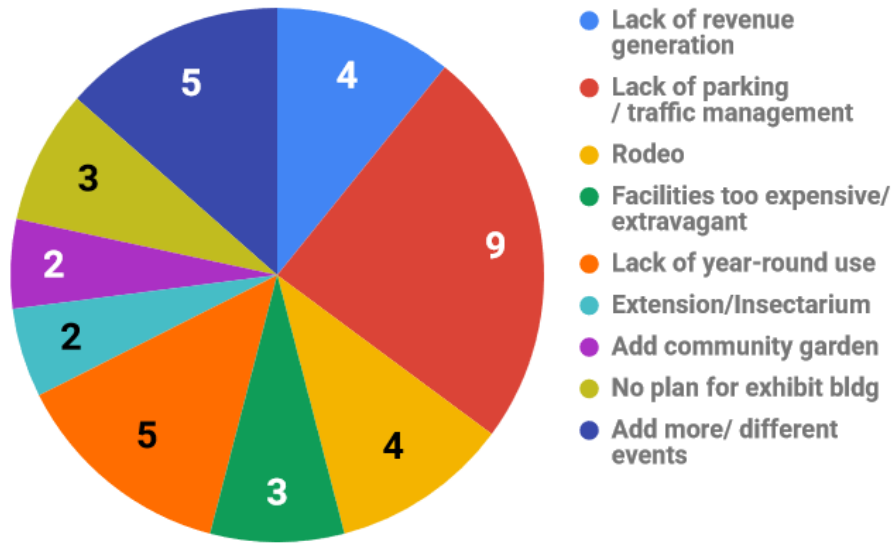
Do you think redevelopment of the Fairgrounds should be a priority for the county? (29 responses)



What do you like best about the plan? (29 responses)



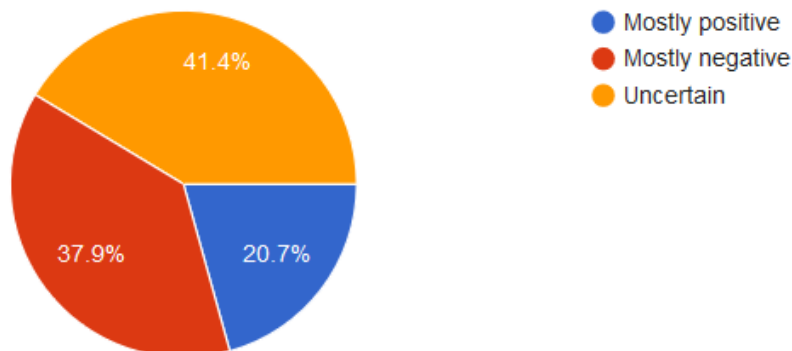
**What is your least favorite part of the plan, or where do you see room for improvement?
(32 responses)**



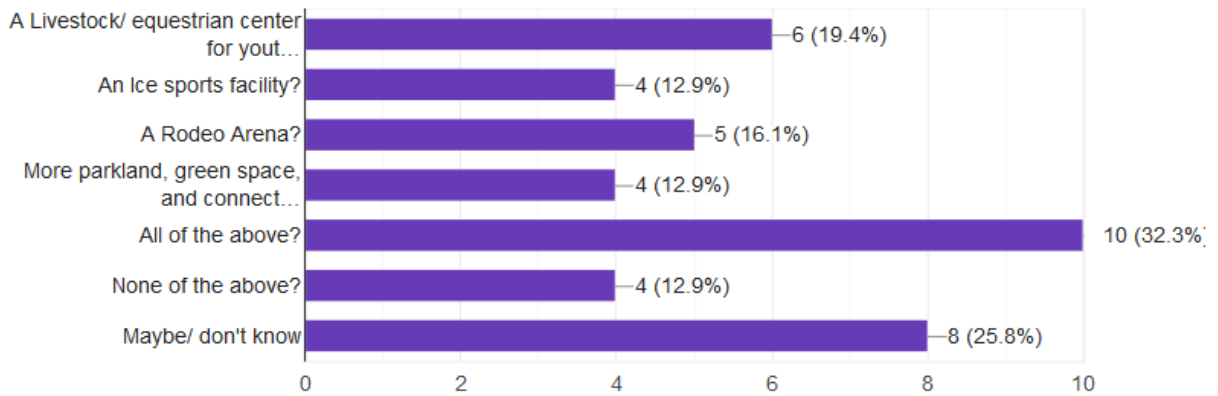
**What do you think are some good options for funding redevelopment of the Fairgrounds?
(27 responses)**

- Public-private blend (10)
- Business sponsorships, naming rights (7)
- Private funds (6)
- User fees (5)
- On-site revenue (4)
- No "good" option (3)
- GO Bond/public financing (2)
- Tax Increment Financing (2)

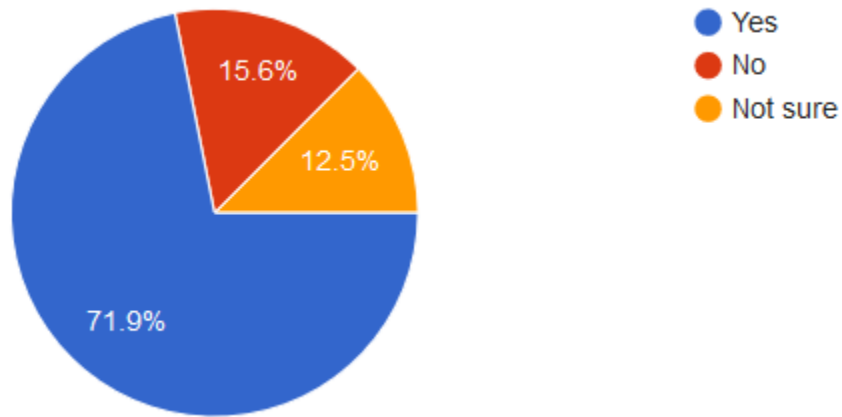
How do you think the political landscape is for investing public money in the County Fairgrounds generally? (29 responses)



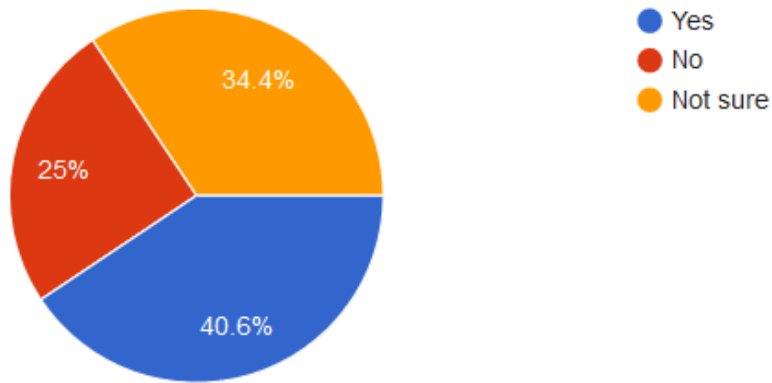
Do you think the public would support a bond measure to build...? (31 responses)



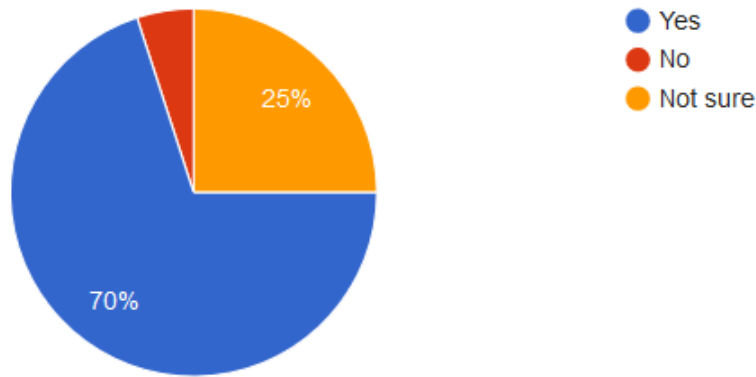
Potentially a \$12-15M bond for the rodeo arena, youth agricultural center, and five acres of new parkland would cost the owner of a median price home about \$18/year or about \$1.50/month – do think this is a reasonable amount of funds to ask the public for? (32 responses)



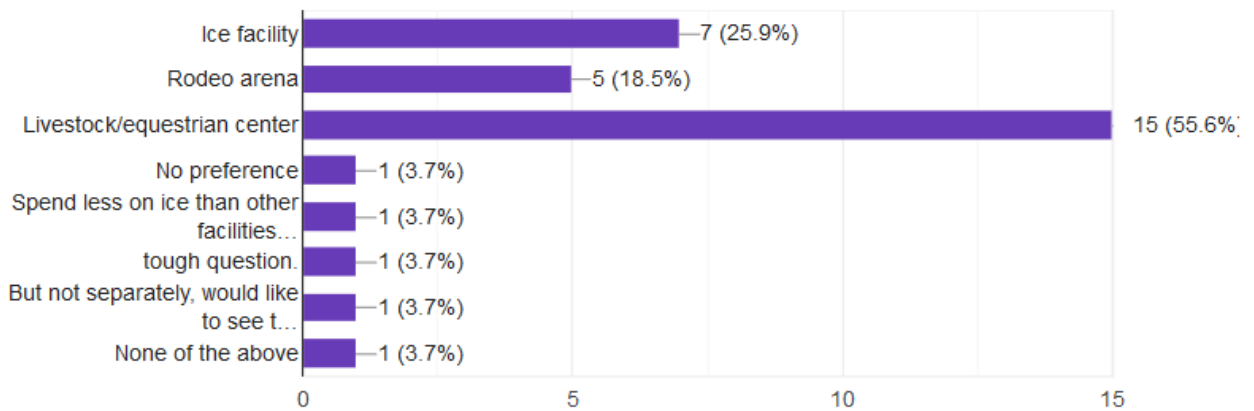
Phase I of a new ice facility could include a new indoor ice rink and a curling rink for an additional \$12-18M – do you think this is a reasonable amount to ask the public for? (32 responses)



Do you think the public would support a smaller ask for just a new ice rink around \$7M that didn't include as many amenities? (20 responses)



If you had to choose between using public funding for an ice facility, rodeo arena or a livestock/equestrian center, which would you choose? (27 responses)



What support would be necessary to secure passage of a bond measure? (verbatim responses)

- Put everything in one bond to get broad support. GIR and the ice leaders. GIR folks will carry one half of the electorate and traditional ag 4H folks the rest. Figure out how to message to those who only use it for the Fair once a year.
- Unified ice support, including curlers, figure skating, hockey, etc—all these groups being publicly supportive. It will be challenging if you don't have that. But not everyone has agreed to the unification plan.
- A PR campaign showing how much the fairgrounds is used and as a part of life. And how it could be better. Kids and 4H messaging would be good. There is some pride in these programs and what they have done historically.
- Urban "hipsters" who support local food and ag could be helpful.
- Highlight historical importance of the Fair.
- Promote the contribution to tourism of ice sports/comps.
- Demonstrate that it can bring in \$.

- Get all the rodeo and livestock groups, farmers and ranchers, 4H (state and national), neighbors who would be impacted by traffic etc. Schools, UM. Climate groups, if you can show sustainability in redevelopment.
- A lot of rural county validators.
- We need the city to support.
- Highlight youth activities and baby animals, and clearly express how it will benefit rural parts of the County. Don't piece it out – promote it all as one thing so that things aren't competing against each other.
- Ag community to come together for the rodeo livestock piece – both conventional and new farmers, and a commitment to making it serve beginning farmers. Sports communities should also come together to support, even public skating piece. City and county parks and trails departments, and Let's Move and physical activity advocates, plus neighboring business community supporting the green space as attracting business to the area. There would need to be a nod toward enhancing business and redeveloping central Missoula. It's a different crowd in mid-town than in downtown. Need county residents to come understand that it is theirs.
- Make the argument of the economic investment that the community could gain from the facilities.
- County Commissioners, City Council and the Mayor. It's critical that all of these are packaged together. We don't want to pitch ice skaters against 4H. That is lose-lose. Being able to truly market the project in ways that demonstrate value to as many people as possible would be really advantageous.
- Making the buildings multi-use so you can show that it's not just for once a year. Eg: Made Fair
- It has to be well thought out and well-coordinated, easy to understand, and spelled out for community so people understand the concepts. Articulates the benefit to community from the bigger picture of facility. Don't talk about open space, parks and trails.
- Schools including MCPS, the agricultural community. Tie to local food movement -- foodies. Hunter-anglers.
- Mid-town Assoc, Downtown Assoc, Mayor, City Council, County Commissioners. Need livestock and rodeo would have to make the case for it and help promote the bond to the public.
- Business community and average homeowners who will be paying the taxes for it.
- Be inclusive of the entire spectrum of cultural interests, even if they are not as savory to the typical downtown Missoulian.
- Dedicate oversize parking to appeal to the rednecks. Provide cheap beer.
- People will vote for it – they are like sheep. They won't even read it. The people that want this stuff are mostly renters, and not conservative.
- County and city government leaders.
- Demonstrating value through privately raised money that augments public. Must be seen as an investment, not a public works project. Need to demonstrate "why." Need all the ice users to advocate strongly.
- Liberals will vote for anything good for the community, but conservative may not oppose it because of the livestock piece and may even be excited about it.

- City voters, but they probably need work to get to "yes."
- Tie livestock center to 4H
- Really broad-based support, lots of key members of community in agreement, elected, MCPS, Destination Missoula, hotels, restaurants. Business people.

What might be some of the speed bumps or challenges to securing voter support?

- Tax/bond fatigue (22)
- Perception of narrow usage/interest (9)
- Facility overpriced/high cost (5)
- Discord among ice user groups (5)
- Other community priorities (3)

In your opinion what are some of the most compelling reasons FOR investing in the fairgrounds? (30 responses)

- History, tradition, agricultural heritage (9)
- Brings people/community together (9)
- Agriculture (9)
- Ugly eyesore, in need of renovation (5)
- Business/economic benefit (5)
- Youth development/education (4)
- Protect from commercial development (2)

In your opinion what are some of the most compelling reasons NOT to invest in the fairground's redevelopment? (27 responses)

- Limited use/"one week a year" (10)
- Enough taxes/bonds (8)
- Move the MCFG and develop the land (6)
- High cost (6)
- Other priorities (4)

"No revenue will be generated from this development plan. Kids aren't doing 4H now."

"Ice isn't really accessible to all—the sport has a high cost of entry."

"It's just the Fair, which serves a limited audience for a limited period of time. We're bonded out."

What motivates you to support the Fairgrounds? (22 responses)

- Agriculture and rural heritage (11)
- Connecting the community (8)
- Ice sports/Glacier Ice Rink (4)
- Western MT Fair (2)
- It's a neighborhood asset (2)

It's how a county defines itself and celebrates what's important.

I'm big support of community assets like parks and open space for our kids. If you want to do something that will be a legacy for the community, then I'm all for it.

Then great energy coming from the Fairgrounds and the current Fairgrounds director.

I'm an advocate of public facilities that serve a broad range of people. It really could be a "Caras Park South," but even bigger, and more.

I live in the neighborhood and I love it.

Even if people don't have a close tie to it, they know it is there because of our agricultural heritage. Like the concept of keeping agricultural heritage and innovation at the center of what Missoula is, and very visible.

I support agriculture.

I want it to be amazing and connect the community, but it needs to be revenue-generating because we need it.

I love the Western Montana Fair. I like the rodeo, green space sounds appealing.

It's community space. Rural agricultural heritage.

Hockey.

The community aspect of many people coming together. Butterfly house, demonstration gardens. It's a nice place to go and walk.

I like skating and hockey.

I happen to like people, and I like them more when they are happy and positive, and if going to fair or skating is their form of happiness, then I fully support that.

Community building, connection to history. We are incredibly lucky to have this gigantic chunk of land right in town, and we should update these space and make them relevant. It's a gem.

It's been talked about for years, so let's finally get it done! The existing 4H building is an embarrassment.

To demonstrate and prioritize agriculture in our community

Youth and local connection to food and ag.

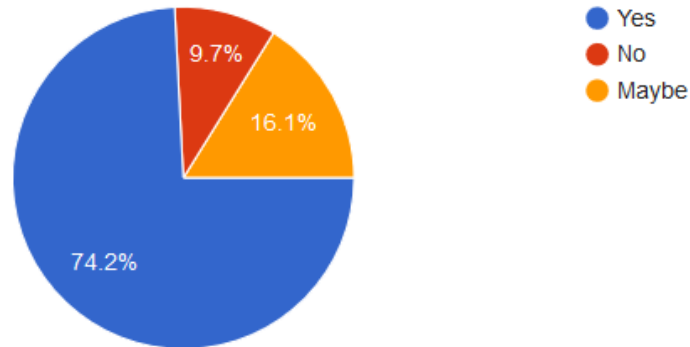
I was a 4H kid.

Connecting people to agriculture.

Youth agricultural education

Glacier Ice Rink

If the County decides to move forward with a bond measure for Fairgrounds redevelopment, would you support that effort? (31 responses)



Other reflections on the Fairgrounds redevelopment effort? (27 responses)

There is a tremendous emotional connection and goodwill to the fairgrounds, whether its folks who went through 4H. There is a history and continuity to the fairgrounds that doesn't happen for other places. This can translate into a successful bond measure.

Governance of ice rink is an issue. If it's on public land, then the revenue should go back to facility not to a single user group. Right now, MAYHA gets all the revenue. The entire community including ice user groups should be on the governance board.

Missoula in the "Engen era" has done a really good job investing in public spaces that provide community.

It can't all be done in one day or one year—it's a work in progress.

Adult hockey involvement may decline. I don't see the 20-30 somethings coming into game.

Maybe we call the livestock center something else that encourages more multi-use?

The rural heritage part of the message is really important. As development happens, we can't lose the soul of our community.

Could we have a winter farmers market in the livestock center?

Encourage environmental sustainability in the construction, including waste disposal, composting, compostable cups and plates.

There's no way that the parking is adequate in the plan.

This has to be a collaborative collective effort between all stakeholder in terms of outreach to their members and constituencies to be successful. There will be work to do to get all the ice users together.

Is this going to be a Fairgrounds or an events center?

They should do more weddings and events year round, particularly when they are done with renovation of the Commercial Building.

The Fairgrounds could be the “epicenter” of enviro, ecological, agricultural education for the community. This whole project should also be a statewide model for reducing waste, recycling, composting, and otherwise supporting the farming community.

GIR is an example of a private facility on public land and it doesn’t work—the funders manage it to the interest of SOME people, but it’s not community oriented.

Why should Missoula County pay for a Fairgrounds used by all of western Montana?

Treatment of animals as entertainment-- including the rodeo--equates to animal cruelty.

I don’t see Glacier Ice Rink growing without massive changes in management.

If a job applicant comes in with 4H on their resume, their application goes right to the top—employers want kids that did 4H because they know the values that the program instilled in these kids.

“The Fairgrounds could be a mid-town version of Caras Park.”

The livestock center needs to be based on the highest standards for keeping animals.

Appendix B: List of Interview Participants in Conversations

Amber Sherrill, Missoula City Council
Blake Niccolanzzo, Bonfire Branding
Bonnie Buckingham, Missoula Community
Food and Agriculture Coalition
Bryan von Lossberg, Missoula City Council
Dale Clouse, Livestock Committee
Dave Dittloff, Montana Conservation Voters
Dave Westfall, Lewis & Clark Neighborhood
Donna Gaulker, Missoula Parks & Rec.
Doug Standley, MBIA
Dwight Easton, Missoula Organization of
Realtors
Eric Gabster, MCFAC/Midtown
Erin Miller, Forward MT
Genevieve Marsh, Garden City Harvest
Gwen Jones, Missoula City Council
Hatton Littman, MCPS
Heather Harp, Missoula City Council
Jean Zozel, Garden City Harvest

Jeri Delys, 4H Council
Jerry Marks, Missoula Weed District
Jill Dunn, MRA, Figure skater
Jim Harmon, historian
John Engen, City of Missoula
Jon Turner, 4H Council
Jon Wilkins, retired City Council
Juanita Vero, Missoula County
Julie Merritt, Missoula City Council
Kim Latrelle, Chamber of Commerce
Lee Banville, Missoula Curlers
Melanie Brock, MRA, Brock Consulting
Michael Burks, former Maulers owner
Mike Nugent, Berkshire Hathaway
Nick Checota, Logjam, Glacier Ice Rink
Shane Clouse, Chamber Ag Committee
Stacey Anderson, Missoula City Council
Susan Kohler, Missoula Aging Services
Tom Andres, Future Farmers of America

Additionally, we had multiple, informal in-depth, open-ended conversations with:

Emily Brock, Fairgrounds Director
Clarence Wildeboer, Glacier Ice Rink
Campbell Barrett, County Extension

Derek Kellenberg, board member,
Missoula Area Youth Hockey Association
Laura Henning, Glacier Ice Rink