



MISSOULA COUNTY RURAL INITIATIVES  
200 West Broadway Street  
Missoula, Montana 59802-4292

OFFICE LOCATION: 317 Woody Street  
PHONE: 406.258.3432  
FAX: 406.258.3920  
[www.co.missoula.mt.us/rural](http://www.co.missoula.mt.us/rural)

**Report to the Seeley Lake Community Council on the  
Seeley Lake Regional Plan Downtown Implementation Event  
November 29, 2011  
2:00 p.m. -7:00 p.m.**

In March 2011, the Seeley Lake Community Council requested the County move forward with implementation of the Seeley Lake Regional Plan via zoning and other tools for the downtown area. The Council specifically asked for information about the process to develop zoning. (See attached letter.) Zoning projects can vary widely in terms of public process from those that follow the minimal public hearing process outlined in state law to others that (more commonly) involve extensive public involvement.

In an effort to understand public interests and expectations regarding zoning in the downtown Seeley Lake area, Rural Initiatives staff held a "check in" event with the community on November 29<sup>th</sup>. This event provided information and collected input on the elements of the Seeley Lake Regional Plan that are particularly relevant to the downtown area.

This document summarizes what we learned from the downtown event. Rural Initiatives staff plans to attend your February Seeley Lake Community Council meeting. We recommend reviewing this information and discussing possible next steps at that meeting.

**Description of Event**

The Seeley Lake Regional Plan Downtown Implementation Event was an open house style event intended to:

1. Explore what has been happening in downtown Seeley Lake since the Seeley Lake Regional Plan was adopted in January 2011.
2. Provide displays showing current downtown data and community activities that help carry out many of the Plan's goals and objectives.
3. Provide public opportunity to give input on key issues and suggestions about priorities for future activities in the downtown area.

In order to encourage broad participation in the event, Rural Initiatives contacted local individuals and made the following efforts to advertise the event:

- Announcements posted in the Seeley Swan Pathfinder on November 10<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>
- Advertisements posted in the Seeley Swan Pathfinder on November 17<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>
- RI E-Newsletter included event announcement in the November issue
- Postcards with the event announcement mailed to 645 property owners in the downtown area

- Invitations mailed to each district in the area, including: Cemetery District, School District, Refuse District, Hospital District, Sewer District, Water District, and Fire District
- Announcements submitted to KECI, KPAX, Missoulain, and MissoulaEvents.net for inclusion on community calendars
- Emailed announcement sent to email list for Seeley Lake Community Council and Seeley Lake Community Council Newsletter
- Flyers provided to local volunteers for posting in public locations

The following displays were staffed by Rural Initiatives during the event:

Display #1 Existing conditions – Provided updated demographic and economic data for the downtown area. Maps and information about existing facilities and services were also provided.

Display #2 Seeley Lake Downtown Goals and Activities – Provided key goals from the plan and examples of community activities underway that implement these goals.

Display #3 Seeley Lake Land Use Strategies – Provided information about existing land uses and the recommended land use map from the plan. Acknowledged that implementation of the plan through zoning was identified as a priority. Identified key land use strategies and how zoning could be used to implement these strategies.

Each display included a feedback form and the results of the feedback have been tabulated. A summary of key points and tabulated responses are provided below.

### **Summary of Results from Event**

- Numerous community organizations and districts are busy working to implement the goals of the plan. Many groups and individuals provided RI with updated information about community activities.
- Twenty-five individuals attended the event.
- We received between 8 and 11 feedback forms from each of the displays. At Display #3 we also received input (drawn on a map) from a few individuals regarding the perceived approximate edge of “downtown” Seeley Lake.

Key points from the feedback forms are outlined below. Please note that this summary does not include every comment. Copies of feedback forms can be obtained from Rural Initiatives.

Please also note that the limited response cannot be deemed representative of the community. There may be a need for gathering additional feedback on various issues and topics. It is typically common to continue to check in with the public as you implement a plan. This is particularly true when contemplating regulatory tools such as zoning. Also, Missoula County typically wants to see significant support for zoning before making major investments in such a project.

**Feedback on Seeley Lake Downtown Event Displays**

<b>Potential Priorities for Downtown Seeley Lake</b>	<b>#</b>
<b>What are current priority issues for downtown Seeley Lake (top 3)</b>	
• Job opportunities	7
• Affordable housing	5
• Attractive business environment	5
<b>What services or facilities should be a priority for investment in downtown Seeley Lake? (top 3)</b>	
• Sewer system	7
• Economic development assistance	4
• Road maintenance	3

**What are the key strengths of downtown Seeley Lake? (multiple responses noted in parentheses)**

1. Services (3)
2. Pathways (2)
3. Its people (2)
4. Uniqueness (2)
5. Variety of businesses
6. The library!
7. Lakes
8. We are not Missoula

**What action strategies should the community focus on in terms of implementing the Seeley lake Regional Plan and supporting a thriving downtown Seeley Lake community?**

1. Develop a sewer to support growth and development of an effective attractive community. (3)
2. Need to develop shared vision and address concerns and fears (2)
3. Less government interference more individual freedom (2)
4. Zoning (2)
5. Walkable attractive, pedestrian-focused downtown (2)
6. Make affordable housing, energy efficient, comfortable housing available
7. Build tourism industry
8. Support efforts to maintain healthy environment
9. The motto – symbol – saying for Seeley Lake “Wild-woolly-wonderful-wilderness-welcome”

**If zoning is proposed what should it absolutely not do?**

- Adversely affect property rights and values and limit land use (4)
- It should not allow high emissions or pollution
- Encourage development outside existing (Wildland Urban Interface)
- Violate zoning laws. Work to mollify if needed.

**If zoning is developed for the downtown area, what do you think it should accomplish?**

- Address residential density (4)  
(Encourage growth close to available services, Retain density of development in town, Increase potential for high density affordable housing, Discourage high rise. Prevent South Tahoe look.)

- Address land use (3)  
(Define commercial area, Include open spaces, Trailer homes)
- Set standards for appearance. (3)
- Concern about costs (2)
- Concern about government control and impacts on property rights(2)
- Make town more walkable
- Minimal environmental impacts.
- Plan development – established districts.

<b>Assessment of zoning to implement the Seeley Regional Plan in the downtown area</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Med</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Overall level of priority for zoning the downtown area	5	1	0	4	0
Level of priority for addressing issues through zoning					
a. Designate different densities for residential and other uses	4	2	1	3	0
b. Identify certain areas for certain land uses (commercial, industrial, low density residential, multi-family residential, etc.)	4	3	0	3	0
c. Protect sensitive areas (e.g. building setbacks from water courses)	5	2	2	1	0
d. Include design requirements for downtown commercial areas (e.g. community theme, landscaping, building design requirements)	4	2	1	4	0
e. Include design requirements such as screening for industrial operations	5	1	2	3	0
f. Explore zoning tools to promote affordable housing	6	2	0	2	0
Other					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rules for new development are acceptable if reasonable. But to reclassify existing development previously approved by the county is punitive and unfair.</li> <li>• Do it!</li> <li>• But to do this, sewer needed.</li> <li>• Explore tools to promote affordable housing</li> </ul>					