



Athol Community Review

October 4-6, 2016

Economic Development

Infrastructure / Transportation

Land Use Planning

Report printing courtesy of Idaho Transportation Department

Athol Community Review Report

October 4-6, 2016

The Idaho Community Review Program is a collaboration of federal, state, tribal, and local governments along with the private sector. It is coordinated by the Idaho Rural Partnership.



For more information call 208-332-1730 or visit www.irp.idaho.gov.

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 Merritt Brothers
 Silverwood Amusement Park

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City of Sandpoint
 City of Post Falls
 Idaho Rural Water Association
 Idaho Smart Growth
 Panhandle Area Council

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Athol Church of God

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PART I EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Idaho Rural Partnership received a Community Review application from the City of Athol in March 2016. This application is found in [Appendix A](#). Planning for the Community Review formally began in August 2016 and the review itself was conducted October 4-6, 2016.

The Athol Community Review (called Community Review or simply Review throughout this document) concentrated on the three focus areas selected by the community: (1) Economic Development, (2) Infrastructure / Transportation, and (3) Land Use Planning. In addition to a series of meetings and site visits related to these focus areas, the Review also included a series of community listening sessions with selected stakeholder groups and a survey mailed to all Athol households and all Kootenai County households within a two-mile radius of Athol. A summary of community comments and concerns and a summary of community listening sessions are followed by an overview of “opportunity areas” identified for each of the three focus areas. The last part of the Executive Summary is the Strategic Sequence Going Forward, which guides the sequence of many of the recommendations found inside of the many opportunity areas.

For a reader not familiar with the Review process and reading straight through this report, Part II gives Background and Overview that answers many questions left unanswered in the Executive Summary – such readers may do well to skip ahead to that section and then come back.

Summary of Community Comments and Concerns

The following comments and concerns were raised frequently by residents and leaders of Athol and Kootenai County in various meetings and conversations that took place before and during the Review.

- Athol and nearby Kootenai County residents expressed a strong desire to have limited, controlled development and growth, allowing the rural character to remain intact. Statements such as, “We don’t want to be another Hayden” were common. Residents also wanted to see local businesses thrive; rural character was the primary concern.
- Low cost of living was prized, and opposition to change – from sidewalks to sewer treatment system – was generally accompanied by comments about potential increases in cost of living.
- There were many comments about not wanting outside business or government entities to try to make Athol something residents did not want it to be. Some residents felt that unwanted change, especially growth, was unavoidable. Many residents were excited about Athol entering a new season of collaboration with outside entities. The community was divided on this topic.
- Comments regarding Athol’s current leadership were very positive.



- Residents were dissatisfied with the level of disorder on lots in town (often referred to as junk). Many residents expressed frustration about Athol's reputation being harmed by this. However, there was also concern about how forcefully property maintenance and outdoor storage should be addressed. We also heard that for some residents, the ability to use their property without community or government limitations is part of Athol's appeal as a place to live.
- Residents generally voiced a desire for a larger grocery store.
- Train noise and disruption to traffic flow were unanimously viewed as problematic, and many noted that train traffic increased from four to sixty trains in the last several decades. However, a Burlington Northern-Santa Fe Railroad (BNSF) representative stated that train traffic had been decreasing since 2006 on their lines.
- Athol's abundant and high quality water was a source of pride for residents.
- Without exception, residents valued the scenic beauty of the area and abundance of trees.
- Silverwood and Farragut State Park were lauded, and many noted economic opportunities associated with these neighbors, in addition to some expressions of disappointment about past missed opportunities for collaboration.

Summary of Community Listening Sessions

Community listening sessions were held with the home team and six other stakeholder groups: youth, business owners, clergy, homeowner's association representatives, emergency and social services, and schoolteachers / administrators. These focus group-like sessions are described in detail beginning in Part III. In summary, many residents of Athol told us they do NOT want a future that includes (in no particular order):

- Sprawling Boise-like growth, with accompanying population growth, congestion and busyness – people value the quiet, slow-paced rural lifestyle
- Loss of trees and rural character of town
- Being passed up for development, or to have developers or outsiders direct growth without community input
- Increased crime including drugs, violence, and graffiti
- Business closures, or large chains driving out smaller home or local businesses
- More "junk" and inadequate screening (e.g. fences)

In contrast, when asked what they do want to see in the future, listening session participants gave us these responses most often (again in no particular order):

- Planned growth
- Increased police presence
- More activities and recreational opportunities for youth
- More businesses, especially grocery store and dining out options, and also pharmacy, bank, hotel, animal shelter, and green businesses – emphasis on small locally owned businesses
- Desire for more community involvement, participation, and engagement. Potentially enhance city council meetings, or even having some form of training for interested community members

- More community events, also desire to enhance Athol Daze
- More interdependence between Athol and Kootenai County in decisions affecting residents in both jurisdictions
- Bolster and beautify Highway 54 corridor through town for walking and business
- City beautification efforts, from building updates to adding trees, but using “soft” code enforcement to avoid driving wedges
- Infrastructure improvement such as sidewalks and other pedestrian safety efforts, sports complex, library expansion, Community Center updated/renovated
- Train traffic and noise mitigation efforts
- Senior housing, center, and transportation

Summary of Opportunity Areas Identified by the Visiting Team

Each focus area had home team and Visiting Team members selected for it. Each focus area’s Visiting Team members were tasked with determining (based on what they saw and heard during the Review) Opportunity Areas and then making recommendations under them. These recommendations, combined with resources at the end of each focus area section (e.g. Economic Development Resources), are a big part of the value in this report. The Visiting Team identified the following opportunity areas within each of the three selected focus areas. Part IV contains opportunity areas, recommendations, and resources.

Economic Development

[Opportunity Area 1](#): Organize – Local Business Promoting Group May be Emerging

[Opportunity Area 2](#): Promote Athol’s (New) Identity

[Opportunity Area 3](#): Support Local Business and Community

Infrastructure / Transportation

[Opportunity Area 1](#): Wastewater Treatment

[Opportunity Area 2](#): Trains / EMS / Fire

[Opportunity Area 3](#): Community Spaces

[Opportunity Area 4](#): Water

Land Use Planning

[Opportunity Area 1](#): Comprehensive Plan

[Opportunity Area 2](#): Hughes Annexation (The Crossings)

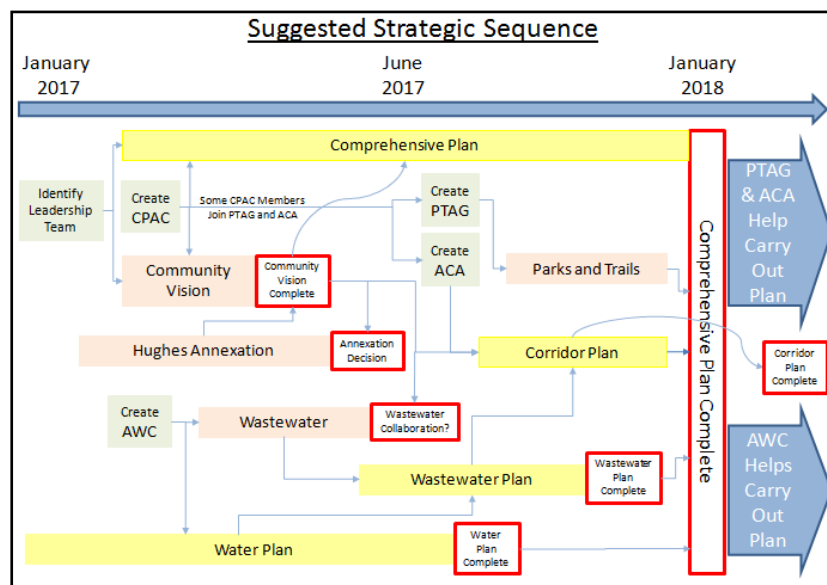
[Opportunity Area 3](#): Vision and Plan for Highways 54 and Old 95

Strategic Sequence Going Forward

This suggested sequence attempts to provide cohesion for a variety of opportunity area recommendations. Each recommendation is intertwined in some way with other recommendations. It is only a *suggested* sequence; it is a sort of template for Athol’s decision makers to populate with better knowledge of priorities and resources. It accounts for urgency relating to decisions about wastewater collaboration and the Hughes Annexation - opportunities that might be missed if not addressed immediately. This urgency stems from Hughes Investments’ intent to break ground in first half of 2017 and install a \$1,000,000 waste treatment system (discussed in more detail in [Infrastructure / Transportation](#) focus area, especially the wastewater opportunity area). As advised in [LU 1.4](#) (LU stands for Land Use, and 1.4 means opportunity area 1, recommendation 4), the Comprehensive Plan would ideally be complete before annexation and wastewater collaboration decisions, but this may not be possible. Instead, in this sequence the community vision (an initial step to create the Comprehensive Plan) is complete before the Hughes annexation decision. In addition, in this sequence, corridor planning is still occurring when the Comprehensive Plan is completed, finishing sometime after January 2018. University of Idaho’s [Community Coaching for Grassroots Action](#) (pamphlet in [Appendix G](#)) can be brought in as desired, though the sequence does not show this option.

In this sequence, the Comprehensive Planning Advisory Committee (CPAC) from [LU 1.5](#) and Athol Water and Wastewater Committee (AWC) from [IT 1.2](#) are initiated almost immediately. The CPAC is intended to have either subcommittees or be one large committee (including the AWC). Later the CPAC contributes members to the Athol Community Association (ACA) from [ED 1.1](#) and Parks and Trails Advocacy Group (PTAG) from [IT 3.2](#) as these two distinct subcommittees form. Once the new Comprehensive Plan is complete, these well-established subcommittees (AWC, PTAG, and ACA) are positioned to help *implement* the plans, something small communities often struggle with. Athol has a lot of overlapping planning efforts recommended in this sequence, with limited staff, so involving interested residents is essential for both plan creation and implementation.

This suggested sequence is shown full size in [Appendix J](#) (the last page of this report) with color legend and acronym definitions.



PART II BACKGROUND & OVERVIEW

Description of the Idaho Community Review Program

The Idaho Community Review Program provides observations, recommendations, and available resources to Idaho communities with populations less than 10,000. Idaho communities participate in the program to understand how they might better approach long-standing and emerging issues and opportunities related to community and economic development.

For information about the Idaho Rural Partnership and Idaho Community Review program, go to <http://www.irp.idaho.gov/>. We also encourage community leaders and residents to “Like” us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/IdahoCommunityReview.

Community leaders initiate a Review by assembling a “Home Team” and selecting three subject areas they would like to be the focus of the Review. These “focus areas” become the basis for the creation of the “Visiting Team,” a group of 10-18 community and economic development professionals employed by public agencies, nonprofit organizations, and private businesses across Idaho. [Appendix B](#) contains



biographies and contact information for the Athol Community Review Visiting Team. The process also includes community listening sessions, which are open-ended, focus group-like discussions with key stakeholder groups.

In Athol, the Visiting Team spent three days in the City learning about issues and opportunities through tours, meetings, listening sessions, and interviews.

Participation was not limited to City of Athol residents. Leaders, residents, and business owners from across Kootenai County had significant interaction with the

Visiting Team in recognition that the “community” extends far beyond the City limits. The Athol Community Review concluded on the evening of the third day with a public presentation of preliminary opportunities, recommendations, and resources identified by the Visiting Team.

The program cannot instantly resolve all issues, but the 38 communities that have benefited in the program since 2000 have evaluated it as an invigorating, validating, and unifying experience. Many communities have used Community Review recommendations to help obtain funding for infrastructure, downtown revitalization, and other projects. Community Reviews also provide invaluable networking opportunities, setting the stage for future resource referrals and follow-up prioritizing and project development.

Coordinated by the Idaho Rural Partnership, the Athol Community Review was a collaborative project of IRP member organizations and agencies and the City of Athol. Additional local funding partners and other supporting agencies and organizations are identified in the front of this report.

Purpose, Use, and Format of this Report

This report is presented to the residents and leaders of Athol and Kootenai County. The Visiting Team hopes it will initiate and focus community dialogue, follow-up action planning, and project development. We will also consider this report successful if it results in increased citizen participation and more effective coordination and collaboration within and between government entities and private sector stakeholders.

Part III of this report contains a summary of the community listening sessions. Part IV identifies the community comments and concerns, opportunity areas, recommendations, and resources for each of the three focus areas selected by the community, as described below.

Community Comments and Concerns

The Visiting Team uses this section to reflect what we heard from community residents and leaders in the context of each focus area. We often find people will express ideas and perceptions to us, as neutral outsiders, that they may be less inclined to share directly with local community leaders.

Opportunity Areas

Opportunity areas are the three or four areas identified for special attention by the Visiting Team. These opportunities are developed for each focus area using all community input gathered before and during the Review.

Recommendations

Each opportunity area includes multiple recommendations or strategies offered by the Visiting Team. Some recommendations involve supporting, improving, or redirecting existing efforts by the community. Other recommendations suggest completely new initiatives.

This report intentionally does not prioritize the Visiting Team's opportunity areas and recommendations, though a [suggested strategic sequence](#) is included. The Visiting Team strongly believes that prioritization is more appropriately done by the community as follow-up to the Review.

Resources

We list resources in hopes they will help the community pursue the recommendations or other initiatives. Resources include potential funding, sources of technical assistance, publications, and successful examples from other communities.

A Fourth Focus Area

In Part V, the Visiting Team offers additional opportunities, recommendations, and resources under a fourth focus area: *Civic Life and Community Involvement*.

Pre-Review Planning and Training

The City of Athol submitted a Community Review application to the Idaho Rural Partnership in March 2016. This application is found in [Appendix A](#). The IRP Community Review Ad-hoc Planning Committee and Athol Home Team leaders began weekly conference calls in August 2016 to prepare for the Community Review. Clarifying the Review's focus areas and developing a pre-review community survey of Athol and Kootenai County households were at the top of the group's list of priorities.

The Athol Community Review addressed three focus areas. As described under *Community Expectations and Identification of Focus Areas* (on the next page), these focus areas included:

- Economic Development
- Infrastructure / Transportation
- Land Use Planning

Visiting Team members also conducted a series of interviews with specific stakeholder groups. These community listening sessions are described in [Part III](#).

Home Team Training

On September 15, 2015, Acting IRP Executive Director Jon Barrett and Home Team leaders met at 4:00 PM before a two-hour training and orientation session beginning at 6:30 PM. A week earlier, on September 7th, Lorie Higgins and Kathee Tift from University of Idaho Extension conducted listening sessions with a group of school administrators, business owners, senior citizens, clergy, and handed out questionnaires to high school students.

All 13 members of the home team attended the training/orientation session. The meeting was also attended by Visiting Team member Nancy Mabile from the Panhandle Area Council. This meeting allowed participating Home Team members to become more familiar with the purpose of the Community Review, discuss the three focus areas, talk about the proposed schedule, and identify remaining tasks.

Monetary Value and Costs Paid by the City of Athol

The in-kind value of the Athol Community Review calculated by the Idaho Rural Partnership is \$46,993 and is itemized in [Appendix H](#). Imagine the cost of hiring 17 professionals in land use planning, transportation, housing, civil engineering, economic development, tourism, cultural resources, arts, communication, grant funding, and other fields of expertise for two and a half 14-hour workdays. Now add in the cost of preparation, travel, follow-up, and report production. These costs are generously covered through donations by participating agencies, organizations, and businesses and are supplemented with private sector donations. We encourage the community to take advantage of opportunities to use the dollar value of the Review as in-kind match when submitting future funding requests.

Recent Community and Economic Development Efforts

Athol community leaders and residents have many reasons to be proud of recent and ongoing community and economic development efforts. These accomplishments were described to the Visiting Team in the Review application and were discussed during the Review itself. The following summary is not intended to be all-inclusive.

- Hiring of new city staff and support including new clerk, attorney, and planner
- Outstanding financial oversight including compliance on five years of financial audits
- Concerted efforts to enforce existing ordinances
- Creation of the very popular Athol Daze
- City-wide garage sale
- Creation of a city beautification week
- Outstanding attendance and involvement in city council meetings
- Following the Review, the two Community Minded Potlucks - the first of which was attended by around 20 community members on November 15th. The second on December 20th (pictured right) was attended by 21 people including staff and City Council.



Community Expectations and Identification of Focus Areas

As described previously, Community Reviews concentrate on three subjects or “focus areas” identified by the Home Team. The focus areas are identified and described on the Community Review application submitted by the City of Athol ([Appendix A](#)). They were also discussed in-depth between Visiting and Home Team leaders in the months and weeks leading up to the Review.

The following summary of community desires and needs by focus area were used to create the community review’s detailed agenda. See the *Community Comments and Concerns* section for each focus area in Part IV of this report for a summary of what we heard from leaders and residents during the Review for each respective focus area.

Economic Development

Broadly defined as the development of new jobs and wealth through the creation, expansion, and recruitment of businesses, economic development is a required focus area for all Community Reviews.

Athol has had a rollercoaster of an economic history. Beginning with Northern Pacific Railroad's depot and the arrival of optimistic settlers in the 1880's, Athol was on the map when its post office was installed in 1895. Athol's first school was housed in the Methodist church from 1900 until 1902, which was the year the first school building was built and also the year the first sawmill, Hackett & Wilson, opened in the City. By 1903 the Pacific Hotel, a drugstore, smithy, jewelry store, restaurants, mercantile company, and saloon were in operation. This bustling beginning slowed with the Great Depression, and then catapulted to new heights when, between 1940 and 1949 with World War II, the U.S. Navy trained 293,000 sailors in just 30 months and also housed some 900 German prisoners, with a total population of 55,000. This high point in population and economic activity was followed by a population low around 1960 with around 200 residents. Athol has since more than tripled in size, approaching 700 residents.



- Today, Lakeland School district and Merritt Lumber are the largest employers in the City, though Idaho Forest Group and Silverwood are major employers in the area.
- Silverwood has a unique impact on employment and tourism with over 1400 employees at the peak of the season and 600,000 seasonal visitors per year, which combines with Farragut State Park to attract well over 700,000 visitors to the area every year.
- Athol has approximately 25 small businesses operating within its borders.
- Athol's residents have a median income 11% higher than the state average and have a median age of 46 – significantly higher than the state median age of 35.
- Over 18,000 people live within 10 miles of Athol.
- This year-round population needs products and services, and as such, a number of businesses may do well here.
- The lack of employed younger and middle-aged workforce could impede business growth.
- Without a sewer treatment plant, the economic development possibilities are very limited.

In the Community Review application, particular interest was given to economic well-being and quality of life as supported by more and better wage jobs (spurred by new and improved business), educational opportunities, healthcare access, and safety. These questions were drawn from the application and from Home Team training discussions:

- What can we do to help create and retain jobs?
- What types of goods and services would residents like to access in Athol?
- How can we improve the quality of/access to education and health services?

- The recent relocation of State Highway 95 connecting Coeur d’Alene and Sandpoint has stressed local commerce, business, and industry. How can the community respond to or mitigate this impact?
- What options does the community have to address limitations on economic development related to wastewater treatment?
- How do we keep businesses engaged and involved in the community, especially since some business owners are not residents of Athol?
- How can we better capitalize on nearby tourist and recreation opportunities (e.g. Silverwood, Farragut State Park)?
- What can the community do to market itself and area attractions?
- How much of our workforce is commuting to jobs located in other communities, how many people commute to jobs in Athol, and what does this information mean for economic development, housing, and land use planning?

Infrastructure / Transportation

Among Idaho’s rural communities, Athol is unique. With two parallel train lines, and an intersection of Highway 54 with Highway 95, Old Highway 95, and “Old Old Highway 95,” the City has a lot of transportation infrastructure. When combined with the absence of a municipal sewer treatment facility and marvelous ground water supply (first tapped by a 350 foot deep hand-dug well with a kink in it), Athol is anything but typical. The Community Center even has a gymnasium! The library is housed in a modestly sized facility in a neighboring building. County sheriff’s deputies support the community, and Fire/EMS are prominently located on Highway 54. Overall, City of Athol owned infrastructure is lean and efficient. However, because it is lean, new development larger than single family homes or low-water-use businesses require added expensive on-site waste treatment facilities and potentially new water capacity. The list below contains infrastructure and transportation related concerns or factors listed in the application or identified during the Review.

- Old City Hall is falling apart and needs approximately \$20,000 in repairs.
- No Parks and Recreation Department, but sprinklers recently installed by Baptist Church volunteers.
- A water facilities plan is just beginning, with a kick-off meeting scheduled for November 3rd, but simply purchasing new tanks for use at the cemetery site have been roughly estimated to be \$100,000, or this money could be used to do repairs and capacity upgrades.
- Current water rates are exceedingly low at \$14 per month compared to \$45 nationally. This prevents adequate savings.
- Grant funding for a Transportation Plan is being pursued through the Local Rural Highway Investment Program.
- Train noise is a problem. Train traffic obstructs emergency response vehicles both directly and by causing traffic to back up past the front of the fire station.
- Having only one ambulance prevents responding to two emergencies at one time.

- Very few sidewalks exist, though the Highways have large buffers around them for walking. Many people expressed concern about safety for children.
- Some people felt that drug problems reflect inadequate policing.

The Community Review application indicated a change of policy from reactive to pro-active with regards to City infrastructure. Concern about commute times, and traffic safety along highways, and issues relating to trains were specifically mentioned. These questions were drawn from the application and from Home Team training discussions:

- How should the community move forward to identify and fund needed capital improvements for the water system?
- What feedback does the Visiting Team have regarding wastewater treatment options? Individual septic tanks are used to handle wastewater because the City does not have a sanitary sewer system.
- What are the predominant opinions about wastewater treatment among residents? To what degree is their support for a sanitary sewer system – whether built on a local or a regional basis?
- The railroad and trains are a big concern of residents. Specific daily impacts include noise, traffic congestion, and safety.
- The community would like to increase bike and pedestrian safety. What improvements or other strategies should they consider? This is a particular concern within the Highway 54 corridor.
- What can the community do to develop a better working relationship with other jurisdictions and agencies (E.g. Idaho Transportation Department, Kootenai County)?

Land Use Planning

Historically, Athol has not placed a high priority on land use planning. Consequently, the current comprehensive plan, written in 1980, is outdated and needs revising. Previous elected leaders, for better or worse, did not strive to direct growth, rather, as was said by many people, there was a “cup of coffee and a ‘No’ vote.” However, the new Highway 95 overpass and developer interest prompted Athol leaders to select Land Use Planning as a focus area. Generally, land use planning - and community planning - becomes a necessity as population increases and people begin to step on one-another’s toes with noise, pollution, or other types of conflicting uses. If growth and development are not occurring, land use planning is not as necessary, though it can still be beneficial. As noted above regarding economic development, business is attracted to Athol’s central location, available undeveloped land, its highway intersection, and its proximity to Silverwood and Farragut. Land use planning and especially a solid comprehensive plan should help Athol address these questions into the future:

- Is this development in or around Athol inevitable?
- What is the County’s approach to development and what impact will this have on Athol?
- What development is desirable?
- What new or expanded public infrastructure and services will future growth necessitate and how will it be paid for?
- What positive or negative impacts might development have on the community?

- What will the buildings look like, and what types of landscaping will surround them?
- If growth occurs, can it occur in a way that retains or enhances the qualities which residents value?

The answers to these questions are tightly interwoven with land use planning. Athol has options, but it has little time to act before others have acted without Athol residents' voice being heard. It is with this urgency, in this pivotal moment in Athol's history that Land Use Planning is a focus area.

In the Community Review application, concern was expressed about lack of enforcement and regulation historically, and a need for systematic assessment of and preparation for future land use needs, including elimination of conflicting uses. These questions were drawn from the application and from Home Team training discussions:

- Athol's leaders would like the Community Review to help chart a course to update the 36-year old comprehensive plan. What can the City do to engage residents in the comprehensive planning process?
- What is Athol's vision for the area of city impact?
- How do residents describe their desired future for Athol, and how does this relate to land use planning (and the two other focus areas)?
- What are some best practices regarding P & Z enforcement, administration, and communication with residents that Athol might implement?
- What can the community do to minimize land use conflicts and resolve them when they do come up?

Pre-Review Community Survey

The Community Review process includes conducting a community survey in the weeks leading up to the Review. This survey allowed residents of Athol and Kootenai County to share their opinions and ideas regardless of whether or not they had direct contact with the Visiting Team during the Review. The information provided by the paper and on-line surveys gave the Visiting Team information to compare with comments gathered through public meetings and face-to-face conversations conducted during the Community Review.

Survey questions were selected and/or developed in August and September 2016. Survey topics included the following:

- Infrastructure and services
- Employment and economic development
- Available housing, goods, and services
- Community events and facilities
- Community involvement and information

While the survey was anonymous, it also included some demographic questions for statistical purposes. Survey recipients were determined using a mailing list of households within the Athol City limits and within a two-mile radius of the City provided by Kootenai County. Commercial, public, and vacant

properties were removed from the lists, resulting in a list of 283 City of Athol addresses and 517 County addresses. Of the 800 surveys sent out, Athol and Kootenai County residents returned 66 and 180 surveys, respectively. The 117 completed surveys received at the Idaho Rural Partnership offices by mid-September were recorded using Google Forms. When paper survey results were combined with 71 online surveys, an impressive 32% response rate was achieved! The mailed survey form and a summary of all survey results combined are included as [Appendix C](#). Survey results comparing responses from City and County residents, and comparing response from internet and mailed paper surveys are available at Athol City Hall.



Summary of Survey Results

Overall, 27% of respondents reported living in the City of Athol. Slightly more than half of survey respondents (51%) were female. Almost two in three respondents (62%) were 55 years old or older. Not surprisingly then, 37% of respondents were retired. However, only 22% had lived in Kootenai County for over 20 years.

In response to a question about work-related commuting, Kootenai County and City residents were almost identical with 39% of survey respondents traveling to another community for their employment; 18 to 20% of respondents not commuting for work, and; unemployed (and non-retired) respondents were around 5%.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND PUBLIC SERVICES

Survey respondents expressed moderate to very low satisfaction with infrastructure and public services:

Satisfaction Level	Survey Question
Very High 	Fire/EMT services
	Water services
	Quality of library facilities
	Quality of parks
	Condition of school facilities
	Quality of K-12 education
.....	
Low 	Availability of drug and alcohol treatment programs
	Trains/rail lines
	Availability of general health care
	Availability of local arts and cultural opportunities
	Availability of high-speed Internet service
	Availability of sidewalks
Very Low	

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND LOCAL BUSINESSES

Survey respondents expressed moderate to very low satisfaction with economic development, housing, and business.

Satisfaction Level	Survey Question
Moderate	Housing affordability
	Housing availability
	Level of business involvement in the community
	Housing quality
	Appearance of public buildings
	City planning and zoning policies
	Variety of goods available in stores
Low	Overall appearance of Athol
	Enforcement of planning and zoning
Very Low	Variety of local businesses
	Quality of local jobs
	Availability of job training programs
	Availability of local jobs

IMPORTANCE OF IMPROVING OR INCREASING SPECIFIC BUSINESSES AND SERVICES

When asked to indicate the importance of increasing or improving various facilities, businesses, and services, survey respondents revealed the following were *most* important.

- Library services
- Retail stores (e.g. hardware, pharmacy etc.)
- Trails and pathways
- Youth services and facilities
- Entertainment, recreation, and parks

Eighty-three people responded to a question asking what businesses are needed in Athol. Of these respondents, 36% suggested a grocery store, 17% suggested a bank, and 10% suggested pharmacy, hardware/building store, and restaurants. Satisfaction with “bicycle or pedestrian access (facilities)” was far lower than other Idaho communities. Another survey question asked residents to identify factors that prevent them from supporting locally owned businesses more often. Over 50% of respondents indicated “Services and products I need are not available in Athol.” Almost 40% indicated “Nothing. Supporting Athol’s businesses is a high priority to me.”

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT, INFORMATION, AND LEADERSHIP

The survey asked how strongly respondents agreed or disagreed with a series of statements related to community involvement, information, and leadership. Over two in three respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “I would like to be better informed about community issues and projects.” When asked how Athol City residents preferred to receive information, 72% indicated the City newsletter and 60% indicated U.S. mail, but less than 30% indicated e-mail, social media (e.g. Facebook), newspaper, or bulletin board. By contrast, for those living in Kootenai County, only 38% indicated the City Newsletter, 65% indicated U.S. mail, and 50% indicated e-mail, though again social media, newspaper, and bulletin boards were not preferred. When asked what prevents residents from being more involved in the community, 34% of Athol residents and 49% of Kootenai County residents responded “Lack of information.” Only one in three survey respondents were happy with their level of involvement – people want to be more involved in Athol!

Less than one in three people agreed with the statement “I generally trust City Council to make decisions for the community.” Based on embezzlement of Athol’s funds by the city clerk between 2009 and 2014, this perception was not surprising. For some people, this sentiment of distrust was connected with a view that the City government had an agenda and was focused on growth and change.

Of the 105 responses to questions about making Athol a better place for residents, businesses, and visitors, eight responses stated in some way that they would like to see outside influence limited, and over 30 indicated that they would like limited growth which maintains the rural feel and lifestyle of the area. Also included in comments were 11 responses suggesting improvements to pedestrian facilities and 10 comments suggesting something be done to reduce the amount of trash, junk, or broken down vehicles.

REASON TO LIVE IN AND VISIT ATHOL

The survey ended with the following two questions:

What are the 2-3 best reasons someone would want to move to Athol?

The most frequently given responses for this question were as follows:

- Quiet, low population
- Rural, country character
- Low cost of living
- Outdoor recreation opportunities
- Scenic beauty (Mountains, lakes, forests, etc.)

What are the 2-3 best reasons someone would want to visit Athol?

The most frequently given responses for this question were as follows:

- Silverwood and Farragut State Park
- Scenic beauty (Mountains, lakes, forests, etc.)
- Rural, country character
- Visit family

Key Participating Individuals

The success of the Athol Community Review was due to the efforts of many people. The Visiting Team wishes to thank all members of the Home Team for their time and contributions. These individuals are named by focus area at the beginning of this report. Also, the Review would not have been successful without the active participation of many community residents who chose to spend time attending one or both community meetings and/or talking with various Visiting Team members during the Review.

Home Team Leadership

Several people did an outstanding job leading the Home Team. Rand Wichman, Shane McDaniel, Lori Yarbrough, and Mayor Bob Watcher consistently participated in the pre-Review conference calls, provided leadership to the Home Team and invited key individuals to participate. The Visiting Team gives special thanks to Lori Yarbrough for her overall coordination of local efforts, from signs announcing the Community Review to a presentation on local history; she went above and beyond to make the Review a success.

The individuals named above facilitated communication with the Home Team, coordinated local logistics, invited organizations and individuals to participate in the Review, and served as primary contacts for Visiting Team leaders.

The Visiting Team would like to thank Bill Weams, Mayor of Plummer, and Representative Eric Redman for their attendance and support.

Visiting Team Leadership

The Visiting Team was comprised of 17 community and economic development professionals who were recruited based on their experience and expertise in the three selected focus areas. They came from local, state, regional, and federal agencies, universities, nonprofit organizations, and private businesses. Contact and biographical information for all Visiting Team members are included in this report as [Appendix B](#). The following people served as Visiting Team focus area and listening session leaders:



Visiting Team Focus Area Leaders

Lori Porreca, Federal Highway Administration
Deanna Smith, Idaho Smart Growth
Jerry Miller, Idaho Department of Commerce

Infrastructure / Transportation
Land Use Planning
Economic Development

IRP Acting Executive Director Jon Barrett served as Visiting Team coordinator, and Josh Hightree of Abundance Consulting contributed as report writer. Key support was provided by Idaho Rural Partnership Administrative Assistance Vickie Winkel.

Known as the Ad-Hoc Committee, the following individuals began meeting with Home Team leaders in August 2016 to coordinate review planning and recruit people to the Visiting Team. The committee is grateful to the Association of Idaho Cities for providing meeting space and teleconference services.

Visiting Team Ad-Hoc Planning Committee

Jon Barrett	Idaho Rural Partnership
Vickie Winkel	Idaho Rural Partnership
Lori Porreca	Federal Highway Administration
Jerry Miller	Idaho Department of Commerce
Lorie Higgins	University of Idaho
Kathee Tift	University of Idaho
Deanna Smith	Idaho Smart Growth

Review Itinerary

The Home Team and the above named Visiting Team focus area leaders jointly developed the overall master schedule, listening session schedule, and detailed itinerary for each focus area. This information is attached as [Appendix D](#).

The Review officially began Tuesday at 3:00 PM on October 4th, with a Home Team listening session conducted at the City Hall. Following the listening session, Stephen Williams presented to Home and

Visiting Teams on Athol’s infrastructure. All Home and Visiting Team members traveled by school bus around the perimeter of town south of Highway 54. Following dinner at the Baptist Church, the Home and Visiting Teams met in the Community Center for the Town Hall Meeting from 7:00 to 9:00 PM.

After breakfast on Wednesday October 5th at the Community Center, hosted by the Church of God Church, the focus area teams visited different places and met in the Community Center for different topic area presentations. Lunch was provided by the Grandmother’s Club. Focus area teams had the following schedule for Wednesday:

<u>Economic Development</u>	<u>Infrastructure / Transportation</u>	<u>Land Use Planning</u>
Hughes Investments’ Athol Crossing Met at Community Center	Timberlake Fire Met at Fire Station	Hughes Investments about Athol Crossing Met at Community Center
Silverwood Met at Silverwood	Train Safety and Crossings Met at Community Center	Development of Main Street Toured Main Street
Merritt Lumber Met at Merritt Lumber		
Lunch – Randall Butt regarding Farragut State Park – Met at Community Center		
Idaho Forest Group Met at Idaho Forest Group		Code Enforcement Met at Community Center
Bay View Met at McDonald Marina	Keller Engineering (Sewer) Met at Community Center	Comprehensive Plan Met at Community Center
Local Businesses Met at Country Boy Cafe	Bike / Pedestrian Met at Community Center	ACI David Callahan Met at Community Center

Also, on Wednesday listening sessions occurred with first responders and social service providers at the fire station and with teachers and administrators at the elementary school. Dinner was provided by the Baptist Church from 6:30 to 7:30 PM, and they generously allowed the Visiting Team to stay late for a debriefing.

Thursday morning, after a buffet breakfast provided by the Church of God, the Visiting Teams synthesized what they had seen and heard on Tuesday and Wednesday as they prepared opportunity areas and recommendations for Athol.

Following lunch, provided by John and Sue Fevold, the Visiting Team reconvened to draft their presentations. The listening session facilitators developed a separate presentation. The four presentations were given at a



community meeting held from 7:00 to 8:30 PM at the Community Center.

Publicity and Public Participation

The Home Team made significant effort to make residents of Athol and Kootenai County aware of opportunities to participate in the Review. The Review was mentioned in several City monthly newsletters. Additionally, fliers were hung in various locations, including the Athol Post Office and Little Town Market. Fliers were also distributed to students at the elementary school. The Coeur d'Alene Press generously ran two articles (Included in [Appendix I](#)) and an editorial before, during, and immediately after the Review.



Participation in community meetings held on October 4th and 6th, equaled if not exceeded what is typically experienced as part of Community Reviews conducted in larger communities. This indicated that residents of Athol and surrounding area are interested and that efforts to spread news of the Review were effective. Approximately 70 people (not including the Visiting Team) attended both meetings at the Community Center. Throughout the Review, there was a prevailing sense of optimism, openness, and honesty. While some distrust was verbalized by both City and County residents, this was met with genuine clarification, and it appeared that relationships were being strengthened rather than division being deepened.



PART III COMMUNITY LISTENING SESSIONS

Community listening sessions are open-ended, focus group-like discussions with key stakeholder groups identified by the Home and Visiting Team. The purpose is simple: we ask open-ended questions of a cross-section of community residents with diverse perspectives, listen to their answers, and reflect back what we hear. The Athol Community Review included listening sessions with the following six stakeholder groups:

- Home team
- High school students
- Seniors
- Business owners
- Education personnel
- Emergency and social services personnel



Listening sessions lasted approximately 60 minutes.

Participants were not prompted to talk about any specific subjects, nor were the sessions directly associated with any of the three focus areas selected for the Review. Facilitators simply ensured stakeholder groups understood the four questions, recorded comments, and encouraged everyone in attendance to participate in the session. The listening session questions were as follows:

1. What DON'T you want to see in your community over the coming 5–10 years?

2. What DO you want to see in your community over the coming 5–10 years?

3. What challenges prevent your desired future?

4. What assets exist that can be used to bring about your desired future?

The form distributed to all participants at the beginning of each listening session described the process this way:

“Please write down your thoughts on the following questions. During the listening session, we will invite you to discuss items you are comfortable sharing in a group setting. The process works best when we have your honest and frank assessment of your experience and perception; your responses will be treated confidentially and will help inform the overall picture of life in your community. Thanks for helping us paint that picture.”

What DON'T you want to see in your community over the coming 5-10 years?

The two most common themes which Athol and nearby Kootenai County residents who participated in the listening session did not want to see were “junk” in yards and population growth accompanied by “sprawl.” Sprawl takes many forms including big box stores, loss of trees, and certain types of housing developments. Additionally, crime was a concern of many. Views were mixed on how to best address each of these, but there was agreement that they were not wanted. Overall, residents in and around Athol want it to remain a small town.

A bulleted list of concerns was included in the Executive Summary section, and the following word cloud visually represents the most frequently voiced responses when listening session participants were asked what they did not want to see in the community over the coming 5-10 years.



What DO you want to see in your community over the coming 5-10 years?

Not surprisingly, Athol and Kootenai residents *want* the opposite of what they *do not want*. So, suggestions opposing “junk” and “sprawl” were dominant. These included: more beautification efforts, more community pride, establishing or maintaining town identity, “Main Street” improvements, retaining rural character, and official planning. Many noted that the town does not have a defined center or town square that can provide a community-gathering place and location for expressions of community identity. Several additional themes were voiced such as interest in more community involvement accompanied by a desire for more local events. A close counterpart to this was the need for more youth recreational opportunities. Pedestrian safety and walkability also stood out, with sidewalks being one proposed solution. Another theme was desire for a larger library, community center improvements, and parks. A final theme was desire for existing businesses to thrive and new businesses to be small and local.

The following word cloud visually represents the most frequently voiced responses when listening session participants were asked what they wanted to see in the community over the coming 5-10 years.



What challenges exist that could cause the future you DON'T want?

The most glaring challenge was a lack of financial resources, but closely following past city administrations resistance to planning, infrastructure improvements and business development. With recent changes in city staffing and elected officials, residents are starting to feel hopeful there will be positive changes, but are still wary. People feel they have been let down many times and are slow to trust and re-engage.

There was a good deal of concern about the lack of wastewater treatment, which prevented business development. This concern circled back to the lack of financial resources. A sewer system would be expensive and there was less government support available than at times in the past, suggesting this was a challenge that will not be easily addressed.

The many trains passing through town each day presented numerous challenges, such as noise, pedestrian and traffic safety hazards. Fire department vehicles were often blocked by the line of cars waiting at one of the two crossings. A gas line that ran alongside one of the tracks was also a safety concern for some.

The lack of city police, and dependence on the county for law enforcement services was frequently mentioned as a challenge. Being at the far end of the county meant response times could be long and having no dedicated officers meant youth who get in trouble could fall through the cracks until reaching an older age and potentially committing more serious crimes.

County residents outside City limits experienced a number of challenges that became obvious during the listening session and were heard during other parts of the Review. While the population of Athol proper was under 700, around 5,000 people with Athol's zip code resided outside of the City. Many of those attending listening sessions resided outside of the City and were transplants to the area, including a high percentage of retired or semi-retired professionals, while those within City limits tended to be long-time or native residents. Differences in interests were related to the amount and type of growth and development desired. People outside City limits felt they had a stake in what happened in Athol, but they felt somewhat disenfranchised from local decision-making. At the same time, most local residents appeared to be far less engaged in community matters than those that surround Athol (of those attending listening sessions, it appeared that there was a greater percentage of outside residents who read the Athol newsletter than in-town residents). This created a conundrum for City leaders with obligations to City voters, while trying to balance them with vocal and engaged County residents.

The following word cloud visually represents the most frequently voiced responses when listening session participants were asked what they perceived to be challenges that could prevent the desired future.



Community Headlines

In the first town hall meeting on October 6th, around 70 community members separated into three groups based on the three focus areas, and were asked to create headlines capturing an idea for a City improvement or direction. Then, each person voted using their one star sticker for their favorite headline. The following top ten list of headlines was created.

1. City of Athol Receives Grant for Downtown Revitalization!
2. Athol Gives Tax Incentives to Encourage Small Business Growth
3. RR Overpass at SH-54 Completed with Funding from Bridging the Valley
4. BNSF Funds Underpass in Athol
5. Athol Develops New Main Street on Old Hwy 95 with USDA/State/Local Grant Funding
6. Athol Cleans Up: Not a Dirty Little Town Anymore!
7. Athol Improves Safety for Pedestrians
8. USDA Partners with Athol on Wastewater Treatment Plant!
9. Ground Breaks on Combination Hardware and Sporting Goods Store
10. Warren Buffet Announces \$20,000,000 for New Hwy 54 Railroad Underpass

Note that if headlines 3, 4, and 10 were combined, something relating to the railroad underpass would have won the competition.

PART IV FOCUS AREA REPORTS

Part IV of this report includes Athol residents' comments and concerns as recorded by the Visiting Team within each of the three selected focus areas. It also includes the opportunities, recommendations, and resources identified by the Visiting Team. The Visiting Team notes the interrelated nature of many of the issues and opportunities in this section of the report.

Economic Development

Community Comments and Concerns

The economic development-related comments and concerns frequently voiced by community residents and leaders fell into the following themes or categories:

TO GROW OR NOT TO GROW, THAT IS THE [ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT] QUESTION

As discussed more fully in the *Land Use Planning* section, there was great concern over the threat posed by growth or urbanization to the rural character and quality of life enjoyed by Athol residents. The many assets under, in, and around Athol, water quality, highway access and proximity to larger cities, enabled something many rural communities might envy, an opportunity to grow easily and in a planned way. Athol residents' feelings towards economic development ranged from a desire for modest growth to fear of sprawl associated with rapid growth. During the Review, it seemed that some residents were fearful of economic development; some were neutral or disinterested, while most wanted modest growth.

HUGHES ANNEXATION (THE CROSSINGS)

The City of Athol was considering several annexation requests at the time of the Community Review. Hughes Investments, developer of the largest and most impactful of these, met with Review teams to answer questions. The *Land Use Planning* section [addresses this topic](#) from a land use perspective, but from an economic development perspective, Hughes annexation had and has a lot to offer, from infrastructure support to tax base. The land being considered, on the northeast corner of the intersection of Highway 95 and 54, was cleared, and the timeline for development was ambitious with construction of the grocery store finishing in late 2017. The proposed commercial development called "The Crossings" could radically alter Athol's economic future, especially for retail and service businesses. Community response to Hughes was mixed, which was not surprising given the amount of information received by residents at the time of the Review. There was a great deal of confusion, speculation, and rumoring, both positive and negative regarding the development. The following was made clear during the Review:

- A 51,000 square foot Super1 Foods was the central structure with smaller store and office space around it.
- Construction of a large, self-contained, surface-application wastewater treatment system was planned and was a key enabler of the development.

- Traffic on Highway 54 through town would likely increase. This increase could benefit existing Athol businesses.
- While the specific types of businesses to be located at The Crossings were not finalized at the time of the Community Reviews (other than the supermarket), the development could have a negative impact on existing businesses in the community if direct competitors come.
- Representatives of Hughes Investments indicated that Athol's water system was currently the best option for providing drinking water and fire protection to the development (as opposed to the project drilling its own well). Hughes was willing to pay the estimated \$200,000 required to connect to the development to City water. It was anticipated that the City would need to upgrade water capacity, though the water facilities plan would determine exactly what was needed. Different ways might be used to pay for this infrastructure, such as creation of an urban renewal district containing the Hughes development.
- Failure to annex the property may deprive the City of new additional tax base with the potential to double City revenues and an opportunity to shape the development. If not annexed the development could proceed in Kootenai County. It was unknown whether compliance with Kootenai county codes and creation of an onsite water system would deter the development.
- One-hundred jobs were anticipated at the grocery store alone, with over 250 estimated at full build-out over the next five years. Wage rate, and full time classification were not specified.
- A possible 50-room motel platted for the Hughes development could provide additional City revenue through the imposition of a 2% hotel room tax.

WASTEWATER TREATMENT LIMITS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The absence of a central wastewater treatment system was the number one barrier to economic development in Athol. The wastewater situation limited the types of businesses that could set up shop in the community and limited the development of housing needed to attract skilled workers. While developers could construct their own wastewater treatment systems, the costs of doing so could be prohibitive.

Construction of a municipal wastewater treatment system would incur costs that will be borne by local residents. At some point in the future, state or federal authorities may require the City to construct a wastewater treatment system. Deferring the decision to build a wastewater treatment system would likely result in higher borrowing and construction costs. Wastewater was [discussed in greater detail](#) in the *Infrastructure / Transportation* section; it was highlighted here to emphasize that many economic development decisions hinge on wastewater treatment decisions.

SILVERWOOD AMUSEMENT PARK

From an economic development standpoint, Silverwood impacted Athol's options tremendously. With 100 full time and over 1400 seasonal employees, Silverwood is Athol's largest employer. Add into the equation Silverwood's annual 600,000 visitors from all over the west and Canada, the park is Athol's

largest economic development asset. Community members saw and commented on this potential. At a meeting with the economic development focus area team, Silverwood management enthusiastically expressed a willingness to work with Athol. Speculation that Athol's past rejection of a collaborative wastewater treatment system had soured relationships with Silverwood was not the case. Housing, especially for their seasonal employees, was one of Silverwood's biggest challenges. Long commutes were making it difficult for Silverwood to attract and retain quality employees.



FARRAGUT STATE PARK

Surveys, listening sessions and conversations with local residents highlighted both the historical relationship and significance of nearby Farragut State Park. Attracting 80,000 visitors per year, Farragut offered year round recreational amenities and potential business opportunities for a laundry mat, sporting goods and groceries.

UNTOLD STORY OF ATHOL

Several community members expressed concern that the story being told about Athol was not a complementary one. Residents and home team members expressed their sentiment that Athol was historically interesting and had a story worth telling – the Visiting Team agreed. Residents expressed concern about the name “Athol” and offered up the possibility of returning to previous community names of “Colton” and “Timberlake.” Others pointed out that the name could be capitalized on (as pictured to right).



name came from Athol, MA and may have originated in Atholl, Scotland. It appears that three cities in Australia and one in Kansas also adopted the name, perhaps because of the fame of Atholl, Scotland's Blair Castle (pictured left) built in the thirteenth century. This history adds to the unique story of Athol.

WORKFORCE AND HOUSING CONCERNS

A number of major employers shared Silverwood's concern regarding the attraction and retention of quality employees. Two contributing factors to this problem appeared to be wages and a short supply of housing. Further complicating the housing issue was a lack of churn. Simply put, locals loved Athol so much they did not move, thus making housing unavailable for new residents. Residents expressed great satisfaction in low housing costs in the pre-Review survey, and this, in theory, would serve to reduce

required wages. Housing scarcity may have been part of the reason that alternatives to standard housing (e.g. living in an RV) were common.

A NEED TO ORGANIZE

Respondents to the pre-Review survey were asked about the importance of creating an Athol chamber of commerce. 79 of the survey takers responded unimportant, 91 replied neutral, and 60 answered important. The results surrounding this question likely reflected an anxiety with potential urban sprawl and not animosity towards coordination between existing local businesses. During and soon after the Review, momentum was building for some sort of regional chamber including Bayview and Spirit Lake.

OVERABUNDANCE OF YARD "ORNAMENTS"

Review participants were nearly unanimous in their attitudes regarding the need to clean up the town. Some desired to see stronger ordinances and code enforcement of junk and blight while others suggested an informal voluntary approach. The City hosts an annual Beautification Week and a City Wide Garage sale, which helps with some of these issues. At the time of the Review, the City was considering intensifying ordinance enforcement efforts.

Economic Development Opportunity Areas

The Visiting Team's opportunity areas and recommendations for economic development are based on the above comments and concerns identified before and during the Review. Athol is different than many rural Idaho communities in that it has avoided (or deliberately protected) itself from unwanted forms of sprawling growth by avoiding, among other things, a touristy look and pro-growth policies – especially a wastewater treatment system. These recommendations necessarily promote economic growth, which it is understood, may not be popular with all residents, but economic growth need not necessarily appear urban or transform the local culture in ways often identified with urban.

Economic development is abbreviated as "ED" throughout this section of the report.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY AREA 1: ORGANIZE – LOCAL BUSINESS GROUP MAY BE EMERGING

As described above in the [A Need to Organize](#) section, local businesses and area advocates mentioned a need for some better-organized form of business promotional group. During the second town hall meeting, a fledgling group was already taking form.

Recommendations

- ED 1.1 The community should consider forming a volunteer promotion committee, perhaps called the Athol Community Association (ACA). The ACA could offer some of the services that a chamber of commerce might offer without the costs and complexity of a formal chamber. This group could include individuals, organizations, and businesses.
- ED 1.2 The City's existing business directory posted on its website lacks links to the featured shops and companies and contains enterprises that no longer exist. ACA could take on the task of creating an updated business directory. Visitidaho.org may serve as a model where businesses are encouraged to sign up with Trip Advisor and directory built from the listings.

Both USDA Rural Development and the Idaho Travel Council have grant programs that might be tapped into to help create the directory.



ED 1.3 Athol does not have a traditional, walkable downtown where businesses can be easily found. While the internet can help customers find a business, not everyone is on or uses the internet while driving. Signage is an important ingredient in attracting customers. The community, through the ACA, could create and implement a strategic sign initiative, placing consistently shaped, colored and attractive signs at major intersections on Highway 54 through town.

ED 1.4 Silverwood has an excellent sense (and lots of data) about the sorts of people that are being attracted to their park, where they are staying during their visit, when they come (day and time), and how they heard about the park. Silverwood may be open to sharing some of this information with ACA, and it could help identify new business or business growth opportunities and improve business advertising and operating decisions.

ED 1.5 Think regionally. Momentum was already building during and soon after the Review for a more regional economic promoting organization. The ACA could coordinate with Bayview and Spirit Lake's chambers of commerce to better promote regional businesses, especially along the Highway 54 corridor.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY AREA 2: PROMOTE ATHOL'S (NEW) IDENTITY

If the story being told about Athol is uncomplimentary as described above in the [Untold Story of Athol](#), then change it! Community vision, arrived at through community engagement as describe in the *Land Use Planning* section and *Part V*, dictates which of these recommendations to move forward with.

Recommendations

ED 2.1 Leverage Athol's interesting history.

- Publish a series of articles in the Coeur d'Alene Press about Athol's history and post them on-line.
- Host "Navy Days" on Veterans Day, or some other event recalling the height of the Navy Base.
- A Highway 54 and 95 Corridor Plan is recommended in [LU Opportunity Area 3](#). Incorporate historical elements into it.

ED 2.2 Leverage existing hot spots for placemaking. Placemaking is loosely defined as utilizing local assets, inspiration, and potential, with the intention of creating public or public/private spaces

that promote people's health, happiness, and wellbeing. In other words, placemaking is making great hangout spots.

- In front of the Little Town Market, there were tables and chairs that get quite a bit of use. Start here and figure out how to temporarily use the gravel parking area for public gathering space. Find other places for the cars and fill this space with things people like to do.
- In front of the library is another spot with great potential. This picture is from the Wallkill Public Library website.
- The motel has an opportunity to add some features to simultaneously satisfy Athol residents and attract visitors to the motel (e.g. wireless internet, cozy courtyard in the lawn, coffee shack).
- Experiment with lighter, quicker, cheaper pilots, such as markets/fairs along the street(s).



ED 2.3 Temporarily use some open spaces along Highway 54 and Old 95 for events or placemaking (described in ED 2.2).

ED 2.4 The community might consider a theme for the Old Highway 95 corridor (or perhaps even the Highway 54 corridor), as suggested by some residents during the Review. Athol's proximity to Farragut and Silverwood make it possible to take on a theme to stimulate local commerce. It could be accomplished by modifying existing buildings with facades. It could incorporate trains and old-western flare, or it could be more subtle. As Silverwood has shown, with some imagination, surprising things can happen. The [comprehensive planning](#) and/or [corridor planning](#) process (LU 1.3 and 3.1) can include floating big ideas, even if they are shot down fast and hard, because Athol has a unique opportunity to do so.

ED 2.5 Work with faith leaders. In the listening session with local clergy, they expressed interest in seeing community-minded efforts succeed. As Athol moves forward, clergy could help bring together City and nearby County residents as they work through some of the potentially divisive decisions to be made in the [comprehensive planning process](#). In terms of placemaking, church volunteer efforts have historically (and recently) had a significant impact, and if multiple churches unified around a community objective, these could make an even more profound impact.

ED 2.6 Athol's Beautification Week and efforts to enforce ordinances are increasingly successful. There is still opportunity to creatively find ways to get Athol's less tidy properties looking nice. With City staff and capacity limited to coordinate beautification activities, volunteer efforts from clubs, faith groups, and individuals could advance these efforts. As much as possible

efforts should be undertaken by either: the ACA (from ED 1.1), a new beautification committee, or an interested organization in the community. Methods might include:

- Trees grow wonderfully in Athol, so an annual day (perhaps sponsored by Athol and supported by local schools) planting baby trees through town to screen where fences either don't exist or are inadequate could, in addition to covering unsightly views, add a pleasing "row of trees" motif to streets for a low cost. Athol could even go as far as becoming a Tree City USA.
- A facelift program that recognizes and rewards improvements could invigorate cleanup efforts. Community rake-up and paint the town days could help the elderly and infirm maintain attractive homes.
- A local resident has volunteered, in past years, to pick up junk metal and recycle it for Beautification Week and donate back revenue from the scrap metal sale. Taking this idea one-step further, efforts could be focused to collect as much as possible to accomplish a City improvement project, perhaps a beautification effort like a sculpture or mural in the park. This could be a prolonged effort with monthly updates and mentions of top donors, or it could have a target weight, like "100 Tons for Fun(ds)".
- Develop enforcement recommendations for the Athol City Council to consider.
- Beautification week efforts could be augmented as follows: school sports teams, faith groups, scouts or other community organizations could partner with property owners to clean up one or more nuisance properties per year (essentially being done currently). Residents or businesses wanting to support such efforts could be financial sponsors. The sponsorship money could go to the participating organization(s). The City of Arco's "Pretty City Committee" formed after their Community Review has made significant progress using this approach. This allows group fundraising efforts and City beautification efforts to be aligned.
- Make sure the topic of property maintenance and outdoor storage is included as part of the proposed comprehensive planning process (See [LU 1.1](#)).

ED 2.7 Explore ways the trains might be embraced as part of Athol's identity. Ask questions like, "How can trains be an asset to the community," and "Can there be social events involving the train or train history?" As suggested in ED 3.9, there may be ways to promote business.

ED 2.8 Consider striking up a relationship – become a sister city - with business owners and/or community leaders in Athol, Massachusetts, or even Atholl, Scotland. The notion of [sister cities](#) in the U.S. dates back to 1956 as a means of post-war diplomacy, and [Sister Cities International](#) is a surviving non-profit from that initiative. There may be some fun ways to team up, and learn about their economic and community development efforts and successes. Perhaps residents would enjoy a bi-annual house swap for a week or two in which easterners (or highlanders) and westerners swap houses for a week. Invite representatives from Athol, MA to visit Athol, ID. Contact information for Athol, MA can be found on their [City website](#). Blair Atholl in Scotland (home of Blair Castle) may be more difficult to contact, but [Sister Cities](#)

[International](#) can probably help. Note that there are three Blair Athol's in Australia that could round out some fun global connections.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY AREA 3: SUPPORT LOCAL BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY

Many smaller opportunities exist that, with a little nudge, could add some value to local businesses and the community.

Recommendations

- ED 3.1 An RV park (or tiny house village) for season-long residents could help alleviate Silverwood's need for workforce housing and attract customers for local businesses, especially in the summer. The City could initiate this with ACA (from ED 1.1), who could work with local property owners to create ordinances that would allow such uses as determined in the "new" comprehensive plan. They could also work with Silverwood to figure out how large it should be and what revenues might look like. Perhaps Silverwood would "sponsor" it in some way or provide shuttle services. This could leverage a wastewater treatment system if built, but also could have its own system or haul waste to a different municipality more affordably than individuals. RV and truck parking for overnight stays near the gas station might also bring in customers.
- ED 3.2 To draw more Farragut State Park visitors to the community, Athol could find ways to support the creation of a laundromat. Perhaps the school septic system or some other large system not used in summer could support it (or the RV park in ED 3.1). If it had WiFi, showers, and some backup camping supplies, Farragut could advertise it to their patrons.
- ED 3.3 Small local business was favored by residents, and rural character is easily preserved with home business. However, we heard some concern that businesses were operating where they should not be, in non-compliance. Home business could be more clearly defined and promoted with zoning and land use ordinances. The comprehensive plan (talked about in [Land Use Opportunity Area 1](#)) could address this.
- ED 3.4 Identify infill opportunities. Infill is developing in vacant land, and Athol residents like the open space in town, but there are many under-used and/or vacant lots along Highway 54 and Old 95. These opportunities should fit with the Corridor Plan described in Land Use Planning [Opportunity Area 3](#) and discussed a bit in community comments and concerns Highway 54 / Old 95 Corridor. In particular, look for ways to encourage commercial and light industrial development along Highway 54. We heard that there was a lack of commercial space for small businesses to expand into, and for retail and restaurants, this is prime real estate. Currently, much of this real estate serves low density uses, or uses that are equally well suited to less conspicuous locations. Note that some types of infill may require wastewater treatment capacity beyond septic.
- ED 3.5 Look for business opportunities serving seniors. As the area's older demographic ages in place or retires, there will be more need for services from firewood delivery (opportunity for a

“Woodbank” like [Athol, MA has](#)) to snow blowing sidewalks to grocery delivery. Health and wellness classes for seniors could easily be made available if they are not already. Grandmothers’ Club could provide valuable advice to the City or ACA (from ED 1.1) to help pioneer or enhance these efforts.

- ED 3.6 Fab labs or makerspaces (places people get together to make things <http://makezine.com/2013/05/22/the-difference-between-hackerspaces-makerspaces-techshops-and-fablabs/>) are an emerging way to spur economic development and simultaneously provide youth with ways to get their hands dirty doing constructive things. These often form in partnership with local schools, libraries, and community centers, and are often open to the public, receiving donations of equipment and time. In [IT 3.4](#), possibilities for the library and Community Center are briefly discussed. Integrating a fab lab into the mix during a transition could be valuable as a business incubator and youth recreation opportunity. [East Bonner County Library District](#) is doing some amazing things in this realm and may be willing to give a tour.
- ED 3.7 Athol’s water filling station is unique, and the water quality great. This could be better advertised to outsiders, though there could be difficulty in having two different rates for locals and tourists. Advertising local businesses at the pump could also bring in City revenue while promoting local business.
- ED 3.8 Athol’s location and outdoor-oriented culture make it a prime place to develop recreational technology, from high-end gunsmiths to custom fishing rod makers. These businesses can be any size (including in-home). With Farragut’s shooting range and all the region’s lakes, this could be a good sector to promote in town – perhaps through a fab lab or locally promoted classes. Idaho Department of Commerce has been promoting “[rec tech](#)” efforts.
- ED 3.9 Have some fun with the train noise (until it is quieted down as recommended in [IT 2.1](#)). One thought was the “Railway Wheel O’ Fun” in which a wheel with one prize slice and mostly non-prize slices can be spun by one person every time a train comes through. It could move around to different businesses and a prize (something small and fun) could be special for every business. As recommended in ED 2.7, trains are a part of Athol’s identity, and this is one way to promote local business and community by incorporating that identity.

Economic Development Resources

BUSINESS CREATION AND PROMOTION RESOURCES

The Panhandle Area Council (PAC) is the North Idaho Economic Development Corporation established to encourage development and diversification in the economy of North Idaho. PAC partners with banks and other state and federal agencies to provide funds through SBA 504 loan programs or revolving loan funds to new, emerging and existing businesses for start-up or working capital. PAC also is a one-stop-shop strategic planning, project development, grant writing and administration services, and for facilitation of services for the city and local businesses alike. Its services include business counseling, commercial loans, Industrial revenue bonds, environmental reviews, grand Administration management,

comprehensive plans and public transport. Founded in 1972, it is headquartered in Hayden, ID. Visiting Team member Nancy Mabile is head of economic development. Contact at nmabile@pacni.org or call 208-772-0584. Go to <http://www.pacni.org/>.

USDA's Farmer's Market Promotion Program (FMPP) offers grants to help improve and expand domestic farmers' markets, roadside stands, community supported agriculture programs, agri-tourism activities, and other producer-to-consumer market opportunities. Go to <http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/FMPP>.

Created and maintained by the Idaho Department of Commerce, Gem State Prospector is an on-line inventory of available buildings and properties in the state. Businesses and the real estate agents looking to expand or relocate in Idaho use this website to identify potential sites. Go to <http://www.gemstateprospector.com/>. The Idaho Department of Commerce offers periodic trainings for people interested in using Gem State Prospector. Contact Jenny Hemly, 208-287-3169, Jenny.hemly@commerce.idaho.gov.

Host a luncheon or meeting for business owners that features a showing of the "Maps, Apps, and Mobile Media Marketing" webinar available through University of Idaho Extension, then work together to help each other learn about and access the many resources provided in the presentation. Go to <http://www.extension.org/pages/16076/etc-webinar-archive>.

Local people investing in local businesses is a trend taking hold in many communities. Here is an article on the new Community-Supported Brewery in Boise being funded in this way: <http://www.boiseweekly.com/boise/doors-open-at-boise-brewing/Content?oid=3129538>.

Locavesting is a resource book by financial journalist Amy Cortese. Go to http://www.locavesting.com/Locavesting_homepage.html.

Many communities are using principles of community-based social marketing to increase support for locally owned, independent businesses, increase recycling, and promote property maintenance. See *"Fostering Sustainable Behavior: An Introduction to Community-Based Social Marketing"* by Doug McKenzie-Mohr and William Smith, 1999, New Society Publishers. Here (www.cbsm.com) is a related website with a large amount of information, best practices, and networking opportunities related to reducing waste.

Idaho Biz Help is a website with resources and wizards to help businesses identify funding and address regulatory needs. <http://idahobizhelp.idaho.gov/>.

Grant funding for research to take an idea from concept to market with University support. <http://igem.idaho.gov/faqs/>.

The Idaho Small Business Development Center is located in Sandpoint at the Bonner Business Center offering various types of assistance for people wanting to grow or start a business. Go to <http://idahosbdc.org/locations/north/>. Call 208-263-4073.

U.S. Small Business Administration, Seattle District, Spokane Branch.
<https://www.sba.gov/offices/district/wa/seattle>. Call 509-353-2800.

Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE) is a program offering workshops and mentoring to small businesses. Some of SCORE's services are available online. Call 509-353-2821 or go to <https://scorespokane.org/>.

USDA Rural Business Development Grant Program can fund many projects that support business development and job creation. Go to http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/BCP_rbeg.html. Contact Michelle Noordam, 208-762-4939, michelle.noordam@id.usda.gov.

Business Retention and Expansion Visitation Fundamentals is a joint publication of North Dakota State University Extension and Mississippi State University Extension. It provides a useful guide to beginning a business retention and expansion (BR&E) visitation program. Go to <http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/pubs/agecon/market/cd1605.pdf>.

State of Idaho Industrial Revenue Bonds provide businesses with a potentially lower cost alternative source of funding for purchasing and improving upon industrial facilities. The lower cost is realized because the bonds issued under this program are tax-free. This incentive might entice investors to accept a lower rate of return. Go to http://commerce.idaho.gov/assets/content/docs/IRB_GUIDE_2010.doc. Randy Shroll, 208-287-3168, randy.shroll@commerce.idaho.gov.

The *Entrepreneurs and Their Communities* archived hour-long webinars available through University of Idaho Extension are focused on research-based best practices for supporting small businesses. Free webinars are ongoing. Go to <http://www.extension.org/entrepreneurship>.

Idaho Housing and Finance Association's Idaho Collateral Support Program establishes pledged cash collateral accounts with a lending institution to enhance loan collateral for businesses in order to obtain financing on acceptable terms. Go to <http://ihfa.org/ihfa/small-business-loan-programs.aspx>. Cory Phelps, 208-331-4725, coryp@ihfa.org.

Idaho Technology Council helps technology businesses get started and expand. One of the council's areas of interest is Agriscience. Go to <http://www.idahotechcouncil.org/>. Contact Jay Larsen, 208-917-5181, jlarsen@idahotechcouncil.org.

The Center for Rural Entrepreneurship uses webinars, publications, and other tools to share timely information and best practices on a variety of topics related to economic development in rural communities. Go to www.energizingentrepreneurs.org/site. "*Innovative Approaches to Entrepreneurial Development: Cases from the Northwest Region*" is one publication of interest. To read or download, go to <http://www.energizingentrepreneurs.org/site/images/research/cp/cs/cs4.pdf>.

An entire curriculum focused on building an entrepreneur friendly community is available through Ohio State University. Go to <http://sustentrep.osu.edu/building-an-entrepreneur-friendly-community>.

Battelle Energy Alliance corporate awards grants for projects aimed at spurring technology-based economic development, entrepreneurship and innovation in the region. Priority is given to projects that focus on connecting industry partners, universities, start-ups and economic development organizations that drive job growth. Go to <https://www.inl.gov/inl-initiatives/economic-and-workforce-development/> or call Stephanie Cook at 208-526-1644.

Wealth Creation and Rural Livelihoods is a learning network of practitioners, researchers, and policy makers focused on creating and sustaining rural wealth. Go to <http://www.ruralwealth.org>.

WORKFORCE TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES

The Idaho Commission for Libraries has a program sponsoring makerspaces in libraries (<http://libraries.idaho.gov/page/make-it-library-where-idaho-makers-meet>), and East Bonner County Library District is doing some amazing things in this realm <http://www.ebcl.lib.id.us/>.

The Ewing Kauffman Foundation supports projects that foster a society of economically independent individuals who are engaged citizens, contributing to the improvement of their communities. The Foundation focuses grant making on two areas—education and entrepreneurship. Go to <http://www.kauffman.org>.

TechHelp provides technical and professional assistance, training and information to Idaho manufacturers, processors and inventors to help them strengthen their global competitiveness through product and process improvements. Go to <http://www.techhelp.org/index.cfm>. Call 208-426-3767 or Toll Free: 877-426-3797 or contact admin@techhelp.org

University of Idaho Extension’s “Open for Business” program is designed to bring business training to remote rural communities. Lorie Higgins, 208-885-9717, higgins@uidaho.edu.

Idaho National Laboratory’s Technical Assistance Program provides technical expertise to state and local government, and regional small businesses. The requesting organization can receive, at no cost to it, up to 40 hours of laboratory employee time to address technical needs that cannot readily be met by commercially available resources in the region. Go to <http://tinyurl.com/992ayxe>. Stephanie Cook, 208-526-1644, Stephanie.cook@inl.gov.

Idaho National Laboratory Statewide is accepting applications to provide funding to an educator/school to purchase classroom instructional resources, materials and laboratory equipment used to integrate the concepts of STEM across disciplines. Go to <https://www.inl.gov/inl-initiatives/education/k-12-stem-grants/> or call Tabrie Landon, 208-526-4925.

The Idaho National Laboratory Extreme Classroom Makeover Grant Program provides schools with up to \$10,000 to upgrade science laboratories or transform classrooms into modern STEM learning environments. Go to <https://www.inl.gov/inl-initiatives/education/k-12-stem-grants/> or call Tabrie Landon, 208-526-4925.

Several Idaho public libraries have developed and are developing makerspaces. They represent an excellent opportunity for idea and information sharing. Boundary County Library is a great example. Go to <http://www.boundarycountylibrary.com/fab-lab-info.html> or call Craig Anderson at 208-267-3750. The Idaho Commission for Libraries has a program sponsoring makerspaces in libraries. Go to <http://libraries.idaho.gov/page/make-it-library-where-idaho-makers-meet>.

The Northrop Grumman Foundation is welcoming submissions for its Fab School Labs online contest, a program that provides public middle schools with an opportunity to make their dreams of a state-of-the-art science lab a reality with grants of up to \$100,000. The contest is designed to drive students' interest in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. The winning schools will team up with Fab School Labs contest partner Flinn Scientific, Inc. to design a state-of-the-art lab complete with all the tools, resources, and furnishings needed. Go to www.fabschoollabs.com.

Lowe's Toolbox for Education® Grants. Each year, the Lowe's Toolbox for Education grants program contributes more than \$5 million to fund improvements at public schools in the United States. Projects should fall into one of the following categories: technology upgrades, tools for STEM programs, facility renovations and safety improvements. Grant requests can range from \$2,000 to \$100,000. A large majority of grants will be given in the \$2,000 to \$5,000 range. Go to <http://responsibility.lowes.com/apply-for-a-grant/>.

The Bank of America Charitable Foundation's goal is to build pathways to economic progress, including addressing social justice issues that are fundamentally connected to income mobility. Funding is directed to meet the needs of low-income communities, with a particular focus on revitalizing neighborhoods, educating the workforce for 21st century jobs and addressing basic needs, such as hunger and homelessness. Go to http://about.bankofamerica.com/en-us/global-impact/charitable-foundation-funding.html#fbid=Vf_VfglpQU3/hashlink=housing.

The *Successful Communities On-line Toolkit* is a searchable database of community design and planning best practices from across the west. It is a joint venture of Lincoln Institute of Land Policy and the Sonoran Institute. Go to <http://scotie.org/>. 602-393-4310.

The Workforce Development Training Fund – WDTF – can reimburse employee training costs to eligible companies that are bringing jobs to Idaho, adding jobs through expansion or upgrading skills of current workers who are at risk of being permanently laid off. Go to <http://labor.idaho.gov/dnn/idl/Businesses/TrainingResources/WorkforceDevelopmentTrainingFund.aspx>. Also check out the new Micro Grant and Sector Grant efforts or contact Regional Business Specialist Ricia Lasso, 208-457-8789 ext. 3992, Ricia.Lasso@labor.idaho.gov.

Idaho Department of Labor office manager for Kootenai County was Visiting Team member Vicki Isakson. Contact her branch in Post Falls at kcmil@labor.idaho.gov or call 208-457-8789.

“Organizing a Successful Downtown Revitalization Program Using the Main Street Approach” is a book available through the Washington Department of Trade and Economic Development. Go to http://www.commerce.wa.gov/cted/documents/ID_160_Publications.pdf.

RampUpIdaho is a new effort being developed by a group of folks representing transportation, business, housing, government, economic development and accessibility. The group is planning to compile a list of resources and outline a simple rationale for businesses, chambers of commerce, and other groups to begin thinking more strategically and collaboratively about access. Contact info@rampupidaho.org for more information.

TOURISM, BRANDING, AND PLACEMAKING RESOURCES

Learn about the City of Glens Ferry's downtown revitalization efforts here:

<http://glensferryidaho.org/downtown/>. Volunteer labor and financial sponsorship of individual downtown furnishings (lights, benches, etc.) by individuals, businesses, and community organizations significantly contributed to the success of this effort.

Idaho Department of Commerce – Community Development Block Grant Program can fund lighting, street trees, sidewalk, and other downtown projects. Go to

<http://commerce.idaho.gov/communities/community-grants/community-development-block-grant-cdbg>. Contact Sharon Deal, 208-287-0774, sharon.deal@commerce.idaho.gov.

For an article and resources on successful efforts to fill vacant downtown storefront windows with local art, go to <http://ruraltourismmarketing.com/2011/03/using-art-in-vacant-storefronts-to-rebuild-a-small-town-s-future/>.

Idaho Department of Commerce's *Show Me the Money* funding newsletter has information about funding for a wide variety of community projects. To subscribe, go to <http://idaho.us2.list-manage2.com/subscribe?u=74de75b2fc7e24670e05b0def&id=a1f3c8c6b9>. Contact Jerry Miller, 208-287-0780, jerry.miller@commerce.idaho.gov.

Operation Facelift is a project of the Southern Idaho Economic Development Organization that has inspired many Idaho communities to spruce up their downtowns. Go to this article:

http://www.expansionsolutionsmagazine.com/091011_siedo or call 208-731-9996.

The National Main Street Center is a membership organization that offers a number of downtown improvement resources. A basic membership is \$350 per year. Go to

<http://www.preservationnation.org/main-street/>.

The Idaho Main Street Program is a licensed partner of the National Main Street Center and offers help for communities interested in pursuing the Main Street™ model.

<http://commerce.idaho.gov/communities/main-street>. Contact Jerry Miller, 208-287-0780, jerry.miller@commerce.idaho.gov.

The Idaho Department of Commerce's Idaho Gem Grant program provides funding for public infrastructure projects that support economic development. Examples of eligible activities include: construction materials, new and rehabilitative construction, architectural and engineering services, and property acquisition. Grant amounts are up to \$50,000. Go to

<http://commerce.idaho.gov/communities/community-assistance/idaho-gem-grants/>. Contact Tony Tine, 208-780-5147, Tony.Tenne@commerce.idaho.gov.

Tourism Cares is a non-profit offering grants and technical assistance for the preservation, conservation and restoration of cultural and historic sites and visitor education. Go to <http://www.tourismcares.org/>.

Idaho Regional Travel Grant Program funds projects related to developing tourism-related amenities and marketing. Go to <http://commerce.idaho.gov/tourism-resources/itc-grant-program>. Contact Jill Eden, 208-334-2650 ext. 2161, jill.eden@commerce.idaho.gov.

As a way to promote tourism, the Visit Salmon Valley website is an excellent example for Athol. Go to <http://www.visitsalmonvalley.com>.

Recreational vehicle facility grants: Go to <https://parksandrecreation.idaho.gov/grants-and-funding>. In 2017, the North Idaho Fair Board and Farragut State park received a combined total of \$2,442,000 from the Recreation Vehicle Fund – this may decrease odds for Kootenai County getting more RV Fund grants in 2018.

Harvest Hosts is a network of farmers, winemakers, and attractions that invites self-contained RVers to visit their vineyards and farms and stay overnight for free. Food producers in the Rigby area can join this network. Go to www.HarvestHosts.com.

OTHER ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES

Tree City USA description and standards. <https://www.arborday.org/programs/treecityusa/about.cfm>.

The 22 Benefits of Street Trees is a free publication touting the benefit of planting trees in cities and commercial districts. Go to http://www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/22_benefits_208084_7.pdf.

The American Farmland Trust has supported the completion of numerous studies that compare the fiscal impacts of different land uses. To download their “Cost of Community Services” Fact Sheet, go to <http://www.farmlandinfo.org/cost-community-services-studies> or http://www.farmlandinfo.org/sites/default/files/COCS_08-2010_1.pdf.

Infrastructure / Transportation

Community Comments and Concerns

WASTEWATER TREATMENT

The greatest infrastructure issue facing Athol was lack of a municipal wastewater system. All developed properties were on septic. Available septic hook-ups were limited. We heard 147 dwelling equivalents (DEs) were available for new development (though a 2015 [draft agreement](#) made with Panhandle Health District due to misuse of DEs by former city council, mayor and staff linked on Athol's website showed 512 were available - a DE was approximately 181 gallons per day). This equated to 1 DE or septic hook-up per parcel of land within City limits regardless of the size of the parcel. As part of this agreement, parcels **could not be split** to receive another DE. This effectively has limited the size and type of business and the amount of residential development.

On the pre-Review survey, residents were asked about the importance of increasing the community's ability to treat wastewater by creating or being part of a wastewater treatment system. Sixty-five City (not County) residents responded:

- 25 marked *very unimportant*
- 3 marked *somewhat unimportant*
- 13 marked *neutral*
- 16 marked *somewhat important*
- 8 marked *very important*

More residents indicated it was very unimportant than indicated that it was either somewhat important or very important. It is unclear why residents responded this way, though clearly the issue was polarized. One factor may be that survey respondents were older than the overall community. Here the City could further investigate residents' perceptions and opinions. Residents may have been indicating a desire to avoid the costs of a new system, and the development that could be triggered by a system. If a system were installed and residents forced to connect, this was estimated to cost between \$12,000 and \$25,000 per connection. Without an official engineering estimate, these amounts provide only a rough estimate of per household cost. Note that funding sources currently exist to help low-income residents cover connection costs. Depending on the income of a property owner, this could be a very great burden, especially relative to the value of some properties. Community comments and concern about development were described in the [Economic Development section](#) and [Land Use Planning section](#). With such high stakes, wastewater treatment infrastructure was likely to be controversial, divisive, and messy without a great deal of honesty, quality information, and discussion with residents, government officials, and business representatives.

We also heard that some septic owners had not done their part in pumping their septic systems, jeopardizing groundwater and leaving those in charge of enforcing the rules in a difficult position.

Adding urgency to the wastewater decision was the interest of Hughes Investments (described in more detail in the [Economic Development](#) and [Land Use Planning](#) sections) in installing a \$1,000,000 system to

meet their development's needs. During the Review, Hughes Investments representatives indicated their preference, if the City were so inclined, to have this investment go toward a municipal system. A municipal system could better serve their future needs, and they expressed a willingness to work with Athol even if doing so pushed back their construction schedule a bit. The plan at the time of the Review was to break ground in the first half of 2017.

In addition, historically, Silverwood expressed interest in working with Athol to get a system installed. A Silverwood representative expressed openness to considering future possibilities during the Review.

WATER

Abundant, high quality water was an asset in the eyes of residents we heard from. Historically water rates have been low—currently as low as \$14 per month compared with around \$45 (per USDA Rural Development) for a comparable community. Athol has received grant funding to complete a water facilities plan including estimates for system improvements and upgrades into the future. This plan will likely provide a sense about the actual cost to provide the water, which may well be over \$14 per month. Idaho Rural Water Association (it was decided, after recommendation during the Review) will be doing a rate study that could answer the question of how much rates would need to be for maintenance and growth in the system long term.



During the Review, the Infrastructure team went to the water tanks, the pumps and the water tower. An initial estimate indicated it would require several million dollars to bring the water system up to modern standards, and the City did not have this amount in reserve.

At the time of the Review, certain places in the City were below guidelines for pressure and flow.

Some capacity improvements, such as additional storage and possibly an additional pump, may be required if the Hughes annexation occurs. Hughes representatives indicated that several hundred thousand dollars had been allocated for these improvements. However, it was not clear how much, if any, the City would need to pay.

SIDEWALKS AND PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

Athol had few sidewalks relative to other rural Idaho communities. This was not inherently bad or good, unless community members had a preference. On surveys and in person, many Athol residents expressed dissatisfaction with pedestrian (especially youth) safety. Often sidewalks came up as a possible solution, especially along Highway 54. This perception accompanied a feeling that traffic speeds were too high through Athol, especially with children present. One resident said it this way: “We are on a highway; I hate seeing the kids walking home from school. I mean..., it’s ridiculous.” As with other infrastructure improvements, concern was expressed about the cost relative to the benefit. Several people expressed interest in a bike path or lane to Farragut State Park. Land use and pedestrian

infrastructure along Highway 54 and 95 intertwine, especially in regards to Hughes. Further discussion is in community comments and concerns for the [Highway 54 / Old 95 Corridor](#).

LIBRARY

We heard that Athol's library was well used, especially its computers, being standing room only at times. Many expressed their desire for a larger library. A few suggested that other functions, such as a fab lab / makerspace function, be added to the library. Expanding the library in its current location was not viewed as feasible due to inadequate foundation for expanding up and inadequate lot size for expanding out. The Visiting Team suspects there may be other options to expand in place. Some residents suggested that there could be a building or land swap between City and library owner. There was some confusion about how the library was funded, and who would be paying for improved facilities. We found that the Community Library Network (CLN, a multi-county library district) operated the library and that a recent levy (May 2016) for improvement including enlarged youth area and expanded meeting room had failed as detailed on their [website](#).



HIGH-SPEED INTERNET SERVICE

Survey results were mixed regarding high-speed internet, with County residents indicating a satisfaction of 2.2 (very low) on a scale of 1 to 5. Athol residents indicated a satisfaction of 3.2 (above average) compared to a state rural average of 2.9. A few individuals mentioned inadequate high-speed internet during the Review, though it was not a major topic. On a listening session form, a youth wanted better internet. In a different listening session, a business owner in Athol noted broadband as good, listing it as an asset. For the City, it appeared that high-speed internet was satisfactory, but in the County, there was plenty of room for improvement.

COMMUNITY CENTER

Review team members spent time in each of the different rooms of the Community Center, and it was spacious with adequate kitchen facilities to feed the Visiting Team! While the gymnasium was spacious and included a stage (something few rural communities have), poor acoustics in the gymnasium made discussion groups impossible, especially for those with imperfect hearing. Many residents on surveys, listening sessions, and in community meetings mentioned wanting improvements to the Community Center, often in combination with discussions about the smallness of the library. In particular, residents felt the current Community Center arrangement was not the best "face" for the City, with City offices located in the basement.

TRAINS

At the time of the Review, Union Pacific (UP) and Burlington Northern-Santa Fe Railroad (BNSF) Railways owned Athol's train infrastructure. These two combined crossed Highway 54 with - residents told us - a combined around 60 trains per day. A BNSF representative indicated train traffic on BNSF tracks had been decreasing since peaking in 2006 because of reductions in Bakken Crude prices and changes in coal industry. Each train caused a three to fifteen-minute delay. Universally, residents were frustrated with train noise and delays. During the Review, a BNSF Railway representative expressed interest in working with the community to pursue a quiet zone and placemaking activities (e.g. playground equipment or other material for public spaces). An Idaho Transportation Department employee expressed interest in helping with a quiet zone as well.

Safety was a major concern in three distinct ways regarding trains. First, traffic delays caused by train traffic caused congestion that intermittently backed up enough to block the entrance to the fire station. Even when traffic was not backed-up, trains potentially delayed emergency responders. Increased traffic in the future could exacerbate this problem. Second, trains posed a threat to those crossing the tracks on foot or in vehicles. Idaho Transportation Department was planning to install crossing gates, lights and signage at the UP tracks. Note that these sorts of crossing gates, lights, and signage are prerequisites for quiet zones. Third, a few residents expressed concern that the contents of the trains themselves, such as oil, could be dangerous if spilled.

While we heard on Tuesday night, October 4th, that trains were generally an asset, little was mentioned during the Review about the current or potential future benefits of trains. Trains at the time of the Review primarily served Merritt Bros. Lumber Company and Idaho Forest Group's Chilco Mill locally.

EMS CAPACITY AND DEPTH OF SERVICE

At the time of the Review, one ambulance was staffed full time, and one was staffed seasonally at Silverwood. Emergency response staff was deeply concerned about the risk of a second call when only one ambulance was operational in the off-season. Athol Fire service area was large, increasing this risk. During the listening session at the fire department, Visiting Team members saw firsthand and heard about the need for a training and meeting room able to handle around 25 volunteers.

CITY PARKS

Most mentions of the City Park were positive, with residents valuing the park as an asset. Some residents expressed safety concerns during listening sessions and on the survey, specifically regarding the large pipe in which "nothing good goes on" and drugs. In addition, there was some desire for a sports complex. The City has no parks and recreation department, but volunteers have stepped up. For instance, the Baptist Church volunteers did a recent installation of a sprinkler system in the park.

Residents expressed interest in having a town or community center in the City Park including amenities like a gazebo, or some other structure that would allow for both indoor and outdoor gathering year-round. Residents were interested in having more programmed activities in the park to bring the community together and to have more activities to do in town.

Infrastructure / Transportation Opportunity Areas

The Infrastructure / Transportation Focus Area is abbreviated as “IT” throughout the following opportunity area recommendations.

INFRASTRUCTURE / TRANSPORTATION OPPORTUNITY AREA 1: WASTEWATER TREATMENT

Wastewater in Athol is a controversial topic, with residents seemingly divided and polarized. At the end of the day, decisions need made, either to install a system or not. If the decision is made to install a system, it can be big or little, serving the whole City or only a small part. It can be set up as a regional sewer district or as an independent Athol-owned system. It can be a public system or a public/private partnership. Each of these decisions intertwines with land use decisions; dense development along Highway 54 is impossible without a system - no businesses requiring more than one DE are possible currently. Wastewater system placement and capacity can direct and contain growth. The City can save hundreds of thousands of dollars by collaborating with private or other public entities.

System costs are the result of a variety of different variables, including system location, number of connections (present and future), grants, system partners, etc. Because of these many variables, accurate system cost estimates are expensive. If the system costs are too high, voters will not approve. The City cannot afford to get cost estimates from engineering firms for every possible scenario. The key to Athol’s wastewater decisions is in its community vision because without a vision for future development, City leaders cannot know what residents view as the “right” system size, location, and purpose. Is the system for a few key businesses or for every residence? Until the vision is developed, partners cannot be determined, nor cost estimates created. Athol’s leaders need to know what the residents want them to bring to the table in a negotiation with potential partners.

A table after IT 1.5 summarizes a list of options. Note that one option in the table is to *never* install a system (unless required to). This is an important option to consider, with its pros and cons. As of the writing of this report, Athol has options, and is in a great place to start moving forward with collaborative public/private system developments should it choose to. However, Athol must act quickly with Hughes as described in the comments and concerns about [wastewater treatment](#). There is more urgency if Silverwood or other regional partners are involved.

Recommendations

- IT 1.1 Beyond all other recommendations, as stated later in the *Land Use Planning* section ([Opportunity Area 1](#)), we suggest that the City engage residents of Athol to determine a vision for future development in the City. Wastewater public engagement, first and foremost, must support development of the community vision, which is the first step in comprehensive planning. Because community vision intertwines with wastewater decisions, these interconnections should be included in the public engagement. The [Strategic Sequence Going Forward](#) shows this order.
- IT 1.2 At the same time as the community vision is being developed, the City could form a City wastewater committee, or alternatively, it could be a committee for all things infrastructure related. Name the committee something like Athol Water & Wastewater Committee (AWC).

City staff or the Mayor could administrate, and the committee should include capable citizen representatives. Many skilled, willing volunteers in and around Athol could be approached about membership. This AWC would interface with different stakeholders and citizens, gathering and distributing information. It is advisable for this committee to include diverse opinions about the future of the community. This committee’s mission should include something about keeping the long-view in mind. Going forward, view water and potential future wastewater systems like self-sustaining businesses with funds in reserve for maintenance, both planned and unplanned, and future improvements. The AWC may need funds to hire consultants to answer key questions or mail surveys to residents, so some funds should be earmarked for the group.

IT 1.3 Perhaps a first major action item for the AWC is to determine how likely it is that future government policies **may require** residents to connect to a municipal system. Requirements for wastewater treatment could change in the future due to policy changes at Panhandle Health, Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (IDEQ), or even changes at the federal level. In this case, if a system **becomes a requirement** for all households in the future, it is best to start planning for it now.

IT 1.4 If resident’s vision for the future of Athol necessitates a system, the AWC should discover what collaborative options exist. Get rough estimates of costs to extend services to different potential partners, and get commitments from partners about their potential financial contributions to a joint system. Keep this planning process open, with its notes publically accessible, and possibly send monthly updates via mail or include them in the City’s monthly newsletter to Athol residents. Be sure to gather input from potential system partners including:

- Hughes Investments
- Silverwood
- Lakeland Joint School District
- Kootenai County
- Panhandle Health District
- Engineering consultant – cost estimates are needed to assess different options such as those in the table in IT 1.5



IT 1.5 The AWC needs to quantify the financial implications of the various options presented in the table below. Residents need to know how annexation and wastewater decisions intertwine with community vision. For instance, if residents say, “We want business development along Highway 54,” then the AWC needs to be able to respond with scenarios. For instance “If Hughes, Silverwood, and Athol’s businesses along Highway 54 were to team up, the system would cost \$X for each small business, but if small businesses each install their own system, it

costs \$Y for each.” The AWC and Athol Community Association could work together to communicate this effectively during the community visioning. The goal is to give residents a sense for what options exist and what financial implications are for each option. The AWC should help residents avoid the sense that they would have seen things differently during community visioning if they had known the wastewater cost implications.

Only one time frame can be selected		\$ Impact of Timing	
When Built?	Never, unless required to...		
	All at once, in a few years		
	All at once, as soon as possible		
	Some now, some later		
One or more of the following options can be selected		\$ Paid to Connect to System	\$ Spent to Provide Service
Who Connects?	Large businesses		
	Small businesses along highways		
	Small businesses not along highways		
	Easily connected Athol residents		
	All other Athol residents		
	Nearby County residents		
	Other public entities		
Who Owns It?	City of Athol		
	Businesses		
	Other public entities		
	Certain subdivisions		

IT 1.6 As shown in the [strategic sequence](#) in the executive summary, Water Facilities Plan and Wastewater Plan are incorporated by reference into the new City of Athol Comprehensive Plan ([LU Opportunity Area 1](#)).

INFRASTRUCTURE / TRANSPORTATION OPPORTUNITY AREA 2: TRAINS / EMS / FIRE

As described in the [Trains](#) section above, safety and noise were the two primary concerns expressed by residents. Trains interact with EMS and fire protection, and so these are combined in this section.

Recommendations

- IT 2.1 Work with BNSF and ITD to establish a quiet zone in Athol.
- IT 2.2 Work with ITD to accomplish two other efforts, potentially augmenting the currently planned installation of gates, lights, and signage on the UP track. The first relates to pedestrian safety along Highway 54. The City may be able to combine funds from BNSF Railway, ITD, and locals toward pedestrian safety from the train crossing to the Community Center or even to Highway 95, both along Highway 54 and crossing it. Look into signage and possible signalized pedestrian crossing (RRFB). RRFBs are relatively low cost around \$25,000, though a HAWK signal (around \$100,000) may be more appropriate. The second is to add pavement markings

and signage in front of the fire station so that if cars do back up, they will leave space for emergency vehicles to enter and exit.

- IT 2.3 Explore the possibility of Athol becoming a regional railway hub, as a BNSF Railway representative stated might be a possibility. Athol would need to work with the rail companies and private industry to develop something like an intermodal facility for agricultural products and/or lumber that can transfer goods between trucks and trains.
- IT 2.4 If possible, add a second staffed ambulance in the off-season, when the Silverwood ambulance is not available as backup.
- IT 2.5 Explore spaces for training EMS and fire volunteers, such as the gymnasium at City Hall.

INFRASTRUCTURE / TRANSPORTATION OPPORTUNITY AREA 3: COMMUNITY SPACES

Community spaces mentioned by residents included the Community Center, Library, Park, and the trail to Farragut State Park.

Recommendations

- IT 3.1 As a part of the comprehensive planning process, develop a cohesive community vision for library, community center, town square, parks, sidewalks, and trails. Include in this vision needs of the Fire Department and library for more space.
- IT 3.2 In the absence of a formal Parks and Recreation Department, residents could form a Parks and Trails Advocacy Group (PTAG) or club, which could help develop (and later implement) the community vision. It is important for this group to include people from the surrounding area because these folks appreciate these amenities and are likely to support their improvement. Both City and County leaders could be represented, and help direct funds toward larger projects supporting group initiatives.
- IT 3.3 To address drug and safety [issues at the park](#), one possible deterrent would be a surveillance camera streaming across the street to the fire station where staff is present 24 hours a day, and contact with County police is constant. For the big pipe in particular, consider removing it, reorienting it, or cutting it into smaller sections.
- IT 3.4 In response to concerns expressed in surveys and listening sessions about deviant youth behavior that is not encountering adequate police resistance, consider community policing. It could provide more timely and consistent guidance to troubled youth.
- IT 3.5 Lighter, quicker, cheaper methods can be employed to test some ideas. For instance, in high pedestrian traffic areas, a walking path could be delineated using paint and cones.
- IT 3.6 As a part of the community vision emerging from the comprehensive planning process, team up with the Community Library Network in considering enlarging or moving the library. Many scenarios were mentioned to the team, and we would add to these that the City has the

power to redraw lot lines around the current library to afford needed space to expand. Alternatively, we felt that City administrative functions could be accomplished in the current library space with the bonus that “City Hall” would have a better presence on Highway 54. This would leave many options open for using the existing Community Center as a library. One option would be to move the library upstairs into the gymnasium. With some clever interior design, and with a few reading lofts, a portion of the gymnasium could be an enjoyable library with space for other functions, perhaps a fab lab ([see ED 3.6](#)), and still leave plenty of room near the stage for performances, community meetings, exercise classes, etc.

- IT 3.7 Depending on the envisioned future use of the Community Center gymnasium, it could be improved with sound absorbing technology. This would make gymnasium space better for community meetings and perhaps other things for a low cost.
- IT 3.8 Crowd fund improvements via internet, by mail, or at events. The idea is to let people volunteer resources toward specific projects, as will old-fashioned bake sales. The City (or PTAG from IT 3.2) could do this by having a bulletin board with five projects it is considering, each listed with a cost (time and money), project description, and a picture. Below each project, a coffee can with a hole in the lid receives slips of paper with commitments of time, money, or donated goods. When a project gets enough commitments to be built, the City does it. Similarly, individual households, organizations, and businesses could be invited to sponsor specific improvements.
- IT 3.9 Approach BNSF with a plan for proposed placemaking activities and/or projects. The BNSF representative was interested in helping provide playground equipment or other materials for public spaces. A vision can inspire individuals as well as corporations to participate and make things happen.
- IT 3.10 Perhaps open the gymnasium for fire department trainings and meetings that require more space than they currently have. Sound absorbing improvements from IT 3.7 could be of benefit for these meetings and trainings as well.

INFRASTRUCTURE / TRANSPORTATION OPPORTUNITY AREA 4: WATER

As mentioned above, water treatment is generally satisfactory and a water facilities plan is being written using grant funds.

Recommendations

- IT 4.1 As with wastewater, the first recommendation is to develop a community vision and comprehensive plan. Coordinate the water facilities plan with the comprehensive plan. As shown in the [Strategic Sequence Going Forward](#), water facilities planning occurs at the same time as comprehensive planning and eventually feeds information into the comprehensive plan.
- IT 4.2 Work with Idaho Rural Water Association to do a rate study. While this overlaps a bit with the water facilities plan, IRWA has offered, and this is an opportunity worth taking.

IT 4.3 Work with USDA and DEQ and other public and private partners to implement the plan.

Infrastructure / Transportation Resources

WATER AND WASTEWATER RESOURCES

For Water and Waste Direct Loans and Grants through USDA Rural Development, and Community Facilities Direct Loans and Grants: Fact sheets in [Appendix E](#) and F respectively. Contact Howard Lunderstadt, 208-762-4939, howard.lunderstadt@id.usda.gov.

For individuals, USDA Rural Development offers help with costs connecting to city water, installing a septic, or removing an old septic. Go to <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/individual-water-wastewater-grants>.

For wastewater treatment system cost support, Idaho Department of Commerce can help access Community Development Block Grants or Rural Development Block Grants at <http://commerce.idaho.gov/communities/community-grants/> or call Idaho CDBG team at 208-334-2470.

For additional Rural Funding Resources see <http://ric.nal.usda.gov/Rural-Federal-Funding-Database>. Also, see *A Guide to Funding Resources*, available here: <https://www.nal.usda.gov/ric/guide-to-funding-resources>.

The Idaho Rural Water Association (IRWA) circuit rider program could provide further input on questions regarding the capacity and condition of the water and wastewater systems. In addition, a rate study is to be completed by IRWA, which would complement the current water facilities plan. Go to <http://www.idahoruralwater.com/> or call Kevin McLeod at 208-343-7001.

Department of Environmental Quality wastewater: Go to <https://www.deq.idaho.gov/water-quality/wastewater/wastewater-systems/>. Contact Larry Waters, 208-373-0151, larry.waters@deq.idaho.gov.

Panhandle Health: Go to <http://panhandlehealthdistrict.org/environmental-health/septic>. Call 208-415-5220.

TRANSPORTATION RESOURCES

BNSF (Burlington Northern-Santa Fe Railroad) spokesperson at the Review was Serena Carlson of Carlson Strategic Communications, 208-818-4338, serena@carlsonstratcomm.com.

Operation Lifesaver's mission is to end collisions, deaths and injuries at highway-rail grade crossings and on railroad property through a nationwide network of volunteers who work to educate people about rail safety. State website: <http://www.olidaho.org/>. Contact State Coordinator Travis Campbell at 208-465-8226, or at oli.idaho@gmail.com North Idaho contacts: For Kootenai County – Jonelle Greear, Idaho State Police, 208 209-8624, jonelle.greear@isp.idaho.gov or for Bonner and Boundary County – Kurt Lehman, Bonner County Sheriff's Office, 208-263-8417, ext. 3022, klehman@bonnercountyid.gov.

Safe Routes to School has a document addressing the challenges of rural communities in accessing resources set aside federally for communities with less than 5000 residents.

<http://www.saferoutespartnership.org/resources/fact-sheet/srts-small-rural>.

Guide to quiet zone establishment from Dept. of Transportation can be downloaded here

<https://www.fra.dot.gov/eLib/Details/L04781>. It links to the BNSF page

<http://www.bnsf.com/communities/fags/train-horns/> and the UP page

http://www.up.com/real_estate/roadxing/industry/horn_quiet/index.htm.

Community Builders New Mobility West program provides technical assistance to help communities with mobility planning. Contact: Jillian Sutherland, Jillian@communitybuilders.org.

ITD Freight Program manager regarding need for an underpass: Jeff Marker,

Jeffrey.marker@itd.idaho.gov.

Road Safety Audit or a Road Diet on old 95. FHWA, LHTAC and ITD typically can provide this service. ITD contact could be Visiting Team member Justin Wuest at Justin.Wuest@itd.idaho.gov or the District 1 District Engineer. Call their office at 208-772-1200.

The Blue Cross/Blue Shield Foundation has provided money for planning and projects that encourage active living (e.g. biking). Go to <http://www.bcidahofoundation.org/>, or contact Kendra Witt-Doyle, kwitt-doyle@bcidaho.com.

Idaho Health & Welfare Community Activity Connection Grants. Go to

[http://www.healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/Health/IdahoPhysicalActivityandNutrition\(IPAN\)/PhysicalActivity/tabid/1970/Default.aspx](http://www.healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/Health/IdahoPhysicalActivityandNutrition(IPAN)/PhysicalActivity/tabid/1970/Default.aspx) and <http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/downloads/UrbanDesignPolicies.pdf>.

The Idaho Department of Transportation has a website with information and links to ITD initiatives related to bicycling and walking, tips and resources for bicycling and walking in Idaho, information on how bicycle and pedestrian projects are implemented, as well as useful links to other organizations that are committed to bicycle and pedestrian mobility. Go to http://itd.idaho.gov/bike_ped/proposals.htm.

For Transportation Alternative Program funding, contact Susan Kiebert with LHTAC at

skiebert@lhtac.org or Jared Holyoak with ITD, Jared.holyoak@itd.idaho.gov.

The Transportation Research Board publishes resources related to selecting chemical treatments for unpaved roads. Go to <http://docs.trb.org/prp/14-3437.pdf>.

For transportation plan funding, the Local Highway Technical Assistance Council (LHTAC) provides a variety of educational opportunities and other assistance to local jurisdictions and transportation agencies in rural Idaho. Go to <http://lhtac.org/>. Contact Susan Kiebert at skiebert@lhtac.org or call 208-344-0565 ext. 1028.

Idaho Walk Bike Alliance. Go to <http://idahowalkbike.org/>. Contact Cynthia Gibson at 208-345-1105, Cynthia@idahowalkbike.org.

For an example of a very good local advocacy group that makes recommendations to the city on bike and ped, look at Bike Walk Nampa. LaRita Schandorff is the lead. bikewalknampa@gmail.com. They also have a fantastic bike/pedestrian plan that would be a good model.

For help with a path connection between Farragut and Athol, New Mobility West (a partnership between Community Builders, Project for Public Spaces, Idaho Smart Growth, and Bike Walk) does concept planning and technical assistance for regional systems. <http://newmobilitywest.org>.

COMMUNITY HOUSING, POLICING, AND OTHER INFRASTRUCTURE RESOURCES

Crowd funding is a low-risk, easy way to raise funds for community projects and confirm community interest. Several sites have been created for this including: <https://www.indiegogo.com/> and <https://www.kickstarter.com/>.

USDA Rural Development has a limited amount of grant funds available to assist in the development of essential community facilities (including infrastructure, streets, roads, and bridges) in rural areas and towns of up to 20,000 in population (<https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/community-facilities-direct-loan-grant-program/id>). Grants are authorized on a graduated scale. Applicants located in small communities with low populations and low incomes will receive a higher percentage of grants. Grants are available to public entities such as municipalities, counties, parishes, boroughs, and special-purpose districts, as well as non-profit corporations and tribal governments. Contact Howard Lunderstadt, 208-762-4939, howard.lunderstadt@id.usda.gov.

Idaho Smart Growth (ISG) offers a number of resources that can help the City act on many of the planning, zoning, and transportation-related recommendations in this report. Go to www.idahosmartgrowth.org. Contact Deanna Smith, (deanna@idahosmartgrowth.org) or Elaine Clegg, (elaine@idahosmartgrowth.org) at 208-333-8066.

Resources for placemaking and lighter, quicker, cheaper: Project for Public Spaces: <http://www.pps.org/reference/lqc-resources/>.

Community Policing Defined is a free publication from the U.S. Department of Justice's Community Oriented Policing Services. To download, go to <http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/pdf/vets-to-cops/e030917193-CP-Defined.pdf>.

The U.S. Department of Justice's Community Oriented Policing Services maintains a website containing resources, funding information, and training opportunities. Go to <http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/>.

The Criminal Justice Program at Idaho State University might be able to assist with an evaluation and implementation of community policing strategies. Go to <http://www.isu.edu/sociology/criminaljustice.shtml>. Contact Program Director Anthony Hoskin, PhD, 208-282-2170, hoskanth@isu.edu.

The Division of Governmental Services and Studies (DGSS) at Washington State University is a university outreach unit jointly supported by the College of Arts and Sciences and WSU Extension. It serves the applied social science research needs of various governmental agencies. It also supports basic research and grant-related work for faculty and graduate students of the School of Politics, Philosophy, and Public Affairs, the Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology, and the Edward R. Murrow College of Communications. The DGSS is a potential resource for recommendations related to law enforcement. Go to <https://dgss.wsu.edu/>.

USDA Rural Development's Section 504 Home Repair program offers grants and low interest loans to help low income persons to improve, repair, modernize and remedy health and safety hazards BEFORE the home is badly in disrepair and unsightly. Go to <http://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/single-family-housing-repair-loans-grants>.

USDA's Rural Housing Service provides a number of single and multi-family loans and grants. Go to <https://www.rd.usda.gov/about-rd/agencies/rural-housing-service>. For Self-Help Housing the USDA Rural Development (USDA RD) and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) combine resources to help very low- and low-income households who construct their own homes. Go to <https://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/hudprograms/shop> and https://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/comm_planning/economicdevelopment/programs/shop.

The HOME Program helps to expand the supply of decent, affordable housing for low- and very low-income families by providing a formula grant to the Idaho Housing and Financing Association (IHFA). IHFA uses their HOME grants to fund housing programs that meet local needs and priorities. IHFA may use their HOME funds to help renters, new homebuyers, or existing homeowners. Go to http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/comm_planning/affordablehousing/programs/home/.

Land Use Planning

Community Comments and Concerns

Home team members and other residents of Athol shared numerous comments, concerns, and opinions that fall under this focus area. The statements that came up most frequently are summarized below.

DON'T PAVE PARADISE!

Many residents of Athol and neighboring Kootenai County were adamant that they did not want sprawling development reminiscent of places like California, Boise, or even Hayden, preferring instead the existing rural character. Statements like, "I moved to Athol to get away from..." were common. Rural



character, also called "small town feel" and "rural lifestyle," encompassed several things in survey and listening session comments such as: trees, quiet, slow pace, little traffic, friendly neighbors, and other things. It was often stated that these would be lost with urbanization or sprawling development. However, not all economic growth and population growth creates urbanization or sprawl, and good planning can make a big difference.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Written a long time ago, in 1980, the current comprehensive plan was not up to date enough to be useful in figuring out what to do with such important questions as annexations and wastewater treatment. When mentioned, it was usually accompanied by a chuckle and remark that "It's like 30 years old." The City has budgeted funds to rewrite a comprehensive plan. Many people expressed a desire to participate in planning efforts as well as a desire not to make decisions for other residents; residents wanted their voice **and** the voice of their peers to be heard in planning decisions. Residents did not want their destiny to be directed by outside entities. In short, we heard many community residents talk about what they *don't* want. In contrast, a comprehensive planning process focuses on what the community *does* want.

HUGHES ANNEXATION (THE CROSSINGS)

In the preceding *Economic Development and Infrastructure / Transportation* sections, the Hughes annexation was viewed through an [economic impact](#) lens and a [wastewater](#) impact lens, and here from a land use lens. Just to the northeast of the Highway 54 / 95 overpass in Kootenai County in Athol's area of impact, Hughes annexation was over one-half mile (and one four-lane divided highway overpass) east of Athol's Library, Park, and Community Center. Hughes Investment representatives spoke openly with the Home and Visiting Teams and indicated that if annexation were not accomplished in the City, development in the County would be pursued, though it would be delayed (roughly a one year set back),

and it was indicated that it may be cost prohibitive to develop in the County. A decision regarding the annexation was pending because a detailed financial analysis had not yet been submitted to the City at the time of the Review. Preliminary site plans were drawn, initial cost estimates for wastewater and City water connection were done, and the site was cleared. It was in a conceptual stage of development at the time of the Review, with annexation officially requested, but not yet accomplished. The key reason expressed to the Review team for wanting to be annexed was City water; the ability to connect to Athol's water system was far less expensive than creating and operating a new water system for the development. In addition, development requirements (e.g. building codes) were less stringent in the City. Residents' sentiments were mixed, from enthusiastic – "It's about time" – to gloomy with a feeling that fears about impending growth and sprawl were becoming a reality.

- It was clear that without housing at The Crossings, this development could cause a lot of housing demand in Athol and Kootenai County. Athol had (we heard) 147 ER's for septic systems at the time of the Review. If all 250 jobs created by businesses located at The Crossings over the next five years were new households (a "worst case" scenario for housing), these households would require new housing either in Athol or somewhere else. This would require over 500 acres of new housing in the County (at one home per five acres) **after** filling **all** available City lots. If two new jobs created need for one new housing unit (a conservative estimate), this would still fill most remaining City lots and have a big impact on housing in the surrounding County areas. Some households would choose to live in other communities and commute.
- Athol had expressed to the developer a preference not to have high-density housing, such as apartments, on the site.
- If housing were included at The Crossings, it would require more, expensive, wastewater treatment capacity than is currently planned.
- When people live across a parking lot from where they work or live in the community in which they work, they do not create as much traffic.
- Pedestrian access via the Farragut trail was planned with attractive irrigated landscaping, but this trail traffic was not incorporated into the core of the development.

The grocery store size and appearance was to mirror Sandpoint's Super 1. As stated in the Pre-Review Survey section, a grocery store was the most commonly requested new amenity, and during the Review, many expressed interest in having more groceries available locally.

COUNTY RESIDENTS WANT TO BE INFORMED AND INVOLVED

We heard from many County residents that they had Athol addresses and felt a sense of ownership in Athol. Some owned businesses in Athol. Others were former residents of Athol and moved out of town, but still felt it was home. These residents supported local businesses, and on surveys gave a strong indication that they wanted to be better informed about City happenings. We heard that at times, County residents volunteered more than City residents in community activities and events. For some County residents, this sense of ownership and community was frustrated by the fact that Athol's

decisions to encourage development could have a direct impact on their way of life, and not surprisingly, these County residents wanted their voice heard.

COST CONSCIOUSNESS

Via the survey results, residents identified the relatively low cost of living (followed by the area's beauty and rural, quiet character) as the best reasons to live in Athol. Throughout the Review, the cost-consciousness of residents came up with respect to wastewater treatment, sidewalks, parks, etc.

If 250 new jobs were to come into the area with [The Crossings](#) over five years, housing scarcity could drive home and land values up unless more compact housing options were to increase (a land use planning topic).

HIGHWAY 54 / OLD 95 CORRIDORS

The Land Use and Infrastructure teams met together and did a walking tour down Highway 54 and then met in the Community Center to discuss reimagining downtown Athol. Using a map and green, yellow and red stars, the Visiting Team asked the group to look at places that worked, places that did not work, and places with opportunity. The group felt that the downtown lacked a main street feel. They discussed whether it made sense to connect to the potential Hughes development or to remain independent. The group felt generally that Athol should find ways to make connections to the Hughes Development through bike and pedestrian facilities, artwork in the Highway 95 overpass, a gateway sign inviting people to downtown Athol, and coordination of the types of businesses in The Crossings versus downtown. On Thursday night, some members of the public expressed more of an interest in keeping Athol separate from the Hughes Development. These folks generally expressed that they did not want Athol to grow. They did not want businesses to come to Athol that would increase traffic, tourists or new residents. They preferred continuing to travel to Hayden, Coeur d' Alene, and Sandpoint on a regular basis for goods and services over increasing their availability in Athol. As mentioned in [Hughes Annexation \(The Crossings\)](#) community comment and concerns in the Economic Development section, some citizens were concerned about potential negative impacts for existing local businesses posed by The Crossings (or other future development east of Highway 95). It was suggested that developing a good link to town under Highway 95 could help mitigate this negative effect.

Even with that conflict, there seemed to be agreement on some things. Residents wanted bike and pedestrian and possibly equestrian trails and paths, and safe walking route for kids to get to school. Residents also wanted to keep businesses small, to see older houses rehabilitated and turned into small businesses on Highway 54, and possibly to use Old 95 for a boulevard, linear park, space for pop up activities, or trails. One person suggested creating a loop around the town for bikes, pedestrians and horses.

Land Use Planning Opportunity Areas

LU OPPORTUNITY AREA 1: COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The comprehensive plan is analogous to a constitution. It accounts for historic and recent trends. It also describes the community's current conditions, values, and aspirations. It is the vision of success that the community is working toward. To achieve this vision, zoning and development standards, capital

improvements, and job creation activities should all be connected to and in support of comprehensive plan goals and policies. Beyond the value for comprehensive planning, Idaho's Local Land Use Planning Act (Idaho Code 67-6501 to 67-6537) requires Idaho cities and counties to adopt comprehensive plans and to update them as appropriate. The Local Land Use Planning Act does not include a specific timeline for updating comprehensive plans, but communities around the state typically update them every 5-10 years (compared to the 36 years since the last rewrite in Athol). To guide future growth, comprehensive plans must identify existing conditions, goals, and objectives on a variety of topics.

Of particular interest in Athol's comprehensive plan should be economic development projections and aspiration, projected housing needs, water and wastewater plans, community design and character, public spaces including the Park, Library, Community Center, and potential trail system. Because wastewater decisions are urgent ([IT Opportunity Area 1](#)) and annexation decisions are pending (Hughes annexation discussed in the [Economic Development](#) and [Infrastructure / Transportation](#) in relation to [wastewater](#)), comprehensive planning style public engagement activities are urgently needed.

Recommendations

LU 1.1 Begin the comprehensive planning process that is already budgeted as soon as possible!

- Create a Request for Proposals (RFP) specifying work to be done.
- Include in the RFP a requirement for a robust public process that addresses wastewater treatment, annexations, and community vision/identity.
- Incorporate Water and Wastewater Plans.
- Identify and incorporate other needed plans (e.g. Farragut Trail Plan).
- Consider home based business reforms mentioned in ED 3.3.
- Clarify community preferences and standards regarding outdoor storage, junk cars, property upkeep, etc.

LU 1.2 As stated above, Kootenai County residents near Athol want to be informed and involved. Development decisions in Athol strongly affect the neighboring residents in the County, but they elect County Commissioners and are not under the City's jurisdiction. While Athol's City Council and Mayor are first and foremost responsible to serve the best interests of Athol residents who elect them, the Visiting Team recommends that the City maintain a "good neighbor" mindset that promotes goodwill and creates opportunities for County residents to weigh in on matters of mutual interest. Forming an advisory committee that brings together the stakeholders below is one way to accomplish this goal:

- Kootenai County commissioner for the district around Athol
- Athol City Council member
- Several residents around Athol, including pro-growth and anti-growth residents

This group should seek funding for communications (perhaps to include mailing Athol's newsletter to County residents), survey creation and results processing, and other group efforts from Kootenai County, and have access to Athol Community Center for meetings.

LU 1.3 Implement a robust public process.

- Adopt a resolution that outlines the City’s goals and specific objectives related to community involvement.
- Use the process to build community-mindedness and to re-establish public trust. This Review, and follow-up Community-Minded Potlucks, are moving in the right direction.
- Use the process to develop a future vision for Athol. This is a first step in any good Comprehensive Planning process, and the community has not had an opportunity to do this for a long time.
- Educate about planning. Address the view that planning simply increases government size and control; local government cannot preserve beloved community characteristics and steer toward preferred growth patterns without it.

LU 1.4 Resist annexations and growth until the comprehensive plan is complete. This may not be possible, but because of the interconnectedness of annexations with so many community decisions, it is advisable to delay annexing until a plan is in place. The comprehensive plan helps not only the City in its annexation decisions; it also helps those interested in annexation by providing them with a better idea of what sorts of uses are likely to be well-received and supported by community members in various locations. At a minimum, the community vision portion ought to be complete before annexation decisions as shown in the [strategic sequence](#).

LU 1.5 To help with the comprehensive planning process, form a Comprehensive Planning Advisory Committee (CPAC). In addition to planning consultants and City Council, mayor, and staff members, the CPAC could have sub-committees including:

- All or some members of the Athol Community Association (ACA) from [FD 1.1](#)
- All or some members of the Athol Water and Wastewater Committee (AWC) from [IT 1.2](#)
- All or some members of the Parks and Trails Advocacy Group (PTAG) from [IT 3.2](#)
- Economic development specialists
- Community engagement
- County residents in the area of City impact

Note that the ACA and PTAG are formed after the CPAC on the [strategic sequence](#), so these two subcommittees might split out and become standalone entities later. This would help with plan implementation.

LU 1.6 Ensure implementation. Note that because a robust public process helps garner citizen buy-in and align plan goals and policies with community values, implementation should experience minimal resident confusion. Follow through with zoning changes and codifying the Comprehensive Plan. ACA, PTAG and AWC members can be brought in to support limited City staff resources.

LU OPPORTUNITY AREA 2: HUGHES ANNEXATION (THE CROSSINGS)

In the opinion of the Visiting Team, the City was in a good position to negotiate - not simply accept terms - because of the value of the City's water system and lax building requirements; such is this value that the development may not be financially feasible without the City's support. Further, Hughes Investments was early enough in the development process, and open enough to local input, that the City still has some (limited) time to better understand citizen wants and needs before annexation, though it would be ideal to complete the comprehensive planning process first.

Recommendations

LU 2.1 Consider holding some citizen engagement on Hughes independent of the comprehensive planning process if the comprehensive planning process cannot be started immediately. Engage residents in discussion about what they would like to see in this area and about what their concerns are regarding this development. We heard mostly positive comments about the grocery store but otherwise very mixed comments about a large car-centric commercial development.



LU 2.2 Fully assess the pros and cons of the proposed annexation by answering questions including:

- What are the effects if Athol *does not* annex?
 - Potential the development will not occur, if it is not financially feasible.
 - Loss of tax revenue, either because development does not occur or occurs in the County.
 - Missed opportunity to collaborate on sewer expansion.
 - Missed opportunity to integrate development with other City efforts including path networks.
 - Missed opportunity to influence site design, architecture, and connectivity to community, as County will not likely be as particular.
 - Missed opportunity to mitigate negative impacts of development on existing local businesses.
- What are the consequences if Athol *does* annex?
 - The development will almost certainly occur, pending budgetary approvals at Hughes Investments
 - All of the above missed opportunities will become possible
 - The City will have more control over the design size and content of development
- If the development does occur, the following negative effects may occur (note these may occur if not annexed and development occurs in County):
 - Impact to and possible loss of existing business (or potential gains)

- Increased workforce housing needs (potential rise in property values and housing costs, and increased crowding in and around town)
- Increased traffic through town which many residents indicated was unwelcome and has negative impacts on bicycle and pedestrian safety and exacerbates congestion from trains, though it could boost local business

LU 2.3 The City does not need to follow the underlying County commercial zoning. The annexation process allows the City to zone creatively, including creating a special zone. The City can create and use a planned unit development (PUD) or identify this area as a special/sub-planning area. Work with a planner to understand what tool fits best given existing ordinances and what has been used effectively in other communities. The Visiting Team suggests the following ideas:

- Mixed-use zoning rather than pure commercial with the opportunity to build workforce housing, rather than (or in addition to) a hotel/travel center/etc.
- Prohibiting (at least temporarily) restaurants (perhaps allowing drive through restaurants which might not compete) or other business that might directly compete with those in town, or possibly require the developer to invite existing businesses to relocate as a first selection – the objective being to provide adaptation time to existing businesses
- Design standards affecting the appearance and character of development
- Non-motorized connections
- Way finding and gateway signs
- Sign height, brightness, and location
- Opportunity to fund water system improvements for the City through impact fees or a development agreement.

Whatever decisions are made, follow through with zoning changes to codify them.

LU 2.4 Leverage development needs for community amenities and to compensate for potential losses by businesses on the other side of the new overpass. Possible examples include:

- A *paved* pathway on the north side of the development for walkers and bikers that connects well with the trail to Farragut. This would require bringing it down to the southwest corner of the development where Highway 95 and 54 intersect. Assume it will continue paved under the Highway 95 underpass and into Athol's core in the future. The Parks and Trails Advisory Group (see IT 3.2) would then have future options and momentum to finish building it.
- Move the entrance to align with Sylvan Lane and create a nice intersection that accommodates people walking and biking. Maybe even consider a roundabout here with a gateway sign in the center.
- Gateway signage and/or an artful aspect to the underpass that would invite visitors to come into town.

LU 2.5 Hughes Investments also owns the north east corner of Old 95 and 54. The Visiting Team suggests approaching Hughes and potentially Super1 about locating the grocery store there.

This would give the City and developer more time to assess how best to develop this larger site and bring the traffic the grocery will attract into Athol's core, being on the same side of the Highway 95 overpass as the rest of Athol. The comprehensive plan would ideally be complete before development of the larger site.

- LU 2.6 A great location for a hotel would be between the Country Boy Café and the gas station. It would be walking distance to many existing business and support local businesses.
- LU 2.7 If a larger hotel goes in at some point (likely requiring a wastewater treatment facility), consider a ballot measure for a hotel tax that could help cover corridor improvements and wastewater treatment.

LU OPPORTUNITY AREA 3: VISION AND PLAN FOR HIGHWAY 54 AND OLD 95

There was significant interest expressed during the Review in creating a "Main Street" along both or one of these corridors.

Recommendations

- LU 3.1 Develop and adopt a Corridor Plan for both Highway 54 and Old 95. We suggest beginning on the Comprehensive Plan first and having a Corridor Plan be an action/implementation item in it. As shown on the [strategic sequence](#), the Corridor Plan would be completed early 2018. The Corridor Plan should support the goals and vision of the Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan's goals and policies are fairly general, and a Corridor Plan would be much more specific. If a Corridor Plan were created first, it could simplify writing of some parts of the Comprehensive Plan, but it would risk missing the larger community vision. It is also possible to have a Corridor Plan be a chapter in a Comprehensive Plan, or even have a transportation chapter in the Comprehensive Plan include a design plan (i.e. Corridor Plan) sub-element.



- Address what to do with extra right-of-way
- Include Old Highway 95 as well as Highway 54 *all the way to Farragut*

This plan should reflect the desire of residents and the vision/identity of the community.

- LU 3.2 In these corridors, plan to make places people want to spend time and relax. This usually means time spent on foot, and it includes both public and commercial space. A Corridor Plan can strongly influence the way businesses arrange themselves relative to one another and to public spaces, so a little effort in planning upfront could make a much more pleasant and usable place in the end.

- LU 3.3 Depending on the community's vision for the future, plan the corridors so that, when seen from Highway 54 or 95, they are attractive to passersby. This would draw in support for local businesses as well as improving the community's identity in the minds of those driving by. It is generally a good idea to match the existing community appearance and form, though it could be bold, as suggested in [ED 2.5](#).
- LU 3.4 Consider industrial uses enabled by the heavy, wide roadway and large currently undeveloped spaces made possible by the large right-of-way.
- LU 3.5 In conjunction with corridor planning, we suggest doing a Road Safety Audit or a Road Diet on Old 95. This can improve road safety and usability for other transportation modes as well as for non-transportation uses. Surrounding land uses should impact the way the road is altered when it goes on its "diet."

Land Use Planning Resources

Idaho chapter of the American Planning Association. <http://idahoapa.org> President Sabrina Minshall sminshall@compassidaho.org.

American Planning Association's "Community Planning Assistance Teams" program. Go to <https://www.planning.org/communityassistance/teams/>.

Web-based visioning and community engagement tools are available to brainstorm ideas, discuss issues, and build consensus in a simple online forum. Examples include: vBulletin, MindMixer, BangTheTable, and <http://www.freeforums.org/>.

The Municipal Research and Services Center provides articles, examples, and best practices related to community visioning. Go to <http://mrsc.org/Home/Explore-Topics/Governance/Community-Strategic-Planning-and-Visioning/Creating-a-Community-Vision.aspx>.

The Orton Family Foundation shares information, best practices, and tools on citizen-driven planning and public participation in rural communities. Stewarding the Future of Our Communities: Case Studies in Sustaining Community Engagement and Planning in America's Small Cities and Towns for instance at <http://www.orton.org/>.

Givens Pursley Law Firm in Boise has published Land Use Handbook: *The Law of Planning, Zoning, and Property Rights in Idaho*, and other handbooks of interest to Idaho communities. This explains comprehensive plans and related requirements. Free download at: <http://www.givenspursley.com/publications>.

U of I Extension – Kootenai County <http://www.uidaho.edu/extension/county/kootenai>. Contact Lindy Harwood at lharwood@uidaho.edu.

U of I Bioregional Planning program. Call the department at 208-364-4595, <http://www.uidaho.edu/caa/programs/biop/what-we-do>.

A nice example of a comprehensive plan is City of Greenleaf, Idaho in Canyon County. It completed its award-winning comprehensive plan in 2006. Go to <http://www.greenleaf-idaho.us/Res108CompPlan.pdf>.

USDA Rural Business Enterprise Grant Program used to assess the feasibility of new uses for the Highway 54 / Old 95 corridors. <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/rural-business-development-grants>.

Association of Idaho Cities has created model zoning and subdivision ordinances that Idaho communities can adapt for use as well as several planning and zoning-related training videos online at <https://membersidahocities.site-ym.com/?page=PandZ>.

Smart Towns: A Guide to Growth Management for Idaho City and County Officials is available through Association of Idaho Cities.

Western Planner magazine hosts an annual conference. Their site is www.westernplanner.org.

The Successful Communities On-line Toolkit is a searchable database of community design and planning best practices from across the West. Go to www.scotie.org/.

Panhandle Area Council, Inc. provides loan and business counseling services. Comprehensive Planning services are offered as well as business counseling, commercial loans, Industrial revenue bonds, environmental reviews, grand Administration management, and public transport. It is headquartered in Hayden, ID. Go to <http://www.pacni.org/>. Visiting Team member Nancy Mabile is head of economic development. Call 208-772-0584, nmabile@pacni.org.

The Federal Highway Administration, Idaho Transportation Department, and Local Highway Technical Assistance Council typically can provide information and assistance regarding corridor planning, safety audits, and road diets. Go to http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/road_diets/.

New Mobility West provides free community engagement for corridor planning in addition to other services, and works with Idaho Smart Growth. Go to <http://newmobilitywest.org>.

Idaho Smart Growth offers services in community engagement and works with Community Builders for road corridor planning. Go to <http://www.idahosmartgrowth.org/>. Contact Visiting Team member Deanna Smith, 208-333-8066, deanna@idahosmartgrowth.org.

PART V CIVIC LIFE AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT: A FOURTH FOCUS AREA

The Athol Community Review included two focus areas selected by the community. The third focus area—Economic Development – is required by the Community Review program. In this section of the report, the Visiting Team identifies a fourth focus area. It is typically an area of concern discussed frequently by numerous residents and leaders participating in listening sessions and other meetings during the review, but not selected by the community in its application. It is often a subject applicable to all three focus areas.

The Visiting Team has selected *Civic Life and Community Involvement* as the fourth focus area for the Athol Community Review. This additional focus area was selected by the Visiting Team for the following three reasons:

First, Athol has a past. The scandal and theft of past years left a scar. We heard that the former City Council was known for its “cup of coffee and a ‘no’ vote” leadership approach, which works fine, so long as trouble is not lurking and change is not looming. This approach did not create an adequate comprehensive plan to address the present development needs. It did not address issues of concern to the community, from junk cars to septic pumping. It did not form clear relationships with neighboring businesses, communities, and agencies that provide infrastructure funding to coordinate efforts. Like a ship using its anchor to steer, it did not direct and propel the community toward a future, even if that future was to preserve those things cherished about the past. Having had this sort of leadership approach for so long, we heard that residents adjusted their expectations. Changing the situation by engaging residents, encouraging volunteerism, and building trust in leadership is the realm of Community Life and Civic Involvement.

Second, Athol has a very different present than its past. With a new mayor, clerk, and public works/water system operator, the City has new individuals in its three key positions. The City Council meetings are now well attended, we were told, and the Visiting Team was impressed by the 70 people who attended two different public meetings associated with the Review! This Review is proof of the change, since it is no small effort to initiate and then see a Review through to completion; how many volunteer hours by Athol residents went into this Review? This Review was completely optional, and we were told that the core desire behind requesting this Review was to assess where Athol is, and better orient and position itself to move forward, looking to the future and not the past.

Third, and finally, Athol has many options for its future—more than most rural Idaho communities. No outside entity can tell Athol which choice is best; it is Athol’s residents’ preferences and their willingness to move in a direction that makes a choice the best. That choice may be to keep things as they are. Going into the future, the Visiting Team believes *Community Identity and Civic Involvement* are needed in excess of what has been seen in the past.

Recommendations

- As suggested, create commissions ([LU 1.2](#)), committees ([IT 1.2](#)), or associations ([ED 1.1](#)) of interested citizens. Let people's passion find validation from the City as they step up to lead. These can be created, go until they cease to be needed, and then be disbanded. Bringing together citizens with differing opinions to answer pressing questions does more than just answer the question at hand – it builds community capacity and trust for the next challenge.
- Ask questions in the newsletter. Over 70% of survey respondents indicated that Athol's newsletter was their preferred means of receiving communications from the City. Residents are reading it.
 - Use it for "hearing" the voice of residents. Perhaps include a raffle ticket for answered questions, and have a community raffle every month announcing winners in the newsletter.
 - Do mini-surveys as part of the public engagement suggested in the [Strategic Sequence Going Forward](#).
 - Perhaps have sections for the commissions, committees, or associations to keep the community abreast of their progress and seek input on their topic. These could also support City staff in reviewing feedback on their topics.
- Leverage social media, such as Facebook, to engage and communicate with younger residents. Youth can be harder to keep involved with print than older residents, but with text messaging and social media applications like Facebook, youth can stay better informed than their parents.
 - Find a way to get them to "Like" Athol on Facebook, then let them spread the news of community events like wildfire.
 - Ask for thoughts and ideas on community issues. Young minds are active!
- Engage County residents with an electronic newsletter via e-mail. This would save cost, and based on survey results, would be preferred. This could be administrated through the City-County commission created in [LU 1.2](#).
- To increase volunteerism, the Visiting Team encourages Athol's community organizations to consider these general principles related to volunteer recruitment and development:
 - ASK people to volunteer.
 - Ask volunteers to contribute for a specific project for a finite period. When this time ends, ask them if they would like to continue volunteering.
 - Make the role of volunteers clear.
 - Celebrate accomplishments.
 - Encourage volunteers to contribute their ideas.
 - Thank people for their efforts.
 - Never underestimate the power of food to bring people together.
- Create an annual volunteer appreciation potluck dinner or other event.

Civic Life and Community Involvement Resources

“Social Capital Building Toolkit” by Thomas Sander and Kathleen Lowney is an October 2006 publication of the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. Go to <http://www.hks.harvard.edu/saguaro/pdfs/skbuildingtoolkitversion1.2.pdf>.

Love Caldwell is a faith-based project to develop opportunities for civic engagement, bridge building, and community service in Caldwell. Go to www.lovecaldwell.org or call 208-459-1821.

The National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation (NCDD) promotes the use of dialogue, deliberation, and other innovative group processes to help people come together across differences to tackle challenging problems. An impressive variety of resources are available for download at their website. <http://ncdd.org/>, 717-243-5144, info@ncdd.org.

“Governments are from Saturn..... Citizens are from Jupiter: Strategies for Reconnecting Citizens and Government” is a publication available from the Municipal Research and Services Center. It is full of strategies the City could use to reconnect with citizens. Contact information for all strategies is provided. Go to <http://www.mrsc.org/publications/textsrcg.aspx>.

The Heartland Center for Leadership Development is a non-profit organization based in Lincoln, Nebraska that provides information and assistance to rural communities regarding collaboration, leadership development, and strategic planning. <http://www.heartlandcenter.info/publications.htm>, 800-927-1115.

HomeTown Competitiveness is a joint project of the Nebraska Community Foundation, the Heartland Center for Leadership Development and the RUPIT Center for Rural Entrepreneurship. Started in 2002, HTC’s community development strategy focuses on four pillars: (1) Developing Local Leadership, (2) Increasing Community Philanthropy, (3) Energizing Entrepreneurs, and (4) Engaging Youth. Go to <http://htccommunity.whhive.com> for additional resources and contact information.

The Orton Family Foundation shares information, best practices, and tools on citizen-driven planning and public participation in rural communities. *Stewarding the Future of Our Communities: Case Studies in Sustaining Community Engagement and Planning in America’s Small Cities and Towns* is one recent publication. Go to http://www.orton.org/resources/stewardship_study.

Idaho Nonprofit Center provides education and networking opportunities to nonprofit organizations on a variety of issues, including organizational development, fundraising, and collaboration. Go to www.idahononprofits.org.

Idaho National Laboratory’s Community Donations. Idaho National Laboratory (INL), on behalf of corporate funds provided by Battelle Energy Alliance, funds philanthropic projects from nonprofit agencies that focus on health and human services, disadvantaged youth, environmental projects, civic affairs, or culture and the arts. Go to <https://www.inl.gov/inl-initiatives/community-outreach/>.

Karma for Cara Foundation has a microgrant program that encourages kids 18 and under to apply for funds between \$250 and \$1,000 to complete service projects in their communities. Whether it is turning a vacant lot into a community garden, rebuilding a school playground or helping senior citizens get their homes ready for winter, we want to hear what project you're passionate about. Go to <http://karmaforcara.org/get-involved/apply-for-a-microgrant/>.

The Idaho Commission on the Arts offers their Change Leader Institute, a three-day professional development opportunity designed for arts administrators, as well as all those working on behalf of the arts. Those who attend the Change Leader Institute go on to certify in the program by conducting an arts project in their own community. Go to <http://www.arts.idaho.gov/community/leader.aspx>. Contact Michelle Coleman, 208-334-2119 ext. 112, Michelle.Coleman@arts.idaho.gov.

The Northwest Community Development Institute is designed to train community development professionals and volunteers in the techniques of modern leadership and management of community development efforts. Since the program's inception, hundreds of community leaders from throughout the country have participated in the program. The Institute is offered in Boise on an annual basis. Go to <https://secure.meetingsystems.com/nwcdi/>. Contact Jerry Miller, Idaho Department of Commerce, 208-334-2650, jerry.miller@commerce.idaho.gov.

In Our Back Yard (IOBY) is a non-profit that helps communities accomplish small projects through crowd source funding. IOBY can help craft a crowd sourcing campaign and even serve as a group's 501(C)3 if none exist. Go to <http://www.ioby.org/>.

For help creating a community foundation, contact the Idaho Community Foundation at <http://www.idcomfdn.org/>. Call 208-699-4249, or the Idaho Nonprofit Center at www.idahononprofits.org.

The community of Melba, ID (population 526) raised \$50,000 at their 2014 community auction to support residents facing tough times. The auction has been conducted annually for over 60 years and has become one of Melba's biggest annual events. Go to http://www.idahopress.com/news/local/melba-community-auction-raisesabout/article_44bba020-a437-11e4-9ae6-df0c640623e4.html.

PART VI FINAL THOUGHTS & NEXT STEPS

The Visiting Team ends its report to the community with the following thoughts. We hope they help you think about what might come next. We encourage you to take advantage of opportunities for continued assistance while at the same time keeping in mind that the future of Athol and Kootenai County will be determined by what you, the residents and leaders, do. No one can do it for you.

Becoming an Entrepreneurial Community

Entrepreneurial communities engage all ages and social groups in community improvement efforts. Likewise, your success will likely hinge on involving a diverse and representative group of community members to take stock of local assets, gain an understanding of *what is* driving and *what can* drive the area's economy, create a shared community vision, and develop teams to focus on various aspects of that vision.

Many of the opportunities and recommendations described in this report will help Athol become more entrepreneurial. For overall guidance and assistance with this process, the Visiting Team encourages the communities to give special consideration to the recommendations and resources identified in the *Economic Development* section and [Part V](#).

We also encourage community leaders and residents to “Like” the Idaho Community Review program on Facebook at www.facebook.com/IdahoCommunityReview.

Community Coaching for Grassroots Action

University of Idaho Extension faculty are available to work with Athol residents and leaders to get organized to implement Review recommendations by bringing a cross-section of the community together to identify assets, deepen understanding of economic drivers, conditions, and possibilities, create a vision, develop teams, and take action. The program, Community Coaching for Grassroots Action, is designed to build leadership capacity while establishing and moving toward shared goals for the community. The brochure for this program is included as [Appendix G](#). More information may be found at <http://cd.extension.uidaho.edu/leadership/index.php>. Contact Lorie Higgins, 208-669-1480 or higgins@uidaho.edu.

Why it Matters

Funding from government agencies and non-government organizations from outside the community is often needed to accomplish larger-scale community and economic development goals. As all Idaho communities know firsthand, the amount of funding for public facilities and infrastructure is limited while the needs (and competition for funds) are ever increasing. Funding applications that result from the use of the positive, inclusive, agreement-seeking tools and principles identified in this report are more likely to be approved than applications from other communities that do not benefit from the same level of broad support. In other words, using inspiring planning and project development processes will mobilize resources within the community and generate greater support from outside the community.

A Final Recommendation

In the Visiting Team's experience, the use of certain principles seem to increase success and build capacity regarding a variety of community and economic development issues and opportunities. We encourage the community leaders and residents of Athol to revisit these principles often and apply them as appropriate:

- Start small.
- Start with what you have and who you are (i.e. assets) and build from there.
- Emphasize volunteerism.
- Celebrate each success and honor participants.
- Build local capacity to take on larger projects over time.
- Embrace teamwork.
- Give credit and thanks.
- Make it clear that volunteers are local heroes.
- Engage youth and young adults in a way that allows them to take responsibility and develop leadership skills.

A Last Word... for Now

Finally, we leave you with the top ten attributes of successful communities. This list was prepared by David Beurle and Juliet Fox, Innovative Leadership 2011 and adapted from the Heartland Centre for Rural Leadership's "20 Clues to Rural Survival."

Top Ten Attributes of Successful Communities

1. Evidence of an inclusive culture

Successful communities are often showplaces of care, attention, history, and heritage. They celebrate their success and have a strong and positive local attitude and support a culture of risk taking and innovation. Diversity is often celebrated and new people are welcomed.

2. Invest in the future – built to last!

People believe that something worth doing is worth doing right. In addition to the brick-and-mortar investments, all decisions are made with an outlook on the future. Expenditures are considered investments in the future, including investments in people. People have their attention on the long-term success of their community.

3. Participatory approach to decision making

Even the most powerful of opinion leaders seem to work toward building a consensus. The stress is on groups, organizations, and communities working together toward a common goal. The focus is on positive results. People, groups, and communities collaborate and share resources.

4. Creatively build new economic opportunities

Successful regions and communities build on existing economic strengths in a realistic way and explore new economic opportunities provided by the 'new economy'. They actively seek out new

opportunities and ideas for new businesses. They look for ways to smooth out the impacts of the booms and busts.

5. Support local businesses

Local loyalty is emphasized, but thriving regional communities know who their competitors are and position themselves accordingly. They look for creative ways to leverage the local economy of the resource sector.

6. Deliberate transition of power to new leaders

People under 40 regularly hold key positions in civic and business affairs. Women (and people from minority groups) often hold positions as elected officials, managers, and entrepreneurial developers.

7. Strong belief in and support for education

Good schools are the norm and centers of community activity.

8. Strong presence of traditional institutions that are integral to community life.

Churches, schools, and service clubs are strong influences on community development and social activities.

9. Willingness to seek help from the outside

People seek outside help for local needs, and many compete for government grants and contracts for economic and social programs. They seek out the best ideas and new people to help build their local community and regional strengths.

10. Communities and regions are self-reliant

There is a wide-held conviction that, in the long run, 'You have to do it yourself'. Thriving communities believe their destiny is in their own hands. Making their region a good place to live is a pro-active assignment, and they willingly accept it.

Appendices

Appendix A: Application

Please complete this application by 4/15/16 and return to:
Idaho Rural Partnership
1090 E. Watertower Street Ste. 100, Meridian, ID 83642
or email to jon.barrett@irp.idaho.gov

Idaho Community Review Application **A Community Visitation Program**

Offered in Partnership by the

Association of Idaho Cities, Idaho Department of Commerce, Idaho Transportation Department, Idaho Housing & Finance Association, U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development, Idaho National Laboratory, University of Idaho, U.S. Department of Agriculture – Rural Development, and Idaho Rural Partnership

Please submit answers to the following questions. Cities with populations under 10,000 are eligible to apply. **Complete applications must be postmarked or received via email by 5:00 pm, April 15, 2016.** Our mailing address is 1090 E. Watertower Street Ste. 100, Meridian, ID 83642. Send applications electronically to jon.barrett@irp.idaho.gov. Call 208-332-1730 with questions.

Your community must agree to accept the following responsibilities to ensure the success of the Review:

- Provide mailing labels for the selected households for the purpose of mailing the pre-review community survey.
- Arrange for large and small group meeting sites throughout the Review with community leaders and citizens.
- Appoint a home team leader for each of the Community Review focus areas (economic development + two other areas selected by the community) who will work with the visiting team leaders to plan and coordinate the Community Review.
- Appoint a home team leader to coordinate the Listening Sessions. This is a critically important role; the ideal leader is someone known to and respected by everyone, a natural connector and networker comfortable in a wide range of social settings. We encourage the home team Listening Session leader to reach out to individuals in the various stakeholder groups early in the planning process; this helps increase participation in listening sessions, which in turn adds value to session results. **Please Note:** Listening Session stakeholders must reflect a broad cross-section of all residents to make best use of this investment. The value of information gained depends on the diversity of opinions and perspectives we sample.
- Participate in weekly planning meetings starting two and a half months prior to the Review.
- Arrange community tours and meeting agendas in the three focus areas you identify.
- Pay for postage for the pre-review community survey, group transportation during the community tours, and all team meals. Many communities have partnered with businesses, school districts, and civic groups to share postage, transportation, and meal costs)
- Assign a community member to work with the Executive Director of the Idaho Rural Partnership to help identify businesses within the community that can be approached by the Executive Director to help pay for the IRP costs associated with conducting a Community Review. Additional information about funding is provided in the “Funding” section on page three of this document.

- Suggest lodging locations for the visiting team and supply related information. Ideally, visiting team members will have the option to stay in the community so as to be close to the action and spend our money at local businesses.
- Publicize the Community Review to maximize community participation; we cannot stress this enough...the value of this process to your community is directly proportional to local stakeholder participation. Greater participation in this process often translates into broader support for follow-up efforts to move recommendations into reality.
- Assist with collection of background information and data prior to the Community Review.
- Designate at least two community members to facilitate the follow-up process.

Community: City of Athol

Main Contact Person: Lori Yarbrough (City Clerk/Treasurer)

Address/City/State/Zip: PO Box 249 (30355 N 3rd St)

Phone, Fax, Email: 208-683-2101, 208-683-0706 cityclerk@cityofathol.us

Economic development is a required focus area for all Community Reviews. Circle or write-in two other focus areas your community has tentatively selected for emphasis. Focus areas might include some combination of the following:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| X/ Infrastructure | Housing |
| X Land Use Planning | Community Design & Identity |
| Education | Health Care |
| Seniors and Youth | Arts, Historic, & Recreation Resources |
| Civic Life & Community Involvement | /x Transportation |

Other Focus Area(s): _____

Please briefly describe the process used to select your focus areas:

Our City is very interested and has been considering applying for a Community Review for a little over a year now. In fact, we feel there really couldn't be a better time than now for it. Our little City has been sitting idle far too long, and given everything it has gone through in recent years, it was actually easy for us to determine that there is a real need to identify where our city is starting with the basic services. A complete evaluation and review of where the City of Athol sits today and a new perspective as to the direction in which the City would like to go is overdue. We have a new Mayor after one who served for nearly 20 years, and an interim Mayor who helped to uncover the embezzlement fraud of the former city clerk of 5 years. The stark differences in opinions between the officials of the past 2 years has also hindered the City's ability to move the City forward. There

appears to be a natural balance in our elected officials as well as overall goals of some progressive planning for the city. We don't want to lose the momentum and interest levels of our local community. We average at least 10-30+ citizens at every council meeting for nearly two years now. While the negative impacts are hopefully in our past, it feels like the city as a whole is looking for that next something.

Names/phone numbers/Email addresses of the three focus area leaders:

1. Economic Development: Dan Holmes (local bus/rest owner) / 208-660-1176 /
mr_potatohead23@yahoo.com
2. Land Use Planning: Rand Wichman (Athol City Planner) / 208-755-7024 /
randw@imaxmail.net
3. Infrastructure/Transportation: Shane McDaniel (Councilman) / 208-661-3096 /
shanemcdaniel@roadrunner.com

In the Focus Areas identified, what specific issues does your community want to address?

1.) Focus area #1: **Economic Development:** Increasing the economic well-being and quality of life for our community by creating and/or retaining jobs and supporting or growing incomes and the tax base are very important to us. Any new or improved business could lead to more jobs with better wages. This combined with any improved education and healthcare access will increase the general living standards of local families. It is important to improve the health, safety, and general welfare of the citizens of Athol. The recent relocation of State Highway 95 connecting Coeur d' Alene and Sandpoint has stressed local commerce, business and industry.

2.) Focus area #2: **Land Use Planning:** We hope to seek order and regulate land use in an efficient and ethical way, while preventing possible land use conflicts. So much has been allowed over the years, without much enforcement or regulation by local government. While we do not want to regulate every little thing in the city, we desperately need to assess present and future needs systematically. Identifying and resolving conflicts between the various uses of individuals and the overall perspective of the community as a whole is needed, which also means, it's time for an update to the 25 + year old comprehensive plan for the City. We want to help plan for desired changes in our city rather than being reactive to things after they have happened. We believe doing this will better serve both the present and future generations of the community. Currently, we are faced with identifying spending \$100k in maintenance of the two water tanks or use that money towards making overall improvements (identify and replacing with a new tank, with greater capacity) that may address a longer-term need.

3.) Focus area #3: **Infrastructure/Transportation:** Dealing with our local roads, city water supply and parks appears sometimes to be an afterthought for our city. Moving forward, we hope to eliminate surprises by keeping it in the forefront of our goals. We believe appropriate city infrastructure is necessary for economic development to happen and

improve. The railroad and trains are a big area of concern that affects the daily life of everyone in the community. What type of options do we have to address these concerns? How might we address helping with the long commutes into larger cities for work? Or how do we address pedestrian traffic safety along the state highways that run through our city?

What are your community's intentions or plans with respect to prioritizing and taking action on the recommendations provided by the Community Review? What individuals and/or organizations in your community can provide the necessary leadership going forward?

Our intentions of using the Community Review is to get a starting point as to where we are and what we have. The city is at a point that it's ready to turn the page and stop looking to how things were or have been in the past, but how to begin addressing issues sooner rather than later. This review will help us better recognize and identify current strengths and deficiencies we may not already be aware of. We hope to move forward from this review to an update of the City's comprehensive plan, as well as bringing our community back together with some idea as to the direction in which it shall proceed. The momentum and interest is here now and we don't want to lose that interest. Commercial growth may not be as big of an issue as the concerns and differences of opinion with residential growth. But, the issue of the city not having or not wanting a sewer system to accommodate the growth and the costs are enough to allow for the topic to go around and around in circles. Gaining any additional information or direction so that we may all better educate ourselves in options and costs and what each of those mean, we believe, would help the elected officials in their decision making.

What strategic planning, business development, enhancement, revitalization, clean-up, contracted or consulting efforts have occurred in your community in the last one to three years? (Attach additional sheets, documentation, brochures, or report summaries as necessary)

As far as any strategic planning, business development, enhancement etc., there really hasn't been anything. The city and a number of local organizations have gathered once or twice a year for city-wide clean-ups. We are seeing an interest and desire for progression and changes but given what the city administrations and elected officials have been dealing with, nothing on the outside has been done. In the past 1.5 years, the city has gotten back on track with the internal issues such as: hiring a new city clerk, attorney and planner as well as, getting back into compliance with 5 years of city audits complete, updating a number of policies and better learning just what the city's financial status is. Recently, in the last couple of months, the city has received a lot of interest in a number of annexation and commercial development proposals, the State Highway 95 realignment has changed a lot of things in our city and we believe the outcomes are only just beginning to unfold. The current council and mayor have made it clear they wish to become more proactive instead of reactive or even passive, as seen in past council and mayors.

Every community we visit faces challenges involving disconnects or conflict among groups. We understand this, and we aren't interested in taking sides or judging. Please identify (in general terms) any recent or anticipated controversies involving local leadership or civic organizations that have a bearing on this Review. Are there any issues that might limit local participation or

implementation of the Review or resulting recommendations? How might they be addressed during the Review? We can discuss details later.

At this point, we believe a number of those types of challenges (such as conflict among city officials) the city was enduring have been settled. There are still going to be other concerns such as the issue we hear from many local business owners (many of whom technically live outside the city, and therefore have no voting power) feel impacted by City decisions but don't have a say in the process of getting to those decisions. Also, there appears to be some division, as previously mentioned, as to past council decisions were to ignore and just leave the city as is, versus the current officials and citizens desiring to move in a direction of wanting to address the future needs or possibilities of more services and jobs. There appears to be an overall interest/desire for some change or forward thinking. This includes the city to begin enforcing ordinances to maintain better order and hold people more accountable for their actions, helping all to be more neighborly and courteous. Everyone agrees they love to live rurally, but some lack recognition of the fact that we are still a city, and that means some regulation to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of all its citizens. The overall lack of attention given to personal property and city property (for example the park) has been a regular conversation amongst the council and citizens. It also may be worth noting that currently, we often see much of the support and workers (volunteers stepping-up) who actually come from outside the city limits and consider themselves citizens. This sometimes doesn't bode well with city citizens and thus conflict can appear. Given our geographical location, those who consider themselves Athol citizens are much greater than the 700+ counted as our city population.

Describe any economic development projects the city would like the visiting team to examine. For the purpose of this question, an economic development project is any initiative to attract new business, help retain or expand existing business or improve infrastructure. In your description of the project, identify any funders and partners contacted and/or involved with the project.

As far as projects at this point, we really don't have any. But, with a few of the proposed annexations, that could very well change. It would be great to see something for our existing businesses to get help or direction. The city's lack of any main sidewalks or walking paths for children and residents has been brought up. With two state highways intersecting through our city, it is a valid concern. There also appears to be the interest in more programs for both the local seniors and children; the community center/city hall is seeing higher and higher usage/interest. As previously mentioned, our water system is also at a point of need to be evaluated—decisions such as, do we spend \$100k plus to repair the water tanks at the cemetery, or use that to upgrade the water system so that it may serve a higher capacity for the city for an additional 30 years. We have recently applied for a grant from DEQ, and it appears it may be funded this year (FY 2017). This would help us towards having a Capital Facilities Plan done.

Community support. Briefly describe major community funding initiatives (fundraisers, levies and/or bond elections) in the past five years, including outcomes.

There have not been any levies or bond elections in the past 5-10 years for the City, if not longer. For our local "Athol Daze" event each August, we have been successful in collecting donations from numerous local businesses, organizations, and individuals. The community at large does pull together to make this event possible.

What other projects has your community completed in the last one to three years? (Attach additional sheets or information as necessary.)

Aside from the annual Athol Daze event, the city has held 2 almost 3 years now, a Beautification Week- a town-clean-up day of sorts. We are also preparing for our 2nd annual city-wide yard sale this April. Last summer, in reaction to the Bayview (Cape Horn), our city collected a massive amount of donations for those affected by the fire and the local fire departments. In fact, the amount of supplies collected in less than a weeks' time (coming from Sandpoint, CDA and Spokane areas), took us several months to disburse.

We ask that communities participating in the Review process provide brief updates on an annual basis for three years following the Review. These updates will share progress the community has made as either a direct or indirect result of a Community Review. IRP will use the information to help future visiting team members adjust their discussions and presentations to better meet the needs of participating communities. This information also helps the partnering agencies and organizations measure the impact of Reviews and demonstrate how resources and investments are leveraged through the process. The information is also shared with our funding entities to show the impact their contributions are making to improve the economic and social conditions in rural Idaho communities. This is critical to maintain support for our work in rural Idaho.

Which month do you prefer for your Community Review?

X September 2016 ___ June 2017
2nd March 2017 ___ September 2017

Mayor's Signature:  Date: 4-07-16

Please complete this application by 4/15/16 and return to:
Idaho Rural Partnership
1090 E. Watertower Street Ste. 100, Meridian, ID 83642 -- (208) 332-1730
or email to jon.barrett@irp.idaho.gov

Appendix B: Visiting Team Biographies

Economic Development Focus Area

JERRY MILLER, PCED (FOCUS AREA LEADER)

Economic Development Specialist
Idaho Department of Commerce
700 West State St.
Boise, ID 83720
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Cell: 208-921-4685
jerry.miller@commerce.idaho.gov

Born and raised in Des Moines, Iowa, Jerry attended the University of Iowa, receiving an undergraduate degree in history and political science and a graduate degree in Urban and Regional Planning. Since 1992, Jerry has toiled in the fields of community and economic development, and is currently employed by the Idaho Department of Commerce as an economic development specialist. Jerry is the co-creator of the Idaho Rural Partners Forums and is editor-in-chief of the Show Me the Money funding newsletter. Jerry serves on the board of the Idaho Human Rights Education Center (the Anne Frank Memorial) and will be a class leader at this year's Northwest Community Development Institute. Jerry's passions include Iowa Hawkeye sports, dogs, movies, travel, blogging, and the performing arts.

VICKI ISAKSON

Regional Manager
Idaho Department of Labor
600 N. Thornton
Post Falls, ID 83854
Office: 208-457-8789, ext. 3917
vicki.isakson@labor.idaho.gov

Vicki Isakson is the Regional Manager at the Idaho Department of Labor in Post Falls. She has worked for the department for 26 years and is heavily involved in workforce development. She sits on the Board of Directors and serves on several committees for the CDA Chamber of Commerce. She recently obtained her master's degree in Organizational Leadership. Her hobbies include being a volunteer for CASA and a variety of outdoor activities. She resides in Post Falls and has a 21-year-old son who is currently attending North Idaho College.

NANCY MABILE

Economic Development Specialist
Panhandle Area Council—North Idaho EDC
11100 N. Airport Drive
Hayden, ID 83835
Office: 208-772-0584, ext. 3014
nmabile@pacni.org
www.pacni.org

Nancy has been employed with Panhandle Area Council for 23 years. Her current responsibilities include providing assistance to communities and special districts in assessing economic needs, developing

strategies, and identifying goals. With extensive experience in providing guidance regarding compliance with state and federal regulations and coordinating and collaborating with public and private entities, her current funding rate for grant projects is 100%. She also prepares the region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). Nancy is the past Chairman of the Post Falls Urban Renewal Agency and past Administrator of the Spirit Lake Urban Renewal Agency. She has received recognition and awards from federal, state and local governments for her work with local communities in community and economic development.

MICHELLE NOORDAM

Business Program Specialist
USDA-Rural Development
7830 Meadowlark Way, Suite C3
Coeur d'Alene, ID 83815
Office: 208-209-4360
michelle.noordam@id.usda.gov

Michelle is a Business Programs Specialist for USDA Rural Development. Michelle has been with the Agency for 14 years and has been in her current position for 2 years. Prior to working for USDA, Michelle was an adjunct instructor at North Idaho College, Business and Professional Programs Department. She also spent a few years working for the Latah Soil and Water Conservation District. Michelle attended the University of Idaho, where she earned undergraduate degrees in Accounting and Agribusiness and a Master's degree in Agricultural Economics.

Land Use Planning Focus Area

DEANNA SMITH (FOCUS AREA LEADER)

Idaho Smart Growth
910 Main Street, Ste. 314
Boise, ID 83702
Office: 208-333-8066
deanna@idahosmartgrowth.org

Deanna is a Project Manager for Idaho Smart Growth (www.idahosmartgrowth.org), a statewide non-profit organization whose mission is bringing people together to create great places to live through sensible growth. She holds a Charrette Management and Facilitation Certificate from the National Charrette Institute and has over 30 years experience in community work as a facilitator. Her interest in and experience with development controversy started during her five years as East End Neighborhood Association Board President. Since, she has assisted developers and neighborhoods on many controversial projects.

JONATHON MANLEY

Associate Planner
City of Post Falls
408 N. Spokane Street
Post Falls, ID 83854
Office: 208-773-8708

Jon Manley is the Associate Planner for the City of Post Falls. Jon was born and raised in western Washington. He earned two degrees from Eastern Washington University, graduating with a Master's in Urban and Regional Planning in 2007. From 2003-2007 he worked for Terragraphics in Kellogg, ID. He was first hired in 2008 as a Planner I for the City of Post Falls. In his current capacity as Associate Planner, Jon fulfills a variety of duties related to both current and long range planning. He was previously involved in code enforcement. Jon lives in Post Falls and likes to fish, hunt, bike, ski, and run.

AARON QUALLS

Director of Planning & Economic Development
City of Sandpoint
1123 Lake Street
Sandpoint, Idaho 83864
Office: 208-255-1738
agualls@sandpointidaho.gov

Aaron arrived in Sandpoint in 2006, lured by the surrounding beauty and strong fabric of community. Since arriving, Aaron has served as a Planning and Zoning Commissioner from 2010 to 2012 and as a Sandpoint City Council Member from 2012 to late 2013 before accepting a job with the Planning and Zoning Department. Aaron has also served on the Parks and Rec. Commission, the Downtown Business Association, the Downtown Streets Redesign Steering Committee and the Sandpoint Arts Commission. Aaron currently serves on the Bonner County Airport Board, Panhandle Area Council and is currently the Region 1 Representative for the Idaho Chapter of the American Planning Association. Aaron holds a BA in Anthropology from the University of California, Santa Cruz and an MA from Eastern Washington University in Urban and Regional Planning.

Infrastructure and Transportation

LORI PORRECA, PHD (FOCUS AREA LEADER)

Community Planner
Federal Highway Administration, Idaho Division
3050 Lakeharbor Lane, Suite 126
Boise, ID 83703
Office: 208-334-9180, ext. 132
Cell: 856-630-1635
lori.porreca@dot.gov

Lori has over nine years of experience working in the public, non-profit and private sectors assisting communities in a variety of planning and development efforts including policy analysis for agricultural land management, recreation and master plan development, zoning, land use and food policy analysis, grant writing and fundraising, volunteer coordination, and outreach/collaboration with the general public, elected officials, professionals and stakeholders. She has designed curriculum and outreach education for traditional classrooms and community settings. She has six years of experience designing and implementing socioeconomic, land use, policy and community planning studies in local food system assessment, community perception studies, agricultural land use change assessment, natural resource assessment. She has worked with focus groups, individual and group interviews, community and landscape surveys, and has experience writing and presenting reports, factsheets, articles, and plans for public and professional audiences. Lori has a Masters in Landscape Architecture and Environmental

Planning and a Ph.D. in Sociology from Utah State University. Currently, Lori works as a community planner for the Federal Highway Administration and has responsibility for the livability program.

HOWARD LUNDERSTADT

Community Program Specialist
USDA-Rural Development
7830 Meadowlark Way, Suite C3
Coeur d'Alene, ID 83815
Office: 208-209-4367
howard.lunderstadt@id.usda.gov

Howard is a Community Program Specialist for USDA Rural Development. He has been with the agency for 10 years and in his current position for the last 4 years. Prior to working for USDA, he worked for Pine Tree Credit Union in Grangeville. Howard graduated from Lewis-Clark State College with a degree in Business Administration in 1989.

KEVIN MCLEOD

Water Circuit Rider
Idaho Rural Water Association
938 Hwy 95
Weiser, Idaho 83672
Office: 208-343-7001
kmcleod@idahoruralwater.com

Kevin has spent 21 years in the drinking water industry, first as a water operator for the City of Weiser in both distribution and treatment. For the past 17 years, he has been a Water Circuit Rider for Idaho Rural Water Association. As a Circuit Rider, Kevin has traveled throughout the State of Idaho assisting small water systems (systems serving under 10,000 people) with technical advice, training and also hands on assistance. He has worked closely with USDA Rural Development during this time.

JUSTIN WEUST

Traffic Engineer
Idaho Transportation Department
600 W. Prairie Ave
Coeur d'Alene, ID 83815
Office: 208-772-1218
Justin.wuest@itd.idaho.gov

Justin Wuest graduated from the University of Idaho with a Bachelors of Science in Civil Engineering in 2006. He has worked for the Idaho Transportation Department in Coeur d'Alene for the last 10 years, starting as an Engineer in Training and getting the opportunity to work in all sections within the District, then filling the role of Staff Engineer in the Project Development section for six years, where he managed numerous design projects including some of the US-95 expansion projects between Coeur d'Alene and Athol. He was recently promoted to the District One Traffic Engineer where he oversees the design, construction, and operation of various safety, traffic, permitting, and railroad related functions.

Listening Session Leaders

LORIE HIGGINS

Associate Professor and Extension Specialist
Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology
University of Idaho
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Moscow, ID 83844-2334
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higgins@uidaho.org

Lorie is an Associate Professor in the Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology at University of Idaho. As an Extension Specialist in community development, Lorie's primary role is to assist Idaho communities and organizations with a broad range of programs and projects. Current work includes a regional effort called Two Degrees Northwest, to develop, support and promote cultural industries, building an entrepreneurship training program, identifying impacts of the Horizons community development program, participating in the Idaho Community Review program as a steering committee member and listening session co-leader, and conducting social assessments as part of the UI Waters of the West program. Nationally, Lorie is a leader in the Enhancing Rural Capacity eXtension Community of Practice.

KATHEE TIFFT

Extension Educator
University of Idaho
Nez Perce County
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Lewiston, ID 83501
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ktift@uidaho.edu

Kathee has taught early childhood classes and directed the infant/toddler center in an alternative high school, wrapped loads at a sawmill, provided care in a toddler classroom and conducted home visits in an Early Head Start program, cleaned residential homes and private businesses, managed a clothing consignment store, provided security at a blues concert, and planted trees at a nursery. Currently, Kathee is an Associate Professor in the University of Idaho Extension System focusing on leadership and community development programs and serving as the Department Chair for Nez Perce County Extension. As a member of the University of Idaho Extension Community Development Team, she has been instrumental in the design and implementation of the Community Coaching for Grassroots Action (CCGA) program focused on helping communities develop a vision and build leadership capacity to move toward prosperity for all community members. In partnership with the Spirit Center at the Monastery of St. Gertrude, Kathee provides the Leadership to Make a Difference Institute (LMDI), an intensive training focused on basic leadership skills to help people develop confidence in their leadership abilities and the courage to take action to effect change. She also is involved in a multi-state effort to develop a mapping technique for assessing the impact of community development initiatives.

Coordination and Report Writing

JON BARRETT

Acting Executive Director

Idaho Rural Partnership

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Jon grew up in Colville, Washington. His career in community and economic development began soon after graduating from Washington State University with a degree in Landscape Architecture. He has worked on staff and in a consulting capacity with numerous rural Idaho and Washington communities. From 1997-2006 he was the co-executive director of Idaho Smart Growth. He started his own consulting business in 2007 to provide services to government agencies, tribes, and nonprofit organizations. Jon has served as IRP's Acting Executive Director since April 2015.

Jon is a graduate of Leadership Idaho Agriculture and has also completed advanced training in mediation, fundraising and other topics. He has expertise in project management, group facilitation and multi-interest collaboration, organizational development and strategic planning, community design, policy development, and grant writing. In 2004 the Idaho Planning Association recognized Jon as Idaho Planner of the Year.

Jon enjoys Idaho's rural communities, mountains, trails, and trout streams.

JOSH HIGHTREE

Abundance Consulting

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Moscow, ID

Work: 208-301-1594

jhightree@abundance-endeavors.com

As a graduate student at the University of Idaho's Bioregional Planning M.S. program, Josh participated in the Aberdeen Community Review. He then became the Principle Investigator (PI) for the Center for Resilient Communities on an analysis on the Community Review surveys and Community Review Report text for Reviews conducted between 2000 and 2016. Lorie Higgins and Jon Barrett were co-authors, and publication of the study is pending. Preliminary findings were presented to the IRP board in October 2014, and later presented at the request of Mike Field to the Idaho Senate Affairs committee. Graduating with an M.Eng. in Engineering Management and an M.S. in Bioregional Planning in May 2016, he founded Abundance Endeavors LLC. Abundance Endeavors is currently producing artisan root beer for sale at the Moscow Farmers Market and offering consulting services. In early 2017, he will begin partnering with Lorie Higgins on a study of Idaho, Wyoming, and Montana's community review (assessment) initiatives.

Appendix C: Survey

Mailed Survey:

This survey is being conducted as part of the Athol Community Review happening October 4-6, 2016. Your response is important to us! Results are confidential and completely anonymous and will only be reported as totals with no identifying information. Your response will help a team of visiting experts understand issues and opportunities related to economic development, land use planning, infrastructure and other topics in Athol and surrounding area.

Please complete only one paper survey per household and respond by Friday, September 16, 2016. Other household members and anyone else who did not receive one in the mail can complete the on-line version of the survey by going to <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/irpatholsurvey>.

Part 1: Infrastructure: In this section of the survey, please rate your satisfaction with various public services and infrastructure. Please mark “N/A” (not applicable) if you do not use or receive a particular service.

	Highly Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neutral	Somewhat Satisfied	Highly Satisfied	N/A
1. Condition of city streets	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
2. Bicycle and pedestrian access	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
3. Availability of sidewalks	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
4. Trains/rail lines	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
5. Law enforcement	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
6. Fire/EMT Services	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
7. Water services	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
8. Quality of library facilities	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
9. Condition of school facilities	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
10. Quality of K-12 education	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
11. Availability of general health care	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
12. Availability of food bank	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
13. Availability of day care for children	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
14. Availability of Senior programs	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
15. Availability of drug and alcohol treatment programs	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
16. Availability of high-speed Internet service	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
17. Availability of local arts and cultural opportunities	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
18. Quality of parks	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
19. Availability of recreation programs	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

Part 2: Economic Development: In this section of the survey, please rate your satisfaction with each of the following aspects of your local economy. Please consider only those businesses or services located within Athol and immediate area. Please mark N/A (not applicable) if you are not familiar with a particular service.

	Highly Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neutral	Somewhat Satisfied	Highly Satisfied	N/A
1. Overall appearance of Athol	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
2. Appearance of public buildings	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
3. Availability of local jobs	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
4. Quality of local jobs	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
5. Variety of local businesses	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
6. Level of business involvement in the community	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
7. Variety of goods available in stores	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
8. Availability of job training programs	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
9. City planning and zoning ordinances	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
10. Enforcement of planning and zoning	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
11. Housing availability	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
12. Housing quality	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
13. Housing affordability	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

Part 3: Businesses, Services, and Jobs in Athol. In this section, please tell us how important it is to increase or improve the following businesses, services, and jobs in the Athol area.

	Very Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Very Important
1. Social services such as domestic violence shelter	1	2	3	4	5
2. Youth services and facilities	1	2	3	4	5
3. Trails and pathways	1	2	3	4	5
4. Retail stores (e.g. hardware, pharmacy, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
5. Professional or personal services	1	2	3	4	5
6. Entertainment, recreation, and parks	1	2	3	4	5
7. Library services	1	2	3	4	5
8. Availability of recreational equipment (e.g. kayaks)	1	2	3	4	5
9. Big box/chain store	1	2	3	4	5
10. Create a chamber of commerce					
11. Wastewater treatment system	1	2	3	4	5
12. Availability of local commodities	1	2	3	4	5
13. Public transportation	1	2	3	4	5

14. Farmer's market or flea market	1	2	3	4	5
15. Athol Beautification Week	1	2	3	4	5
16. Athol Daze	1	2	3	4	5
17. Visitor information and services. (e.g. lodging)	1	2	3	4	5
17. Comments about other types of businesses, services, and jobs you would like to see increased or improved:					

Part 4: Community Involvement and Information. In this section, please tell us how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I am satisfied with the quantity and quality of information provided by the City of Athol.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I am satisfied with the City of Athol's website. (http://cityofathol.us/)	1	2	3	4	5
3. I am satisfied with the Kootenai County website. (http://www.co.kootenai.id.us/)	1	2	3	4	5
4. I am satisfied with the level of coordination and communication between the City of Athol and Kootenai County.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I would like to be better informed about community issues and projects.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I am satisfied with opportunities to be involved in decisions affecting the community.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I generally trust the current City Council to make decisions for the community.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I am happy with my involvement in community issues and organizations.	1	2	3	4	5

9. What prevents you from being more involved in the community? (Check all that apply)

- Lack of time
- Family responsibilities
- Lack of information
- I am not asked to become involved.
- I don't know how to become more involved.
- Nothing, I am happy with my level of involvement.
- Other _____

10. What prevents you from supporting Athol's locally owned businesses more often? (Check all that apply)

- Cost
- Local businesses are not open when I need them.
- Services and products I need are not available in Athol.
- Lack of parking
- Nothing, supporting Athol's businesses is a high priority to me.
- Other _____

11. How do you prefer to receive community information? (Check all that apply)

- U.S. mail
- Email
- City newsletter
- Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, etc)
- Newspaper
- Community Bulletin Boards

Part 5: Demographics.

1. Where do you live? Within Athol city limits Outside city limits/Kootenai County
2. Do you commute to another community to work? Yes No
 Don't work Retired
3. Gender Male Female
4. Age group under 25 25-35 36-45
 46-55 56-65 over 65
5. How many years have you lived in Athol? 0-10 11-20 21+

We end with these final questions:

What are the 2-3 best reasons someone would want to: visit, move to, or work in Athol or surrounding area?

Best reasons to visit Athol: _____

Best reasons to move to Athol: _____

Best reasons to work in Athol: _____

Thank you! In the space below, please describe additional ideas or improvements you think would make Athol a better place for residents, businesses, and visitors.

Survey Results

Surveys were sent in the mail, or made available on the internet. They were sent to people in the Athol City limits, and also to those outside City limits. Results were broken down by Online vs Paper Copy, and as In Town vs Out of Town. These results are available at Athol City Hall. **All results are combined below.**

Q1. Part 1: Infrastructure: In this section of the survey, please rate your satisfaction with various public services and infrastructure. Please mark N/A (not applicable) if you do not use or receive a particular service.

Answer Options	Highly Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neutral	Somewhat Satisfied	Highly Satisfied	N/A	Rating Average	Response Count
1. Condition of city streets	9	38	56	84	40	16	3.48	243
2. Bicycle and pedestrian access	37	53	50	33	26	44	2.79	243
3. Availability of sidewalks	58	51	50	14	15	57	2.35	245
4. Trains/rail lines	45	33	69	24	27	46	2.77	244
5. Law enforcement	12	30	62	52	68	18	3.60	242
6. Fire/EMT services	3	9	25	61	139	9	4.37	246
7. Water services	1	7	32	41	80	79	4.19	240
8. Quality of library facilities	3	12	34	62	95	36	4.14	242
9. Condition of school facilities	5	13	42	53	47	85	3.78	245
10. Quality of K-12 education	7	19	43	33	56	86	3.71	244
11. Availability of general health care	47	42	41	29	22	62	2.65	243
12. Availability of foodbank	7	12	55	36	30	105	3.50	245
13. Availability of day care for children	10	17	59	14	17	128	3.09	245
14. Availability of Senior programs	13	24	76	17	14	99	2.97	243
15. Availability of drug and alcohol treatment programs	14	24	63	7	15	120	2.88	243
16. Availability of high-speed Internet service	90	37	32	35	30	20	2.46	244
17. Availability of local arts and cultural opportunities	54	40	57	21	15	55	2.48	242
18. Quality of parks	10	17	47	76	68	25	3.80	243
19. Availability of recreation programs	14	30	72	38	25	66	3.17	245

Q2. Part 2: Economic Development: In this section of the survey, please rate your satisfaction with each of the following aspects of your local economy. Please consider only those businesses or services located within Athol and immediate area. Please mark N/A

Answer Options	Highly Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neutral	Somewhat Satisfied	Highly Satisfied	N/A	Rating Average	Response Count
1. Overall appearance of Athol	33	87	49	53	20	1	2.75	243
2. Appearance of public buildings	31	61	62	64	22	1	2.94	241
3. Availability of local jobs	58	49	56	10	14	54	2.32	241
4. Quality of local jobs	47	55	50	15	16	59	2.44	242
5. Variety of local businesses	46	81	41	42	21	11	2.61	242
6. Level of business involvement in the community	24	26	69	47	23	51	3.10	240
7. Variety of goods available in stores	33	71	33	70	22	14	2.90	243
8. Availability of job training programs	43	31	52	5	12	100	2.38	243
9. City planning and zoning policies	22	39	78	24	22	56	2.92	241
10. Enforcement of planning and zoning	30	39	80	21	16	55	2.75	241
11. Housing availability	16	33	82	30	31	49	3.14	241
12. Housing quality	16	49	83	30	26	37	3.00	241
13. Housing affordability	18	30	87	43	27	36	3.15	241

Q3. Part 3: Businesses, Services, and Jobs in Athol. In this section, please tell us how important it is to increase or improve the following businesses, services, and jobs in the Athol area.

Answer Options	Very Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Rating Average	Response Count
1. Social services such as domestic violence shelter	40	21	101	43	34	3.04	239
2. Youth services and facilities	19	21	66	65	67	3.59	238
3. Trails and pathways	20	16	60	79	65	3.64	240
4. Retail stores (e.g. hardware, pharmacy etc.)	26	23	36	71	84	3.68	240
5. Professional or personal services	28	21	69	77	45	3.38	240
6. Entertainment, recreation, and parks	19	20	69	78	54	3.53	240
7. Library services	13	20	61	70	73	3.72	237
8. Availability of recreational equipment (e.g. kayaks)	45	35	91	43	24	2.86	238
9. Big box/chain store	92	36	42	35	36	2.53	241
10. Create a Chamber of Commerce	55	24	91	31	29	2.8	230
11. Wastewater treatment system	77	19	61	41	41	2.79	239
12. Availability of local commodities	28	22	82	65	41	3.29	238
13. Public Transportation	66	34	62	41	37	2.79	240
14. Farmers market or flea market	35	38	76	65	23	3.01	237
15. Athol Beautification Week	30	20	83	59	45	3.29	237
16. Athol Daze	18	18	78	70	53	3.51	237
17. Visitor information and services(e.g. lodging)	38	30	80	56	34	3.08	238

Q5. Part 4: Community Involvement and Information. In this section, please tell us how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

Answer Options	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	Rating Average	Response Count
1. I am satisfied with the quantity and quality of information provided by the City of Athol.	23	42	90	56	25	3.08	236
2. I am satisfied with the City of Athol's website. (http://cityofathol.us/)	12	22	141	40	15	3.10	230
3. I am satisfied with the Kootenai County website. (http://www.co.kootenai.id.us/)	3	21	112	62	34	3.44	232
4. I am satisfied with the level of coordination and communication between the City of Athol and Kootenai County.	14	33	134	35	16	3.03	232
5. I would like to be better informed about community issues and projects.	10	8	57	86	76	3.89	237
6. I am satisfied with opportunities to be involved in decisions affecting the community.	29	39	77	72	20	3.06	237
7. I generally trust City Council to make decisions for the community.	47	40	79	54	17	2.81	237
8. I am happy with my involvement in community issues and organizations.	14	33	115	49	22	3.14	233

Q6. What prevents you from being more involved in the community? (Check all that apply)

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Lack of time	32.2 %	76
Family responsibilities	15.3 %	36
Lack of information	42.4 %	100
I am not asked to become involved.	19.1 %	45
I don't know how to become more involved.	21.6 %	51
Nothing. I am happy with my level of involvement.	31.4 %	74
Other (please specify)	13.1 %	31

Q7. What prevents you from supporting Athol's locally owned businesses more often? (Check all that apply)

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Cost	31.8 %	77
Local businesses are not open when I need them.	12.0 %	29
Services and products I need are not available in Athol.	50.8 %	123
Lack of parking	9.5 %	23
Nothing. Supporting Athol's businesses is a high priority to me.	39.7 %	96
Other (please specify)	9.9 %	24

Q8. How do you prefer to receive community information? (Check all that apply)

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
U.S. Mail	64.2 %	156
Email	44.0 %	107
City newsletter	47.3 %	115
Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, etc)	10.7 %	26
Newspaper	17.7 %	43
Community Bulletin Boards	13.2 %	32
Other (please specify)	0.4 %	1

Q9. Where do you live?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Within Athol city limits	26.6 %	63
Outside city limits - Kootenai County	70.9 %	168
Outside city limits - Other	2.5 %	6

Q10. Do you commute to another community to work?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	37.9 %	91
No	20.4 %	49
Don't work	5.0 %	12
Retired	36.7 %	88

Q12. Age group

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
under 25	0.0 %	0
25-35	3.4 %	8
36-45	10.5 %	25
46-55	23.5 %	56
56-65	27.3 %	65
over 65	35.3 %	84

Q13. How many years have you lived in Athol?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
0-10	41.8 %	100
11-20	35.6 %	85
21+	22.6 %	54

Questions 14 and 15 had a variety of written, open-ended responses. These have not been included to avoid violating confidentiality or disclosing potentially offensive comments.

Q14. What are the 2-3 best reasons someone would want to: Visit or Move to Athol? Work in Athol?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Best reasons to visit Athol	92.8 %	194
Best reasons to move to Athol	97.1 %	203
Best reasons to work in Athol	71.3 %	149

Q15. Please describe additional ideas or improvements you think would make Athol a better place for residents, businesses, and visitors.	
Answer Options	Response Count
	100
answered question	100
skipped question	146

Appendix D: Review Itinerary

Master Schedule

September 7-8

Community Listening Sessions

Thursday, September 15

Home team training

Tuesday, October 4

- 3:00 – 4:30 pm Home Team listening Session w/ Lorie H & Kathee
Location: Community Center (30355 N. 3rd Street)
- 4:30 - 5:30 pm Presentation on City Infrastructure-(Stephen) then Bus tour with Home Team
Courtesy of Lakeland Transportation (Darrell Rickard)
Location: Community Center/Library parking lot
- 5:30 – 6:30 pm Dinner (Casserole’s Galore)
Location: Athol Baptist Church on Sylvan Rd (Hosted by Athol Baptist)
- 7:00 – 9:00 pm Community Town Hall Meeting
Location: Community Center

Wednesday, October 5

- 8:00-8:45 am Breakfast (Presentations on community history?)
Location: Community Center (Hosted by Church of God)
- 7:30-9:00 am Listening Session w/ Lorie H & Kathee – Social Services/First Responders
Location: Timberlake Fire Dept. on Hwy 54
- 9:00-11:45 am: Focus area meetings and site visits
- 12:00-1:00 pm Lunch (Taco Boats/Mexican foods) (Presentations - Randall Butt, Farragut
State Park, Operation Life Saver (invited)
Location: Community Center (Hosted by The Grandmother’s Club)
- 4:00 – 5:30pm Listening Session w/ Lorie & Kathee-Teachers and or other county residents
Location: Community Center
- 5:00 - 6:00 pm Dinner (Spaghetti Dinner)
Location: Athol Baptist Church on Sylvan Rd (Hosted by Athol Baptist)
- 6:30-7:30 pm Debrief meeting (Visiting Team only)
Location: Same as dinner (Athol Baptist Church)

<u>Thursday, October 6</u>	(mostly Visiting Team)
8:30 - 9:30 am	Breakfast Buffet Location: <u>Community Center (Hosted by Church of God)</u>
9:30 - 12:00 am	Visiting Team meets to develop focus area and listening session presentations Location(s): <u>Community Center</u>
12:00 - 1:00 pm	Lunch (Sandwich Bar- make it how you like it) Location: <u>Community Center (Hosted by Sue & John Fevold)</u>
1:00 - 4:00 pm	Visiting Team develops focus area and listening session presentations (cont.) Location(s): <u>Community Center</u>
4:00 - 5:30 pm	Downtime for Visiting Team
5:30 - 6:30 pm	Dinner Location: <u>Country Boy Café (Hosted by the City of Athol), 6160 Highway 54</u>
7:00 - 8:30 pm	Community meeting featuring Visiting Team presentation, Q & A, and discussion of next steps Location: <u>Community Center</u>

Economic Development Focus Area Itinerary

9:00 – 10:00 am	Focus Area meetings/site visit #1 Topic: Hughes Development – Athol Crossing Location: Community Center Other invited participants: _____
10:15 – 11:00 am	Focus area meeting/site visit #2 Topic: Tourism – Amusement Attractions Location: Silverwood Other invited participants: _____
11:15 – 12:00 PM	Focus area meeting/site visit #3 Topic: Major Employer Location: Merritt Lumber Other invited participants: _____
12:00 – 1:00 PM	Lunch
1:00 – 2:15 PM	Focus area meeting/site visit #4 Topic: Major Employer Location: Idaho Forest Group Other invited participants: _____
2:30 – 3:30 PM	Focus area meeting/site visit #5 Topic: Tourism – Outdoor Attractions Location: McDonald Marina - Bayview Other invited participants: _____

3:45-4:45 PM Focus area meeting/site visit #6
Topic: **Local Business**
Location: **Country Boy Restaurant**

INFRASTRUCTURE/TRANSPORTATION FOCUS AREA ITINERARY

9:00 – 10:00 am Focus Area meetings/site visit #1
Topic: **TRAINS/SAFETY**
Location: FIRE DEPARTMENT
Other invited participants: FIRE CHIEF, PERSONNEL _____

10:15 – 11:45 am Focus area meeting/site visit #2
Topic: **HIGHWAY 54**
Location: BRIEF TOUR OF AREA, RETURN TO COMMUNITY CENTER
Other invited participants: LOCAL BUSINESS PEOPLE ? _____

11:45 – 12:45 pm Lunch

1:00 – 2:15 pm Focus area meeting/site visit #3
Topic: **WATER**
Location: SITE VISIT TO STORAGE TANKS/ WELL HOUSES
Other invited participants: KELLER ENGINEERING, NOT CONFIRMED_

2:30 – 3:30 pm Focus area meeting/site visit #4
Topic: **SEWER**
Location: COMMUNITY CENTER/ WITH LAND USE
Other invited participants: **CITY WATER OPERATOR, BOB WACHTER/ KELLER ENGINEERING, NOT CONFIRMED**

3:45-4:45 pm Focus area meeting/site visit #5
Topic: **BIKE/ PEDESTRIAN/ SIDEWALKS**
Location: Tour area / return to community center
Other invited participants: LOCAL BUSINESS, COMMUNITY

Land Use Focus Area Itinerary

9:00 – 10:00 am Focus Area meetings/site visit #1
Topic: **HUGHES ANNEXATION**
Location: Community Center –
Other invited participants: Alan Johnson – owner representative

10:15 – 11:45 am Focus area meeting/site visit #2
Topic: **DEVELOPMENT OF A DOWNTOWN / MAIN STREET**
Location: Brief tour of area, return to Community Center
Other invited participants: None

11:45 – 12:45 pm Lunch

1:00 – 2:15 pm Focus area meeting/site visit #3

Topic: **CODE ENFORCEMENT ISSUES / SOLUTIONS**
Location: Community Center
Other invited participants: None

2:30 – 3:30 pm

Focus area meeting/site visit #4
Topic: **CONSIDERATIONS FOR A FUTURE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**
Location: Community Center
Other invited participants: None

3:45-4:45 pm

Focus area meeting/site visit #5
Topic: **AREA OF CITY IMPACT**
Location: Tour area / return to community center
Other invited participants: David Callahan – Director, K.C. Comm. Devel

Appendix E: Community Facilities Direct Loans and Grants

Community Facilities Direct Loans and Grants

PURPOSE:

- Provide financial assistance to develop essential public community facilities in rural areas up to 20,000 population based on last decennial census (2010)
- Provide loan and grant funds for projects serving the most financially needy communities

ELIGIBLE PURPOSES:

Construct, enlarge, extend, or improve essential community facilities providing essential services, primarily to rural residents and rural businesses for health services, public safety, public services, and telecommunication (medical or educational).

- Purchase of equipment to provide essential service
- Purchase existing facilities
- Reasonable fees and costs such as: engineering/architectural, legal, administrative, environmental and planning services
- Costs of acquiring interest in land; rights of way, etc.
- Fire, rescue & public safety (fire stations, fire & rescue equipment, jails, police stations)
- Health services (clinics, nursing homes, assisted living, group homes)
- Community, social or cultural services (libraries, schools, day-care, museums)
- Transportation facilities (bridges, roads, airports, parking facilities)
- Telecommunication equipment (telemedicine and distance learning)
- Natural gas distribution
- Irrigation systems
- Support structures for rural electric and telephone systems when not eligible for RUS
- Refinance existing facility debt, if it is a secondary part of the loan

ESSENTIAL COMMUNITY FACILITIES:

- Fire, rescue and public safety (fire stations, fire & rescue equipment, jails, police stations)
- Health services (clinics, nursing homes, hospitals, assisted living, group homes)
- Community, social or cultural services (libraries, schools, day care, museums)
- Transportation facilities (bridges, roads, airports, parking facilities)
- Telecommunication equipment (telemedicine and distance learning)
- Natural gas distribution
- Support structures for rural electric and telephone systems (when not eligible for RUS)

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS:

- Public body such as a city, county, district, or other political subdivision
- An organization operated on a not-for-profit basis such as an association, cooperative, or private corporation
- Federally recognized Indian Tribe

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS:

- Facility must have broad-based community support
- Applicant must be unable to obtain credit elsewhere at reasonable rates and terms
- Applicant must have legal authority and responsibility to own, operate, and maintain the facility

Rural Development - Idaho State Office
9173 West Barnes Drive • Suite A1 • Boise, ID 83709
Voice (208) 378-5600 • Fax (855) 505-1564
Website: <http://www.rd.usda.gov/ID>

- Lease agreement cannot contain an “option to purchase” clause
- Facility must be necessary for orderly community development and consistent with the State’s Strategic plan
- Facilities must be modest in size, cost and design

SECURITY:

- Loans will be secured by the best security position practicable in a manner that will adequately protect the interest of the Government
- Bonds or notes pledging taxes, assessments, or revenues may be accepted as security if they meet statutory requirements
- A mortgage may also be taken on the organizations facilities if the state law allows

INTEREST RATES:

- Interest rates are set periodically
- Once a loan is approved, the rate remains fixed for the term of the loan, recipient receives the lower rate in effect at approval or closing.
- Currently rates are dependent on the median household income for the service area and health or standards violations (check with the Rural Development Area Office serving your area for current rates)

TERMS:

Maximum term on all loans is 40 years. However, no repayment period will exceed any statutory limitation on the organization’s borrowing authority or the useful life of the facility or improvement to be financed.

GRANT FUNDS:

- Available on a graduated scale based upon the median household income & population of the service area, as well as the repayment ability of the facility
- Available where the median household income for the service area is below \$44,604, (based on the 2006-2010 American Community Survey)
- Grant funds are very limited and will only go to the most needy projects

APPLICATIONS:

- Applications may be submitted at any time and compete for funding with other applications on hand
- USDA, Rural Development will advise the applicant on how to assemble information to determine engineering feasibility, economic soundness, cost estimates, organization, financing, and management matters in connection with the proposed improvements
- For further information contact the USDA, Rural Development Area Office serving your county

AREA OFFICES & COUNTIES SERVED:

Northern Idaho – 7830 Meadowlark Way, Ste. C3, Coeur d’Alene, ID 83815
 Benewah, Bonner, Boundary, Clearwater, Idaho, Kootenai, Latah, Lewis, Nez Perce, Shoshone
 Howard Lunderstadt - (208) 209-4367, John Lynn - (208) 209-4363, Tieremie Fry - (208) 209-4349

Appendix F: Water and Waste Direct Loans and Grants Information

Water and Waste Direct Loans and Grants

PURPOSE:

- Provide financial assistance to communities for water and waste facilities in rural areas up to 10,000 population (based on the last decennial census – 2010)
- Provide loan and grant funds for projects serving the most financially needy communities, resulting in reasonable user costs for rural residents, rural businesses, and other rural users.

ELIGIBLE PURPOSES: Loans and Grants

- Construct, enlarge, extend, or improve rural water, sanitary sewage, solid waste disposal, and storm wastewater disposal facilities.
- Relocate buildings, roads, bridges, fences, or utilities associated with the project
- Payment of utility connection charges
- Reasonable fees and costs such as: engineering, legal, administrative, environmental analysis, surveys, and planning
- Costs of acquiring interest in land, water rights, leases, permits, rights-of-way, etc.
- Purchase or rent equipment
- Cost of applicant labor or other expenses
- In extraordinary situations, connecting user to the mainline

ELIGIBLE PURPOSES: Loans Only

- Interest incurred during construction
- Initial operating expenses
- Purchase of existing systems
- Refinancing existing debt

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS:

- Public body such as a city, county, district, or other political subdivision
- An organization operated on a not-for-profit basis such as an association, cooperative, or private corporation
- Federally recognized Indian Tribe

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS:

- Project must have adequate capacity to serve existing population and reasonable growth
- Applicant must be unable to obtain credit elsewhere at reasonable rates and terms
- Applicant must have legal authority and responsibility to own, construct, operate, and maintain the proposed facility
- Water and waste disposal systems must be consistent with any development plans of state, city, or county, in which the proposed project is located
- All facilities must comply with federal, state, and local laws including those concerned with zoning regulations, health and sanitation standards, and the control of water pollution

Rural Development • Idaho State Office
9173 West Barnes Drive • Suite A1 • Boise, ID 83709
Voice (208) 378-8800 • Fax (855) 505-1564
Website: <http://www.rd.usda.gov/ID>

SECURITY:

- Loans will be secured by the best security position practicable in a manner that will adequately protect the interest of the Government
- Bonds or notes pledging taxes, assessments, or revenues may be accepted as security if they meet statutory requirements
- A mortgage may also be taken on the organizations facilities if the state law allows

INTEREST RATES:

- Interest rates are set periodically
- Once a loan is approved, the rate remains fixed for the term of the loan, recipient receives the lower rate in effect at approval or closing.
- Currently rates are dependent on the median household income for the service area and health or standards violations (check with the Rural Development Area Office serving your area for current rates)

TERMS:

Maximum term on all loans is 40 years. However, no repayment period will exceed any statutory limitation on the organization's borrowing authority or the useful life of the facility to be improved.

GRANT FUNDS:

- Must be made in conjunction with Rural Development loans
- Eligibility is dependent upon the Median Household Income (MHI) of the service area using the 2006-2010 American Community Survey, similar system costs, and the availability of funds.
- MHI between \$39,648 and \$49,561 can be considered for grants up to 45% of eligible project costs.
- MHI below \$39,648 can be considered for grants up to 75% of eligible project costs if the system is in violation of health and sanitary standards
- In recent years, funds have been allocated to the state at a ratio of 75% loan to 25% grant. Grant funds are available for facilities serving communities with the most need and to reduce user costs to a reasonable level

APPLICATIONS:

- Applications may be submitted at any time and compete for funding with other applications on hand
- USDA, Rural Development will advise the applicant on how to assemble information to determine engineering feasibility, economic soundness, cost estimates, organization, financing, and management matters in connection with the proposed improvements
- For further information contact the USDA, Rural Development Area Office serving your county

AREA OFFICES & COUNTIES SERVED:

Northern Idaho – 7830 Meadowlark Way, Ste. C3, Coeur d'Alene, ID 83815

Benewah, Bonner, Boundary, Clearwater, Idaho, Kootenai, Latah, Lewis, Nez Perce, Shoshone

Howard Lunderstadt - (208) 209-4367, John Lynn - (208) 209-4363, Tierenie Fry - (208) 209-4349

Appendix G: Community Coaching for Grassroots Action Pamphlet



Contact and Information

Lorie Higgins, higgins@uidaho.edu
208-885-9717
Kathee Tift, ktift@uidaho.edu
208-799-3054
<http://cd.extension.uidaho.edu/leadership/>

COSTS AND COMMUNITY RESPONSIBILITIES

Community costs for the training and facilitation services will vary depending on location and availability of Extension personnel and funding. For CCGA, communities are generally expected to pay most travel costs, but not the salaries of Extension faculty and staff. If a local Extension person is not available for long term coaching, the community may choose to hire a coach or recruit a volunteer. Additionally, communities are expected to recruit participants, as well as advertise workshops and meetings and coordinate venues and refreshments as needed. The Leadership to Make a Difference Institute (LMDI) has some additional staffing and materials costs, but in general, both CCGA and LMDI costs are kept as low as possible in order to make them available to very small communities with very small budgets.



PARTNERS

The University of Idaho Extension Community Development Team, with faculty located in all corners of the state, focuses on leadership, business and economic development and community design. Co-chairs are Harriet Shaklee (hshaklee@uidaho.edu) and Kathee Tift (ktift@uidaho.edu). For more information about Extension programs in Community and Economic Development: <http://cd.extension.uidaho.edu/>.

The Idaho Rural Partnership (IRP) joins diverse public and private resources in innovative collaborations to strengthen communities and improve life in rural Idaho. IRP's Idaho Community Review brings experts from across the state to small communities for three days to provide objective observations, recommendations and resources to help communities build capacity, engagement and the local economy. For more information: <http://irp.idaho.gov>.

Leadership to Make a Difference Institute: A collaborative partnership between University of Idaho Extension and the Spirit Center at the Monastery of St. Gertrude, LMDI is designed to assist people in developing confidence in their own leadership abilities and the courage to take action to address community issues. For more information, contact Kathee Tift (ktift@uidaho.edu).

COMMUNITY COACHING FOR GRASSROOTS ACTION

LEADERSHIP IN ACTION



*I suppose leadership at one time meant muscles; but today it means getting along with people.
Mahatma Gandhi*

Community Coaching for Grassroots Action (CCGA) is designed to help communities build leadership capacity while developing and implementing a community vision. The program takes a "guide on the side" approach, with Extension faculty supporting community members as they identify their assets, create a vision, build agreed-upon strategies and develop the networks and good working relationships needed for progress toward prosperity for everyone.

University of Idaho Extension builds partnerships to *Ignite, Coach and Sustain positive change in Idaho's rural communities*

CCGA can be implemented in conjunction with the Idaho Community Review process (www.irp.idaho.gov/Home/Community_Review). The review creates a comprehensive inventory of community assets, focus areas for action and menu of strategies and resources for implementing recommendations. The review *ignites* change and engages a broad spectrum of the community in the process. CCGA captures that energy and builds on its momentum through a community *coaching* process.

UI Extension faculty provide neutral facilitation and coach community leaders and action committees as they implement plans in the months following the Review.

LAUNCHING THE PROGRAM

The CCGA process begins with an initial meeting to introduce the program and develop an outreach plan followed by a series of intensive workshops over the course of 2 - 3 months. Typical workshop sequence:

1. *Creating a Community Vision*

Futures Game - Learn to think beyond immediate gains and identify investments in community that will reap long-term benefits.

Understanding the Local and Regional Economy - this is essential for identifying the community's assets and thinking about how to link them for effective economic development.

Building a Vision from Assets - Identifying community assets involves listing the obvious rivers, views, highways and buildings - but it also involves looking at what is working well in the community and the root causes of local successes. This helps the community distill the essence of the best of the community's culture, people, enterprises and leadership and turn that into a vision and focus areas for action.

2. *Creating Action Teams & Steering Committee*

This workshop series focuses on how to build effective teams and manage meetings and relationships to avoid needless conflict. Once action teams are formed, the group is led through the process of selecting a steering committee and identifying its roles and responsibilities.

From this point, action teams will usually be meeting on their own but will come together regularly for a period of time in order to facilitate communication, enhance individual

and team skills and *sustain positive change*.

COACHING & MOVING FORWARD

In addition to continued facilitation/coaching, capacity-building workshops will be provided as needed/requested by the teams. Topics may include (but are not limited to) >Creating S.M.A.R.T goals; >Entrepreneurial communities; >Creating a vibrant downtown business district; >Using social media to support community activities.

LEADERSHIP TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE INSTITUTE

This program is for communities wishing to focus on building local leadership capacity and so is designed to assist people in developing confidence in their own leadership abilities and the courage to take action to address community issues through:

- Strengthened skills for leading meetings, working with others, and dealing with conflict,
- Strategies for communicating, partnering and fundraising within communities, and
- Development of a personal leadership plan and strategies for implementing new ideas in current community work.

Appendix H: Documentation of Cash and In-Kind Value of Athol Community Review

This table created by Idaho Rural Partnership, 1/6/17

\$14,187 Direct expenses covered by Idaho Rural Partnership

\$3,253 Direct expenses covered by City of Athol, local employers, and community organizations

\$28,403 In-kind contributions of time and travel expenses provided by visiting team members

\$1,150 Cost of food provided by City of Athol and community review home team

\$46,993 Total, direct expenses + In-kind contributions

Appendix I: Coeur d' Alene Press Articles

From Coeur d' Alene Press [newspaper on October 7th](#)



LOVEN BENOITE/Press

A community review team coordinated by the Idaho Rural Partnership, the state's rural development council, conducted a survey and community input session and presented its initial findings at the Athol Community Center on Thursday night. The city of Athol will receive a final report in mid-December and consider implementing changes based on the report.

Finding Athol's future

City's last master plan was completed in 1980; Town still has no wastewater facility

By BRIAN WALKER
Staff Writer

ATHOL — If Athol decides to grow, updating the city's comprehensive plan for the first time since 1980 and having a wastewater treatment system would be good places to start.

Those were among the ideas presented by a community review team coordinated by the Idaho Rural Partnership (IRP) to about 75 residents of Athol and the surrounding areas at the Athol Community Center on Thursday night.

Athol was one of two rural cities statewide chosen this year by IRP, the state's rural development council, to have its community reviewed after the city applied for the program.

"We offer ideas based on the community's input for the future, then it's on the community to work with those ideas if it wishes," said Jon Barrett, IRP's acting executive director.

Thursday's presentation came after 288 community surveys were sent to residents within city limits (86 were returned) and another 518 (180 were returned) to those who live in the surrounding areas. It was also the compilation of a public input night on Tuesday, interviews with community groups and business owners and tours the review team performed this week.

"Some people resist change, but organized change is good," said Dave Londeree, who lives just outside city limits in Farragut Village. "The community of Athol in general is anti-growth — and that isn't bad — but you're not going to stop growth. That's why we need to control the amount."

Londeree said he realizes some growth is going to occur, but he'd like to see 5-acre lots preserved outside city limits so the area can salvage its small-town feel.

"We don't need any high-density homes," he said. "If we wanted that, we'd be living in town (the Coeur d'Alene metro area)."

Londeree said he senses the community review will lead to changes.

"It's a done deal," he said. "We just have to wait and see what will be done."

Alice Adams, who also lives just outside city limits, said she'd like to see the city remain as rural as possible. She said additions like a grocery store may add convenience and save on gas by not having to drive to Hayden, but it also may drive out small mom-and-pop shops.

She said when the U.S. 95 overpass was built and bypassed the city, multiple businesses, including a restaurant and gas station, went under.

But she believes Athol will grow regardless of residents' opinions.

"I imagine it will happen," she said. "Just look at Coeur d'Alene."

Areas that received "low satisfaction" in Athol on the citizen survey included high-speed internet, availability/quality of jobs and arts and culture opportunities. Receiving "high satisfaction" were the library, water supply and housing affordability.

The types of businesses that

See ATHOL, A2

are desired, according to residents, include grocery stores, banks and restaurants.

In a citizen exercise Tuesday, the suggested headline that received the highest marks was, "City of Athol receives grant for downtown revitalization."

Themes for desired improvements included a railroad underpass on Highway 54 and pedestrian safety projects.

Creating an image
Jerry Miller, of the Idaho Department of Commerce and a review team member, said helping existing businesses grow was a priority based on input.

He suggested the community create a business improvement team consisting of businesses both inside and outside city limits and that a community logo and tagline be created.

The example he used for a tagline was "Athol Gateway to adventure." The logo, for example, could include a roller coaster with the mountains in the background.

"This is a central location to access these activities," Miller said.

He said the railroad coming through town, a frustration among residents, could be turned into a positive by having a prize wheel move from business to business.

"Every time the train comes through town, someone could spin the wheel where customers win a prize," he said. "The idea is to encourage people to come to town."



ISRAEL HALL PHOTO

Athol area residents, at the Athol Community Center on Thursday night, listen to the findings of a community survey on the future of the town.

"We learned a lot about the challenging times Athol has been through over the past few years."

JOH BARRETT, Idaho Rural Partnership acting executive director

A final report on the citizen input is expected to be sent to the city in mid-December.

The IRP has reviewed 49 rural communities in the state since 2006. Barrett said Athol's comprehensive plan is one of the oldest the IRP has encountered.

"Cities can update them as they deem appropriate, but conventional wisdom within community planning says it's a good idea every five to 10 years," Barrett said, adding it depends on how fast the community is changing and growing. "Athol hasn't changed much over the past 10 to 15 years so it's understandable why the comprehensive plan hasn't been a huge priority. But it does seem to me that it makes sense at some point that it's a good time to take a look at that and create a plan."

Barrett said Athol may also be the first city the IRP has reviewed that doesn't have a wastewater treatment system. The entire city is on septic systems, which is frowned upon by environmental agencies, especially above the aquifer, the region's drinking water source.

"The lack of a sewer system can put the brakes on or limit growth," Barrett said.

Barrett said there are

build a system without putting all of the burden on existing residents. The city can charge impact fees on new growth to generate revenue and apply for grants.

Mayor Bob Wachter said none of the elected officials at the city have been in office for more than three years, so the report will give them some direction as to what the citizens would like to see in the future. He said the city has been stagnant for several years and needs an identity.

A city in the news
Athol and the surrounding areas have made multiple recent headlines.

Former city clerk Sally Hansen last year pleaded guilty to embezzling \$437,379 from the city.

"We learned a lot about the challenging times Athol has been through over the past few years," Barrett said.

"There's a sense that the mayor and council want to turn the page and move forward in a positive way to re-earn the trust of residents rather than being stuck on that story. Athol's challenging times was one of the factors that caught our attention to review."

Developers are also eyeing the area for future projects, especially

an increase in traffic on U.S. 93.

Moert Construction sought a conditional-use permit to build a regional wastewater treatment and reuse facility south of Brunner Road between Diagonal Road and Old Highway 93, but the request

received opposition from residents wanting to preserve the rural lifestyle and is on hold. The firm has plans for a residential development.

Meanwhile, developer Hughes Investments hopes to annex 37 acres east of U.S. 93 near the northwest corner of Highway 54 and Howard Road into The Crossings commercial area. Alan Johnson of the development firm said he has been working with Super 1 Foods to help anchor the project.

The only cost to the city for the review was about \$300 for the postage for the survey.

Barrett said the value of the review, including team members' time and travel costs, is \$40,000. He said the city can use that amount as the local match for grant funding.

"It's a demonstration of local commitment," he said.

Plummer has been chosen as a city for the IRP to review next year. Hayden also had a review in 2010 and was one of the first cities to

Review to help guide Athol's future

Town hall meeting tonight; Presentation set for Thursday

By BRIAN WALKER
Staff Writer

ATHOL — Now is a chance to have a say in Athol's future.

The city was chosen for an Idaho Rural Partnership program that helps rural towns identify future needs in the areas of economic development, transportation, infrastructure and land-use planning.

"We're having an identity problem," said Mayor Bob Wachter, who became mayor in January. "We have a relatively new mayor and council this year, so we want to get a thumb on what the people who live in and around the city would like to see."

"We have been standing still for about 20 years and nobody wanted to annex or talk about it."

But times are changing.

Two major recent projects that have come to Athol include the U.S. 95 overpass and developer Hughes Investments plans to annex 37 acres

east of U.S. 95 near the northwest corner of Highway 54 and Howard Road into The Crossings commercial area.

To obtain the pulse of what Athol-area residents want the future of the city to look like, a town hall meeting will be held tonight at 7 at the Athol Community Center, 30355 N. Third St.

Then, on Thursday at 7 p.m. at the community center, preliminary findings from the town hall and a recent resident survey will be presented along with possible next steps for the community.

Wachter said the Idaho Rural Partnership team will develop a finalized summary of the public input and submit it to the city for consideration in two or three months.

He said none of the elected officials at the city have been in office for more than three years, so the report will give them some direction as to what the citizens would like to see in the future.

A survey sent to Athol residents and those who live near the city asked several questions, including street conditions, quality of education, senior programs, thoughts on growth and

more.

Of 300 surveys sent to residents within city limits, 65 were returned by deadline on Friday. Of 500 surveys sent to citizens outside city limits, 180 were returned.

Wachter said based on an early review of the surveys, residents appear to be divided on growth.

Wachter said Athol was among three cities chosen for the Idaho Rural Partnership's Community Review Program after it applied. Such reviews have been held in nearly 40 rural Idaho communities since 2000.

The review program is a collaborative project that also includes the Association of Idaho Cities, Idaho Department of Commerce, Idaho Transportation Department, U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Development, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Idaho Housing and Finance Association, Region IV Development Association and the University of Idaho.

Wachter said the only cost to the city is the postage fees for the surveys, which was about \$500. He said meals fund-



GABE GREEN / Press file

Colten Bernal pushes a merry-go-round at Athol's town park Aug. 10, 2013, while playing with friends at Athol Days. A town hall meeting will be held tonight at 7 at the Athol Community Center to obtain public input on the city's future. A presentation on the input and results of a recent citizen survey will be presented on Thursday at 7 p.m. at the community center.

ed by private donations are being provided to the program's team members during their stay.

He said visiting team members aren't paid through the program and are responsible for the cost of their hotel accom-

modations and transportation. While in Athol, the team has toured the community and spoken with residents, business owners and community leaders.

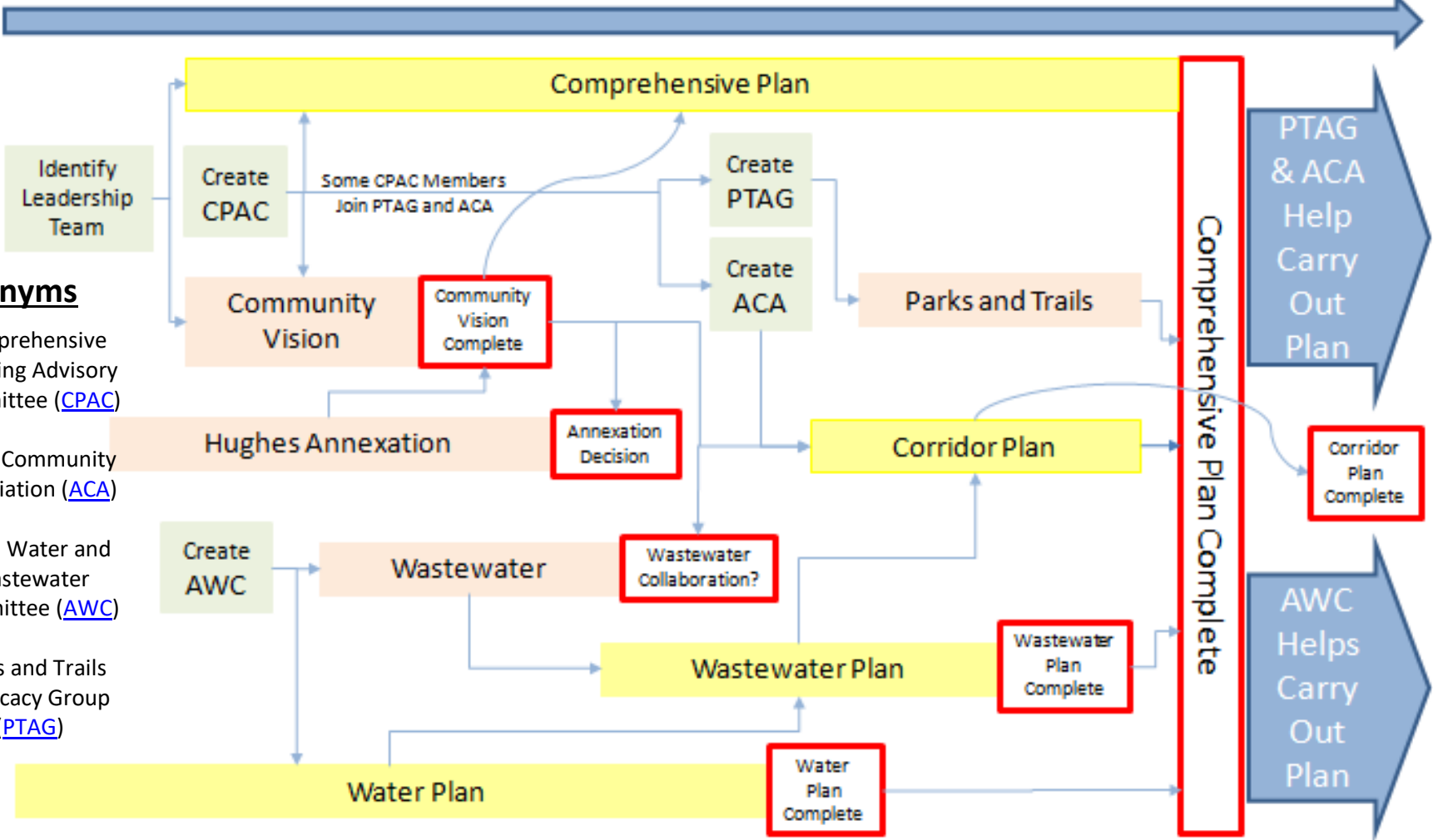
"I'm excited about the many ways Athol will

benefit from the community review," Wachter said. "I hope residents of the city and outlying area take advantage of this unique opportunity to express their ideas for improving the community."

Appendix J: Strategic Sequence Going Forward

Suggested Strategic Sequence

January 2017 June 2017 January 2018



Acronyms

Comprehensive Planning Advisory Committee ([CPAC](#))

Athol Community Association ([ACA](#))

Athol Water and Wastewater Committee ([AWC](#))

Parks and Trails Advocacy Group ([PTAG](#))

What the colors mean

Group Started or Someone Hired

Community Engagement Efforts

Planner Creating a Plan

Something Finished or Decided