

Introduction

PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

The Tobacco Valley, which encompasses the entirety of North Lincoln County, is a beautiful place to live, to raise a family, to build a business, and to retire. Historically, the area has been dependent upon the natural resources and services provided through the National Forest and other state and federal lands. Currently, citizens in the Tobacco Valley have seen a movement to a more guarded use of the federal lands and are apprehensive with the future vitality and success of the Tobacco Valley. Creating a well-defined plan is an important step to identify diversification and growth opportunities as a community so the integrity and the culture of the valley remain based on the existing ways of life and the environment.

The intent of this document is to recognize how the Tobacco Valley can develop and expand its economic base. Planning and identifying economic and community opportunities within and outside of the traditional natural based extraction industry will encourage the Tobacco Valley to explore economic avenues all of kinds. From the recent influx in tourism and service industries, to the additions of large recreational businesses (ie Golf Courses, Lodges) the Tobacco Valley is prime for economic growth and prosperity. This document will provide an overview of the past, the present and will be a guide to identifying projects that will enhance the valley's community and economic future.

This document will serve as the comprehensive economic development strategy (CEDS) for North Lincoln County and part of North Flathead County. For the Flathead County portion this document is in conjunction with the "Flathead/Glacier Park Region of Montana Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy as prepared by Montana West Economic Development Corporation and Flathead County Economic Development.

CEDS documents are designed to bring together the public and private sections in the creation of an economic roadmap to diversify and strengthen local economies. The CEDS purpose is to serve as a guide and a plan of action with the identification of priorities and funding sources to be used by local organizations, governments and leaders. The strategies are focused on fostering jobs and overall economic vitality for the areas of North Lincoln and North Flathead Counties.

COMMUNITY AND PRIVATE SECTOR PARTICIPATION

This document was compiled through a variety of means and incorporated a number of activities including surveys, public hearings, public and community meetings, and one on one conversation. The final compiling was completed by Eureka Rural Development Partners in partnership with the Town of Eureka and District #3 Lincoln County Commissioner.

Information was gathered through the following programs:

- Community Needs Assessment Public Meeting Feb. 2013

*North Lincoln County/Tobacco Valley Region
Strategic Economic Action Plan*

- ERDP Annual Community Social November 2011 and 2012
- Eureka Horizon's Program 2010
- Montana Economic Development Association's Resource Team 2007
- Annual Needs Assessment Hearings, 2010, 2011, and 2012

In addition numerous organizations were approached for input and through organized media relations comments were attracted from various community residents and organizations.

During the spring of 2013, ERDP hosted two public Needs Assessment Hearings where the draft CEDS document was reviewed and open for comments. Comments during the meetings, one held at Riverstone Family Lodge on Feb. 26th, 2013 and the other at Jerry's in Fortine, MT on Feb. 28th, 2013, were compiled and incorporated into the final CEDS document following. The draft plan was also made available at Eureka Rural Development Partners office and the Town of Eureka's Town Hall. Written comments were accepted until May 15th, and only one was received during that time.

ERDP in conjunction with the Lincoln County Commissioners held a public hearing on the final draft on July 17th at 11:00am. The Lincoln County Commissioners adopted the Tobacco Valley portion of the CEDS on _____.

SOURCES OF DATA and REFERENCES

The following is the list of sources that was used in the North Lincoln County Strategic Economic Action Plan:

- Headwater Economics 2012 Socio Economic Profile
- Montana Site Selector/ESRI (2010 US Census)
- Montana Census Information Center
- Lincoln County Growth Policy Plan, Adopted June 24th, 2009
- Tobacco Valley Needs Assessment, 2007

Overview of North Lincoln/Tobacco Valley Region

The traditional economic base of the Tobacco Valley was primarily a forest-based timber industry. Included in the Forest industry are the Forest Service, privately owned lumber mills and logging employed 21% of the community work force in 2002¹. Owens and Hurst, located 3 miles north of Eureka, at full capacity employed 220 and south of Eureka, just outside of Fortine, was the Plum Creek Ksanka Mill. In June of 2004, Plum Creek had 90 employees working in the mill². Today, both mills are closed and the distribution of workforce has changed.

¹ US Department of Commerce Bureau of Economic Analysis Regional Economic Info. System, May 2002

² Numbers on the mills came from direct phone calls with Owens and Hurst and Plum Creek.

*North Lincoln County/Tobacco Valley Region
Strategic Economic Action Plan*

The Tobacco Valley region extends north of Eureka, Montana eight miles to the Canadian Border, south 25 miles to the Town of Stryker, past Fortine and Trego, Montana. Traveling east to west, the valley is narrow but includes the town of Rexford, 6 miles southwest of Eureka. Due to the limited valley floor, agricultural trades such as farming and ranching had impact on the shaping of the valley's economy but on a much smaller scale than the timber industry. Agriculture remains today with small portions of the land being farmed (mostly in alfalfa), minimal cattle ranching and a market of fiber producing animals (angora goats and sheep).

The Tobacco Valley is experiencing a continued influx of people moving into the valley, especially for the summer tourism season. This movement into the valley has continued to reshape the use of the valley's landscape which has traditionally been used in agricultural production. With the increase of valley residents, original acreages are being subdivided into smaller parcels and what agricultural land there is in the valley is being depleted. In 2009, Lincoln County adopted a Growth Policy plan to help guide growth and usage but there are no zoning regulations in place. As a result of inherent attitudes toward land use there is an overriding resistance to discuss town planning and development of the valley for the future.

According to the Montana Department of Labor and Industry, Research and Analysis Bureau, in April 2013 Lincoln County had a 14.3% unemployment rate. The cause of this high unemployment rate is largely contributed to the loss of the main timber industry. Business Expansion and Retention along with drawing new businesses into the region has been the primary goal for many community leaders. The effect of the mill closures in the previous decade has brought to the forefront the need to expand and retain the current businesses not directly related to the timber industry. Continuing support of existing businesses is a key factor to the maintenance of the Tobacco Valley's economic base. If the valley is to continue to grow and remain vital it is imperative that the valley diversify the area's economy in an effort to replace the declining timber industry.

After the unfortunate 9-11-2001 act on our country, the Tobacco Valley has experienced the effects stemming from an increased profile in the Homeland Security forces. With the border 8 miles north of Eureka, the Valley is experiencing an increase in Border Patrol Officers in the area. The extra officers have lead to a re-evaluation of the Border Patrol's current facility and have contributed to the current growth in the Valley. The Port of Roosville has increased security in and out of the United States and has recently built a larger structure for the United States port authority and entrance. There are continual increases to the traffic coming and going through the Roosville Port, which has brought to the forefront traffic congestion and concerns specifically on Highway 93. A focus for the Eureka/Tobacco Valley is to work with the Canadian officials to increase the Canadian Port's access to full commercial and more car lanes to handle the influx of travelers using the Port of Entry to Canada. National trends and policy will have a large impact on the area's efforts to increase trade through the Canadian (both commercial and service) with continued discussion of sequestration and fees.

The Valley's infrastructure is undergoing major changes. In 2003, the Town of Eureka updated its wastewater treatment facilities and has currently applied for funding through the 2013 Montana State programs for an expansion and upgrade to the system. The sewage system has gone through a three (3) phase upgrade plan with the last phase being completed in 2004. The

*North Lincoln County/Tobacco Valley Region
Strategic Economic Action Plan*

Town of Eureka has completed in the Spring of 2012 an major expansion and upgrade to the Town's water system with additional storage and new lines extending into the unincorporated adjacent commercial and residential areas north of Eureka proper. The Town is working with the Montana Dept. of Environmental Quality on a required improvement project to the Filtration System which is scheduled to be completed in the Summer of 2014. The Town of Rexford is currently looking into an upgrade to their Sewer system and is working with the Montana Dept. of Natural Resources.

Highway 93 in the late 1990's went through a facelift increasing the lane size and overall safety of the highway. The area has also seen an increase in beautification projects such as new lamp posts along Dewey Avenue³ and most recently the business owners have cooperatively purchases and hung flowering baskets and new event banners along Main Street. This has made the Eureka Downtown very attractive and has resulted in six new stores opening in between November 2011 and March of 2012. The community support two walking trails; the Eureka Riverwalk and the Rails to Trails/Kootenai Trail that connects Eureka to Rexford. Each are needing some additional maintenance and uptake but both are great additions to the vibrant and active lifestyles of the Tobacco Valley. Another contributing factor is the addition of the Eureka Farmer's Market every Wednesday throughout the summer months in Riverside Park of Eureka. This showcases the increase interest in local food production and provides healthy food to residents. Building on the idea of local food consumption was the completion of a Community Garden at the Lincoln County Fairgrounds, just outside of the Town of Eureka. The Community Garden in 2012 has 38 beds rented out to residents and in 2011 produced over 1700 pounds of produce for the Community Food Bank.

Along the same line ERDP is working with Agricultural producers in the Valley to expand and enhance agricultural production in the area. Working closely with the Montana Dept. of Agriculture, the hope is to build business opportunities and markets for local produced foods and manufacturing.

However, even with all that has happened in the recent years, there are still concerns and upgrades to infrastructures and community facilities needed. Side streets in the towns are rough and unattractive. Alternative routes are needed during the spring break-up since the only two roads that do not have load restrictions on them are the two highways passing through the valley, HWY 93 and HWY 37. There is also a need to expand the ability to improve congestion of vehicular and pedestrian, specifically within the Town of Eureka; along with improving parking in the downtown core. With the addition of the Tobacco Valley Industrial District Business Park located in the county, the Airport Road will be open for heavier loads to the access of the Park's entrance in the future.

The Tobacco Valley is on the prime tourist driving route between Whitefish, Montana and British Columbia, Canada with Glacier National Park accessible within a short time frame. In the recent past, the overall feeling towards tourism was apprehensive at best. Of late, there is much more interest in exploring and expanding tourism. ERDP and the Eureka Chamber of Commerce have developed a tourism committee to continue cooperatively marketing the area for

³ Dewey Avenue is the main street in Eureka and is also Highway 93

*North Lincoln County/Tobacco Valley Region
Strategic Economic Action Plan*

residents and visitors alike. The next steps are to increase communication avenues for organizations and businesses to utilize as well as expand into a shop local campaign, showcasing the importance of residents supporting local businesses to help prevent continued trends of increase linkage to the larger Flathead communities. The goal of the tourism committee is to help mitigate negative impacts from a tourism industry while still promoting the overall Valley's potential. There have been two large recreational additions to the Valley with the addition of the Indian Springs Ranch and The Wilderness Club. Both are 18-hole golf courses with over 300 home sites each. Indian Springs Ranch is more accessible to the public and provides RV sites, walking trails, and hosts a variety of community events. The Wilderness Club is a Nick Faldo golf course that has ranged from private to public and now showing signs under new ownership of semi-private/membership only. The Wilderness Club also has a new restaurant and opened Water Park in July 2012. With these new additions there has been even more push to explore tourism trade tools such as the Montana Resort Tax and Tourism Increment Financing Districts.

SOCIO ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

The socio economic profile is based on the information obtained from Headwaters Economics' social profile on the Town of Eureka, Town of Rexford and Census Information Points of Trego, Fortine, and Stryker. Also built into the following is information from the Montana Site Selector Program using ESRI data and the Montana Census Economic Information Center.

The demographics for the area prove to be difficult to quantify as there is only a handful of Census date points (CDP) in the area, with a large portion of the information being County wide. As per the 2010 Census the following table outlines the Valley's population, though keep in mind that it does not represent areas like the West Kootenia and Pinkham that have experienced growth but are not CDP sites.

Area/Town	2010 Population	2000 Population	Percentage Change
Town of Eureka (proper)	1,196	1,017	17.6% increase
Fortine CDP	312	169	84.6% increase
Town of Rexford	78	151	48.3% decrease
Stryker CDP	66	n/a	n/a
Trego CDP	592	n/a	n/a
City Region (rural area)	2,244	1,337	67.8% increase

However, the Montana CEIC has, Lincoln County High School District Population at 6,255. Which is equaled to the populations shown in the three elementary school districts; Eureka Elementary School District's Population at 4,898, Fortine School District's at 769, and Trego School District's at 587. This seems more accurate than the using the CDP to get a better understanding of a total population. Though it should be noted that neither the Census nor the School District information accounts for seasonal and vacation based populations.

*North Lincoln County/Tobacco Valley Region
Strategic Economic Action Plan*

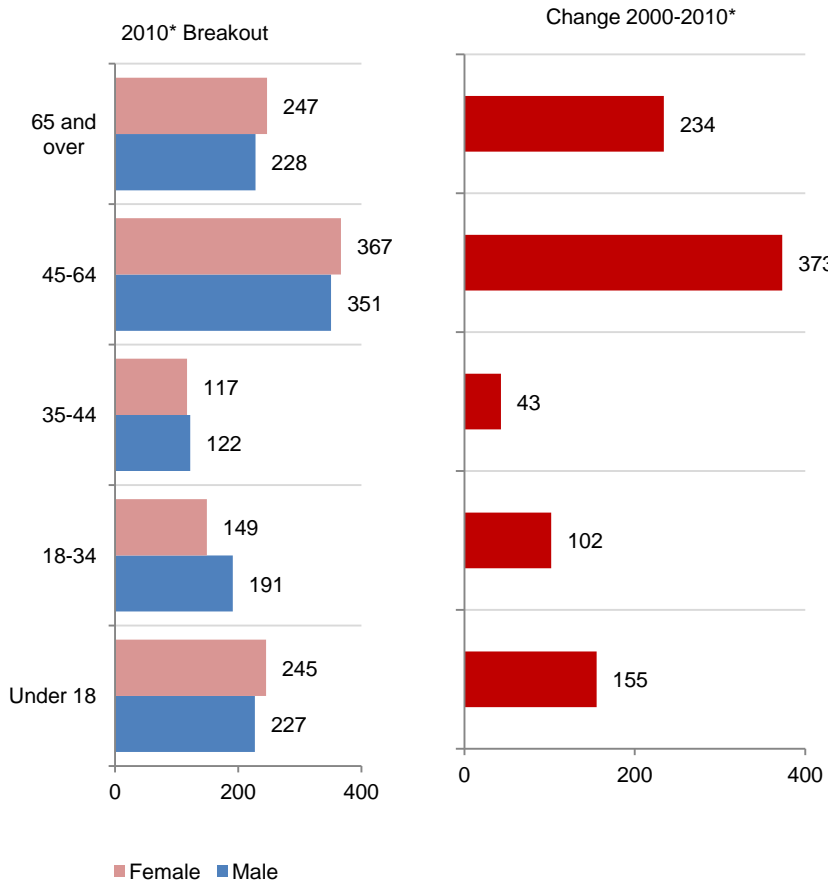
For the age of the population, again not reflecting the non-permanent residents, the Census information was used from the Socio Economic Profile from Headwaters Economics.

Area/Town	2010 Ave. Age	2000 Ave. Age	Percentage Change
Town of Eureka	43.3	40.2	7.7% increase
Fortine CDP	55.5	45.2	22.8%
Town of Rexford	67.5	43.2	56.2%
Stryker CDP	30.1	n/a	n/a
Trego CDP	48.5	n/a	n/a

This data confirms what the community felt during the public hearing and throughout all the programs to collect public input. There were a lot of comments regarding the loss of youth in the area, specifically younger working families. This also is reflected later when discussing Services, as one of the main concerns from the public was the aging volunteer Fire Departments and Ambulance Services with higher demands due to increased populations.

The following graph outlines in more details the 2010 age categories and the change from 2000 to 2010 which shows that the overall population of the Tobacco Valley/North Lincoln County is aging and there has been a general loss of population in the 18 to 44 year olds. This reflects again the Community's observation that the North Lincoln County workforce is starting to seek employment elsewhere or that other factors are playing a role in the younger generations leaving the Community.

*North Lincoln County/Tobacco Valley Region
Strategic Economic Action Plan*



The race diversification in the Valley mimics most Montana communities. Across the communities and CDP's Caucasian was the largest race averaging right at 94.5%. Other races that were calculated included African American, American Indian, and two or more races. What was interesting was that of the American Indian population the two Tribes listed were Cheyenne, and Iroquois and of the Alaska Native Tribes Tlingit-Haida was the only Tribe listed. Given that the Tobacco Valley was traditionally home to the Kootenai and Salish Tribes it was expected to have a larger density of that Tribe than any other.

When researching the employment demographics of the area it became clear how important the retail and service, and construction industries have become in our community and just how much the area's traditional economics based on natural resources has been lost. The following table was an eye opener to just what had changed over the years but also was a great indicator that the overall Communities workforce has potential to foster industry outside of service.

*North Lincoln County/Tobacco Valley Region
Strategic Economic Action Plan*

	Town of Eureka	Fortine CDP	Town of Rexford	Stryker CDP	Trego CDP	City Region (rural)
Civilian Employed Population	457	100	28	16	159	760
Agriculture, forestry, Fishing & hunting, mining	1.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	13.2%	3.8%
Construction	34.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	11.3%	23.0%
Manufacturing	11.2%	24.0%	0.0%	0.0%	5%	10.9%
Wholesale Trade	2.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.4%
Retail Trade	15.1%	23.0%	10.7%	0.0%	13.8%	15.4%
Transportation, warehousing and utilities	0.0%	0.0%	60.7%	25.0%	2.5%	3.3%
Information	2.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.3%	1.8%
Finance and Insurance, and Real Estate	11.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	10.7%	9.1%
Professional, Scientific, management, admin, and waste management	3.5%	4.0%	0.0%	0.0%	13.8%	5.5%\$
Education, Health care, and social assistance	11.8%	33.0%	10.7%	75.0%	23.3%	18.3%
Arts, Entertain, recreational, accommodations, and food	5.9%	11.0%	0.0%	0.0%	5.0%	6.1%
Public Administration	0.0%	5.0%	17.9%	0.0%	0.0%	1.3%

Another interesting factoid that emerged was the commuting patterns that the Socio Economic Profile demonstrated.

*North Lincoln County/Tobacco Valley Region
Strategic Economic Action Plan*

Commuting Characteristics, 2010*

	Eureka town, MT	Fortine CDP, MT	Rexford town, MT	Stryker CDP, MT	Trego CDP, MT	City Region
Workers 16 years and over	435	100	25	16	149	725
PLACE OF WORK:						
Worked in county of residence	421	89	25	12	95	642
Worked outside county of residence	14	11	0	4	54	83
TRAVEL TIME TO WORK:						
Less than 10 minutes	183	23	17	0	29	252
10 to 14 minutes	33	0	0	12	8	53
15 to 19 minutes	75	60	3	0	11	149
20 to 24 minutes	20	6	5	0	6	37
25 to 29 minutes	7	0	0	0	0	7
30 to 34 minutes	69	0	0	4	5	78
35 to 39 minutes	0	0	0	0	3	3
40 to 44 minutes	0	0	0	0	0	0
45 to 59 minutes	3	11	0	0	0	14
60 or more minutes	14	0	0	0	64	78
Mean travel time to work (minutes)	15	16	0	0	40	19

Percent of Total

PLACE OF WORK:						
Worked in county of residence	96.8%	89.0%	100.0%	75.0%	63.8%	88.6%
Worked outside county of residence	3.2%	11.0%	0.0%	25.0%	36.2%	11.4%
TRAVEL TIME TO WORK:						
Less than 10 minutes	42.1%	23.0%	68.0%	0.0%	19.5%	34.8%
10 to 14 minutes	7.6%	0.0%	0.0%	75.0%	5.4%	7.3%
15 to 19 minutes	17.2%	60.0%	12.0%	0.0%	7.4%	20.6%
20 to 24 minutes	4.6%	6.0%	20.0%	0.0%	4.0%	5.1%
25 to 29 minutes	1.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.0%
30 to 34 minutes	15.9%	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%	3.4%	10.8%
35 to 39 minutes	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.0%	0.4%
40 to 44 minutes	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
45 to 59 minutes	0.7%	11.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.9%
60 or more minutes	3.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	43.0%	10.8%

What was of most interest was in 2007 when the Tobacco Valley Community Development Council completed the Tobacco Valley Needs Assessment it was 1 out of every 4 worker in the area was commuting to the Flathead for their main source of employment. The above tables do not illustrate that same information so it does point to a major change in the employment characteristics of the Valley. Though the income of the Valley was pretty much right where it was expected with little change shown from the previous years.

Strengths and Liabilities

The following strengths and liabilities list has been revisited a number of times since the 2007. Though posed in different questions the following questions were posed to community members through a variety of means (as explained above). The answers were compiled and listed below.

*North Lincoln County/Tobacco Valley Region
Strategic Economic Action Plan*

What unique strengths can the Tobacco Valley/North Lincoln County region build on for economic development and growth?

- *Alumni of the area are returning and more are desiring to come back to the area*
- *Closeness to Canada with expanded opportunities for markets and people*
- *The high unemployment means that there is a skilled workforce (manufacturing) available*
- *Highway 93 and Entry into Montana and the USA*
- *Creativity is abundant in the Valley with artists and musicians*
- *Availability of wood fiber*
- *Affordable and quality senior and workforce housing, though need more*
- *Retired individuals that have experience, knowledge and desire to be involved*
- *A variety of small home based businesses*
- *The Community is resilient and can build with what is available*
- *Strong social media network*
- *Lots of talent in the area but many are not returning*
- *InterBel Telephone Cooperative has in place a good infrastructure for high tech employment and business*
- *Community and area aesthetics*
- *ERDP*
- *Positive attitude of the Town Council for growth and progress*
- *People with prior knowledge for business*
- *Small Town Charm and ambiance*
- *Scenic Areas and Highways*
- *Outdoor sports and activities*
- *Affordable Electricity*
- *Access to Rail Road*

What weaknesses pose challenges to economic development?

- *The assumption that service jobs (lower wages) are the only solution*
- *A Disconnect with the people between playing and working*
- *The tax payers are way less than the amount of people that use services like the streets and sidewalks*
- *Volunteer burnout*
- *Business don't work together to promote each other*
- *Current condition and congestion of access points (including the Marina) to Lake Koocanusa*
- *The current businesses are burdened with the local demand for donations*
- *Leakage to surrounding community*
- *ERDP is needing to expand outreach as there is a lack of knowledge to the general public and business community about the programs ERDP has or has access to through regional, State and Federal connections*
- *High unemployment; though there is also a traditional trend for seasonal unemployment*
- *Wage rates are not living wages*
- *PR Status- People are not aware of what we have here*
- *Lack of communication and advertising avenues*

*North Lincoln County/Tobacco Valley Region
Strategic Economic Action Plan*

- *Remote location and distance from population hubs*
- *Burnout of volunteers and lack of overall community involvement; community apathy*
- *Workforce is specifically trained; will need training for new industry*
- *Distance from major transportation hubs*
- *Environmental movement continues to limit access to Natural Resources*
- *The desire to see the community remain rural; not change into a resort community where residents can no longer afford to live- fear of change*
- *Minimal access to Startup capital for business development*
- *Schools are limited to what they can provide to youth*
- *Availability of lodging*
- *24 Emergency Care*
- *Transitional workforce: Residents have to leave home and family to find work*
- *Lack of jobs for youth/High School*
- *Poor road conditions within Towns and County with Road closures during the spring due to weight restrictions*
- *A division within the community; specifically businesses not working together to promote each other and activities*
- *Limited evening amenities*
- *Not enough promotion of what to do in the Tobacco Valley*
- *Aging Population without a connection to the younger generations to become involved and volunteer*
- *Naysayers- people that are very negative but without any suggestion on solutions*
- *Overkill on flyers as a means of community communication*

How can these weaknesses be mitigated?

- *Develop recruitment outreach to attract or build locally small manufacturing businesses*
- *Incorporate a local Capital program for startup funding*
- *Strengthen community wide networks-begin hosting the all-organization meetings again*
- *Create a Downtown Business Association*
- *Work with EPA to mitigate localized impacts*
- *Utilize public funds that are available by expanding knowledge of the availability*
- *Create more venues for leadership development*
- *Work with schools to improve workforce opportunities and utilize online education tools such as those provided through Flathead Valley Community College*
- *Capitalize on Geo-Tourism*
- *Connect businesses with Community College for better workforce training*
- *Work with local newspaper and outlets to improve communication within the community*
- *Communication, Collaboration, Coordination- organizations and businesses work together no against each other*
- *Promote Eureka as a destination/Center for activity in and around the Tobacco Valley including Canada and Flathead*
- *Develop a Resort Tax and/or Tourism Increment district to help fund infrastructure needs*
- *Explore option of a user fee for Lake Koocanusa to help support the development and expansion of access*

*North Lincoln County/Tobacco Valley Region
Strategic Economic Action Plan*

- *Create a bicycle trail between Eureka and Whitefish*
- *Encourage and educate on entrepreneurship*
- *Develop a youth outreach that includes job training and importance of community involvement*

What are the Needs of the Tobacco Valley/ERDP Service area?

- *Creation of Jobs*
- *Workforce Training*
- *Leadership Development*
- *Campaign to let people know the area is “open for business”*
- *Youth Development: School and Beyond which includes building an entrepreneurship program for middle school students*
- *Expand Youth Job opportunities; use InterBel youth employee as an example and build on local social media outlets to create opportunity for employers and youth to work together for on job training and development*
- *Partner with the schools for job shadowing and develop field trips to local businesses*
- *Create a skill development fund: Help small business train their employees; similar to the Experience Works program but for all ages*
- *Build winter economy*
 - *Connect with snowmobile and outdoor winter recreationist better*
 - *Expand hours of services*
 - *Enhance publicity to showcase that the area has winter amenities*
- *More access to the Lake Koocanusa and the availability of docks and slips*
- *Parking within the communities including Handicapped areas*
- *Evening amenities for visitors and residents, specifically to help market the area for workforce and entrepreneurs*
- *Bicycle friendly roads and trails*
- *Incentives for Business Growth and Attraction*
- *Current businesses need to work together to promote the local economy*
- *Lodging*
- *Control of the perpetual Yard-Sales/Flea Markets*
- *Volunteers!*

How does regional and State economic activity provide direct or indirect benefits to the area?

- *Glacier Country is a great tool for growth that is funded through the Montana Bed Tax*
- *Forest Service provides local economy base*
- *State is promoting recreation and tourism which is good for the Community given the proximity to Canada and Whitefish, MT*
- *Advertising opportunities in Statewide publications*
- *Alternative funding sources*
- *The State continues to manage and harvest their forested lands*
- *Provides assistance and funding for new and existing businesses*
- *State is working on developing a better business atmosphere*
- *The State is working on developing better trade and exporting opportunities*

*North Lincoln County/Tobacco Valley Region
Strategic Economic Action Plan*

- *State is promoting better retraining and/or training for workforce*
- *Increase tourism traffic has impacted areas like the West Kootenai/Amish Community: “Cultural Clashes”*
- *Forest Service regulations*
- *National movement to be more active and outdoor recreation*

What assets contribute to the local economy?

- *The desire of people wanting to help the overall community*
- *The increase of Canadian Traffic and residents; with their stronger dollar sustaining a number of local businesses.*
- *The Tobacco Valley is overall isolated and has been able to sustain small town charm and values.*
- *Recreational opportunities are vast with the Kootenai National Forest and Lake Koocanusa.*
- *The Forest provides an opportunity for local biomass development*
- *The people*
- *Clean water and access to timber*
- *The expansion of the tourism industry and businesses*
- *A sense of History with a love of the place along with a willingness of the people to work*
- *There are two good grocery stores*
- *Chamber of Commerce*
- *Eureka Rural Development Partners*
- *Natural beauty and resources are both a means for industry and business/workforce attraction*
- *New Businesses on Mainstreet and the appearance of Mainstreet*
- *Pick Montana (a locally owned marketing company that is very active in the community)*
- *Strong community based organizations like Sunburst Foundation and Creative Arts Center*
- *Lake Koocanusa and the ability to access a variety of quality outdoor recreational areas all year long*
- *The Lincoln County Fairgrounds Facility*
- *The development of the two golf courses*
- *Canadian/US Border/Port of Entry*
- *Glen Lake Irrigation District*
- *Strong medical facilities and access*
- *Expansion of Cottage Industries and outlet for home based businesses like the Chamber of Commerce’s Farmers Market*
- *Community Facilities such as the Historical Village, Riverwalk, Rails to Trails, High School, etc)*
- *Strong Community events: Lincoln County Fair, Rendezvous Days, Quilt Show*

How are economic conditions changing in the Tobacco Valley Region?

- *More businesses are on Mainstreet*
- *Canadians are buying homes and spending more time in the Valley; Continued growth through Canadian influx*

*North Lincoln County/Tobacco Valley Region
Strategic Economic Action Plan*

- *Adjusting to capitalize on tourism dollars and accepting service based industry (tourist friendly)*
- *Historic industries, such as logging, are no longer as viable*
- *Incomes from Canadian travels has given people hope*
- *North Dakota and Eastern Montana oil fields are providing work away from home*
- *More telecommunicating for work and businesses*
- *Demographics are changing from industry based to tourism and recreational based*
- *Cost of living is impacting spending in the local economy, relying on outside resources*
- *Concern that communities like Trego and Fortine are becoming more bedroom based communities for the Flathead*
- *Loss of high paying jobs; no industrial support*
- *Increase seasonal populations and non-residential growth*
- *Increase in Real Estate sales and sub-division*
- *Diverse residential backgrounds- more diversity with experiences*

What industries could be developed in the Tobacco Valley?

- *Create local growth through development of the Valley's agricultural production*
- *Whole food and Healthy foods; building on the Nations movement to "know your farmer" and build a network of businesses that utilize locally grown items (produce, meat, fiber, etc).*
- *Recycling Center- Manufacturing recycle bins*
- *Build on the talented stay at home Moms and create a company that makes Artic Clothing for the oil fields in North Dakota, Eastern Montana, and Canada*
- *Create a local "Shark Tank" and build a network of investors from the area to invest in start up companies*
- *Bring in a Habitat for Humanity's program that uses and resells materials from construction sites*
- *Create tours of local companies, specifically agricultural based*
- *Winery's and Brewery's*
- *Transportation Hub by expanding the usage of the Reload and Loading area around the Railroad, also build in the Highway Transportation utilizing Hwy 93 and proximity to US/Canada Border*
- *Expand Artistry and Musician business opportunities by building on the success of Sunburst Foundation and Montana Art Council programs. This would also incorporate the idea of creating art retreats for all venues.*

Priority Vision:

The priority vision among the organizations engaged or contributing to economic development is to promote economic diversity and job growth while preserving the quality of life.

Based on the above section, along with previous Vision Statements and information gathered through the variety of means, the following vision was developed for the region:

The North Lincoln County/Tobacco Valley region is a community with a rich heritage preserved in our natural resources and traditional values. The community maintains a sense

*North Lincoln County/Tobacco Valley Region
Strategic Economic Action Plan*

of volunteerism and quality of life with the preservation of peace and safety. The area has a diversified economic base that holds true to the natural resource past but embraces emerging industries of tourism and recreation.

Overall the community is proud of the quality infrastructure and services with a strong connection to the past and hope for the future for our children. Residents of all ages engage in community activities and reaches out to those in need. The people of this Valley are strong and independent with a true sense of Community Pride. They support community improvements that embrace the economic desires and community growth.

The Board of Directors for Eureka Rural Development Partners made a decision several years ago to focus resources on supporting local business and entrepreneurs first. Local business sustainability will remain the focus of ERDP's with a secondary mission of attraction of companies to the area due to limited organizational resources. ERDP is actively engaged in Montana Site Selector programs and continues to build relationships with State agencies and programs to encourage relocations/attraction of companies to the region, though the focus will remain on serving the local businesses and growing economic vitality within the region.

Goals and Actions

This document is intended to serve as a plan of action for economic growth and vitality for the communities and regions served by Eureka Rural Development Partners. The communities include:

- Tally Lake
- Star Meadows
- Olney
- Stryker
- Trego
- Fortine
- Eureka
- Rexford

For the communities within ERDP service area that are located within Flathead County, reference should be made to the "Flathead/Glacier Park Region of Montana Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy" as prepared by Montana West Economic Development Corporation and Flathead County Economic Development.

A plan of action needs to be clearly measurable and include an assignment of who is responsible for each activity. The plan should be stated in realistic terms. The following strategies are projects, programs, and activities to be undertaken to support job creation, sustainability of jobs and businesses, and improve overall community and economic goals for the region.

For the purpose of this document the strategies are built upon the information and topics provided by the Community Members who participated in the 2012 Needs Assessment Hearing on February 23rd, 2012, and the ERDP Annual Community Social on November 18th, 2012 and

*North Lincoln County/Tobacco Valley Region
Strategic Economic Action Plan*

2011. Additional information gathered through the previous planning processes were incorporated into the goals. Further information and concepts were developed through the 2013 Need Assessment Hearings held in Feb. 2013.

✚ GOAL: BUSINESS and INDUSTRY

Business and Industry is a broad term and has a number of sub-goals. The focus of this document is to foster job creation thus, the development and expansion of business and industry is a major focal point for this action plan. The majority of the comments received regarding the overarching goal of improving business and industry included:

- Creation of jobs that provide a living wage by expanding industry and not focusing on tourism/service industry
- Improving the ability to market stay at home jobs and/or home based businesses; educate the community about services and products made locally.
- Lack of lodging for tourism development and overall need to improve the regions attraction as a tourist destination
- Help facilitate the creation of environmentally friendly businesses
- Continue promotion of forest related jobs both in and outside of the forest including value added production

Another component of this section that was discussed was that ERDP serves the area as the Business Service center but is limited in their outreach and publicity as an organization. ERDP has a number of connections and programs to utilize if people are aware of their services. ERDP Board and Staff have built into their annual workplan and this CEDS document, more outreach as an organization which will include social media, website development, print and advertising, one on one visiting, and displays at community events such as the Lincoln County Fair.

This section is the longest part of the document and builds on the other goals throughout the remainder of the document.

Goal One: *Promote the Eureka area as a Trade Distribution Area and Create Manufacturing Opportunities to diversify the economic base of the region*

Action One: *The Tobacco Valley Industrial District and ERDP will continue to promote and foster business development at the Wood Development Center-Business Incubator. The two organizations will work on creating a tax increment-financing district to provide alternative funding opportunities for those that are within the Industrial District.*

Action Two: *ERDP and partners will continue to explore the option of a Free Trade Zone, or similar programs around the Mission Mountain Rail spur that connects Eureka to Burlington Railroad.*

Action Three: *County Commissioner and local legislatures will lead conversations regarding expansion of trade through Port of Roosville, specifically north bound by building relationships and partnerships with the US Customs and Canadian Customs.*

*North Lincoln County/Tobacco Valley Region
Strategic Economic Action Plan*

This will also include looking into the traffic congestion/bottle neck on Highway 93 entering Canada for tourism development and trade traffic.

Objective One: *Expand distribution around the rail by promoting Eureka as a place to do business and working with the locally landowners on potential programs to increase entrepreneurship and trade.*

Objective Two: *Development of a fully commercial Port into Canada on Highway 93. This will create opportunity for business development and attraction and spur economical trade.*

Objective Three: *The creation of manufacturing companies through the promotion of growing business from within (economic gardening) and by expanding the incubation programs at the Wood Development Center. The Wood Development Center and Industrials District will serve as the base for entrepreneurship education by creating outreach for business workshops and classes annually.*

Goal Two: *Create the Tobacco Valley region as center for business opportunities for local residents.*

Action One: *Lincoln Electric Cooperative will explore alternative energy to help facilitate future growth needs for the community which may open the area for alternative energy business development.*

Action Two: *Expand on InterBel Telephone's infrastructure ability to attract or build technology based companies, and explore InterBel's ability to expand Wi-Fi capabilities while supporting their efforts to bring fiber to the entire service area.*

Action Three: *Focus on identifying and responding to the needs of existing businesses.*

Action Four: *Create a local business trust program to capitalize on the expertise of the local retirees and the influx of retirees into the community. There is a wealth of opportunity to foster business creation through mentoring entrepreneurs.*

Action Five: *Build a relationship with the Montana Ambassador Program, Innovate Montana, Come Home Montana and other programs that are working to attract Montanans back home. Work with the Lincoln County High School to connect with alumni to discuss potential business development opportunities and/or workforce attraction.*

Action Six: *Develop local incentives for business development. This would include expanding the services at the Tobacco Valley Industrial District Incubator facility.*

Objective One: *Expand the local capacity of Lincoln Electric Cooperative to provide affordable energy for the communities. The objective would be to foster business growth*

*North Lincoln County/Tobacco Valley Region
Strategic Economic Action Plan*

through affordable electricity while providing opportunity for alternative energy businesses.

Goal Three: *Promotion of Forestry Industry and Value Added, while building opportunities within the Natural Resources.*

The members of the community that have participated over the years in planning is very interested in pursuing manufacturing of raw material (fiber) within the Valley. The Tobacco Valley is mostly within the US Kootenai National Forest, which means that for natural resource development, forestry remains a key contributor for the regions overall economy.

Action One: *Explore the usages of biomass materials and foster businesses/entrepreneurships around value-added. ERDP has been asked to host a community presentation on value-added forestry and is in the process of creating such an event for the community.*

Action Two: *Identify construction and housing needs in high growth areas, such as the Bakken Oil Fields, and determine if the Tobacco Valley region could capitalize on those needs. As a specific action item, members of the community discussed contracting to build temporary and mobile housing units to ship to areas of need. However, no individual organization or businesses has stepped forward to lead on this item even though it gained a number of comments.*

Action Three: *Remain active in the promotion of stewardship contracting on public and private lands.*

Action Four: *Identify and help market local contractors' ability for private landowners to become stewards of their lands through tree harvesting and management. This will also help reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire while promoting shop local.*

Goal Four: *Continue the promotion of Tourism Industry and build the Tobacco Valley Region as a tourist destination.*

Action One: *Winter tourism was a point of discussion as many participants felt that the summer season was going well and already growing, though there was definitely a need identified for additional lodging. The Eureka Area Chamber of Commerce and ERDP's joint tourism committee will reach out to businesses and organizations that are involved in winter activities, such as the Ten Lake Snowmobile Club, to help identify marketing venues to attract winter tourist.*

Action Two: *ERDP and the Chamber, along with businesses within the marketing industry, will work with regional programs like Western Montana Glacier Country to continue promotion of tourism to the region.*

Action Three: *Build marketing venues, as outlined in Goal Eight below*

*North Lincoln County/Tobacco Valley Region
Strategic Economic Action Plan*

Action Four: *Through working partnerships, businesses will begin cross marketing, sharing resources, and building relationships to promote activities and community awareness. Facilitate communication between businesses to build more active partnership and working together to promote the Tobacco Valley as a tourist destination and continue to showcase support from private marketing companies and businesses.*

Action Five: *Though no one organization or business was tasked with this action, it is imperative that the lodging is identified and determine if there is a lack of lodging for the promotion of a tourism industry. If a need is found then organizations such as ERDP and businesses in the field, will work on filling that gap, though many participants expect that private development like Indian Springs Ranch and the Wilderness Club will fill the need for additional lodging as well as individual vacation rentals.*

Action Six: *Promote Eureka as a base for winter and summer traveling. Eureka is centrally located between two major ski resorts, Fernie BC and Whitefish, MT, which is a great opportunity for businesses, specifically those in the lodging, to build visitor attraction.*

Action Seven: *Work with the North Lincoln County Airport Board, County Commissioners, local investors, and funding agencies to continue expansion and use of the Eureka Airport. Within this parameter was working with the US Customs to develop custom screening at the airport.*

Action Eight: *Explore working with private sector businesses like Pick Montana and Indian Springs Ranch to provide venues for visitors and residents to learn about the “happenings” of the Valley. The Indian Springs Ranch and Golf Community has the largest and most up to date Calendar of Events for the Valley. Expanding on working with organizations and private companies will help benefit the entire community as tourism continues to grow in the area.*

Goal Five: *Expand local workforce capacity and identify educational needs throughout the community*

The members that participated in the planning processes over the years discussed workforce needs a variety of times. The discussion focused on two parts: 1) address local capacity for people who are coming to the area and focus energy on recruiting workforce and entrepreneurs to the area, and 2). Identify businesses’ workforce needs and help foster relationships between workforce, and workforce training programs.

Action One: *ERDP will work with the Flathead and Kootenai Job Service Centers to promote workforce training programs for local businesses as well as build on the programs available to connect skilled workers to employers*

Action Two: *Connect youth with opportunities to gain on the job training similar to an apprentice program. This is already occurring in Lincoln County High School, so*

*North Lincoln County/Tobacco Valley Region
Strategic Economic Action Plan*

members of the community, specifically the Eureka Area Chamber of Commerce and ERDP will help educate businesses on the opportunity and support the school in continuing the program.

Action Three: *ERDP with business partners will create opportunities for youth and students to “tour” local businesses. This request came from businesses owners that felt that there was a disconnect between the overall community and the business community. The idea is that this will help educate the entire community through the youth, about the services and products available locally as well as educate the youth about opportunities in the Region.*

Action Four: *ERDP, Job Service Centers, and other technical assistance providers in the area such as the Small Business Development Center, will work together to help identify training needs of local businesses and create a skill development fund. This will include bringing in specific training/workshops through FVCC and other resources to train business employees on the job. ERDP will also actively promote the State of Montana’s Workforce training programs.*

Action Five: *Sunburst Foundation has been in discussion with the local school District Administrators to explore the option of a service learning requirement.*

Goal Seven: *Identify opportunities and obstacles with the influx of Canadian trade and visitors*

Action One: *ERDP, Public Officials, Lincoln Electric Cooperative, and other members of the community will remain engaged in the Columbia Basin Treaty that has potential to affect the region.*

Action Two: *ERDP and partners will nurture cross border partnerships with local government officials to create markets and promote cross trade. Will also incorporate working towards creating an avenue for the workforce of the Tobacco Valley to temporarily replenish workforce shortage in Canada.*

Action Three: *ERDP will facilitate discussion with the Montana World Trade Center, Governors Office of Economic Development, the State and US Dept. of Commerce International Trade Bureaus, and Congressional Delegations, to increase awareness of Eureka’s potential to capture economic growth through trade and cross border relations.*

Objective One: *Eureka and Tobacco Valley will have the ability to maintain cross border workforce to assist with Canada’s current workforce shortage while providing employment opportunity for local workforce.*

Goal Eight: *Develop additional venues for marketing by exploring cooperative marketing, shared trade show attendance, building further capacity for the Chamber of Commerce’s website, and expand into social media marketing.*

*North Lincoln County/Tobacco Valley Region
Strategic Economic Action Plan*

Action One: *Pick Montana is currently hosting a number of social media marketing classes and is providing a service to businesses to coordinate alternative marketing outlets. Find it Flathead is also incorporating social media into their marketing campaign for their members. Both businesses are sole owned and serve members. ERDP and the Chamber of Commerce will help promote businesses to explore options with both Pick Montana and Find It Flathead.*

Action Two: *ERDP serves Northwest Montana as the Montana Cooperative Development Center, Cooperative Development Specialist. As part of the business incubator program through the Wood Development Center and ERDP's business classes, ERDP will develop a workshop on the pros and cons of Cooperative Marketing and will incorporate the suggestion of shared trade show attendance.*

Action Three: *The Chamber of Commerce and ERDP tourism committee will work on a shop local campaign along with a branding program to let people know that Eureka is open for business. ERDP is working with the Lincoln County High School to create videos for entrepreneurship development and visit Eureka.*

 **GOAL: ALTERNATIVE FUNDING**

The Tobacco Valley is an area that all can agree has struggled to recover from the decline in timber industries. There is almost a sense of loss in culture with the decrease in logging activities which has impacted the Valley's overall economic vitality. Due to that there is a sense of urgency to find alternative ways to fund improvements to municipal and community facilities and needs.

The community overall has embraced the idea of Tourism, with the reservation that there must be a diversification of the overall economy. With the increase in the tourism and recreational trade industries there is opportunities to capture alternative funding for public facilities.

Goal One: *Research and Identify if a Resort Tax and/or Tourism Increment Finance district would provide funding for needed public facilities.*

Action: *The Town of Eureka in partnership with Lincoln County and ERDP will form a committee within or outside of an active organization to look into the possibilities of a Resort Tax and/or Tourism Increment Finance District. This committee will help evaluate the pros and cons, impacts (good and bad) of local residents, determine legal and community steps needed to pursue, and factor if the cost verses return of investments.*

The committee will provide information back to the organizations and agencies involved for public input and discussion.

Objective: *This will determine if there are opportunities to facilitate improvements to public facilities and services through an alternative method of funding through the increase tourism and recreational industries.*

*North Lincoln County/Tobacco Valley Region
Strategic Economic Action Plan*

Other sources of funding were discussed for a variety of programs included some community facilities and youth activities such as a Community Room and Pool. Other ideas that were brought to the table for alternative funding included; possibility of attracting outside investors or development of an investment program to help facilitate job growth and businesses, community fundraising with limitations on community bonding and loans, and though maybe a bit far fetched, well worth to show the optimism of the community “have the community Adopted by Bill Gates!”.

GOAL: RECRETION and TOURISM

The area of the North Lincoln County/Tobacco Valley region is loaded with opportunity for a recreation based industry. The Community members identified a variety of options to expand the overall recreational opportunities for local community uses and to build tourism industry for the area.

One thing that should be noted that during the CEDS planning process two other planning documents were under development. The Kooconusa Scenic By-way plan identifies a variety of recreational opportunities in and around Lincoln County based on the Scenic By-way of Highway 37. The other plan that is in the process of starting is the Lake Kooconusa Management plan that incorporates the US Forest Service, the US Corp of Engineers and Libby Dam Operations, Town of Eureka, Town of Rexford, City of Libby, Lincoln County Commissioners, and public involvement, amongst others. As those plans are released they should be utilized as additional information to the CEDS document.

Goal One: *Expand recreational opportunities for the community members and visitors, which incorporate a variety of uses mainly on the National Forest Service Lands.*

Action One: *A number of community members made reference to the need to create a community swimming pool. The overall consensus was to work with private industry/businesses to facilitate a community swimming pool. ERDP will consult with potential businesses already working towards active lifestyle development to determine if any plans are in process for a community swimming area.*

Action Two: *Facilitate community participation in Forest Service planning that address infrastructure in and around the Forest Service Lands, including Lake Kooconusa and the Ten Lakes area. ERDP will work with the US Forest Service, Town of Eureka, County Commissioner, and other community leaders to help educate the public about involvement in planning processes. The Forest Service is leading a collaboration effort for the Galton project which is a focal point for a number of recreational opportunities including snowmobiling, back country horse riding, mountain biking, hiking, and much more.*

Action Three: *ERDP and the Eureka Area Chamber of Commerce has developed a tourism committee that will work on promotion of the area incorporating comments on needing to create additional marketing venues for businesses. Provide assistance to any*

*North Lincoln County/Tobacco Valley Region
Strategic Economic Action Plan*

potential cooperative based marketing through the Montana Cooperative Development Center and/or assist any marketing companies that are in place in the area, as needed.

Action Four: *The committee will also look at expanding events and/or ways to attract for an all seasonal recreational industry while incorporating any needs such as maintain/plowing for snowmobile access or cross country skiing. The committee will help identify and implement projects to expand the overall recreational opportunities for tourism development. The Committee is mostly private business owners and/or managers within and outside of the tourism industry.*

Action Five: *Expand the connection between youth and outdoors through the Afterschool and Summer Rec programs, and possibly explore creating a Boys and Girls Club in the Valley. This would include identifying and expanding funding sources for the programs and people to volunteer for the outreach. The potential entities discussed was the US Forest Service and the Yaakin Club.*

Objective One: *This will improve the overall facilities and infrastructure to handle increase uses, specifically on areas of high demand such as Lake Koocanusa. The objective is to increase infrastructure for recreation for both visitors and residents.*

Goal Two: *Improve and expand the Communities ability for overnight stays and educate on current opportunities for overnight facilities.*

Action One: *Work on educating the community about the overall capacity of rooms/beds in the area for tourism/visitors. The committee will incorporate and work with businesses to help market their ability for events, and seasonal recreational opportunities.*

Action Two: *Work with current and potential RV site owners, hotels, B&B's, cabins, vacation rentals etc, as needed to assist on improvements and/or expansion.*

Action Three: *Identify camping areas and create a way for visitors to learn about current camping and RV lots.*

Other ideas under Recreation and Tourism were:

- *Have a fully operation Marina on the North end of Lake Koocanusa.*
- *Develop Recreational opportunities for businesses to potential developed including scenic flights, guided tours for fly fishing, rock climbing etc.*
- *Create a cooperative display for the Valley at Glacier National Airport*
- *ERDP is working on developing "Visit Eureka" and "Eureka: Your Place for Your Business" videos to promote tourism and business development*
- *Further utilize and broadcast current publications like the "Go Kootenai" to promote local community support and tourism visitations*
- *Work with the State Tourism Council and Glacier Country to do more promotion of the Tobacco Valley*

GOAL: PUBLIC FACILITIES

Overall, the community members found that the public facilities were well managed and covered essential services. Some key areas of concern was to continue to provide/raise funding to keep the current public facilities useful and maintained.

Goal One: *The community members who participated felt that upgrading the Town Hall was a key to future economic and community development due to the current ascetics and lack of room.*

Action One: *The Town of Eureka will continue to move forward with a design and rehabilitation of the abandoned fire hall on Main Street to move Town municipality offices into. The rehabbed building will also include meeting space and potential house the Chamber's Visitor Information Center.*

Objective: *The Town will improve a blighted area on Mainstreet thus helping with the downtown revitalization, which member of the community pointed out as a need for future economic growth.*

Goal Two: *Develop the Riverside Park in Eureka to expand camping services through full shower and restrooms facilities.*

Action One: *Town of Eureka will adopt a design for the Riverside park that flows into their work on the Town Hall facility.*

Action Two: *Determine funding sources and continue accepting donations through potential fundraising and the use of the park itself*

Action Three: *Determine motoring and upkeep to ensure proper use and maintenance*

Other areas of the community that were discussed but did not develop into specific actions were:

- Improve the Lincoln County Fairgrounds,
- Expand the Town of Rexford areas like the elementary school
- Expand the Rexford Bench which is US Forest Services
- Create a public indoor rodeo arena
- Provide more meeting and possibly resort areas
- Improve and expand parking within Eureka and adjacent areas

GOAL: COMMUNICATIONS

Throughout a number of the planning process, specifically during the Horizons project, community communication was a focal point of frustration for businesses, residents, and visitors alike. The community felt overall that their was limited venues for community information to be shared and relied mostly on mouth to mouth, though a there was a recent rise in a number of residents commenting that they are using social media, mainly facebook, as a way to stay connected.

*North Lincoln County/Tobacco Valley Region
Strategic Economic Action Plan*

Goal One: *Improve community communications by expanding education to community about what is currently available and providing new communication projects to expand availability.*

Action One: *ERDP and the Chamber of Commerce’s join tourism committee are working on developing a series of kiosks that will include monthly breakdown of activities. The committee is also reaching out to business owners to discuss activities and use of the Chamber’s website and calendar of events as well as promote the private venues such as Indian Springs Ranch and Golf’s website and community calendar.*

Action Two: *Build on the momentum of private businesses to create social media outlets to share community information.*

Action Three: *The Town of Eureka is building a website and engaging in social media for direct information sharing.*

Action Four: *Determine if the Montana Dept. of Transportation would allow for large banners to be posted over Mainstreet (US Highway 93) and expand banner ability at Memorial Park through Lincoln County.*

Objective One: *The communities included in this region, specifically the Tobacco Valley area, will have more ways to find out information on community activities. The community organizations will participate and be active in the overall communication sharing via social media, websites, on-site postings, and traditional venues of radio, television, and newspaper.*

One idea that was discussed in length that was not moved into a specific action item due to funding and who would manage it was an electronic reader board. The Town of Eureka continues to explore the option of putting an electronic reader board at the new Town Hall facility in partnership with the Eureka Chamber of Commerce but no decisions were made if that was a goal or not.

✚ GOAL: INFRASTRUCTURE and TRANSPORTATION

The discussions for public infrastructure have been ongoing for a number of years. This section should be read in conjunction with the Town of Eureka’s Strategic Plan and Capital Improvement Plan both updated in 2012 and in the process of a 2013 update. Other documents that outline the public infrastructure need is the County’s Growth Policy plan. Overall, the Town of Eureka has expanded their services and the Town of Rexford is the process of upgrading their water and wastewater facilities as well. However, the main concern from residents that participated was focused on roads.

Goal One: *Work on improving Town of Eureka side streets and County roads to prevent road closures during the spring break-up.*

*North Lincoln County/Tobacco Valley Region
Strategic Economic Action Plan*

Action One: *The Town of Eureka has built in road improvements to their annual Capital Improvement plan and working on prioritizing funding and roads for improvements.*

Action Two: *Discuss with County alternative funding sources to explore if any options exist to improve/upgrade County Roads. Other alternative ideas is a per square inch policy and or rotating road closures to allow for continuation of business.*

Action Three: *Explore alternative funding such as the Resort Tax or the Tourism Increment Financing Districts to determine if infrastructure funding is an option.*

Action Four: *Coordinate the players, including Town, County and Dept. of Transportation to work together to determine prioritized areas and how funding can be allotted to ensure building is completed.*

Goal Two: *Continue the expansion work of the Town of Eureka water and wastewater services to underserved areas specifically to help build economic diversity on the Highway 93 Corridor.*

Other community infrastructure that was discussed was Utilities and medical. Overall the community members were satisfied with both and no priority projects were identified. The North Lincoln County Airport was discussed a number of times regarding the potential of it becoming an international airport. ERDP and the County Airport Board have been in discussion with the US Customs and other agencies to explore this option. Funding is an obstacle but there is a potential of a project to expand the Airport further.

Within this section is a specific discuss regarding transportation for the region. This region is served mainly by rail and truck, with limited air transportation. A portion of this discussion is already highlighted in the Goal: Business and Industry though some comments that were made regarding transportation should be mentioned even though they did not result in an actual goal with action items:

- Expand bike and running paths
- Connect communities through walking and biking trails
- Expand local transportation for elderly and low-income residents
 - Provide better education/outreach on current programs available

GOAL: COMMUNITY SERVICE

Though not directly an economic development goal, community services are essential to the overall development of a diverse economy. The community members focused on the following areas though there were limited specific goals and action items identified.

Goal One: *Build Awareness of services available through educational outreach with community organizations.*

*North Lincoln County/Tobacco Valley Region
Strategic Economic Action Plan*

Action One: *The Tobacco Valley Community Development Council to begin hosting the All Organization meetings again*

Action Two: *Work with the local Justice System to incorporate community services into the “sentences”*

Action Three: *Build on the success of the “Eureka Spruce Up Day” and organize more community wide clean up days that would actually go and help private landowners do work on their lands thus improve overall community feel. Work with private businesses to determine if donation of materials (paint, nails etc) could be provided.*

Action Four: *Work with the Schools Community Day to see if further connection could be made between the Youth and Community through expanding what community groups participate.*

Even though this section did not have a number of specific goals and actions developed, there was a lot of information provided and captured below on what the community felt were needs.

- There were a number of comments that addressed the need to attract more doctors to the area and that amenities in the community were lacking to attract and retain doctors
- There is a need for pre-school services, specifically for low income families
- The community responded that there was a need for an outreach on chemical dependency. This was shared with the local chemical dependency agency that serves the region.
- An overwhelming number of people throughout the planning processes discussed the need for childcare options, as well as early childhood development programs. At the time of this document, a group of agencies and organizations are working on creating child care/pre-school options.
- There were comments and concerns on urgent care facilities and the need to have a 24-hour urgent care facility.
- Another service that was discussed that is currently being provided was credit counseling and domestic violence prevention/counseling. This was shared with the Lincoln County Crisis Center. Also, the comments regarding credit counseling was shared with local financial institutions as well as the Northwest Community Assistance Program.
- A number of concerns were noted regarding underage drinking. At the time of this document a new organization has emerged called Lincoln County United for Youth Coalition that is addressing this concern.
- Emergency preparedness and awareness was also brought up by a variety of members that participated. The Tobacco Valley Community Development Council is discussing this with the Lincoln County Emergency Planning Department along with the Town of Eureka to educate and coordinate emergency planning for the region.

 **GOAL: COMMUNITY CAPACITY**

During this planning process there was a variety of comments related to the concern of community leadership and volunteerism. Though, not directly related to the economic

*North Lincoln County/Tobacco Valley Region
Strategic Economic Action Plan*

development strategies it is important to note the comments and discussions regarding community capacity. The two key comments that were mentioned over and over were:

One, the need to get youth engaged and facilitates the transition between generations in community leadership. This would include the concern that the youth of the area do not have positive reinforcement and safe places to “hang out”. There is an opportunity to create youth related businesses, which is being capitalized by some entrepreneurs in the area.

And second, there is a need to expand volunteerism and community leadership amongst more members of the community, and that an attraction to engage new volunteers is needed.

Other comments made included a concern for homeless, a need to develop a community all season center/pavilion, build a community swimming pool and youth center, and connect the Lincoln County Fairgrounds to the Town of Eureka’s utilities. No specifics actions or goals were developed for these comments beyond the fairgrounds connection. The County, Fair Board, Town of Eureka and ERDP, along with the US Forest Service and private businesses that are along the route are in discussion on expanding the Town’s water and wastewater services to the Fairgrounds.

 **GOAL: HOUSING**

ERDP is limited in resources and has not been able to facilitate a lot of activity on Housing. A handful of dedicated volunteers worked on creating a Community Land Trust but struggled to gain community support. The needs for housing are still needed, and are further addressed in the Lincoln County Growth Policy Plan, which should be read in conjunction to this section. Some key areas of concern that was derived from the planning process were:

- Senior Housing: There is limited areas of housing for Senior residents to downgrade prior to moving into assisted living facilities
- Workforce Housing is limited due to first time homes are still providing a service to the senior/aging population
- A significant need for a group home exists in the region and there is a strong group of volunteers working on this project.
- There is a need to provide housing educational outreach to retain homeownership and/or educate on buying homes/first time home buyers.
- There is a lack of affordable and quality apartments/rentals
- Concern was brought up about existing mobile homes and lack of infrastructure

Overall, there is a continued struggle on how to address housing needs in the region. The Northwest Montana Community Assistance Program serves the region, but limited activity has occurred in the area from that program. ERDP has a certified Housing Financing Professional on staff to assistance developers and/or housing organizations to obtain funding and program assistance but no activity has occurred. Sunburst Foundation has recently expanded to provide mental health services and is exploring the idea of cooperative housing for mentally disabled and potential other demographics that need housing. The Happy Hearts Thrift Store was developed

*North Lincoln County/Tobacco Valley Region
Strategic Economic Action Plan*

by the local Group Home organization to help raise funds to build a group home facility and potentially expand into other venues for the disabled residents in the Valley.

Many comments were received that due to the recent recession of the Country and impacts on the region that the need that was identified in 2008 has been decreased. Due to these conditions, no housing projects were identified as a priority for this planning document. However, all of the recently mentioned efforts are supported through the CEDS document and can be incorporated in the long term planning of the Tobacco Valley and Lincoln County.

 **GOAL: ARTS AND CULTURE**

Artists practicing in all venues are abundant in the Tobacco Valley. The Valley has a strong potential to expand into an artistic based industry with the current momentum that is being observed on Mainstreet. A number of the recent businesses are based on local talent including wood work, furniture, painting, photography, sculpture, and so much more. It was surprising that Arts and Culture did not receive more attention in the planning process. The only specific item that was brought up in the meetings was the potential to expand on the historical value of the area incorporating Native American culture with the well utilized Historical Village. One idea was to work with the Native America Tribes within the area to host an art festival with a Pow-Wow but not specific organization was identified to do it.

The Sunburst Foundation is working with the Chamber of Commerce to expand musician and artist outreach through the Farmers Market as well as thru the Sunbursts annual concert series. Sunburst also hosts a variety of plays, like Shakespeare in the Park and the Missoula Children's Theater. These types of activities add to the evening amenities that were identified as a need in the Valley. The Sunburst Director, Rita Collins, did provide a written comment during the Draft Comment Period as an individual and provided a good insight to the Arts and Cultural section. Her comment specific to the Arts and Cultural section follows;

Arts and Culture

I would like to say we just need to find markets and income for the amazing artists and musicians in the valley. But I am not sure what this would look like to be viable. There have been various attempts to set up artists co-op galleries in town. Often the artists are not willing to put in time to keep them open. There are two open air markets in the summer (Riverside Park and Indian Springs) with very few artists and crafts people showing their work. There are a number of skilled artists and crafts people who seem to earn income from selling their work outside the valley. Maybe we need to have seminars that help artists and crafts people identify potential markets and how to do effective marketing. The Montana Arts Council has a great program that does this.

Another aspect of this is how arts are (not) valued in the community at large. Despite numerous studies that show how valuable the arts are for our children and for local economies, there is extremely limited exposure to the arts for students in our schools, in our local paper or through the Chamber. Yet obviously people support the arts privately (the funds raised to build the high

*North Lincoln County/Tobacco Valley Region
Strategic Economic Action Plan*

school auditorium or the fact that Shakespeare in the Park has been coming to Eureka for decades). Sunburst and the Creative Arts Center (both non profits) have been around for about 20 years offering classes (ballet, yoga, computer skills, painting, etc), concerts, recitals, plays and other cultural events.

It is important to note that a number of the businesses on Dewey Avenue/Main Street Eureka focuses on local artists and are avenues for artists to reach markets. The Chamber of Commerce at one time was hosting the “home Based Business Expo” as a way for artists and other home based businesses to become more acquainted with the community and vice versa. Unfortunately, the Expo was not done in 2012 and it is unsure if it will be a continued event or not. The Expo received little community participation even when the Expo itself was full.

During the process of answering the series of questions, as noted in one of the earlier sections, the other ideas that were discussed included Artist Retreats, Cooperatives, and Marketing venues. The community will need to continue to explore concepts in order to continue the building on the success and to capture the full potential that Arts and Cultural venues could have on the overall economy.

 **GOAL: AGRICULTURE**

The Tobacco Valley has a unique opportunity to build a thriving agricultural based economy. The Valley itself is considered the banana belt of Montana with longer growing season and more mild climates. There are a number of agricultural based businesses throughout the Valley. During the public meeting in Feb. 2013, Debe Gwynn, owner of Glacier Peak Holistics (a start up business utilizing the Tobacco Valley Industrial District) brought to the forefront the possibility of expanding agricultural production in the community. Now, under ERDP’s and Glacier Peak Holistics leadership, a small group of agricultural producers are meeting to discuss future growth, business networking, product development, and marketing. The goal of this section is to expand the Valley’s potential to create business opportunities for locally grown food, product and services in the agricultural field along with developing a supporting role for the tourism industry with Agricultural tours. Randy McIntyre, owner of Elk Camp Art Gallery on Mainstreet is already working with Glacier Country to bring in an agricultural tour for the summer of 2014. ERDP and Glacier Peak Holistics has had meeting with the Dept. of Agricultural Director Ron De’Young and is coordinating a visit from the Bureau Chief of the Dept. of Agriculture’s Growth through Ag program. The potential for economic development through agricultural is vast in the Tobacco Valley.

Goal One: *Develop a network of Agricultural producers in the Valley to work together for promotions and product development.*

Action One: *Build on the growth of the local Farmers Market, managed by the Eureka Area Chamber of Commerce as a market for local foods and producers to sale their agricultural based products. This would include incorporating more outreach to residents and visitors alike to shop local as well as sale local.*

*North Lincoln County/Tobacco Valley Region
Strategic Economic Action Plan*

Action Two: *Work with State and Regional programs to promote Agri-tours in the Valley as the farms and ranches continue to grow.*

Action Three: *Coordinate meeting for agricultural producers to discuss ideas and concepts that include cross marketing, utilizing each other products, and building support for the businesses.*

Action Four: *Continue working with the Lincoln County Fair Board to explore the potential of building a commercial incubator kitchen in partnership with ERDP to build local food based manufacturing.*

Community and Private Sector Participation

This section discusses the relationship between the community in general and the private sector in the development and implementation of the CEDS.

Beginning in 2010 when Eureka participated in the State-wide Horizon's program, information was being gathered for the CEDS document. A number of input sessions were held in the form of community/public meetings. Each community session was facilitated by an experienced facilitator with a background in community and economic development. In addition many organizations, including the Eureka Chamber of Commerce, Tobacco Valley Community Development Council, and the Tobacco Valley Industrial District, local governments, and business leaders provided detailed input. There were avenues for citizens input through electronic mail, regular mail, phone, and individual conversations to be considered for inclusion into the plan.

For More information Contact:

Eureka Rural Development Partners
PO Box 1951; 189 Business Park Road
Eureka, MT 59917
406-297-7374
www.eurekardp.net
Email: tracy@eurekardp.net

