

**Community
Action Plan**

RECREATION ECONOMY
for
RURAL COMMUNITIES

**Thompson Falls,
Montana**

October 2020



**Northern Border
Regional Commission**



CONTACT INFORMATION

Thompson Falls, Montana

October 2020

For more information about RERC, please visit:
<https://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/recreation-economy-rural-communities>

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(bottom)
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COMMUNITY STORY



Downtown Thompson Falls, situated on the Clark Fork River

Thompson Falls is a small town of 1,231 residents located in rural Sanders County in Western Montana. The town is situated along the Clark Fork River in a valley surrounded by the dramatic mountain peaks of the Lolo National Forest. The first European settlers arrived in 1809 to trade animal furs. David Thompson, founder of the North West Company, established a trading post near the present-day site of the town that would later bear his name. The discovery of gold in the Coeur d'Alene mountains West of Thompson Falls brought more settlers to the area. The Northern Pacific railroad built tracks through the Clark Fork valley in 1881 to support gold prospecting and mining. A railroad station was eventually built in Thompson Falls which sparked the development of the town. In 1905, Sanders County was formed after separating from Missoula County and Thompson Falls was designated as the county seat. A dam was

constructed on the Clark Fork River at Thompson Falls in 1912. Around this time, bridges spanning the river were constructed in the town, further solidifying Thompson Falls' status as a center for commerce. Logging timber became the predominant industry in the region with mills and other support facilities located in Thompson Falls.

Although timber was Thompson Falls' dominant industry for many years, the industry has waned, contributing to an overall economic decline of the town. The hydroelectric dams are significant contributors to local tax revenues and create reservoirs that provide opportunities for the region's growing tourism industry.

Thompson Falls is connected to the region by State Highway 200 which is the town's Main Street. This street is home to historic buildings, restaurants, cafes, and a brewery. The railroad tracks pass through town parallel to Main Street and separate the Main Street business district from the rest of the town to the north. Although the railroad was a key factor in establishing the town, the town is no longer served by passenger trains.

Sanders County, roughly the geographic size of Delaware, is home to 11,521 residents, 1,231 of whom live in Thompson Falls. Five percent of town residents identify as Hispanic or Latino. The median household income in the town is \$30,296 with approximately 25% of residents living below the federal poverty level. The decline of the timber industry

STEERING COMMITTEE

Ray Brown, Executive Director, Sanders County Community Development Corporation

Heather Berman, Recreation and Range Staff, USDA Forest Service—Lolo National Forest, Superior and Plains/Thompson Falls Ranger Districts

Carol Brooker, Commissioner, Sanders County; Thompson Falls Community Trails

Katherine Maudrone, City Council Member, City of Thompson Falls

Daniel Moore, Owner, Black Bear Inn; City of Thompson Falls Planning Board; Thompson Falls Chamber of Commerce; Thompson Falls Main Street

Zach Whipple-Kilmer, Owner, Limberlost Brewery; Cube Iron Cataract Coalition; Eastern Sanders Forest Collaborative

Figure 1: Local Steering Committee

has negatively impacted local prosperity but the Thompson Falls and Sanders County communities are coming together to diversify the local economy and take advantage of the region's plentiful natural assets.

The Thompson Falls Community Trails program is a non-profit organization devoted to managing and promoting trails for non-motorized use. These trails include the Mule Pasture Loop, Island Park Trail, Powerhouse Loop Trail, and the State Park Trail. The hydroelectric facility is composed of four dams spanning the Clark Fork River with Island Park located on an island in the middle. Visitors to Island Park access the island via a walking bridge from Thompson Falls. The island provides walking paths with dramatic views of the river, dams, and reservoir. The High Bridge connects the island to the south side of the river and is a favorite destination of residents and visitors alike.



Thompson Falls High Bridge

In the mountains north of Thompson Falls lies an expansive wilderness area within the Lolo National Forest. The Cube Iron Cataract Coalition is a local organization dedicated to building community awareness of recreation opportunities in the wilderness areas. The coalition maintains some trails in the wilderness and publishes maps and other marketing materials to encourage locals and visitors to get out and enjoy nature.



Thompson Falls Main Street

The Thompson Falls Main Street (TFMS) initiative is a public-private partnership between community members, businesses, and local governments united by a goal of revitalizing the historic town center while strengthening the local economy by connecting the town to the region's abundant recreational opportunities. TFMS is an all-volunteer organization that creates community connections to support a variety of projects that are guided by the town's 2015 downtown master plan. Projects include community branding, repurposing of historic buildings, and streetscape improvements.

These community organizations have formed strong regional connections and made progress in diversifying the local economy, improving quality of life, and expanding the town's recreation-oriented opportunities. So far, most of these efforts have been undertaken by local volunteer organizations. TFMS and other local partners applied for planning assistance through the Recreation Economy for Rural Communities (RERC) program, supported by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the USDA Forest Service, and the Northern Border Regional Commission, to enhance these volunteer efforts and build local capacity to carry out the work of establishing Thompson Falls as a destination for outdoor recreation and tourism.

Partner organizations in Thompson Falls formed a local steering committee for the Recreation Economy for Rural Communities project (see Figure 1) and established several goals for enhancing the region's recreation economy and enhancing downtown revitalization, including identifying and building partnerships for marketing the town as a recreation economy, creating an inventory of recreation areas in the region, and creating a wayfinding plan that connects local businesses and recreation assets in the greater Thompson Falls area.

Thompson Falls was also selected as one of two RERC communities to receive additional support from EPA's Office of Research and Development. Through this project, the local Steering Committee received quantitative and geospatial data on visitation to key sites in Thompson Falls, including Flatiron, Power Park, Thompson Falls State Park, Thompson Pass, Island Park, and Main Street. The data indicated the origins of visitors, the annual distribution of visits, and other information about visitation. This was generated by exploring visitation levels and visitor origin information provided by commercially-available human mobility datasets derived from cellular device locations. EPA has been working with human-mobility datasets as an instrument to understand how people interact with nature and how they are affected by environmental policy. EPA researchers presented their preliminary findings to the Steering Committee during a virtual pre-workshop session in July 2020. Details are available in the full data summary provided to the community by EPA's Office of Research and Development.

PLANNING ASSISTANCE TEAM

Lad Barney, USDA Rural Development

Heather Berman, USDA Forest Service

Stephanie Bertaina, U.S. EPA Office of Community Revitalization

Diane Conradi, Montana Access Project/Whitefish Legacy Partners

Nate Currie, USDA Rural Development

Amanda Egan, USDA Forest Service

Laura Farris, U.S. EPA Region 8

Erin Farris-Olsen, Heart of the Rockies Initiative

Jamie Hackbarth, U.S. Economic Development Administration

Nausheen Iqbal, USDA Forest Service

Jamie Kirby, Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation

Patsy McEntee, National Park Service

Vonda McGarvey, USDA Rural Development

Nate Merrill, U.S. EPA Office of Research and Development

Tim O'Connell, USDA Rural Development

Alexis Rourk, U.S. EPA Office of Community Revitalization

Rachel Schmidt, Montana Governor's Office of Economic Development

Juli Thurston, Montana State University Extension Service

Wei-Lun Tsai, U.S. EPA Office of Research and Development

Megan McConville, EPR, PC (Facilitator)

Meryl Harrell, Meryl Harrell LLC (Facilitator)

Figure 2: Several federal, state, and nonprofit partners joined consultants to comprise the planning assistance team.

ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

The planning assistance engagement process for Recreation Economy for Rural Communities has three phases of plan, convene, and act, illustrated in Figure 3. The **plan** phase consists of three preparation conference calls with the local steering committee and the planning assistance team to clarify goals and arrange workshop logistics. The **convene** phase includes the effort’s capstone event—a workshop with the community. The **act** phase includes three follow up conference calls to finalize the community action plan and strategize on how to implement the plan and maintain momentum generated during the workshop. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the community workshop was held using a virtual platform rather than an in-person event. Six virtual workshop sessions took place over three days from October 14-16, 2020 and activities during those days are described below. Workshop exercise results are summarized in **Appendix A** and a list of workshop attendees is provided in **Appendix B**.



Figure 3: Planning Assistance Process Diagram

VISION AND VALUES SESSION ONE

Over 25 participants convened virtually for the first session of the workshop on the evening of October 14, 2020. Each participant was asked to introduce themselves and share three words summarizing what excites them most about Thompson Falls or outdoor recreation. Their responses were captured and turned into a word cloud (Figure 4). Following introductions, Stephanie Bertaina of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency provided a brief overview of the RERC program purpose and process. Although a physical community tour was not possible, Ray Brown, Executive Director of the Sanders County Community Development Corporation, provided the community context and background for Thompson Falls' motivation to apply to the RERC planning assistance program through a virtual tour of regional highlights.



Fishing spot on the Thompson River



Figure 4: Three words describing what excites you most about Thompson Falls or outdoor recreation.

COMMUNITY CONTEXT

Ray Brown provided a virtual tour of Thompson Falls’ assets to orient the planning assistance team, federal and state agency partners, and workshop attendees to the key challenges and opportunities that could be addressed by the workshop.

Ray began by describing regional challenges including the high poverty rate, aging population, outmigration of young people, very rural and spread-out geography, and the decline of the timber industry which long served as the area’s economic base. He then segued into the many opportunities that currently exist, including the momentum generated by local organizations such as Sanders County Community Development Corporation and Thompson Falls Main Street. He highlighted Ainsworth Park as a particular success story and engine of revitalization in the downtown. Ray also pointed to the trail system, including the Mule Pasture Trail, Island Park Trail, and the newly developed River Trail, as a tremendous asset and catalyst for further growth.

Ray also identified the Clark Fork River and Thompson Rivers as assets, used by residents and visitors for boating, fishing, kayaking, and more, and also described other world-class fishing spots such as Finley Flats. The hydroelectric dam and High Bridge are also popular destinations for viewing the area’s natural beauty. Also along the river are many sandy beaches enjoyed by locals.

Additionally, he pointed out that Thompson Falls’ access to wild places where one can find solitude is unparalleled. This includes Cube Iron, the Cabinet Wilderness, and Scotchman Peaks. The community is also surrounded by scenic plains and ranchlands.

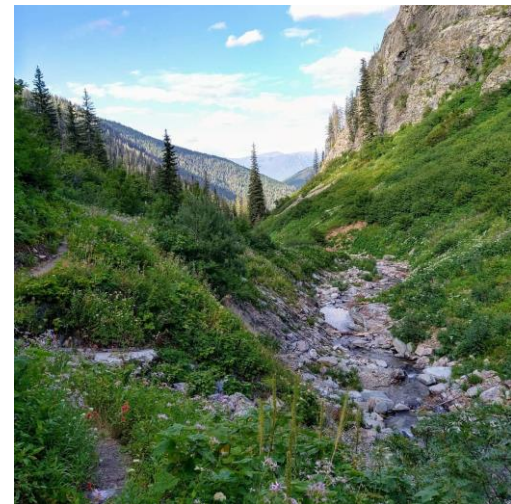
Ray also described the strong sense of community and the residents’ engagement in moving the town forward. He highlighted trail building efforts, Project Ascent which takes youth on wilderness treks, the football team and fan base, and community events such as the Christmas parade, Christmas on Main Street, and Huckleberry Festival. He concluded by saying that Thompson Falls is far from being a dying former timber town or a pass-through on the way to Glacier—it’s a strong, vibrant community where people can stop, stay, and make their homes.



View from river near downtown



Mule Pasture Trail System



Scotchman Peaks

RECREATION ECONOMY

The planning assistance team provided an overview of opportunities and benefits related to the recreation economy. Presentations detailed how supporting and growing the outdoor recreation economy can be part of a community's overall economic development strategy and can be mutually supportive of other economic development efforts. Outlining how the recreation economy benefits from a comprehensive approach that connects across sectors, the planning assistance team discussed three areas of focus to build the recreation economy: 1) enhancing access to outdoor recreation, 2) revitalizing main streets, and 3) ensuring that equity is an intentional part of the conversation. The team spoke to the growing interest and importance of the outdoor recreation economy both nationally and in Montana, and shared state and regional data demonstrating outdoor recreation as an economic driver (Figure 5). Key findings from the EPA Office of Research and Development analysis of visitation data were also highlighted. Participants were asked to share brief descriptions of what outdoor recreation means or looks like to them. Their responses are shown in the word cloud in Figure 6.



Figure 5: Recreation Economy in Montana. Credit: <https://outdoorindustry.org/state/montana>



Figure 6: What does outdoor recreation mean/look like to you?

WORKSHOP GOALS

A primary purpose of session one was to hear from workshop participants about their vision for growing the area's recreation economy and revitalizing downtown Thompson Falls. The planning assistance team introduced the draft workshop goals which were formulated by the local steering committee in conference calls leading up to the workshop. In later sessions, the participants discussed and approved the goals, and also voted for the top three most important to be detailed through the action planning process. Goals 1, 2, and 3 were selected. While actions were brainstormed for all five goals, detailed action planning was only conducted for the top three.

1. Asset inventory: Identify high-priority assets for promotion, connection, and wayfinding signage.

2. Physical connections: Identify needs for connective infrastructure among recreation assets and downtown.

3. Regional promotion: Identify partners, resources, and opportunities to promote regional assets.

4. Business and workforce development: Grow businesses and train the workforce for recreation, conservation, and other forest-related opportunities.

5. Youth engagement: Expand outdoor recreation and stewardship activities for local kids.

To help define and describe the community's vision and values related to the outdoor recreation economy, participants brainstormed through two brief exercises. First, they used the chat function to complete this sentence: "I believe Thompson Falls..." Next, the planning assistance team asked participants to dream about something good that could happen in Thompson Falls related to outdoor recreation and main street revitalization, and to work in small groups to draft aspirational headlines for 3-5 years from now. Some of the responses from these two exercises are shown in Figure 7.

PEER INSPIRATION

To close the first workshop session, three leaders from across Montana presented case studies, examples, lessons learned, and potential resources to support outdoor recreation, economic development, and community vitality.

Diane Conradi, the Founder and CEO of the Montana Access Project and Co-Founder of the Whitefish Legacy Partners, shared her experience developing the Whitefish Trail. The trail is a regional project established in 2010 to develop a 55+ mile recreational trail system encircling the community of Whitefish and Whitefish Lake. Diane highlighted the strong partnerships that were necessary to make the project work and pointed to keys to success, such as easements on private land, community leadership, and donor support. She also discussed the trail's economic impact, which includes \$6.4 million in annual consumer spending and 68 jobs.

Erin Farris-Olsen, the Rural Development Director of the Heart of the Rockies Initiative, shared her work exploring how conservation partners can bring added support for rural community development with other communities in Montana, including Lincoln, Troy, and Choteau. She highlighted the effort in Lincoln, which is building on the community's Envision Lincoln work to increase connectivity through its local trails plan and increase recreational tourism. Erin discussed how the community is using a Rural Business Development Grant from USDA Rural Development to conduct some of their planning and implementation.

Jono McKinney, the President and CEO of the Montana Conservation Corps, highlighted the mission and programs of the MCC, which builds the capacity of teens and young adults through leadership development, teamwork, civic engagement, and work-skills training, combined with direct service to lands and communities. The Corps has deployed youth crews to a number of National Forests throughout Montana.

MAKING HEADLINES

- *"Wilderness Experiences Abound in Thompson Falls Area"*
- *"A Revitalized Thompson Falls Brings Residents Home"*
- *"Thompson Falls Becomes A Year-Round Recreation Destination"*
- *"Outdoor Recreation Draws Growth and Businesses Explode in Thompson Falls"*
- *"Strong Champions Help the Community Rally Behind Wilderness Designations in Thompson Falls Area -- A Success!"*
- *"From Timber Town to Recreation: Thompson Falls Pivots to Keep Community Sustainable and Vibrant"*
- *"Thompson Falls . . . the New Hot Spot for Outdoor Recreation in Western Montana!"*

I BELIEVE THOMPSON FALLS

*...is full of forward-looking good energy today.
...is Montana's best kept secret!
...has great potential as an outdoor recreation destination.
...should be the "hub" of the outdoor recreation economy for the lower Clark Fork Valley.
...is the most beautiful place to be.
...is a charming small town that serves as a gateway to Montana's natural wonders.
...has young people that would love to stick around with rewarding jobs.*

Figure 7: Results of the visioning exercises

ASSET MAPPING & ASSESSMENT SESSION TWO

On the morning of October 15, 2020, participants reconvened for the second session of the virtual workshop. The purpose of this session was to begin to identify opportunities through small group exercises focused on asset mapping and asset assessment. The goal was for each group to have the time to exchange ideas on topics of interest to prepare for the action brainstorming in the next session. Two breakout groups were formed with one group working on a Social Pinpoint Asset Mapping exercise and one group working on an itinerary planning exercise.

SOCIAL PINPOINT MAPPING

One group worked with a shared online mapping tool called Social Pinpoint to place virtual pins on a map of Thompson Falls and the surrounding region identifying favorite places, outdoor recreation assets, community assets, areas needing improvement, opportunities and big ideas, and the location of partners or organizations. The interactive RERC Thompson Falls map can be viewed here:

<https://eprpc.mysocialpinpoint.com/rerc-thompsonfalls/> This website (Figure 8) will remain open for comment and input by the community until the end of March 2021. A summary of the content generated as of December 2020 is available in Appendix A.

ITINERARY PLANNING

The other breakout group worked with the facilitation team to create itineraries for potential outdoor recreation-centered trips to Thompson Falls. Working in a shared document, groups identified several types of potential visitors and developed lists of potential destinations that might attract them, which were put together into one and two-day itineraries. The purpose of this exercise was to identify assets and strengths to promote, as well as gaps that need filling in order to increase visitation to the area and grow the recreation economy. The outputs of this exercise are summarized in Appendix A. A sample itinerary is included in Figure 9. Additional work on itinerary planning may benefit from review of EPA visitation data, which indicates that for locations and time periods selected by the local steering committee, more than 50% of the visitors travel less than 20 miles to most of the selected sites, and three sites attract visitors from further away. Approximately 75%, 70%, and 90% of visitors travelled more than 20 miles to visit the Main Street area, the Thompson River, and Thompson Pass, respectively. Details are available in the full data summary provided to the community by EPA’s Office of Research and Development.

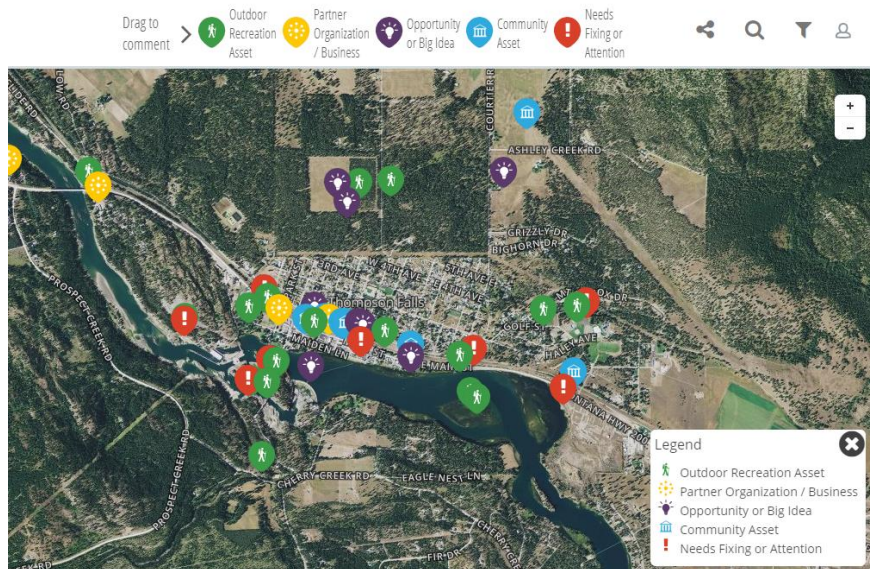


Figure 8: Thompson Falls Social Pinpoint Map can be viewed at <https://eprpc.mysocialpinpoint.com/rerc-thompsonfalls/#/>. A map and legend as of December 2020 is available in Appendix A.

ITINERARY A: (Heather) A Great Thompson Falls Weekend

DAY 1	Activity	Location/destination	Supplies and services needed, source	Transportation/route to next stop
	Camping in the Fall	Fishtrap Campground	Gear and Food - Self provided	Drive themselves
	Hike	Fishtrap Lake Trail	None	Located next to campground
	Fish	Fishtrap Lake	Small boat, self provided or rent in town. No current service provided at this time.	Self provided trailer or a truck and small boat that doesn't need a trailer.

DAY 2	Activity	Location/destination	Supplies and services needed, source	Transportation/route to next stop
	Driving Tour to see fall colors before traveling home.	Several routes available	Full tank of gas before leaving town.	Return to T Falls.

Figure 9: Sample itinerary; a complete set of exercise results are in Appendix A.

ACTION PLANNING

The action planning process during the workshop consisted of four phases of work, each phase a virtual working session. Below is a summary of this process and outcomes at the Thompson Falls workshop. Overall, group participation by the community was very thoughtful with productive conversations and learning, and the workshop managed to maintain a good level of energy throughout. Below is a group picture from the Zoom meeting that is emblematic of the participation and energy.



Group photo from the Zoom meeting

ACTION BRAINSTORMING SESSION THREE

Later in the morning of October 15, 2020, participants reconvened for session three of the virtual workshop to begin action brainstorming. The purpose of this session was to get participants thinking about how they can achieve their goals. Participants were instructed to think of actions that in the near to medium term (within two years) could be implemented to advance a goal. Using a shared document, each participant was given time to work independently to brainstorm and type in actions that would support each of the five draft workshop goals. Once completed, the facilitation team reviewed the posted actions from each participant, noting areas of overlap and asking for clarification or additional feedback from attendees. At the conclusion of session three, participants discussed the five draft goals and narrowed them down to three (Goals 1, 2, and 3) to focus on during the upcoming action planning sessions.

Between session three and session four, the planning assistance team organized each of the brainstormed actions into themes, looked for similar actions to combine, and inputted the actions into a voting form. Participants were instructed to vote for their priority actions, being allocated 8 votes to assign to the actions of their choice. In the voting form, they chose their priorities from all of the brainstormed actions. The results of all of the voting was then discussed in session four.

Your Name Here

Goal ___ Type an action here.	Goal ___ Type an action here.	Goal ___ Type an action here.
Your Name Here	Your Name Here	Your Name Here
Goal ___ Type an action here.	Goal ___ Type an action here.	Goal ___ Type an action here.
Your Name Here	Your Name Here	Your Name Here

Action Brainstorming Instructions

Begin with a verb, be specific, think near- to medium-term (within 2 years); Which Goal does it help advance a goal (write the number in the box). Please write a complete sentence. Consider actions that you could help with. Keep one action per box. You don't have to write six actions, just write what you want to. Feel free to describe as much of the action as you need in the text box.

- Asset inventory:** Identify high-priority assets for promotion, connection, and wayfinding signage.
- Physical connections:** Identify needs for connective infrastructure among recreation assets and downtown.
- Regional promotion:** Identify partners, resources, and opportunities to promote regional assets.
- Business and workforce development:** Grow businesses and train the workforce for recreation, conservation, and other forest-related opportunities.
- Youth engagement:** Expand outdoor recreation and stewardship activities for local kids.

Figure 10: Example of an action brainstorming slide where every participant had their own slide in a shared Google Slides document, and wrote a set of actions to support one or more workshop goals

ACTION PRIORITIZATION SESSION FOUR

After providing a break for participants to reflect on and vote for their priority actions, participants joined the fourth session of the virtual workshop on the afternoon of October 15, 2020. The purpose of this session was to discuss as a group what actions are a priority to get things done for each goal. At the start of the session, the facilitation team allowed any remaining participants who hadn't yet voted to select their highest priority actions while state and federal agency partners introduced their roles in supporting the recreation economy.

Once completed, the facilitation team reviewed the actions with the most votes with the participants. The facilitation team worked with workshop participants to confirm priorities based on those votes and to select actions to move forward in the

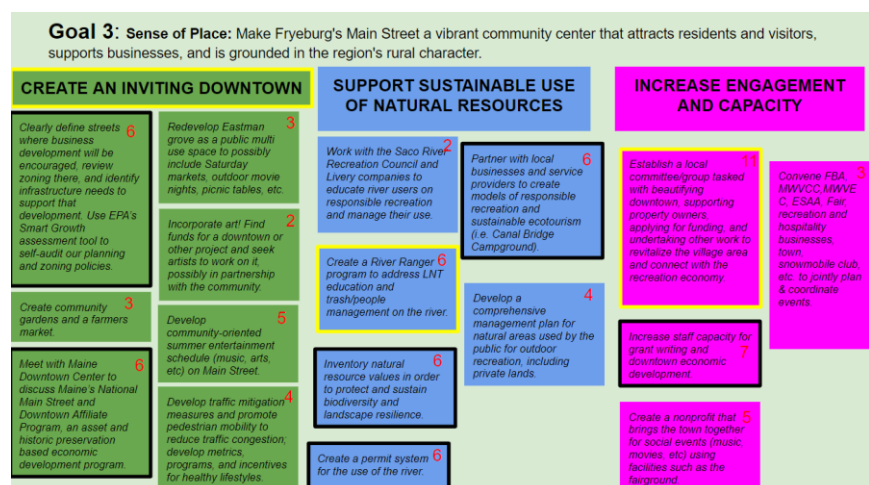


Figure 11: Goal 3 Priority Actions – number of votes are in red. A complete set of the brainstormed actions is in Appendix A.

planning process. The actions ranked for Goal 3 are shown in Figure 11, with the full transcript of actions and ranks collected in Appendix A.

ACTION PLANNING SESSION FIVE

The final phase of the action planning process culminated on the morning of October 16, 2020 with an action detailing session. Participants worked in small groups assigned to each goal. These working groups assessed the prioritization voting and fleshed out the details of the top actions for each goal, such as importance, timeframe, lead role, etc. For each goal, three to four priority actions were detailed during the allotted time. Each group prepared to report on their actions for the final session.

WORKSHOP CLOSE SESSION SIX

Participants joined the sixth and final session of the virtual workshop later in the morning of October 16, 2020. This final session was all about making it happen. Each of the session five working groups presented the results of their action detailing session. The working group members asked other workshop participants to provide feedback and help fill in gaps, and together they all discussed next steps. The action plan tables that resulted from this discussion provide the detail for how to accomplish each action for each goal. At the close of the workshop, the facilitation team asked each participant to offer something to advance the action plan and to ask for something that they hope and/or expect from the process moving forward. Below is a list of those offers and asks that can be used to support implementation of the action plan, noting the interest of volunteers.

OFFERS

Katie Cox: Use Kaniksu Land Trust as a resource.

Ray Brown: Continue to play role as a hub.

Carol Brooker: Work with a group to hire someone to lead us into the future. We need to keep the momentum going.

Rob Christensen: Connection between these action groups and the school. Also any connection between our projects and youth outdoor education.

Jamie Kirby: Ideas, resources (financial too!), technical assistance and analysis for urban forests and urban ecology, partner connections, former Thompson Falls resident.

Andrea Christensen: I would like to provide a link to Project ASCENT and the Chamber of Commerce.

Daniel Moore: Goodwill, energy, 2-4 hours a month of personal effort. Physical assets and infrastructure.

Diane Conradi: Support, connection to resources, thinking partner, informal and formal advice on many aspects of successful frontcountry recreation projects.

Phil Hough: I can help with regional connections.

Steph Bertaina: To help connect to federal partners.

Meryl Harrell: Available to discuss ideas, and help connect to others in MT thinking about these ideas in addition to supporting the RERC process.

Megan McConville: To continue to support you all as we further develop and refine your action plan.

ASKS

Katie Cox: Don't be shy.

Ray Brown: Patience.

Jamie Kirby: Follow up meetings and more work like this, chance to engage with the larger community.

Andrea Christensen: I hope to be able to find resources for the projects that Project ASCENT and the Chamber of Commerce have to help improve the community!

Daniel Moore: Join me.

Diane Conradi: Connect and share lessons learned with other rural, underserved communities. Plug into mtaccessproject.com.

Phil Hough: Think big.

Meryl Harrell: Ask is for those with resources, ideas, great examples to continue to share the knowledge with the group!

Megan McConville: Keep up the hard work and pride in your community! It will pay off.

COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN | Thompson Falls

Here are the final goals and actions developed through Thompson Falls' Recreation Economy for Rural Communities action planning process.

Goal 1 – Asset inventory: Identify high-priority assets for promotion, connection, and wayfinding signage.

- *Action 1.1 – Expand the network of signage and kiosks highlighting recreation opportunities and other assets inside and outside of town.*
- *Action 1.2 – Create and publish a map of Thompson Falls highlighting all recreation opportunities in and adjacent to town.*
- *Action 1.3 – Create a public-private partnership group to coordinate efforts around recreation economy development and to leverage available funding to implement projects in this plan, including Great American Outdoors Act funding*
- *Action 1.4 – Convene a public launch event to publicize the RERC process and seek input on goals and actions.*

Goal 2 – Physical connections: Identify needs for connective infrastructure among recreation assets and downtown.

- *Action 2.1 – Based on existing plans and studies, identify the specific next steps needed to make Main Street safer and more attractive for pedestrians and cyclists.*
- *Action 2.2 – Physically connect the Mule Pasture trails to the high school.*
- *Action 2.3 – Gauge community support for the community center at the high school.*
- *Action 2.4 – Develop an information hub and community space on one of the vacant lots on Main Street.*

Goal 3 – Regional promotion: Identify partners, resources, and opportunities to promote regional assets.

- *Action 3.1 – Develop a Destination Marketing Strategy for the Thompson Falls area.*
- *Action 3.2 – Create a County-level Recreation and Tourism Coordinator position with a focus on supporting Thompson Falls.*
- *Action 3.3 – Identify apps targeting specific outdoor activities and other existing promotional materials and make sure opportunities in and around Thompson Falls are included.*
- *Action 3.4 – Create promotional materials to highlight local and regional assets, including videos.*

(The actions brainstormed under goals 4 and 5 will be included in the appendices.)

Goal I: Asset inventory: Identify high-priority assets for promotion, connection, and wayfinding signage.

As was documented during the workshop, the number of recreational assets in and around Thompson Falls is staggering. However, many of these assets are not well marked or promoted, making them difficult to find and less “discoverable.” Improving wayfinding signage and information will make Thompson Falls’ outdoor amenities more welcoming to residents and visitors, increase their usage, and elevate the region as a recreational destination. Actions under this goal will focus collaborative efforts on signing and promoting high-priority assets.

Action 1.1 – Expand the network of signage and kiosks highlighting recreation opportunities and other assets inside and outside of town.

<p>What this is. Why it is important. Who benefits?</p>	<p>This action will develop a signage priority list and build out new directional signs and kiosks in key locations in town and outside of it to supplement existing signage. Signs will be attractive and easy for residents and visitors to understand and will entice them to go from one destination to another by including distance and travel times to trailheads, natural areas, parks, and services such as restaurants, breweries, and coffee shops. They may also indicate routes that connect amenities and showcase the natural, historical, and cultural identity of the area. This critical wayfinding infrastructure will support greater use of Thompson Falls’ recreational and downtown amenities by residents and tourists alike. It will attract tourists to the community, encourage them to stay longer, and inspire them to patronize local businesses and support the local economy. This action should be coordinated with action 1.2.</p>
<p>Measures of success</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inventory of existing assets is created – most important. Previous signage plan exists, and Downtown/Main Street and Trails plans discuss signage, but it is unclear how much has been implemented and where the gaps are. Heather Berman and Juli Thurston are inventorying signage gaps and needs. Zach Whipple-Kilmer has inventory on many items outside of city limits. High priority sites will be identified, plotted, and pictured on the Google Asset Map provided. ▪ Barriers to placing new signs are identified, including DOT and railroad requirements, and develop a game plan for overcoming them – Katherine Maudrone, Carol Brooker. ▪ Signage priority list of needed signs and placements is developed. ▪ Funding is identified – only after inventory and DOT concerns are addressed will we know budgetary needs. ▪ Design was finished through a previous grant. SCCDC has all relevant files. ▪ Contract for signs is in place – Bozeman Signs are familiar with design and have worked with Thompson Falls before. ▪ Placement for signs is established – Coordinate with City, Main Street, and Chamber for consensus and installation.
<p>Timeframe</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 3 months: Signage priority list ▪ 1-2 years: Signs built
<p>Lead Roles</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Heather Berman, USDA Forest Service (signage outside of town) ▪ Katherine Maudrone, City of Thompson Falls (signage in town)

Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Juli Thurston, Extension ▪ Carol Brooker, Sanders County ▪ Erin Farris-Olsen, Heart of the Rockies ▪ Racene Friede, Glacier Country Tourism ▪ City Council Members ▪ City of Thompson Falls Recreation Committee ▪ Trails Committee ▪ Chamber of Commerce ▪ Daniel Moore, Thompson Falls Main Street ▪ Katie Cox, Kaniksu Land Trust ▪ Local artists ▪ Northwestern Energy (power company) ▪ Fish, Wildlife, and Parks ▪ Montana Department of Transportation
Needed resources and possible sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ MT Tourism Grant ▪ Montana Main Street funding (application period opens up December 8th; match requirement is 1:5) – can cover planning and signage ▪ Montana Department of Commerce Tourism funding ▪ USDA Rural Development Rural Business Development Grants (application period closes in February 2021) – could cover wayfinding signs and planning but are highly competitive; also USDA Rural Development Community Facilities Loans and grants (can be used for trail projects and parks among many other things) and REDLG loans through electric coops ▪ FY22 Forest Service proposal for Great American Outdoors Act funding – Heather Berman submitted a broad request for \$85,000 for recreational opportunities including signage and other projects, can be used outside of National Forests if projects promote opportunities on Forest Service land ▪ County Level Community Health Grant could also cover this (Erin Farris-Olsen has more information) ▪ Walk Your City for signs that indicate walking and biking distance to destinations ▪ Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) for funding ▪ AVISTA (energy company) for funding

Action 1.2 – Create and publish a map of Thompson Falls highlighting all recreation opportunities in and adjacent to town.

What this is. Why it is important. Who benefits?	<p>This map will be a comprehensive resource including all types of trails, water access points, and other recreation sites. It will be printed, published online, and linked to from other maps and websites. The map will draw people to the area and encourage them to extend their stays, help them engage in multiple types of recreation while they're there, and improve their visitor experience, especially if the information is up-to-date.</p>
Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The map is finalized and online.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The map is marketed to residents and visitors and shared with businesses, organizations, neighboring towns, and others that can help to promote Thompson Falls. ▪ The map is being used (measured by webpage visits).
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fall 2020: Ray and Zach connect to share information that has already been collected to aid with grant applications ▪ 1 year: Identify consultants to develop the map ▪ 1 year: Get an estimate of how much funding is needed ▪ 1 year: Identify funding sources ▪ Make sure that the Social Pinpoint Mapping locations that were identified through the RERC process are populated on the map in this action, and also on GoogleMaps and other shared mapping locations ▪ Create a StoryMap for publication
Lead Roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ray Brown, Sanders County Community Development (website/Tour Montana Highway 200 for cross-posting the map) ▪ Erin Farris-Olsen, Heart of the Rockies ▪ Daniel Moore, Thompson Falls Main Street ▪ Heather Berman, USDA Forest Service (funding a temporary person to complete this project, providing GIS data, printing maps) ▪ New county rec coordinator (created in Goal 3)
Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sanders County (build on their GIS trails map) ▪ Zach Whipple-Kilmer (has hand-drawn map, historic driving tour, and other data about recreation sites in and around Thompson Falls and Sanders County that can serve as the basis/starting point)
Needed resources and possible sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Montana Tourism Grant (Ray is applying for now) ▪ Montana State Parks Foundation program to help communities provide an experiential online map (with State Park as an anchor, extending into the community) – Diane Conradi checking on whether Thompson Falls is one of the eligible communities ▪ Montana Land Information Act grant that the county has gotten in the past (to get the word out) ▪ Business sponsorships to provide match for this action item (Zach Whipple-Kilmer has worked on this in the past) ▪ State Land and Water Conservation Fund is open – non-federal agencies can apply for funding to improve recreation facilities (Heather Berman has information)

Action 1.3 – Create a public-private partnership group to coordinate efforts around recreation economy development and to leverage available funding to implement projects in this plan, including Great American Outdoors Act funding.

What this is. Why it is important. Who benefits?	This action will establish and maintain an active public-private partnership group to coordinate efforts related to outdoor recreation and economic development, share progress, monitor upcoming opportunities, and help each other with project implementation. This type of collaboration creates capacity to take on
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	<p>projects, attracts the support of funders, and keeps opportunities from slipping through the cracks. Additionally, linking public and private partners generates interest and resources. This group will serve as an information hub, regularly comparing notes on current projects and upcoming funding applications. Many of the members will come from the existing RERC Steering Committee, with others to be added as needed.</p>
Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The group is established, meets quarterly, and has an established and active email communication chain. ▪ The group is the recognized entity to coordinate efforts to build the outdoor recreation economy. ▪ The group is successful at attracting Great American Outdoors Act and other funding to implement projects.
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Immediately: Group is established and begins meeting and coordinating via email ▪ Ongoing: Identify and invite any additional people and organizations who need to be involved
Lead Roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Outdoor Recreation Coordinator could serve to coordinate this group ▪ RERC Steering Committee: Ray Brown, Heather Berman, Carol Brooker, Katherine Maudrone, Daniel Moore, Zach Whipple-Kilmer ▪ Katie Cox, Kaniksu Land Trust ▪ Erin Farris-Olsen, Heart of the Rockies
Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Federal agencies ▪ Nonprofits ▪ All others interested and involved in this RERC process ▪ Chamber of Commerce ▪ Juli Thurston, Montana State University Extension Service
Needed resources and possible sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ People time

Action 1.4 – Convene a public launch event to publicize the RERC process and seek input on goals and actions.

What this is. Why it is important. Who benefits?	<p>This public meeting will be the official launch of the RERC Thompson Falls action plan. It will build on the momentum generated by the RERC process so far, bringing community members up to speed, recruiting new engagement and energy, and getting feedback on the goals and actions for moving forward. By taking place at the Black Bear, the Rex Theater, or Ainsworth Park, the meeting will also highlight downtown revitalization successes and needs, including buildings in need of investment.</p>
Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The meeting occurs and is well-attended. ▪ New community residents step forward to be involved. ▪ Feedback is gathered from people who have not yet been active in RERC.
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Immediately: Get an article in the paper about the RERC process

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spring 2021: Hold an in-person event (building a drumbeat through the winter)
Lead Roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carol Brooker, Katherine Maudrone, and Doug Ferrell meet with The Ledger for the article
Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Daniel Moore, Thompson Falls Main Street Ray Brown, Sanders County Community Development Corporation (to help facilitate the meeting)
Needed resources and possible sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People time Funding for space/food/promotion etc?

Goal 2: Physical connections: Identify needs for connective infrastructure among recreation assets and downtown.

A strong recreation economy is dependent on safe, attractive, and convenient connections among outdoor amenities, main streets, and other key destinations for people using all modes of transportation, including pedestrians and bicyclists. High-quality pedestrian and bike access improves quality of life for residents and visitors, supports foot traffic at local businesses, and contributes to a vibrant and healthy community. The actions under this goal will build up connective multimodal infrastructure and enhance the pedestrian and bicycling environment in Thompson Falls.

Action 2.1 – Based on existing plans and studies, identify the specific next steps needed to make Main Street safer and more attractive for pedestrians and cyclists.

What this is. Why it is important. Who benefits?	Improving the pedestrian environment is critical to making it easier for residents and visitors to get around and reach destinations in and around downtown. Additionally, it draws visitors and locals alike and encourages them to spend time and money downtown. Currently, there are several gaps in pedestrian and bicycling infrastructure, physical barriers such as the railroad tracks and Highway 200, and opportunities to enhance the attractiveness of the streetscape. Existing plans and studies have addressed these deficiencies and suggested solutions, and a focused effort is needed to examine those resources and pull out the most impactful and timely implementation steps. Options could include conducting public engagement, including a walk audit; adding sidewalk connections; improving ADA access; providing shade using covered benches; creating outside lingering and resting spots on the railroad side; and adding crosswalk bump-outs and a usable path on the north side of the street.
Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specific next steps or deliverables are identified, along with responsible parties and potential funding sources.
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review capacity of existing organizations to gauge interest in continuing work. – Carol Brooker 2-3 months: Review all existing plans and detail out next steps for what is needed to build on those plans in terms of improving Main Street for pedestrian and cyclists. – Steering Committee Determine if projects identified can be handled by current groups or should groups restructure and be coordinated by RERC Steering Committee?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mule Pasture Project will be used to determine path forward. – Carol Brooker ▪ Hiring of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Director will also be important to this action (see Action 3.2).
Lead Roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ray Brown, Sanders County Community Development Corporation – to identify next steps from existing main street plan to share with the broader group ▪ RERC Steering Committee
Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ City of Thompson Falls Trees Committee, Capital Improvement Plan ▪ Daniel Moore, Thompson Falls Main Street ▪ Western Transportation Institute (design cost estimates) ▪ Montana Department of Transportation ▪ Jamie Kirby, Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (funding support, such as for covered benches using local wood in Missoula) ▪ Erin Carey, USDA Forest Service ▪ Bike Walk Montana ▪ League of Cities and Towns ▪ Carol Brooker, Sanders County
Needed resources and possible sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ USDA Rural Development Rural Business Development Grant funding ▪ MT Department of Natural Resources and Conservation Urban and Community Forestry Program – Grants for urban forestry-related projects (shade, tree planting/management) ▪ Walk Audit with help from National Park Service Rivers Trails and Conservation Assistance Program ▪ Safe Routes to School ▪ USDA Forest Service iTree Tools

Action 2.2 – Physically connect the Mule Pasture trails to the high school.

What this is. Why it is important. Who benefits?	<p>Opportunities exist to physically connect the Mule Pasture trails to the high school. This will make it easier for students and staff to use the trails for recreation, classes, and extracurricular programs, and it will also create a safe route to school. This action will investigate what needs to happen to make this connection and ultimately build the new path.</p>
Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Potential trail connection is mapped. ▪ Easements are obtained. ▪ Trail/path is constructed.
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ February 3, 2021: Katie Cox to meet with Trails Committee to identify next steps and investigate potential of power line cut-through ▪ PER (Preliminary Engineering Report) developed to show options. SCCDC is working on funding this.
Lead Roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Thompson Falls Trails Committee delegate TBD – need to confirm that they want to take this on at February 3 meeting
Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Katie Cox, Kaniksu Land Trust (help with easements) ▪ Heather Berman, USDA Forest Service ▪ Project Ascent (disc golf) ▪ Phil Hough, Friends of Scotchman Peaks (trail construction)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Diane Conradi (help with easements) ▪ Thompson Falls Main Street (help with grant writing)
Needed resources and possible sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Great American Outdoors Act funding for trails planning and construction (Diane Conradi did a webinar on this funding source) ▪ Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks – Recreation Trails Program (Katie Cox has experience with this) ▪ Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks – Montana Trail Stewardship Grant Program (opens November 2nd, 2020) ▪ State Land and Water Conservation Fund is open – non-federal agencies can apply for funding to improve recreation facilities (Heather Berman has information)

Action 2.3 – Gauge community support for the community center at the high school.

What this is. Why it is important. Who benefits?	<p>Thompson Falls High School is located near the Community Center, 2 baseball parks, the dog park, the city pool, and memorial cemetery. Currently the facilities surrounding the school include a tennis court, trail system, and dirt track. Each of the named facilities are in blighted condition and desperately need repair if they are to be used. Because of its central location close to existing public facilities, a growing neighborhood, and the senior center and senior living facilities, improvements made at the school would greatly benefit all demographics. The School District has identified public outreach and support for our senior citizens as a top priority and would open an all season, all-weather track available for public use.</p>
Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fundraising campaigns established • Master plan created • Funding applications submitted and funding secured • Bleachers installed
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Spring 2021 – Fundraising begins, public hearings on master plan begin ▪ June 2021 – Master plan established ▪ August 2021 – Bleachers installed (Phase 1) ▪ Ongoing – Funding secured for track, tennis courts, and fitness trail
Lead Roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Kaniksu Land Trust ▪ Thompson Falls Main Street
Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ SCCDC ▪ Thompson Falls Booster ▪ Thompson Falls School District
Needed resources and possible sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ LCWF ▪ Frisbee Morbella ▪ Blackfoot Telephone ▪ Hecla Mining

Action 2.4 – Develop an information hub and community space on one of the vacant lots on Main Street.

What this is. Why it is important. Who benefits?	A central information hub or visitor kiosk would draw visitors to downtown, provide them with resources on everything Thompson Falls has to offer, and promote local businesses and recreational opportunities. Locating this hub on a vacant lot would bring new vibrancy to Main Street, and combining it with a community space would increase the use of the property, bringing locals as well as visitors for events, classes, and other gatherings.
Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Visitor center/information hub is completed
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gather partners together to discuss what is needed in terms of a visitor center or information sharing, what options exist, and what is possible ▪ Explore potential space and locations for a visitor center ▪ Explore options for staffing vs. not staffing ▪ Longer term: Secure space and open visitor center
Lead Roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daniel Moore, Thompson Falls Main Street?
Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Jamie Kirby, MT Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (grant program for community garden) ▪ Local artists ▪ Katie Cox, Kaniksu Land Trust ▪ Property owners ▪ Zach Whipple-Kilmer ▪ Heather Berman, USDA FS (potential staffing support) ▪ Andrea Christensen, Chamber
Needed resources and possible sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ People time to research and evaluate options ▪ Funding for building and staffing the hub

Goal 3: Regional promotion: Identify partners, resources, and opportunities to promote regional assets.

Along with improving wayfinding and connective infrastructure in Thompson Falls, it is critical to raise the profile of the region and its recreational opportunities among statewide and national audiences. Strategic efforts should identify and promote the area’s unique assets and quality of life in order to boost tourism and attract and retain residents. Actions under this goal focus on marketing the broader region as a destination as well as promoting it to people with specific outdoor hobbies, and also building capacity to sustain this work over the long term.

Action 3.1 – Develop a Destination Marketing Strategy for the Thompson Falls area.

What this is. Why it is important. Who benefits?	A Destination Marketing Strategy is vital to increase the awareness and appeal of Thompson Falls as a destination and waypoint or home base for tourists, and to highlight the opportunities and benefits of the area compared to other places, including opportunities for solitude. A marketing strategy could outline how Thompson Falls can support all kinds of visitors who want to engage in different types of outdoor recreation. It could also spotlight the community as a wonderful
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	place to live, where people come for the natural amenities and stay for the lifestyle, and catch the attention of potential future residents and businesses. Getting people here is the magic elixir – once they are here, they can see it as part of their family’s future. The plan will articulate the community’s desired end result—what product is being promoted—and lay out specific action items to achieve it.
Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Destination Marketing Strategy is developed. ▪ Marketing is taking place in key locations for visitors arriving to the region. ▪ A media campaign is targeting outlets that reach audiences who might want to recreate in Thompson Falls, i.e. driving tour groups, cycling groups.
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 1.5 years: Marketing Strategy is developed and implemented.
Lead Roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Director (see action 3.2)
Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sanders County Community Development Corporation ▪ Carol Brooker, Sanders County ▪ Racene Friede, Glacier Country Tourism
Needed resources and possible sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 40% of visitors to Glacier NP were traveling through Troy and Libby. Need data on the current level of travel through Thompson Falls and how it can be increased. ▪ Need financial and technical capacity to support the marketing (strategy, development of materials, implementation) – someone needs to be paid to help develop this. ▪ Partnership with the high school? ▪ Build off the work of Tourism 200

Action 3.2 – Create a County-level Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Director position with a focus on supporting Thompson Falls.

What this is. Why it is important. Who benefits?	While there are many local partners involved in outdoor recreation and economic development in the Thompson Falls region, their staff capacity is limited. To fully maximize the many opportunities available to the community and coordinate all the ongoing work, a full-time paid staff person devoted to building up recreation and tourism is needed. This director would provide support to all of Sanders County but would have a special focus on Thompson Falls. They would be responsible for the development of the Destination Marketing Strategy; coordinating and consolidating complementary plans and planning teams; bringing together various groups, activities, and programs; planning additional events; managing a coordinated calendar; and identifying and pursuing funding and other resource opportunities.
Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ (1) Position description and one-year work plan is developed. – Erin Farris-Olsen, Heart of the Rockies ▪ (2) Host organization for the position is identified – confirm support for Kaniksu Land Trust being the lead entity. ▪ (3) Funding/other support is secured for the position. ▪ (4) Position is filled. ▪ (5) Coordinator has a work plan, is accomplishing tasks.

Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ (1) 0-3 months ▪ (2) 0-3 months ▪ (3) 1-2 years ▪ (4) 1-2 years ▪ (5) 1-2 years
Lead Roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ (1) Katie Cox – Kaniksu Land Trust ▪ (2) Ray Brown & Carol Brooker ▪ Sanders County Community Development Corporation
Supporting cast	<p>Partners who have potential resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Erin Farris-Olsen, Heart of the Rockies ▪ Jamie Hackbarth, Economic Development Administration ▪ Other community leads ▪ State-level tourism entities ▪ AmeriCorps Vista - SCCDC, University of Montana, Cohort
Needed resources and possible sources	<p>Need funding – EDA funding? USDA Rural Development funding? Support from local business owners? Lake County Community Development? Covid \$ TBID</p>

Action 3.3 – Identify apps targeting specific outdoor activities and other existing promotional materials and make sure opportunities in and around Thompson Falls are included.

What this is. Why it is important. Who benefits?	<p>There is a wealth of apps, websites, and other information sources widely used by outdoor recreationists interested in hiking, mountain biking, fly fishing, kayaking, and other activities. In order to attract users' attention and be "discoverable" on a statewide and national level, opportunities in and around Thompson Falls need to be included in those sources.</p>
Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Thompson Falls recreational opportunities are reflected in key apps and other sources. ▪ Local information is included in materials put out by Glacier Country Tourism. ▪ The Trails Committee trail map is readily and widely available.
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 1-3 months ▪ Ongoing to maintain and update
Lead Roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ray Brown, Daniel Moore to coordinate with high school to find student volunteers ▪ Coordinate with/identify someone to serve on Glacier Country Tourism board
Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ High school students ▪ Racene Friede and team, Glacier Country Tourism ▪ MCC intern?

Needed resources and possible sources	
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Action 3.4 – Create promotional materials to highlight local and regional assets, including videos.

What this is. Why it is important. Who benefits?	This action will hire a consultant to create and publish drone footage of Thompson Falls and the surrounding areas to highlight the beauty of the region as viewed by air. The footage will be featured on Youtube with some segments highlighted on regional websites. Professional local footage will be included in all social marketing campaigns.
Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Campaign plan completed ▪ Raw footage obtained ▪ Edited content published ▪ Content cross promoted by stakeholders
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May 2021 - Campaign plan • September 2021 - All footage complete • August 2021 - Summer footage featured on local websites • Summer 2022 - Finish product cross promoted
Lead Roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCCDC
Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thompson Falls School District • Hazer Live • Chamber of Commerce • Main Street • Glacier Country Tourism
Needed resources and possible sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism Grant • Foundation Grants for 21st Century workforce training

IMPLEMENTATION AND NEXT STEPS

Following the workshop, the local steering committee and additional interested stakeholders who participated in the workshop met via video conference to review the results of the workshop and strategize about next steps. Three video conference calls were held on November 30, 2020; January 6, 2021; and February 22, 2021, during which the group discussed additional case stories and peer community examples that could be helpful, refined the action plan, discussed progress made post-workshop, and planned for implementation. In between the first and second post-workshop call, the local steering committee met to prioritize and add detail to key actions. The local team has already made significant progress on many actions. Listed below are some key implementation steps the community has undertaken since the workshop.

- *Action 1.1: Heather Berman and Juli Thurston are working on the inventory. Zach Whipple-Kilmer is providing information he had previously gathered. Erin Farris-Olsen and Vonda McGarvey are working with the Steering Committee to apply for a USDA Rural Business Development Grant, which would support some wayfinding signs and planning as well as other activities. Heather Berman submitted a FY22 GAOA request including Thompson Falls recreational opportunities, which could also cover some of this work.*
- *Action 1.2: Zach Whipple-Kilmer is sharing information he had previously gathered. Erin Farris-Olsen is working with the Steering Committee to further map out and seek funding for this action. SCCDC worked with Juli Thurston and Rhonda Wakefield to apply for the Montana Tourism Grant to develop the map.*
- *Action 1.3: The Steering Committee has continued to meet and is becoming this group, along with several other key partners like Katie Cox and Erin Farris-Olsen.*
- *Action 2.2: Katie Cox is meeting with the Trails Committee to identify next steps and investigate the potential of the power line cut-through. Ray Brown included a line item in SCCDC's budget for the PER (Preliminary Engineering Report).*
- *Action 3.2: Ray Brown, Carol Brooker, Erin Farris-Olsen, Phil Hough, and Katie Cox have been working to define what the position would look like, develop a position description and one-year workplan, and identify funding sources to support it. They are also exploring the possibility of utilizing AmeriCorps Vista participants.*
- *Action 3.4: Ray Brown has been working with high school students to identify and highlight what they love about Thompson Falls. They created a survey which was completed by junior high school students, and are now working on an icon map and QR codes, after which the drones class will take footage of the key locations, which may be shared on a YouTube channel and used to market the area.*

APPENDICES

- *Appendix A – Workshop Exercise Results*
- *Appendix B – Workshop Participants*
- *Appendix C – References*
- *Appendix D – Funding and Technical Assistance*