

Community Health Assessment 2017  
Rural Communities Report



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# Rural Communities Report

## Introduction

Welcome!

The 2017 Community Health Assessment (CHA) represents the third iteration of the Missoula County health assessment. The CHA is conducted every three years, with each CHA followed by a Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). The CHIP is directly informed by the CHA, which means that it is critical to provide CHIP committee members with the most thorough information possible under time and resource constraints.

Every third year, the Missoula City-County Health Department (MCCHD) aims to enhance the health assessment by refining its process and expanding its reach throughout the county. This summer, the MCCHD had the resources available to make a concerted effort to learn more about rural community's health and wellness directly from rural community members. Through background research, informal interviews, community outreach, and a health survey, the MCCHD gained a better understanding of the perceived strengths and needs across the county. The Rural Communities Report shares findings from this endeavor, which could serve as a starting point for individual communities to improve public health and for the County to better serve all residents.

## Rural Communities: Health Assessment Process

The rural community assessment was conducted between June and August 2017. The purpose of the assessment was two-fold: broaden Missoula County residents' understanding of "health"; and, directly engage with community members to learn about their town's perceived strengths and needs with the intention of better serving the county.

Health was examined holistically: more than just personal health, it includes things like public safety, roads, food, education, jobs, and recreation. To learn about rural community health, the MCCHD engaged community members via e-correspondence, telephone, an online survey, informal interviews, and outreach.

In early June, MCCHD representatives met with Community and Planning Services (CAPS), an organization that has a long-standing relationship in many of the rural county communities. CAPS employees shared information about the county including key contacts, suggested outreach strategies, and known community successes and struggles. Mid-summer, CAPS introduced MCCHD outreach specialists with community councils from each rural community within the county, excluding Missoula. This introduction served as a starting point for the MCCHD to access already civically engaged residents that might assist with the CHA process. The community councils directly and indirectly contributed to the CHA either by sharing an email, completing an online survey, or distributing the health survey through social media and their established local networks.

In addition to an e-survey, MCCHD personnel conducted brief, informal interviews with interested residents. These individuals happened to be residents of the Seeley Lake and Condon areas that had knowledge specific to local struggles and strengths. These informal interviews served to bolster survey data from that area.

During this process, the Seeley Lake Community Foundation invited MCCHD personnel to attend the Bob Marshall Music Festival to conduct outreach. MCCHD warmly accepted this invitation and spent a day at the festival engaging community members in a dialogue about their perceptions of health and wellness, and their experiences with the County. This opportunity allowed MCCHD to learn about Seeley Lake directly from residents. Some key contacts made during this outreach were with the Lions Club, Partnership Health, and Missoula Aging Services.

Finally, MCCHD personnel met with the Seeley-Swan Pathfinder, that community's local newspaper, to discuss the CHA and spread awareness about the health assessment survey. Unfortunately, the summer fire season has been extremely intense, particularly in our rural communities. Understandably, fire activity very likely reduced the survey response rate, because public safety is a more pressing priority.

## Rural Communities: Survey

After reviewing CHA reports from across the country and other research literature, MCCHD adapted a validated survey questionnaire to assess community health. The survey was pilot-tested with MCCHD personnel and University of Montana graduate students whose suggestions helped refine the survey into its final form (*see Appendix*).

The 10-item survey was voluntary, anonymous, and confidential. Participants had the option to give permission for their short answers to be shared verbatim, and nearly 75% of all respondents elected to do so. The survey consisted of demographic and open-ended questions. The demographic data captured resident location, length of residence at that location, and employment status, while the open-ended questions captured resident perceptions about their community's strengths and needs. The short answers also sought to understand why those perceptions exist in the hope that the information could be used by communities and the MCCHD.

The survey was distributed via email to each community council in mid-summer and was open for approximately three weeks. While 105 individuals touched the survey (i.e. opened the survey), 77 of those individuals represented rural communities outside of Missoula (see *Figure 1*). East Missoula had the highest response rate at 40%, while Huson had the lowest response rate with no representation. Some Missoula residents did respond to the survey; however, their data was not examined with the rural community data.

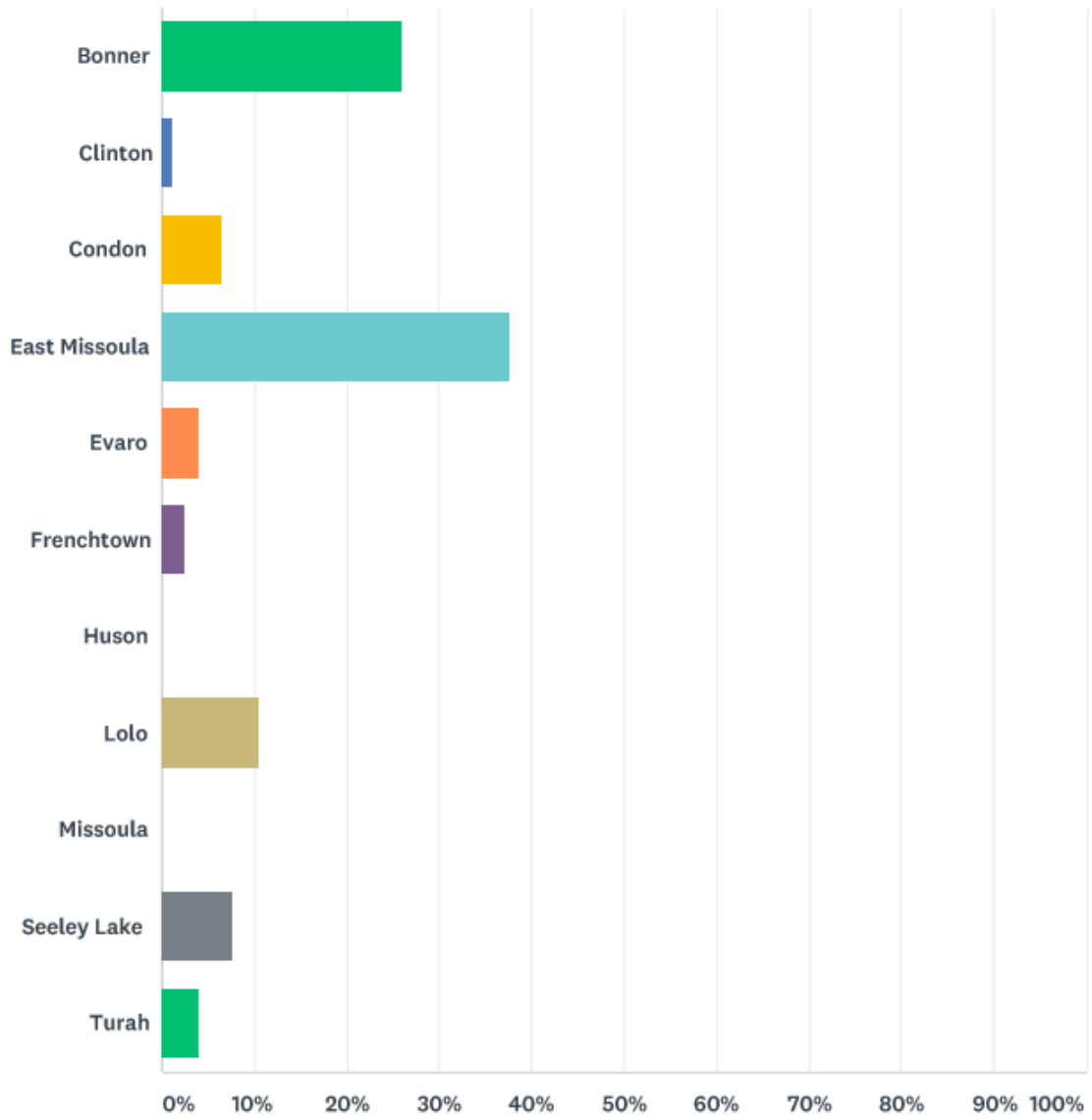


Figure 1. Survey Response Rate by Location

## Rural Communities: Survey Analysis

After the survey closed, MCCHD personnel reviewed all data including multiple readings of the short responses. The data was separated into four areas (Bonner, Clinton, and Turah; Condon and Seeley Lake; East Missoula; and, Evaro, Frenchtown, and Lolo) based upon geographic location and response rate.

After MCCHD personnel developed an understanding of the qualitative survey content, they developed themes that captured the meanings of the survey information (*see Table 1*). All qualitative data was coded by theme using NVIVO, a rigorous qualitative software analysis program, which helped identify primary and secondary themes.

This report presents the findings of each area's top five perceived strengths and needs. Figure 2 and 3 are word cloud representations of the perceived strengths and needs of **all** respondents, while Table 2 depicts the strengths and needs by area. In general, each area reported a strong tie to Community, a deep respect for the Location of their home, and accessibility to unparalleled Recreation. Often an area's top strength was also its most pressing need. For example, Seeley Lake and Condon residents have a strong tourist economy. This is both a boon and a burden, which was particularly evident during this summer's fire season. Consequently, while residents appreciate the tourist economy, they clearly recognize the need to develop a more diversified economy that offers living wages year-round to all community members.

This iteration of the CHA represents a great step forward in engaging with rural communities and building relationships with county residents. The MCCHD is very grateful to the community councils that disseminated the e-survey, community residents that completed the survey, and individuals that participated in informal interviews. MCCHD also extends a Thank You to the Seeley Lake Pathfinder that published information about the CHA in their paper and online platform.

We hope that rural communities in Missoula County find this information useful. Please note that the findings from this study are not concrete answers, but rather starting points for enhancing the health and wellness of Missoula County.

*Table 1. Themes and Descriptions*

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Air &amp; Water Quality</b>	Quality of air and water, typically related to clean air and water infrastructure.
<b>Community</b>	People, neighborhoods, community pride, civic engagement, etc.
<b>Economy</b>	Jobs, wages, etc.
<b>Education</b>	Schools, including but not limited to building quality, school location, teachers, and staff.
<b>Food</b>	Access to local food resources including grocery store, farmers markets, local restaurants, etc.
<b>Government</b>	Legislation, regulation, etc.
<b>Health Care</b>	Quality and quantity of health services. Accessibility of health services.
<b>Housing</b>	Quality and quantity of housing. Affordable housing for all incomes.
<b>Location</b>	Physical location.
<b>Other</b>	
<b>Public Safety</b>	Crime, law enforcement, emergency preparedness, safety, etc.
<b>Social Services</b>	Services provided to the community.
<b>Recreation</b>	Access to outdoor recreational opportunities including: rivers, trails, fishing, hunting, etc.
<b>Religious Organizations</b>	Churches, typically described as providing a sense of community or creating a safe space for gatherings.
<b>Transportation</b>	Infrastructure including roads, traffic lights, sidewalks, and street lights. Typically related to public safety.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Roads</i></li> <li>• <i>Sidewalks, Lighting, Traffic Lights</i></li> </ul>	





Figure 2. Word Cloud: All Rural Community Respondents: Perceived Strengths



Figure 3. Word Cloud: Rural Community Respondents Perceived Needs

Table 2. Rural Communities' Strengths and Needs by Theme

	Bonner, Clinton, & Turah	Condon & Seeley	East Missoula	Evaro, Frenchtown, & Lolo
<b>Air &amp; Water Quality</b>			S	
<b>Community</b>	S / N	S	S	S / N
<b>Economy</b>		S / N		
<b>Education</b>	S	S	N	S / N
<b>Food</b>	N			
<b>Government</b>		N	N	N
<b>Health Care</b>		N		S
<b>Housing</b>		N		
<b>Location</b>	S	S	S	S
<b>Other</b>		N		
<b>Public Safety</b>	N		N	
<b>Social Services</b>			S	
<b>Recreation</b>	S / N	S	S	S / N
<b>Religious Organizations</b>	S		S	
<b>Transportation</b>	N		N	N
• Roads				
• Sidewalks, Lighting, Traffic Lights				

Note: S = Perceived Strength, N = Perceived Need

## Bonner, Clinton, and Turah

### Respondent Demographics

Twenty-four residents representing Bonner (n=20), Clinton (n=1), and Turah (n=3) completed the Community Health Assessment Survey for Rural Communities. This represents about 31% of all rural respondents.

All respondents reported living in Bonner, Clinton and/or Turah full-time for at least one to two years. Seventy-five percent of respondents (n=18) have lived in the area for more than 10 years, indicating that these survey participants are likely well-informed about their community's health.

Nearly 70% of residents reported working full-time in a variety of job sectors. Private and Nonprofit sectors employ nearly half of all respondents with Education (12.5%), Government (8.33%), and Health Care (8.3%) also represented.

### Community Information: Perceived Health and Wellness

Bonner, Clinton and Turah respondents described their community's strengths and weaknesses in detail. These individuals recognize the importance of community involvement whether it be civic engagement, community pride, or neighbors looking out for another. Respondents also identified, however, that while their community is comprised of "wonderful, self-reliant people," it also needs somewhere or something to unite around such as a clearly defined town center or central meeting place. Consequently, Community is both a strength and a need identified by Bonner, Clinton and Turah respondents.

### Perceived Strengths

Respondents identified Recreation, Education, Community, Location, and Religious Organizations as community strengths. Recreational opportunities, which are tied to Location, are a great resource that promotes residents' health and wellness. One respondent noted, "Getting outside helps us stay healthy," and that includes easy access to local trails, rivers, and mountains for a variety of exercise and

hobby options. Residents here enjoy the peace and quiet that a rural space affords. They also noted the history of the area as a unique asset.

Education and Religious Organizations were noted as key factors helping create a sense of community in Bonner, Clinton, and Turah. Schools and churches provide a physical space where residents can come together, and they provide a moral space for individuals to unite around common causes or share dialogues about emerging community issues.

Finally, residents identified Community as a strength. Many respondents reported that the people that comprise the area are what makes it home. This appears to be a place where neighbors look out for one another, “where working people can afford to raise children,” and enjoy everything that the Bonner, Clinton, and Turah have to offer.



Figure 4. Word Cloud: Bonner, Clinton, and Turah: Perceived Strengths

Table 3. Bonner, Clinton, and Turah: Top 5 Perceived Strengths

Theme	Description	Ranking	Quotes
<b>Recreation</b>	Access to outdoor recreational opportunities including: rivers, trails, fishing, hunting, etc.	1	<p><i>“Top notch and easily accessible.”</i></p> <p><i>“We are a family that recreates. We love walking and hunting the mountain. We love the rivers. We kayak, fish and tube on them.”</i></p> <p><i>“Getting outside helps us stay healthy.”</i></p>
<b>Education</b>	Schools, including but not limited to building quality, school location, teachers, and staff.	1	<p><i>“Bonner School is a great asset to this community.”</i></p>
<b>Community</b>	People, neighborhoods, community pride, civic engagement, etc.	3	<p><i>“In most areas there is still the small town feel of looking out for your neighbors and a sense of community.”</i></p> <p><i>“I am so proud to live here.”</i></p> <p><i>“Some of the hardest working and conservation minded people I know live and have lived for years in this community.”</i></p>
<b>Location</b>	Physical location	4	<p><i>“Peace and quiet and open space.”</i></p> <p><i>“Privacy.”</i></p> <p><i>“Historic community.”</i></p>
<b>Religious Organizations</b>	Churches, typically described as providing a sense of community or creating a safe space for gatherings	4	<p><i>“They (churches and schools) are some of the few places where the community can come together.”</i></p>

### Perceived Needs

Food, Recreation, Community, Transportation, and Public Safety were reported needs. The need for a grocery store or market, somewhere to buy food locally, was mentioned 18 times, which is significant

since there were 24 respondents from this area. One individual noted that a local grocery store would reduce food insecurity, including more affordable, local options with less transportation costs.

Recreation, Transportation, and Public Safety needs are related to one another. Several respondents reported the need for more parks (10 mentions), a clean river, and parking infrastructures particularly at river put-in and take-out locations. A park would be a wonderful addition to the community for children and families alike. Removing hazardous logs in the river would make it safer for all recreationalists. Developing parking structures would improve public safety for river go-ers, residents, and those just passing through Highway 200.

Finally, although many respondents reported a community where neighbors look out for neighbors, some reported that the area lacks community identity, community involvement, and community pride. Respondents suggested that perhaps this was due to lack of interest on the part of individuals, insufficient funding, or the lack of a clearly defined town center where residents could meet.



Figure 5. Word Cloud: Bonner, Clinton, and Turah: Perceived Needs

Table 4. Bonner, Clinton, and Turah: Top 5 Perceived Needs

Theme	Description	Ranking	Quotes
<b>Food</b>	Access to local food resources including grocery store, farmers markets, local restaurants, etc.	1	<p><i>"Grocery store in Bonner."</i></p> <p><i>"The grocery store that we had is on MRL land and [is] not on adequate septic."</i></p> <p><i>"So we would spend less in gas each week to shop for food and for the community members who face food insecurity."</i></p>
<b>Recreation</b>	Access to outdoor recreational opportunities including: rivers, trails, fishing, hunting, etc.	2	<p><i>"The community needs a park."</i></p> <p><i>"Also the Bonner superfund park is still closed and it's a real missed opportunity."</i></p> <p><i>"I think it is great that people come to use the river. I would like to see parking issue resolved at the Tamarack drop off point."</i></p> <p><i>"The river is still a little dangerous (its (sic) still full of logs and somewhat hazardous)."</i></p>
<b>Community</b>	People, neighborhoods, community pride, civic engagement, etc.	3	<p><i>"Cohesiveness as Bonner is...not well defined."</i></p> <p><i>"We don't have a central meeting place where neighbors can see each other... Some place...that would increase our sense of community."</i></p> <p><i>"Get people to attend council meetings and discuss things wanted/needed/not wanted/not needed."</i></p>
<b>Transportation</b>	Infrastructure including roads, traffic lights, sidewalks, and street lights. Typically related to public safety.	4	<p><i>"Infrastructure to support all of the additional businesses at the mill site, especially the new concert venue. Parking and infrastructure at the state park and for river users."</i></p> <p><i>"Build two large parking lots at each put in and take out location."</i></p>
<b>Public Safety</b>	Crime, law enforcement, emergency	5	<p><i>"Now that mountain line is offering no charge rides, we are seeing a considerable increase in transient population in the area so additional</i></p>

## Condon and Seeley

### Respondent Demographics

Condon (n=5) and Seeley (n=6) had 11 survey respondents representing about 14% of all rural participants.

In addition to survey participants, four individuals were interviewed that work, live, and play in Seeley Lake. These interviewees helped bolster the survey data.

Approximately 64% of Condon and Seeley (n=11) residents reported living in the area for more than 10 years.

Sixty percent of respondents reported working full-time, while the remaining 40% are retired. Most full-time employed participants reported working in the Other category with a diversity of job roles including self-employment, customer service, and construction.

### Community Information: Perceived Health and Wellness

Community was identified as the most prominent strength, while Health Care and Economy were identified as the most pressing needs. Participants, including the four interviewees, described the community as strong, charitable, and willing to help. Health services were identified as a critical need not only for a remote area, but for the aging community that lives there. Additionally, participants reported that jobs, specifically, year-round jobs with living wages, are needed to improve the local economy and bring young families to the area.

### Perceived Strengths



Condon and Seeley survey participants reported Community, Location, Recreation, Education, and Economy as area strengths. Here, individuals appear to have a sense of togetherness, at least with their neighbors. People were described as willing to help, charitable, and strong.

Like other rural areas, Location and Recreation were top strengths. The remote location affords one of a kind access to outdoor recreation and beautiful scenic views. The area offers hunting, fishing, hiking, and other recreational opportunities.

A few respondents identified the school system as a place that brings people together. Here, class sizes are small, which creates an opportunity for individual attention in the classroom.

Finally, the tourism economy was identified as a strength of the area. Note that Economy was also described as something that needs to be diversified and more robust. The tourist economy booms in the late spring and summer, and it significantly drops in the off season. Many of the local businesses survive and thrive during peak tourist season, however, this type of economy is problematic when it becomes compromised like it was during this summer’s fire season.



Figure 6. Condon and Seeley: Perceived Strengths

Table 5. Condon and Seeley: Top 5 Perceived Strengths

Theme	Description	Ranking	Quotes
<b>Community</b>	People, neighborhoods, community pride, civic engagement, etc.	1	<p><i>"The willingness to help each other out."</i></p> <p><i>"Seeley Lake is an amazing asset to Montana. Beautiful example of the definition of community."</i></p> <p><i>"The residents here are largely charitable, outgoing and very nice to know and work with."</i></p>
<b>Location</b>	Physical location.	2	<i>"...beauty, camaraderie and remoteness."</i>
<b>Recreation</b>	Access to outdoor recreational opportunities including: rivers, trails, fishing, hunting, etc.	3	<i>"Close to National Parks and Wilderness."</i>
<b>Education</b>	Schools, including but not limited to building quality, school location, teachers, and staff.	3	<p><i>"The school brings people together."</i></p> <p><i>Small class sizes and individual attention for students.</i></p>
<b>Economy</b>	Jobs, wages, etc.	5	<i>"Tourism is Seeley's greatest asset in the summer months, without that small business suffer."</i>

## Perceived Needs

Health Care and Economy tied for the most pressing perceived needs in the area. These two themes were followed by Housing, Government, and Other. Condon and Seeley are remote and many social services are far away in Kalispell or Missoula. Not only would these services be critical to any resident, but the need is exacerbated because a large aging population resides there. Health Care facilities that accept walk-ins, a doctor, a veterinarian, and a prescription refill service were some of the suggestions

to improve Condon and Seeley. This need was also described by both a county-wide social services organization and a Seeley Lake non-profit. Missoula Aging Services recognized the need for expanded personal care in the far reaches of Missoula County and placed a Resource Specialist in Seeley Lake starting last October 2016. The Resource Specialist provides information to individuals in need and connects them to care. While this is a step toward improving health care, Missoula Aging Services indicated that there is still a significant and pressing need for certified nursing assistants to provide in-home care in remote areas of the county. The Seeley Lake Community Foundation established the “iRide” van services in March 2017. This service represents a creative way to connect individuals to services at a low cost. For a very small fee, the van service connects residents in the Seeley-Condon area to local medical services. Additionally, for a \$10 round trip fee, residents can ride to Missoula for additional care or social services.

As mentioned previously, Economy is problematic here. Many respondents discussed diversifying the economy to support workers and their families. Seeley and Condon residents need local jobs with living wages all year, not just during the tourist season. Some suggestions from the survey include: creating opportunities for entrepreneurs that would like to improve the area; reducing restrictions on logging and building; and, identifying economically and environmentally sustainable jobs. Economy is related to Housing, and affordable housing is also needed in this area. Too few jobs with living wages make it difficult for younger families to move to the area. Housing is expensive and there are few options for affordable rentals.

Here, Government and Other are related to regulations. There appears to be division between those who want more and less regulation. One individual suggested they wanted decreased regulations on building permits and another proposed that private property rights need to be supported. Someone reported that the community is divisive over a lot of issues, suggesting that it is difficult to come to a consensus. One resident even stated that, “The county has abandoned us,” which is a bleak sentiment that was reinforced during interviews with Seeley Lake residents. For example, during an interview, Seeley non-profit employees described several attempts at bringing county resources to Seeley with no success. The non-profit reported poor communication between County and city personnel, and minimum mandatory restrictions on enrollment for social services like work training or library reading programs. A rural community like Seeley could not, and likely cannot, meet the minimum enrollment restrictions. In an example such as this, communication can more easily be improved, while policy level changes regarding enrollment numbers will take more time.



Figure 7. Word Cloud: Condon and Seeley: Perceived Needs

Table 6. Condon and Seeley: Top 5 Perceived Needs

Theme	Description	Ranking	Quotes
<b>Health Care</b>	Quality and quantity of health services. Accessibility of health services.	1	<p><i>"I would make sure the Medical Services in Seeley Lake would take walk ins no matter what the issue happens to be."</i></p> <p><i>"Senior care, health care, vet."</i></p> <p><i>"Forcing a person to drive to Kalispell or Missoula to see their doctor or emergency room is too far away."</i></p>
<b>Economy</b>	Jobs, wages, etc.	1	<p><i>"Economic opportunities for entrepreneurs."</i></p> <p><i>"Gainful employment for younger residents"</i></p> <p><i>"Unless you live richly In Seeley Lake or living on government assistance - if your (sic) in between like me with no assistance jobs are very scarce and when found most depend on tourist season."</i></p>
<b>Housing</b>	Quality and quantity of housing. Affordability for all incomes.	3	<p><i>"There are high value homes and properties beyond affordability for younger workers and those properties displace and limit the number of more modest but functional/serviceable properties."</i></p> <p><i>"Add affordable housing so younger persons might be able to find a means to stay and work in the area."</i></p>
<b>Government</b>	Legislation, regulation, etc.	4	<p><i>"Oppressive regulations stop growth and prosperity."</i></p> <p><i>"Eliminate mandatory rural building permits. Support private property rights."</i></p> <p><i>"County has abandoned Seeley Lake."</i></p>
<b>Other</b>		5	<p><i>"Just respect the people of the Swan Valley and keep the urban attitude in Missoula."</i></p> <p><i>"It (the community) is divisive a lot over most issues."</i></p>

## East Missoula

### Respondent Demographics

East Missoula had the highest response rate with nearly 40% of all rural survey respondents living there (n=29). All but one participant lives in East Missoula year-round. Just over 65% of participants reported living in East Missoula for more than 10 years, while 25% reported living there 5-10 years.

Respondents reported a variety of employment statuses with 40% Full-time, 20% Part-time, and 40% Retired. East Missoula residents indicated employment across a variety of job sectors with the Non-profit and Government sectors representing the most employees. Some recent job roles included: administrative assistant, journeyman, musician, teacher, and doctor.

### Community Information: Perceived Health and Wellness

East Missoula participants represented most of rural survey respondents. Again, like other rural towns, East Missoula residents indicated a strong sense of community, reporting people helping one another is a great strength of the area. Recreation (rivers, trails, and mountains) were also identified as a resource that improves quality of life. Residents resoundingly reported that Education and Government are critical needs. Many residents would like to see the elementary school re-open not only to decrease parent and caretaker burdens, but also to create a sense of community that is otherwise lacking. Government, as indicated in respondents' short answers, specifically refers to noise ordinances, zoning ordinances, and public safety related to road maintenance.

### Perceived Strengths

Community, Recreation, and Location followed by Social Services, Religious Organizations and Air and Water Quality were the most prominent perceived strengths in East Missoula. Respondents overwhelmingly reported that their neighborhoods and neighbors were important, and that East Missoula is a place with a great community feeling where people tend to help one another out.

Like other rural communities in Missoula County, Recreation and Location were identified as area strengths. Responses indicated that residents enjoy easy access to a variety of local recreational

activities including the river, trails, and Mount Jumbo. East Missoula was described as a beautiful, friendly area. Its proximity to Missoula provides access to many needed services without having to give up a peaceful and serene home life.

Some respondents indicated that Social Services and Religious Organizations provided supportive services to the community. The Lions Club hosts family-friendly events and social services, while churches offer a supportive community environment and a space where the community can come together. Finally, Air and Water Quality, having the same number of references as Social Services and Religious Organizations, was a strength. Residents appear to appreciate their sewer system that was constructed in the recent past.



Figure 8. Word Cloud: East Missoula: Perceived Strengths

Table 7. East Missoula: Top 5 Perceived Strengths

Theme	Description	Ranking	Quotes
<b>Community</b>	People, neighborhoods, community pride, civic engagement, etc.	1	<p><i>"Neighbors watching out for other neighbors."</i></p> <p><i>"Great community feeling."</i></p> <p><i>"East Missoula, on the whole, is a wonderful place to live, full of people of all ages with varied interests. Most of us want to be able to live our lives without being annexed to Missoula, in the quiet that we "usually" have out here."</i></p>
<b>Recreation</b>	Access to outdoor recreational opportunities including: rivers, trails, fishing, hunting, etc.	2	<p><i>"East Missoula has a couple nice parks, and a lovely proximity to the trails of Mount Jumbo."</i></p> <p><i>"Close to trails, river, kids can play, usually quiet."</i></p>
<b>Location</b>	Physical location	3	<p><i>"Easy access to cultural activities and medical needs that increase with aging."</i></p> <p><i>"Being close to Missoula but not in Missoula lessens the impact of living with too many people yet proximity to services. I90 for ease of travel and access to outdoors."</i></p>
<b>Social Services</b>	Services provided for the benefit of the community	4	<p><i>"Lion Club puts on activities for our community."</i></p> <p><i>"Supportive services."</i></p>
<b>Religious Organizations</b>	Churches, typically described as providing a sense of community or creating a safe space for gatherings	4	<p><i>"The church is good at bringing people together for Easter and they have a Kids party which gives out free school supplies."</i></p> <p><i>"Helpful church."</i></p>
<b>Air &amp; Water Quality</b>	Quality of air and water, typically related to clean air and water infrastructure.	4	<p><i>The sewer.</i></p> <p><i>"A sewer system put in place in '02 to protect our ground water from septic tanks, which is what was previously out here."</i></p>



## Perceived Needs

Respondents were very descriptive about their community's needs which included Education, Government, and transportation infrastructure related to Public Safety and Roads. More than 20 references were made about Mount Jumbo Elementary School. Residents want to see the school reopen. Without the institution, the town lacks a sense of community, cohesion, and togetherness. Survey participants stated that many families are moving to the area and there is an increasing need for the school to reopen. A school in East Missoula would not only decrease the transportation and planning burden on parents and caregivers, but it would also provide a communal space where residents could meet and dialogue. Respondents questioned why the school was closed and why it hasn't reopened for community residents. Some thought that there was a lack of funding, but many did not know why a 'perfectly good school' wasn't being used. One individual was hopeful that seeing Missoula elementary students using the facility this past year while Lowell School was under construction would help demonstrate the value of the resource to the East Missoula community.

Government was also a contentious issue. Here, government refers to noise and zoning ordinances. Since East Missoula is a county and not a city property, it does not have the same kind of regulation. The timing of this survey was in mid- to late-July, and respondents overwhelmingly described their interest in noise ordinances to reduce or entirely halt fireworks. Without these restrictions, some community members suffered at the expense of fireworks. Some individuals indicated that the noises affected their children, their ability to work, their pets, and local veterans. Additionally, some respondents reported that they would like to see zoning ordinances come into effect that would help regulate the sewer system. A few participants suggested that there should be ordinances and enforcement of household appearance and abandoned vehicles that tarnish East Missoula's image.

Finally, residents were also very vocal about the need for transportation infrastructure to improve public safety. Taken together, Roads, Public Safety, and Sidewalks, Lighting and Traffic Lights, were more needed than Education and Government alone. Roads and alleyways are in disrepair and need maintenance. Respondents want to see the roads be safer and more pedestrian friendly with sidewalks, lighting and traffic lights. Designated bike lanes would help promote the use of alternative transportation. Additional Public Safety issues were related to drug activity, particularly near the school when it was not in use; outdated and unsafe park equipment; RVs and abandoned vehicles; and, increasing homelessness. Some noted that while the Mountain Line is a good resource, its fee-free services appear to have increased the transient population in the community, which was a concern for some parents and caregivers.



Figure 9. Word Cloud: East Missoula: Perceived Needs

Table 8. East Missoula: Top 5 Perceived Needs

Theme	Description	Ranking	Quotes
<b>Education</b>	Schools, including but not limited to building quality, school location, teachers, and staff	1	<p><i>“Local School (Mount Jumbo) for the kids that live here in East Missoula to attend.”</i></p> <p><i>“The closing of Mount Jumbo school was a real hit to the community. Not sure why the closure of the school happened, the community is growing, families are relocating here.”</i></p> <p><i>“E Msa (East Missoula) very much needs to have a neighborhood school again. I've heard from more than one long-time resident that when the school closed, the community started to degrade.”</i></p>
<b>Government</b>	Legislation, regulation, etc.	2	<p><i>“No county ordinance for noise abatement after a specified time in the evening.”</i></p> <p><i>“We are county so I guess there is less government involvement, but I feel noise ordinance and road condition should be important town wide.”</i></p> <p><i>“I'd very much like to see E Msa (East Missoula) CLEANED UP and local ordinances established.”</i></p>
<b>Roads*</b>		3	<p><i>“Improvements to Highway 200.”</i></p> <p><i>“The roads and alleys are in bad repair, also we (need) better lines on the highway.”</i></p> <p><i>“Safer roadways; people speed through town on the highway and some of the side streets.”</i></p>
<b>Public Safety*</b>	Crime, law enforcement, emergency preparedness, safety, etc.	4	<p><i>“Fewer unsafe features. (Drugs, unregulated fireworks etc.)”</i></p> <p><i>“I feel that the recent problems residents have observed with drug traffic and other crimes are directly related to the poor condition of the community -- those who engage in such activities see it as a place where they'll go mostly unnoticed.”</i></p>
<b>Sidewalks, Lighting,</b>		5	<p><i>“East Missoula is a great place to live but is poorly funded. Take one look at the streets and the</i></p>

Theme	Description	Ranking	Quotes
Traffic Lights*			<i>children walking in the dark on Hallowing. Children enjoying parks that are not up to date with outdated equipment. Safety in this community is being way over looked and should be put on a higher priority before something tragic happens that could have been prevented.”</i>

*\*Cumulatively, Transportation including Roads, Public Safety, and Sidewalks, Lighting and Traffic Lights is the most pressing need with more than 30 references.*

## Evato, Frenchtown, and Lolo

### Respondent Demographics

Approximately 17% of all rural survey respondents reported living in Evato (n=3), Frenchtown (n=2), and Lolo (n=8). All respondents live in the area year-round, with nearly 70% living there more than 10 years.

Forty percent of respondents reported working full-time, while just over 30% are retired. The remaining respondents reported part-time employment or unemployment. Of this sample, most respondents work in the Private Sector with Government, Education, and Health Care also represented. Most recent job roles indicate that residents work as federal lands specialists, educators, researchers, and bus drivers among others.

### Community Information: Perceived Health and Wellness

#### Perceived Strengths

Evato, Frenchtown and Lolo respondents reported that Location, Community, Health Care, Education, and Recreation were community strengths. Location and Community had a similar number of references, while Health Care and Education were also tied. Residents enjoy the rural, uncrowded area with its scenic views and natural beauty. Lolo residents also reported that even though it is a bedroom community, they have access to many local goods and services in town, but are also close enough to Missoula for other services and amenities. Like other areas of Missoula County, these residents have a wonderful, close-knit community where neighborhoods often work together.

Few references were made to Health Care and Education. Respondents recognize that they have access to health services through a walk-in clinic in town, and more services nearby in Missoula. The school was recognized as being “very proactive in the community.” Lastly, five references were made to recreational opportunities. The state park, ball fields, and town trail system were called out as community strengths.



Figure 10. Word Cloud: Evaro, Frenchtown, and Lolo: Perceived Strengths

Table 9. Evaro, Frenchtown, and Lolo: Top 5 Perceived Strengths

Theme	Description	Ranking	Quotes
<b>Location</b>	Physical location	1	<p><i>“Natural beauty of the area.”</i></p> <p><i>“It is a scenic beautiful place.”</i></p>
<b>Community</b>	People, neighborhoods, community pride, civic engagement, etc.	1	<p><i>“Close knit community neighborhoods.”</i></p> <p><i>“People are excited to live here, and excited to see things changing and growing.”</i></p>
<b>Health Care</b>	Quality and quantity of health services. Accessibility of health services.	3	<i>Access to health services in community.</i>
<b>Education</b>	Schools including but not limited to building quality, school location, teachers, and staff	4	<i>“School system is very proactive in the community.”</i>
<b>Recreation</b>	Access to outdoor recreational opportunities including: rivers, trails, fishing, hunting, etc.	5	<i>“Great recreation locally.”</i>

### Perceived Needs

Some perceived needs parallel perceived strengths in this area. Education, Community, Recreation, Transportation, and Government were the most reported community needs. Several individuals would like to see a new school facility or an addition to the existing school. While respondents indicated that there are great neighbors in the area, some stated they want to see more civic engagement and community involvement. They would like “a close community that steps forward and volunteers for community service” and “an increase in the community involvement for projects in the area.” Perhaps not surprisingly, lack of civic engagement was noted as a possible reason for the lack of school improvements.

Residents enjoy their easy access to parks and trails; however, they would like to see more parks and green spaces for families and a multi-user trail for all community members. Regarding Transportation and trails, a few respondents suggested that a trail system connecting the school to neighboring towns to improve safety for children, families, and commuters. Lastly, Government was identified as an area need. Here, Government refers to better communication between the County and city so that communities are better apprised of proposed and upcoming changes that might affect residents.



Figure 11. Word Cloud: Evaro, Frenchtown, and Lolo: Perceived Needs



Table 10. Evaro, Frenchtown, and Lolo: Top 5 Perceived Needs

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Ranking</b>	<b>Quotes</b>
<b>Education</b>	Schools, including but not limited to building quality, school location, teachers, and staff.	1	<p><i>“A new school facility would help our students live and learn more safely.”</i></p> <p><i>“Our community has been unsuccessful at passing a school bond.”</i></p>
<b>Community</b>	People, neighborhoods, community pride, civic engagement, etc.	2	<p><i>“A close community that steps forward and volunteers for community service.”</i></p> <p><i>“Gain a sense of community.”</i></p> <p><i>“I would like to see an increase in the community involvement for projects in the area.”</i></p>
<b>Recreation</b>	Access to outdoor recreational opportunities including: rivers, trails, fishing, hunting, etc.	3	<p><i>“A public park would be great.”</i></p> <p><i>“Multiuser trail.”</i></p>
<b>Transportation</b>	Infrastructure including roads, traffic lights, sidewalks, and street lights. Typically related to public safety.	4	<p><i>“An adequate trail system linking the elementary school from Frenchtown to Huson on Mullan Road to provide safe walking/biking for community members.”</i></p> <p><i>“Safe biking trails.”</i></p>
<b>Government</b>	Legislation, regulation, etc.	4	<p><i>“Difficulty in working through the ‘system’ created to administer funds for trails.”</i></p> <p><i>“More communication with County officials regarding information affecting our community.”</i></p>

## Concluding Thoughts and Moving Forward

During the summer of 2017, the MCCHD conducted a health assessment of rural communities in Missoula County. The goal of this assessment was to learn about communities from community residents whose words and voices shed insight into area strengths and needs. Most of the rural CHA data arose from a brief 10-item online survey that was disseminated through community councils. The survey captured both demographic and qualitative data, with the short answers providing more detailed information about local communities. In addition to the e-survey, residents were contacted for interviews. Seeley Lake showed a great interest in the CHA, and individuals from non-profits and service organizations met with MCCHD personnel to share their local knowledge. These interviews bolstered the Condon and Seeley qualitative survey data.

Each area has its own unique strengths and needs. However, most communities reported about their strong community bond, wonderful neighbors, beautiful home landscapes, and unparalleled recreational opportunities. Respondents often noted public safety needs like road maintenance or street lights and sidewalks. Some residents would like more regulation like noise or zoning ordinances, while others would like fewer restrictions like developing private land.

It is critical to note that every community recognized the need for something to gather around, usually a school, a church, or a town center. Some communities, like East Missoula, lack this, while others noted that the churches or schools provide a strong, unifying presence.

The MCCHD thanks all participants, particularly community council members and individuals that personally met with MCCHD personnel to discuss their communities in detail. Starting a dialogue and connecting people to information is a starting point for enhancing county health.

APPENDIX

## Community Health Assessment 2017

### Rural Communities Survey

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Thank you for participating in the Community Health Assessment process with the Missoula City-County Health Department. We want to hear from community members like you to understand residents' health and well-being in the county.

This survey consists of 10 questions including a permission waiver, demographic questions, and short answers. Participation in this survey is voluntary and confidential. Skip any question you do not wish to answer.

All findings used in any written reports which result from this survey will be reported by general theme. It is, however, sometimes useful to use direct quotes to describe themes. We will only use a direct quote from you if you agree to this in the question below. We will **not** include your name or any other information that could identify you.

- Please check a box below regarding your responses:
  - I give permission for my responses to be directly quoted.
  - I do **not** give permission for my responses to be directly quoted.

**Thank you for sharing your voice with us.**

**We look forward to serving your community.**

## Demographic Information

For each demographic question below, please check the box that most closely reflects your best response.

1. Where do you live in Missoula County?

- Bonner
- Clinton
- Condon
- East Missoula
- Evaro
- Frenchtown
- Huson
- Lolo
- Missoula
- Seeley Lake
- Turah

2. How often do you live there (see question 1)?

- Full-time / year round
- Part-time / seasonally

3. How long have you lived there (see question 1)?

- Less than one year
- 1-2 years
- 2-5 years
- 5-10 years
- More than 10 years

4. What is your current employment status?

- Full-time
- Part-time
- Unemployed
- Retired
- Other (Please specify: \_\_\_\_\_)

5. What best describes the type of organization you currently work for? (Please check all that apply.)

- Education
- Government
- Healthcare
- For-profit / Private
- Non-profit
- Not applicable
- Other (Please specify: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#))

6. What was or is your most recent job role? Please describe in the space below. (For example: police officer, doctor, logger, school teacher, cook, librarian, biologist, etc.)

Click or tap here to enter text.

## Community Information

The following short answer questions are about the health of your community.

We define “health” broadly: this includes personal health issues such as obesity and health insurance coverage, and system health issues like income, education, housing, recreation, food, and water.

We define “community” as any group of people living in the same place or sharing something in common. For the following questions, think about your community as your family, friends, neighbors, and other town residents.

Please keep these definitions of “health” and “community” in mind when answering these short answer questions.

Provide as little or as much information as you like. Please skip any question you do not wish to answer.

7. What do you see as strengths of your community? (For example: neighborhoods, safety, parks, road systems, health care facilities, government, schools, etc.)

Click or tap here to enter text.

- a. Why do you view these as strengths?

Click or tap here to enter text.



8. What are some of the things that you see as lacking in your community? (For example: neighborhoods, safety, parks, road systems, health care facilities, government, schools, etc.)

Click or tap here to enter text.

- a. Why do you think these things are lacking?

Click or tap here to enter text.

9. If you could change anything about your community, what would it be?

Click or tap here to enter text.

- a. Why would you make that change?

Click or tap here to enter text.

10. What else would you like to share with us about your community?

Click or tap here to enter text.

**Thank you for participating in this process.**

**Your responses will help us better serve you and your community.**

