



Public Health
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Panhandle Health District

Forces of Change

COMMUNITY HEALTH ASSESSMENT

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Forces of Change Overview

The Forces of Change assessment is one of four assessments conducted as part of the Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnership (MAPP) process. This assessment focuses on identifying the trends, factors, and events that are likely to impact health and quality of life in northern Idaho's counties.

The Forces of Change assessment included one-on-one interviews with identified key community members and stakeholders. During the interviews, each person was asked, "What is occurring or might occur that affects the health of our community or the health system?" and "What specific threats or opportunities are generated by these occurrences?"

Forces of Change may be described as broad, all-encompassing categories that include:

- **Trends:** Patterns over time, such as migration in and out of a community or a growing disillusionment with government.
- **Factors:** Discrete elements, such as a community's large ethnic population, an urban setting, or jurisdictional proximity to a major waterway.
- **Events:** One-time occurrences, such as a hospital closure, a natural disaster, or the passage of new legislation.

Categories or forces that were considered were: social, economic, political/legal, environmental, and technological.

A total of three key leaders from each county were selected for interviews. Information collected from interviewees is collated by the county they represent.

Boundary County

Interviews conducted in Boundary County focused on identifying the trends, factors, and events that are likely to impact health and quality of life throughout the community. Participants were encouraged to think about “What is occurring or might occur that affects the health of our community or the health system?” and “What specific threats or opportunities are generated by these occurrences?” To help facilitate the interview, forces were broken down into categories of technical, medical, political, environmental, social, and economic. Most forces impact various categories. Each identified force of change is color coded by category to show the complexity of the force.

Participating Key Leaders: Mayor, Boundary County Area on Aging, Boundary County Family Coalition



Technological



Medical



Political



Environmental



Social



Economic

Population

In Boundary County there is a steady increase in population that poses several threats, as well as opportunities, across



multiple forces of change including social, economic, political, and medical. Boundary County is seeing an increase in the elderly population. This increase is not only from long-time community members aging, but also retirees from other states moving into the county. In addition to an increase in the elderly population, they are seeing overall population growth and increased enrollment in the school systems. Due to the rural location of Boundary County, a real-estate company promotes Boundary County to survivalists and people from around the country who are a part of the “Redoubt movement.” This increase in “Redoubt movement” participants is shifting the political representatives in Boundary County. Finally, a unique force in Boundary

County is the significant traditional Mennonite community. This community is noteworthy for the fact that many do not vote or continue with education beyond 8th grade.

Threats

- Aging population
- Increased burden on the health care system and the Medicare system
- Change in work force and need to replace retiring employees
- Access issues
- Social isolation for elderly
- Political tension
- Redoubt movement could lead to lack of community
- Increase in drug use, opioid crisis

Opportunities/Assets

- Increasing medical services to meet the demand of the aging population
- School system population increase will help build the future Boundary County community
- Growing population can help strengthen the economy
- Kootenai Tribe and reservation
- Increased law enforcement presence

Employment

Boundary County’s two major industries are timber and agriculture. The economic well-being of these industries is influenced by macro forces such as fluctuating commodity prices, and limits on the number of timber that can be cut on federal land. Additionally, Boundary County borders Canada, and many small shops and businesses are impacted when the Canadian dollar decreases. 20-50% of sales in Boundary County come from Canada.



Threats

- Wages are lower than surrounding counties, making it difficult to find skilled workers
- Spouses of wage earners have a difficult time finding employment
- Underemployment
- Timber industry withdrawn
- Forest fires
- Commodity prices

Opportunities/Assets

- Highspeed internet access is anticipated in the future
- High-speed internet will allow spouses to work from home

- Internet shopping, small business closing due to loss of business

Housing

Boundary County’s population is increasing. This is leading to an increased demand for affordable and high-quality housing. Many people are building their own homes to meet their need.



Threats

- Lack of affordable housing
- Limited low-income apartments
- Lack of housing for people with behavioral health needs
- Lack of public shelters

Opportunities/Assets

- Partnerships with housing organizations

Nature

Boundary County is rich in natural resources, which poses both threats and opportunities from multiple forces of change. A large percentage of land is used for farming and producing hops, wheat, etc. There are many absentee land owners in Boundary County who lease the land to farmers. Unique to Boundary County is a large amount of federal forest land that is home to several endangered species, which limits land use.



Threats

- Forest fires
- Drought
- Kootenai River Dam damaged river flow
- Sturgeon fish have stop reproducing

Opportunities/Assets

- Increase timber harvest
- Kootenai Tribe has a fish hatchery and restoration project; they are working to rebuild natural pools for sturgeon to spawn
- Jobs

Bonner County

Interviews conducted in Bonner County focused on identifying trends, factors, and events that are likely to impact health and quality of life in the community. Participants were encouraged to think about “What is occurring or might occur that affects the health of our community or the health system?” and “What are specific threats or opportunities are generated by these occurrences?” To help facilitate the interview, forces were broken down into categories of technical, medical, political, environmental, social, and economic. Most forces impact various categories. Each force is color coded by category to show the complexity and impacts of the force.

Participating Key Leaders: Mayor, Bonner County Commissioner, Bonner County Coalition for Health



Technological



Medical



Political



Environmental



Social



Economic

POPULATION

In Bonner County, communities are experiencing a steady increase in population that poses several threats, as well as opportunities, across multiple forces of change; including social, economic, political and medical. There are concerns developing around the decreasing youth population in the county. Several community leaders and members mentioned that younger residents often move away from Bonner County to find higher paying jobs. This has led to many companies in Bonner County having a difficult time filling job opening. Bonner County is unique in the fact that most of the county identifies as Republican, except for the largest city of Sandpoint. This occasionally creates a polarizing political environment at the county level.



Threats

- Affordable housing; home prices continue to rise, and people are being forced out of their homes due to costs
- Many retirees are moving in and buying “recreational” homes
- Reduction of work force due to age distribution
- Transportation issues
- Many people commute to Bonner County for work
- Lack of emergency shelters for women and children

Opportunities/Assets

- Examine zoning and collaborate with county to improve cost of housing
- Comprehensive planning both south and north of the Long Bridge
- Rising home prices increase the tax base for city improvements
- Selkirk Pend Oreille Transit (SPOT) bus-expanding services, rebranding, and starting van pools for commuters who live in Kootenai County
- SPOT serves Bonner and Boundary Counties; elderly can request rides to doctor’s appointments etc.

HEALTH CARE

Bonner County is served by Bonner General Hospital; a Federally Qualified Health Center, Kaniksu Health Services; and a free health care clinic for the uninsured, Bonner Partners in Care. Bonner General recently expanded and has new facilities and increased services. Sandpoint was recently awarded a High Five Grant which they are using to assess the health of the community and examine the feasibility of a YMCA in the community.



Threats

- High uninsured and underinsured population; many cannot afford care even on a sliding fee
- High suicide rates
- Medicaid not expanding; high proportion of Bonner County falls in the Medicaid coverage gap leaving many without health insurance
- Lack of diabetes prevention classes and tobacco cessation classes

Opportunities/Assets

- Bonner Partners in Care
- Kaniksu Health Services clinics
- Interventions at high schools
- Life Flight
- High Five Grant can make infrastructural changes to the community

Nature

Bonner County is rich in water resources and is home to lake Pend Oreille, Priest Lake, and many rivers that run through the county. In addition to the water resources, there is a robust timber industry. This proves to be challenging with the current political climate and energetic environmental activist groups in Sandpoint. The wealth of natural resources creates several challenges and opportunities environmentally, politically, technologically and economically. People from all over the world come to visit and start new companies in Bonner County to enjoy the outdoors.



Threats

- Law suits against the timber industry; loss of high paying jobs
- Water contamination; oil and coal travel by railroad through the county and threaten the water system
- Increased smoke from forest fires and decreased air quality
- Milfoil in the lake effects swimming and boating and impacts the economy
- Winter storms
- Climate change; Bonner County depends on the ski mountain, Schweitzer, to drive income into the economy
- Aging waste water facility

Opportunities/Assets

- Lake Pend Oreille Waterkeeper, an independent water quality organization
- Sandpoint has a high park per capita and is named a walking city
- Community support around a new or upgraded water plant

EMPLOYMENT

Bonner County is home to several large corporations and organizations, such as Tamarack Aerospace Group, Encoder, Kochava and Quest Aircraft, which provide Bonner County



residents with some high paying jobs. They have recently lost Cold Water Creek and Thorne. Bonner County sees a significant amount of seasonal work with the summer lake and winter ski resort attractions.

Threats

- Climate change; seasonal workers could be impacted
- Decrease in tourism
- Lack of qualified job applicants
- Increasing retiree population

Opportunities/Assets

- Highway 95 improvement
- Tamarack Aerospace Group, Encoder, Kochava, Quest Aircraft
- Timber industry
- New fiber optics in Bonner County should increase high tech businesses moving in and decrease costs
- Increase in tech jobs; library has a “Fab lab” and is encouraging technological skills

Kootenai

Interviews conducted in Kootenai County focused on identifying the trends, factors, and events that are likely to impact health and quality of life throughout the community. Participants were encouraged to think about “What is occurring or might occur that affects the health of our community or the health system?” and “What specific threats or opportunities are generated by these occurrences?” To help facilitate the interview, forces were broken down into categories of technical, medical, political, environmental, social, and economic. Most forces impact various categories. Each force is color coded by category to show the complexity of the force.

Participating Key Leaders: Mayor, Kootenai Behavioral Health, Panhandle Health District



Technological



Medical



Political



Environmental



Social



Economic

AGING POPULATION

In Kootenai County the aging population poses several threats, as well as opportunities, across multiple forces of change, including social, economic, political and medical. The growing elderly population is not only from long-time community members aging, but also from retirees from other states moving into the county.



Threats

- Increased burden on the health care system and the Medicare system
- Change in workforce, and need to replace retiring employees
- Access issues
- Social isolation for elderly

Opportunities/Assets

- Increasing medical services to meet the demand of the aging population
- Increase affordable housing for elderly
- Increase in small businesses and entertainment that cater to the elderly
- Develop safety nets for the elderly

EMPLOYMENT

Kootenai County has recently experienced small business growth. This has bolstered



overall economic growth within Kootenai County. Recently there has been an emphasis on technology jobs and companies with both Jobs Plus, and the new Innovative Collective building established in Coeur d’Alene. Furthermore, there is anticipated growth in the local medical industry with the expansion of Kootenai Health and their Medical Residency program.

Threats

- Small businesses can’t afford benefits or insurance
- Technology replacing people in the workforce
- Underemployment; people need several jobs to support themselves or family

Opportunities/ Assets

- Jobs Plus is working to bring in higher paying jobs
- Training for technology jobs
- Innovative Collective could bring in more businesses
- More medical professionals in the area
- Kootenai Health expansion could keep more health care local

MENTAL HEALTH

All Kootenai County interviewees discussed mental health from various forces that could be, and are, impacting our community. Issues arise from stigma around mental health that leads to people not seeking treatment and high suicide rates. In addition to stigma, there is a lack of mental health providers and hospital beds available for those suffering from mental illness.



Threats

- People not seeking treatment
- High suicide rates
- Increase in suicidal ideation since 2010
- Politics; Crisis Center being an entitlement program
- Lack of housing
- Homelessness
- Lack of beds at the state mental health hospital
- Idaho is the least funded state for mental health

Opportunities/ Assets

- Incorporating PHQ2 or PHQ9 (depression screenings) into primary care office visits
- Patient-Centered Medical Homes
- Advocating for zoning changes to allow for low income housing
- Incorporating mental health education into the Medical Residency program
- Provider education on mental health
- Legislation to increase pay for nursing staff at the state mental health hospital to better serve people and increase the number of beds available
- Idaho State Hospital Association is working to change CPT codes to allow for E.R. reimbursement and adapt the current model
- Kootenai Behavioral Health Initiative group is creating a collective voice for mental health

HOUSING

Kootenai County has recorded significant growth in overall population over the last 10 years. This has put a strain on the affordable housing market in Kootenai County. Kootenai County has also seen a significant increase in housing and shelter costs in the last 4 years.



Threats

- Rising real estate costs
- Rising cost of rent
- Lack of affordable housing
- 10-year wait for permanent transitional housing with St. Vincent De Paul
- Lack of housing for mentally ill
- Increase in housing could put a strain on the aquifer

Opportunities/Assets

- Advocate for additional housing
- Advocate for zoning changes to allow for more transitional housing

POPULATION

Kootenai County has seen a steady increase of people moving into the area from out of state interviewees mentioned a positive trend in residents



who are more environmentally friendly, and willing to serve and give to the community. With the increase in population, a negative impact on the community has been the outgrowing of current infrastructures.

Threats

- Keeping up with the growth infrastructurally
- Keeping up with medical services needed
- Increase in drug use; opioid crisis
- Increase in crime
- Current political instability; elections

Opportunities/ Assets

- Trend of people becoming more physically active and getting outside
- Increase biking and trail opportunities in the county to support the more active community
- Expanding health care services and primary care
- The Kootenai Environmental Alliance, county, and city partnerships
- Continue to provide education on the importance of keeping the aquifer clean

HEALTH CARE

Kootenai County is continuing to develop assets within the medical and health care field. Kootenai Health has lead the effort to



increase high quality health care services, bring in new doctors through their residency program, and expand their building. Additionally, there is a growing effort to qualify doctors' offices as patient-centered medical homes that allow people to be active participants in their health care.

Threats

- Uncertainty of the Affordable Care Act
- Idaho Medicaid Gap
- Reimbursement issues with Medicaid
- 30% of medical care goes to Spokane
- Cost of electronic medical records system for Kootenai Health
- High immunization exemption
- Increasing sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)

Opportunities/ Assets

- Statewide Healthcare Innovation Plan
- Heritage Health a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC)
- Kootenai Residency program
- Patient-centered medical homes lead to improved health outcomes
- Improved medical technology and the partnership with the Mayo Clinic
- Kootenai Health changing electronic medical record system for all offices, increasing communication and streamlining care

NATURE

Kootenai County is rich in it natural resources. It provides residents with an abundance of outdoor and recreational opportunities. Kootenai County's natural resources help drive the economy with tourism, logging, and others. However, weather, fires, and population increase poses several threats.



Threats

- Forest fires which threaten homes
- Poor air quality caused by forest fires

Opportunities/ Assets

- Cross-state collaboration for developing fire mitigation plans

FORCES OF CHANGE

- Small businesses impacted by poor air quality
 - Winter weather increases social isolation
 - Aquifer is the water resource for North Idaho; risk of contamination
- Continue to protect and provide education on aquifer protection

Benewah

Interviews conducted in Benewah County focused on identifying the trends, factors, and events that are likely to impact health and quality of life throughout the community. Participants were encouraged to think about “What is occurring or might occur that affects the health of our community or the health system?” and “What specific threats or opportunities are generated by these occurrences?” To help facilitate the interview, forces were broken down into categories of technical, medical, political, environmental, social and economic. Most forces impact various categories. Each force is color coded by category to show the complexity of the force.

Participating Key Leaders: Benewah Medical Center, St. Maries Gazette



Technological



Medical



Political



Environmental



Social



Economic

POPULATION

Benewah County is divided between the two main cities, St. Maries and Plummer, which have two different populations and



cultures. St. Maries is experiencing stagnant growth in the community. Many residents have lived and worked in St. Maries for most of their life and are nearing retirement. However, due to limited housing, the population is not increasing, and there are not enough new residents to replace retirees. Conversely, Plummer is one of the few places in the county experiencing growth in their younger population. Plummer and the surrounding area is home to the Coeur d’Alene Tribe and Reservation. Across Benewah County there are many people who want to live “off the grid”.

Threats

- Increasing aging population in St. Maries area; unable to fill jobs of those who are retiring; school system is shrinking
- Plummer’s younger population; lack of institutional knowledge about tribal culture
- Resistance to change within the community

Opportunities/ Assets

- Recruit new residents to St. Maries
- Create more housing opportunities to bring people into the county

MEDICAL

Benewah County has two major assets in medical care. They have Marimn Health and Wellness Center that is a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) and Benewah Community



Hospital. Marimn Health and Wellness Center is a patient-centered medical home dedicated to a strong continuum of care. With many strengths in medical care, there is a lack of an OB-GYN providers in Benewah County. Many women travel to Kootenai County to receive prenatal care.

Threats

- Lack of OB-GYN in the county could lead to poor health outcomes for babies; women not receiving prenatal care; pregnant women absent from work to travel to medical appointments, etc.
- New CEO at Benewah Community Hospital could lead to staff turnover and uncertainty of changes and finance
- Increase in the opioid epidemic; seeing a trend of babies born addicted to drugs
- Increase in teens using tobacco products

Opportunities/ Assets

- Marimn Health is an FQHC
- Marimn Health is a patient-centered medical home
- Marimn Health treats both tribal and non-tribal members
- Marimn Health is a tribal medical center which opens the community to many grant opportunities
- Benewah Community hospital will be getting a new electronic medical records system
- The new superintendent is enforcing vaccine policies in St. Maries School District

- Due to proximity to Washington, there is an increase in marijuana use

HOUSING

In Benewah County, both in St. Maries, Plummer, and surrounding areas, there is a lack of quality, affordable housing.



The lack of housing in St. Maries is driving up the cost of homes and making it difficult for young families to move into the area. In Plummer there is a moratorium on new buildings. In both cities you see many employees living outside the county and commuting to work. Finally, the reservation is a checkerboard reservation, which means there are a mix of tribal and non-tribal members living on the reservation.

Threats

- Lack of quality homes
- Lack of quality affordable homes; cost of homes is higher than income
- Moratorium on new buildings
- People not motivated to move into the county
- Checker board reservation; discordance with some state and tribal laws
- Lack of enforcement of septic system permits when building

Opportunities/ Assets

- Checker board reservation

NATURE & PHYSICAL SURROUNDING

Benewah County is well known for its rural setting. Much of the land in Benewah County is privately owned which allows for one of its major industries,



logging. The rural setting poses many opportunities, as well as threats. People in Benewah County enjoy nature and the peacefulness of the county and many choose to live “off the grid”.

Threats

- Overlogging of resources
- Mismanaged lands could increase wild fires
- Adjudication of water rights
- People being “off the grid” feeling safe to use drugs

Opportunities/ Assets

- Provide a livelihood for many people who live in Benewah
- Increased access to the lake for the tribe could help improve wellness and get back to cultural wellness

Shoshone

Interviews conducted in Shoshone County focused on identifying trends, factors, and events that are likely to impact health and quality of life in throughout the community. Participants were encouraged to think about “What is occurring or might occur that affects the health of our community or the health system?” and “What specific threats or opportunities that are generated by these occurrences?” To help facilitate the interview, forces were broken down into categories of technical, medical, political, environmental, social and economic. Most forces impact various categories. Each force is color coded by category to show the complexity of the force.

Participating Key Leaders: Silver Valley Chamber of Commerce, Shoshone Medical Center



Technological



Medical



Political



Environmental



Social



Economic

POPULATION

Shoshone County has seen a decrease in population over the last few years, posing several threats and opportunities socially, economically, and technologically. Shoshone has



historically been a mining community with a “work hard, play hard” mentality. However, due to the cyclical work of mining, during times when the mine shuts down or people are on strike, there is some fluidity to the community. When miners are out of work, there is a decrease in people recreating and spending money, which leads to a lower overall socioeconomic status.

Threats

- Lack of resources for mental health
- High suicide rates
- Aging population; increasing medical costs and fixed incomes

Opportunities/ Assets

- People moving into Shoshone bring in new perspectives
- Farm to Table movement and a new farmers’ market that takes EBT cards

FORCES OF CHANGE

- Volunteer shortage
- Poor health outcomes for community members
- Influx of people buying homes pushes locals out
- Influx of people buying homes in the Silver Valley which increase the tax base

EMPLOYMENT

Mining has been the primary industry for several decades in Shoshone County. The cyclical nature of mining employment creates economic surges and depressions within the Silver Valley. During times when the mine shuts down, or employees are on strike, there is a significant decrease in people recreating and spending money which leads to a lower socioeconomic status overall. However, there has been an increase in eco-tourism in the Silver Valley, which is breathing new life back into the community.



Threats

- Mines shutting down or workers going on strike; puts 260 people out of work
- Weak economy; decrease in tourism
- Gas prices increasing
- Workforce development issues; finding qualified workforce

Opportunities/ Assets

- Sale of Silver Mountain; expanding services and tourism to the area
- Increase in eco-tourism
- Wallace festivals
- Rails to Trails
- Provide classes for people applying for jobs; resume development; etc.
- Growth potential drawing in new businesses
- Increase in construction jobs due to new homes being built

NATURE & PHYSICAL SURROUNDING

Shoshone County is home to the largest Superfund site in the United States, which brings many



challenges and opportunities for improvement. The remediation that has happened in the Silver Valley has been used as a model around the world, but the environmental impact presents several threats. Elevated lead levels still pose a threat to the community. Education related to lead exposure and prevention is important to maintain a healthy community.

Threats

- Superfund site; perceived high blood lead levels
- 100-year flood breakpoint through Kellogg; barriers which protect Superfund site would be compromised
- End of yard remediation program in two years; loss of jobs
- Closing of the road paving project; loss of jobs; will have to rely on tax payer dollars to upgrade and fix roads

Opportunities/ Assets

- Recovery of the flora and fauna
- Flood management group
- Brush cleanup and fire reduction
- Lots of outdoor recreation activities; hunting, hiking, mountain biking, etc.
- Trail of the Coeur d' Alene
- With the ending of the yard remediation, they will be moving to the Coeur d'Alene Basin clean up
- Upgrade central water treatment plant; see a reduction in heavy metals in the south fork by 40%