



CLIMATE SMART
MISSOULA

Health and Climate Summit

A Recap of this Community Meeting

Early on the morning of October 28, 2016, just over 100 people, from health professionals to city planners to affordable housing advocates and more, came together to discuss all things climate and health. This diverse cross-section of the Missoula community heard from a panel of experts about current efforts to address public health challenges at the neighborhood level, the latest cutting edge research on local climate change projections, and how we can work together to address the mental and physical health impacts wrought by a changing climate, especially for the most vulnerable groups like low-income folks, the elderly, and children.

For the second half of the morning, we turned the tables: attendees had a chance to share their ideas for how to improve community health for all Missoulians in light of climate challenges. In breakout groups, there were insightful and productive conversations about wildfire smoke, healthy homes and emergency shelters, mental health, wellness and livability, and long-range planning strategies.

Through both the panel speakers and the breakout discussions, it was evident that what may appear as disconnected community stressors, challenges, and solutions are, indeed, intertwined. Planning for a changing climate is foremost simply sound planning with a social equity lens. A healthy community needs educational resources, healthy homes, trees, trails, and parks. Preventative, “upstream” medicine and care will benefit us all, now and into the future.

We were thrilled by the great turnout and dynamic conversations around the room. This was the third Community Climate Summit over the last few years, and like the previous ones, our community’s creativity, collaborative spirit, and dedication shined. This is how we create the Missoula of the future.

We have more from this [Summit and additional Health and Climate Resources on our website](#).

The Panel in a Nutshell

This Panel was moderated by Beth Schenk, PhD, MHI, RN-BC, Nurse Scientist, Providence St. Patrick Hospital. Beth has been a community and regional leader in sustainability, energy, and climate efforts for over a decade and is on Climate Smart’s Executive Team. She led the panel and seamlessly connected the four speakers and their areas of expertise.

Lisa Beczkiewicz, Missoula Invest Health, Missoula City-County Health Department and Mike Snook, Missoula County GIS Manager. Roll out of the collaboratively developed “Missoula Community Health Map” describing relationships between obesity, mental health, and the physical environment, and which can identify ways to accelerate efforts to create healthy places for Missoulians.

Lisa shared an amazing array of maps in which we could zoom in and out and look at variables of interest. This will be a fantastic community tool and promises to be available by the end of November.

Nick Silverman, PhD, Research Scientist, Montana Climate Office. Where are we headed? New release of climate projections for this region developed for Montana’s Climate Assessment

Nick provided a first look at where our western Montana climate is projected to head. This work will be finalized and available this summer as part of our much needed statewide Climate Assessment so we cannot share his maps yet. Here are his 5 main conclusions looking ahead to 2040: 1. It is getting hot, no matter how you look at it. 2. These changes will have impacts (e.g. health). 3. It is likely getting wetter

overall. 4. Summers are getting drier. 5. Drought is really complicated. And in sum, if we go forth with “business as usual” and don’t curtail emissions, it’s all a whole heck of a lot worse.

Samer Khodor, MD, Physician Exec Ambulatory Services, Providence St. Patrick Hospital. Weaving together Missoula’s climate projections, vulnerable populations, and health risks.

Samer shared his thoughts on health issues, preventive vs acute care delivery, and climate challenges facing those at risk and our community. Respiratory and cardiac conditions are made worse by wildfire smoke and extreme heat. Smoke and heat affect us physiologically and psychologically. Interestingly, only 10% of the reasons for medical visits are directly attributed to actual disease or condition; the other 90% are a result of environment and lifestyle. This underscores the importance of addressing preventive health in times of change.

Amy Cilimburg, Director, Climate Smart Missoula. Showcasing climate resiliency outreach and collaborative solutions stemming from the first season of “Summer Smart”; release new animated film.

Amy provided a brief history of Climate Smart and the history and goals of these Community Summits. She described the Summer Smart initiative, which helps our community thrive amid increasing summer wildfire smoke and heat by helping Missoulians be physically, mentally, and economically healthy and resilient. This includes developing a [website](#) as the “go to” place for resources, outreach materials and activities, a “Clean Air Cool Places” interactive map, animated short films on wildfire smoke and heat, and more.



Recap of the six breakout discussions

Attendees self-sorted into one of six breakout groups, participating in a 1 hour facilitated discussion.

Wildfire Smoke Breakout Group

Facilitated by Amy Cilimburg. Our group had a range of experience, from health practitioners to University researchers to local government and community members. We came up with lots of ways to address and better deal with wildfire smoke. Given that episodes of wildfire smoke are projected to increase in duration, intensity and frequency (even into the fall when school is in session) and we cannot escape it completely, we discussed the need for specific timely education and outreach materials and to both target the message and the recipient. Climate Smart Missoula’s collaborative “Summer Smart” program has a good start on these and is headed in the right direction. We need to be cautious not to scare people, especially when conditions do not warrant, so timing of the outreach is key. We need a system to get HEPA air filters to those in need, provide for free if possible. Over the long term there is a need for identified, safe, free, clean air locations around the community. Along with this infrastructure we need to work to help our community be dynamic, flexible, hopeful, and creative in our community-wide response. 10 community members.

Healthy Homes

Facilitated by Eran Fowler Pehan and Andrea Davis. The overall theme of our discussion was positive, solution focused, and engaged. We had a good mix of finance folks, developers, community members, and industry leaders. This provided significant depth to our short conversation! There is an identified need for a clearinghouse that can provide clear guidance for both homeowners and commercial builder/owners on the best use/impact of specific sustainability practice. If I only have \$10,000 to invest, what is best for both my checkbook and for the planet? Solar, LED's, more sustainable materials at construction? More education on all fronts is needed to help people make the best choices. Healthy homes includes the surrounding area, with need for walkable neighborhoods, trees, parks, and ways for everyone to be active. 17 community members.

Long-Range Planning Breakout Group

Facilitated by Laval Means and Chase Jones. Our group discussed numerous ways that planning policy, zoning, transportation, and waste informs and can mitigate our changing climate. We described a future vision that retained precious resources, created equitable and affordable places, reduced the dependency on automobiles and improved the overall health of the residents. The group focused on the significance of where and how development occurs with an emphasis on concentrating development as mixed use and higher densities in the urban core of Missoula as well as county places like Lolo and Seeley. There was a great deal of discussion about the patterns of development and the need to recognize that people want to live in rural and suburban environments yet supporting sprawl will not be an effective way to counter climate change. The group pointed to the satellite nature of communities outside the Missoula urban area and felt that supporting those places with community services and a mix of uses will help to reduce the need to travel long distances un-necessarily. The group focused on transportation needs and trends and considered ways to reduce the amount of congestion and parking in the urban core. They elevated the desire to plan so that a vehicle may not be needed, while acknowledging that people are still driving to get to the many fun places around Missoula County – like to ski or to recreate on the rivers. Overall, the discussion looked at long range planning from a broad perspective of county and city considerations. The group seemed interested in continuing the discussion through future meetings. 18 community members.

Mental Health Breakout Group

Facilitated by Katie Deuel. The group acknowledged that there is more to learn, but we know that smoke, heat and a changing landscape create significant negative impacts on people's mental health, from the already challenged to the generally fit. Mental health is our base, and strongly linked to physical health. Issues span from specific mental health conditions to broader considerations of loss, change, anxiety, fear, and *solastalgia* (grief or existential distress from wicked problems like climate change) and also resiliency, connectedness, and concern and care for those at increased risk. Positive visions for the future include connected and aware neighborhoods and overall community; services and healthy indoor and outdoor spaces accessible to all; and all sectors are involved, from churches to police to schools to health providers. There needs to be opportunity to be creative, have access to the arts, to share, and to help each other. Specific concern given to elderly or others who maybe isolated and to kids. We need to educate and inspire, strengthen access to resources, experts, and build needed infrastructure, from libraries to indoor gardens to intergenerational housing. 10 Community members

Wellness and Livability Breakout

Facilitated by Lisa Beczkiewicz. This group had many ideas and suggestions. There is a lot of good work already happening to support this area, from Let's Move programs in schools, to the Missoula Invest Health project in three neighborhoods. However, more intentional connections and partnerships may be needed, especially ways to connect with existing resources and access relevant data. For example, expanding the

current veggie prescription program to other health issues would create stronger links between medical professionals and community resources. Many also expressed the need for continued outreach to vulnerable populations who already face challenges and will be most impacted by climate change. This highlights the potential and need to integrate policy and planning efforts with wellness and livability in an era of climate change; a safe network of low-carbon transportation will help all Missoulians choose healthier commute options. Further education about the nexus between climate, health and wellness could benefit a variety of audiences, from the general population, to medical and public health practitioners. A rotating open forum on different topics could be way to share information in an accessible way. Working on the neighborhood level also offers the opportunity to build relationships so that people feel valued and supported. 17 community members.

Emergency Preparedness Breakout Group

Facilitated by Rachel Goen. The group primarily comprised individuals who work on emergency preparedness right now, with a great deal of community preparedness experience. Two members were university students in public health that had completed projects and assessments regarding emergency preparedness. Group members were in agreement that there should be more communication amongst people working in emergency response right now, and there are opportunities to improve communication with the public (via regular and social media, neighborhood councils, schools, hospitals). Overall, our community does know how to respond to current emergencies such as fire or other devastating events in which evacuations and emergency shelters are needed. It appears harder to understand and plan for the kind of emergency that shuts people in such as smoke or heat. New climate related emergencies will require new health communication delivery models, considerations of land use planning (e.g., building in the Wilderness Urban Interface), and programs to help those in need. 8 community members.

Summit Supporters

The 2016 Health and Climate Summit was hosted by Climate Smart Missoula with financial support from GCS, American Lung Association in Montana, and The Institute of Health and Humanities. This event has also been made possible by the Bloomberg Award for Partners for Places to Climate Smart Missoula for “Summer Smart”. This award is a partnership with the City of Missoula and was matched by community partners, including Providence Saint Patrick Hospital, Missoula Federal Credit Union, the Llewellyn Foundation, Community Hospital, The LEAW Foundation, Providence Montana Health Foundation, Sunburst Sensors LLC, WGM, other conservation groups, and myriad individuals.

Thanks to everyone who contributed or attended this Summit

Please direct any questions or follow up to Amy Cilimburg: amy@climatesmartmissoula.org; 406-926-2847. Copies of the breakout discussion notes are available upon request.

For more see: <http://www.missoulaclimate.org/health-and-climate-summit.html>

