

Tourism Development Potential: Absarokee Resident Attitudes and Visitor Characteristics

Area of Study: Absarokee Montana



Research Report 2006-1

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Tourism Development Potential: Absarokee Resident Attitudes and Visitor Characteristics

AS PART OF THE
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents information about tourism and recreation in Absarokee and throughout the state. It offers estimated travel volume and traveler characteristics for overnight visitors to Stillwater County, which was extrapolated from the 2001/2002 Nonresident Travel Study dataset, and includes the results of a 2005 Absarokee resident attitude survey. This survey provides residents' opinions and attitudes regarding tourism and its development in the Absarokee area, and compares those results with a 2004 statewide survey.

The Absarokee resident attitude survey represents responses from a random sample of 193 households in the fall of 2005, and a statewide random sample of 410 Montana households collected fall 2004. The survey sequence was initiated by mailing a pre-survey notice letter to all selected households. A week later, the first round of questionnaires was mailed followed by a reminder/thank-you postcard one week later. Two weeks after mailing the postcards, replacement questionnaires were sent to those households who had not yet responded. The final adjusted response rate was 51 percent for Absarokee, and 47 percent for the state.

The following bulleted points offer highlights of the 2001/2002 Nonresident Travel Study for Stillwater County and the state, in addition to the 2005 Absarokee and 2004 statewide resident attitude surveys. A more detailed analysis is found in the remainder of the report.

Nonresident Visitors:

- In 2004, over four million nonresident travel groups visited Montana. Of those, about 1,462,000 groups traveled through Stillwater County, with 146,000 driving through Absarokee.
- Over \$1.9 billion was spent statewide in 2004 by nonresident travelers with more than \$6.8 million being spent in Stillwater County. Statewide this amounts to approximately \$2,115 for every Montana resident, and \$818 for Stillwater County residents.
- Fifty-three percent of nonresident overnight visitors in Stillwater County were primarily on vacation, compared to 43 percent at the statewide level. Twenty-three percent were in the state primarily to visit family or friends.
- Ninety-seven percent of visitors to Stillwater County had visited Montana before their trip, and 14 percent had previously lived in the state.
- Less than half (41%) of Stillwater County visitors traveled as couples, with nearly half (49%) traveling with family.
- Montana visitors who also spent a night in Stillwater County were more likely than statewide visitors to stay in campgrounds and with friends or relatives while in Montana.
- Only 27 percent of Stillwater County overnight visitors had an annual income over \$60,000, compared to 51 percent for the state.
- More than half (53%) of overnight visitors to Stillwater County found information from the Internet to be the most useful information source of the sources listed to plan their trip, and brochure racks (60%) were the most useful during their trip.
- Vacationers to Stillwater County were attracted to Montana primarily for Yellowstone National Park (38%) and visiting family and friends (18%).
- Stillwater County visitors' largest expenditures were retail sales (38%), followed by overnight accommodations (23%).

Absarokee Resident Attitudes about Tourism:

- Respondents from Absarokee have resided in their community for 20 years and in the state for 33 years compared to the statewide respondents who have lived in their community for 24 and in the state for 33 years.
- Montana natives comprise 45 percent of the Absarokee sample.
- The largest portion (16%) of Absarokee residents earns their household income from manufacturing occupations.
- The majority (54%) of Absarokee respondents feel the tourism industry should have a role at least equal to other industries in the local economy (18% said a dominant role), and ranked the industry fourth on a list of eight desired economic development options.
- Nearly all (93%) of Absarokee residents work in places that they perceive to supply a part or none of their products or services to tourists or tourist businesses.
- While 67 percent of Absarokee respondents have infrequent or somewhat infrequent contact with tourists, nearly half (47%) enjoy meeting and interacting with tourists.
- Residents of Absarokee show slightly less attachment to their community than the statewide respondents mostly because they do not think the future of their community looks bright.
- Absarokee residents feel that tourism can enhance their quality of life by improving museums and cultural centers and job opportunities.
- The respondents of Absarokee are generally supportive of tourism development to the same degree as statewide residents.
- Residents of Absarokee strongly agree that decisions about tourism development should involve residents of the community, as do statewide respondents.
- Economic growth is perceived as the primary advantage of increased tourism in Absarokee, while overcrowding is the leading disadvantage.
- Outdoor recreation is what Absarokee residents feel has the greatest potential for attracting visitors.
- The scenic mountains near Absarokee are its greatest attraction, as well as the most common place residents take visiting friends and relatives.

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INTRODUCTION

This report is intended to provide an analysis of Absarokee and statewide resident attitudes toward tourism development, as well as a profile of recent visitors to the Stillwater County. It combines the results of three different studies and is presented in two sections. The first section contains county-level nonresident visitor profiles, as well as profiles for statewide visitors. The visitor profiles were developed using research conducted by the Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research at The University of Montana throughout 2001 and in the fall of 2002. Data from nonresident travelers spending at least one night in Stillwater County were used for the profile information.

The second section of this report contains an assessment of resident attitudes toward tourism in Absarokee. This assessment is the result of a survey obtained from households throughout the city in the fall 2005. It is provided side by side with the same inquiries collected at the state level in 2004 to provide a comparison between resident opinions toward tourism in Absarokee and in Montana as a whole.

Information for this report was gathered as part of the Community Tourism Assessment Program (CTAP), which is a nine month economic development program conducted in three Montana communities each year. Absarokee was selected for the 2005/2006 CTAP, together with Cooke City and Silver Bow County. The CTAP program is facilitated by Travel Montana (Montana Department of Commerce) and the Montana State University Extension Service.

Funding for this research comes from Montana's Accommodations Tax. Copies of this report can be downloaded from ITRR's web site at www.itrr.umt.edu.

Section 1: Nonresident Visitors to Montana and Stillwater County

Methodology

Travelers to Montana during the 2001 travel year (December 1, 2000 - November 30, 2001) and the fall of 2002 (October 1 – November 30, 2002) were intercepted for the 2001/2002 Nonresident Travel Study. The traveler population was defined as those travelers entering Montana by private vehicle or commercial air carrier during the study period, and whose primary residence was not in Montana at the time. Specifically excluded from the study were those persons traveling in a plainly marked commercial or government vehicle such as a scheduled or chartered bus, or commercial vehicles. Also excluded were those travelers who entered Montana by train since passenger volume is relatively small, and passengers are not distinguished based on residency. Other than these exceptions, the study attempted to assess all types of travelers to the state.

Data were obtained through a mail-back diary questionnaire administered to a sample of intercepted travelers in the state. During the fourteen-month study period, 11,996 questionnaires were delivered to visitor groups (Table 1). Usable questionnaires were returned by 4,595 groups, resulting in a response rate of 38 percent. A sub-sample of 1,608 respondent groups traveled through the Stillwater County, with 40¹ of them spending at least one night in the area.

Table 1: The 2001/2002 Nonresident Travel Study

	Sample
Questionnaires delivered	11,996
Questionnaires returned	4,595
Overall response rate	38%
Nonresidents who drove through Stillwater County	1,608
Nonresidents who spent at least 1 night in Stillwater County	40

A Profile of Recent Montana Visitors

This section presents a profile of Montana visitors from the 2001/2002 nonresident survey. Group characteristics are reviewed for both statewide visitors as well as overnight travelers to Stillwater County. Overnight visitors are important for analysts and marketers due to their more inclusive spending patterns compared to day trippers. In addition, a brief economic profile highlights the spending contributions nonresidents make to Stillwater County and throughout Montana.

Group Characteristics

Travel group characteristics for the Stillwater County were obtained from visitors who spent at least one night in the area. Tables 2 and 3 show several differences between the travel groups staying overnight in this travel area and across Montana.

¹ ITRR recognizes that a sample of only 40 respondents is insufficiently small for making generalizations; however, the sample has been included here to merely compare those respondents with the statewide sample for the Absarokee CTAP committee.

Table 2: Reasons for Traveling to Montana

	Stillwater Co.		Statewide	
	All Reasons*	Primary Reason**	All Reasons*	Primary Reason**
Vacation	73%	53%	62%	43%
Visit family or friends	31%	23%	29%	16%
Passing through	23%	19%	34%	26%
Business	19%	5%	11%	9%
Shopping	5%	--	8%	2%
Other	13%	1%	7%	5%

Source: ITRR 2001/2002 Nonresident Travel Study. Stillwater County overnight visitors n=40; statewide all visitors n=4595. *Visitors could indicate more than one reason. **Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Table 3: Characteristics of Nonresident Visitors

	Stillwater Co.	Statewide
Group Type		
Friends	3%	6%
Couple	41%	40%
Alone	7%	18%
Family	49%	28%
Family & friends	--	4%
Business associates	--	2%
Organized group	--	1%
Have previously visited Montana	97%	80%
Have previously lived in Montana	14%	17%
Nights spent in Montana	5.1	4.4
Accommodations used in Montana		
Private campground	43%	14%
Home of friend or relative	27%	17%
Hotel, motel, B&B	22%	47%
Public campground	4%	10%
Private cabin/2 nd home	1%	4%
Rented cabin/home	--	2%
Other	3%	6%
Income		
Less than \$20,000	41%	7%
\$20,000 to \$39,999	14%	17%
\$40,000 to \$59,999	18%	25%
\$60,000 to \$79,999	7%	20%
\$80,000 to \$99,999	14%	11%
Over \$100,000	6%	20%
Place of Primary Residence		
	WA (43%)	WA (13%)
	CA (14%)	CA (7%)
	ID (13%)	ALB, MN (6%)
	MN, OR (5%)	ID, ND, WY (5%)
	CO, WI (3%)	CO, OR (4%)

Source: ITRR 2001/2002 Nonresident Travel Study. Stillwater County overnight visitors n=40; statewide all visitors n=4595. Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Compared to the statewide sample, overnight visitors to Stillwater County are visiting family or friends more, but passing through the state at a much smaller margin. Other visitor characteristics show some differences; group types, accommodations, household income, and residency followed different distributions for the two samples.

Information Sources

Nonresident travel groups indicated which information sources were used as planning tools for their trip *prior* to arriving in Montana, as well as while they were *visiting* Montana. Also, respondents indicated which of the sources were most useful to them. A list of nine pre-trip and five Montana information sources was included in the questionnaire (Table 4).

Table 4: Travel Information Sources

Information Sources Used <i>Prior to Visiting Montana</i>	Stillwater Co.		Statewide	
	All Sources*	Most Useful Source**	All Sources*	Most Useful Source**
The Internet	42%	53%	37%	39%
Auto club	39%	12%	23%	24%
Chamber or visitor bureau	11%	13%	8%	4%
National Park brochure	6%	8%	14%	7%
Travel guide book	5%	5%	10%	8%
Montana Travel Planner	4%	--	8%	5%
Information from private businesses	3%	4%	9%	9%
Travel agency	3%	1%	4%	3%
1-800 State travel number	2%	3%	1%	1%
None of the sources	41%	n/a	41%	n/a

Information Sources Used <i>While Visiting Montana</i>				
	Stillwater Co.	Statewide		
Brochure racks	51%	60%	24%	16%
Highway information signs	24%	17%	32%	26%
Service person (motel, restaurant, gas station, etc.)	17%	15%	29%	25%
Visitor information center	8%	3%	22%	23%
Billboards	7%	2%	12%	5%
None of these sources	28%	4%	39%	n/a

Source: ITRR 2001/2002 Nonresident Travel Study. Stillwater County overnight visitors n=40; statewide all visitors n=4595.

*Visitors could indicate more than one information source. **Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Regarding information sources used prior to visiting Montana, both samples showed some similarities with over one-third to one-half finding the Internet as the most useful. Furthermore, both groups had somewhat comparable percentages for information sources used while in Montana; with the exception of brochure racks that were used at a much higher rate for the Stillwater County group.

Montana Attractions and Activities

Respondents who indicated that one purpose for their trip was vacation were asked what attracted them to Montana as a vacation destination. They were asked to check all pertinent attractions, and then indicate one *primary* attraction (Table 5). In addition they were asked about various recreation activities in which they participated (Table 6).

Table 5: Attractions of Montana as a Vacation Destination

	Stillwater Co.		Statewide	
	Attractions*	Primary Attraction**	Attractions*	Primary Attraction**
Yellowstone National Park	48%	38%	31%	20%
Native American culture	46%	3%	6%	1%
Mountains	34%	7%	35%	10%
Rivers/lakes	24%	--	24%	1%
Open space	22%	5%	29%	11%
Other Montana history	19%	3%	8%	3%
Visiting family and friends	19%	18%	17%	13%
Wildlife	15%	--	20%	1%
Camping	14%	2%	14%	2%
Glacier National Park	10%	3%	21%	16%
Fishing	8%	5%	11%	4%
Lewis & Clark sites	7%	12%	7%	1%
Hiking	6%	--	13%	<1%
Special events	3%	--	5%	4%
Northern Great Plains	1%	--	6%	<1%
Hunting	--	3%	3%	5%
Other	9%	2%	7%	7%

Source: ITRR 2001/2002 Nonresident Travel Study. Stillwater County overnight visitors n=40; statewide all visitors n=4595.

*Visitors could indicate more than one attraction. **Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Table 6: Recreation Activity Participation

	Stillwater Co.	Statewide
Visiting other historic sites	55%	23%
Camping (developed area)	51%	19%
Visiting Native American sites	48%	12%
Shopping	40%	37%
Day hiking	31%	26%
Wildlife watching	27%	29%
Special event/festivals	21%	9%
Camping (primitive areas)	20%	8%
Backpacking	17%	3%
Fishing	16%	13%
Road/mountain biking	16%	5%
Visiting museums	16%	16%
River rafting	11%	5%
Picnicking	10%	22%
Canoeing/kayaking	9%	3%
Nature studies	9%	9%
Off-road/ATV	7%	2%
Visiting Lewis & Clark sites	7%	13%
Gambling	6%	8%
Sporting event	5%	3%
Golfing	2%	5%
Motor boating, water skiing	2%	4%
Sailing/windsurfing	--	<1%

Source: ITRR 2001/2002 Nonresident Travel Study. Stillwater County overnight visitors n=40; statewide all visitors n=4595. Note: Visitors could indicate more than one activity.

Looking at the attractions of Montana, Stillwater County respondents preferred Yellowstone National Park and visiting Lewis and Clark sites more than the statewide group. On the other hand, more statewide respondents were attracted to Glacier National Park and open space than the Stillwater County group. With the exception of just six recreation activities (out of 23), the Stillwater County sample participated in all other recreation activities to higher degrees than the statewide group.

Economic Characteristics

Information about the number of visitors to an area and how much they spend during their visit is useful for planning purposes. While the preceding travel group characteristics are based only on groups who spent at least one night in the Stillwater or the state, economic information represents nonresident groups who spent money in the county or state whether they stayed a night or not (Table 7).

Table 7: Expenditures of Nonresident Travelers

Distribution of Expenditures	Stillwater Co.	Statewide
Retail sales	38%	21%
Lodging, campgrounds, etc.	23%	13%
Restaurant, bar	14%	21%
Gas, oil	12%	22%
Guides, outfitters	6%	4%
Groceries, snacks	4%	7%
Auto rental and repair, transportation	3%	7%
Misc. expenses, licenses, fees	1%	4%
Total expenditures in sample area, 2004	\$6,861,000	\$1,958,000,000
Total travel groups through Stillwater County, 2004	1,462,000	4,241,000
Total travel groups through Absarokee, 2004	146,000	
Travel group size (persons)	2.3	2.4
Population, 2004	8,391	925,739
Per capita expenditures in sample area	\$818	\$2,115

Source: ITRR 2001/2002 Nonresident Travel Study; U.S. Census Bureau, 2005². Stillwater all visitors n=40; statewide all visitors n=4595. Economic information updated 02/09/06; percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Differences in expenditure distribution show that the Stillwater County visitors spend a larger portion of their money on retail goods and accommodations than statewide visitors, but less on restaurants and gas. Lower gasoline expenditures could be due to travelers having filled up their tanks in relatively nearby cities (Billings, Livingston, Red Lodge) before they visited Stillwater County; and then leaving the county with enough fuel for their next destination. Nearly 10 percent of travelers through Stillwater County travel directly through Absarokee.

²U.S. Census Bureau, 2005. Montana County Population Estimates. <http://factfinder.census.gov>. Accessed October 22, 2005.

Section 2: The Resident Attitude Survey

METHODOLOGY

In an effort to help understand how residents feel about tourism and its impacts, a resident attitude survey was conducted. In the fall of 2005, a booklet-style questionnaire was administered to a sample of Absarokee residents. A similar survey (although lacking Absarokee-specific questioning) was also distributed in 2004 to a statewide random sample during the same period and those results are reported here as well.

The survey administration sequence was initiated by mailing a pre-survey notification letter to a random sample of 500 Absarokee households³, and 1,000 Montana residents. The letter informed recipients of the survey and alerted them to the appearance of a questionnaire in their mailbox in the near future. A week later, a questionnaire was mailed to the same households, along with a cover letter from the local CTAP working group and a cover letter from ITRR stating in more detail the purpose and nature of the study.

One week following the questionnaire mailing, a postcard was sent to all selected households. This served the dual purpose of thanking respondents for their efforts if they had already returned their questionnaire, and reminding those who had set it aside to complete it and return it in the postage-paid return envelope. After two more weeks, replacement questionnaires were sent to those households that had not yet responded to the first questionnaire mailing. Included this time was a different cover letter addressing some concerns respondents may have had that kept them from responding. The cut-off day for accepting returned questionnaires was four weeks following the last mailing. The survey instrument is included in Appendix A.

A non-response bias check was not conducted at the conclusion of the sampling effort. Such bias checks often take the form of a telephone interview to determine if those in the sample who did not respond to the questionnaire differ on key issues from those who did respond. In this case, the key questions where opinions may have differed involve statements of support for tourism development. These key questions could only be answered after considering other questions asked in the survey. It was therefore not possible to develop a condensed telephone non-response questionnaire.

The reader is cautioned to bear in mind that the results presented are the opinions of 51 percent (193 households) of Absarokee residents polled (Table 8). It is assumed that respondents did not differ from non-respondents in their opinions. In addition, because the age distribution of the survey respondents differed from the Montana census estimates of age groups⁴, responses were weighted to more closely reflect the population of Absarokee. The results presented in this report reflect the adjusted dataset, with the exception of demographic and open-ended questions.

Table 8: Absarokee and Statewide Survey Samples

	Absarokee	Statewide
Resident questionnaires mailed	500	1000
Undeliverable questionnaires	122	125
Delivered questionnaires	378	875
Completed questionnaires	193	410
Response rate	51%	47%

³The sample of addresses was purchased from Survey Sampling, Inc: Fairfield, CT.

⁴U.S. Census Bureau, 2004. DP-1. Profile of General Demographic Characteristics: 2000. http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/QTTable?_bm=n&_lang=en&_qr_name=DEC_2000_SF1_U_DP1&ds_name=DEC_2000_SF1_U&geo_id=04000US30. Accessed December 13, 2005.

ABSAROKEE RESIDENT ATTITUDES

When a community pursues tourism as a development strategy, the goals of that effort can often include an improved economy, more jobs for local residents, community stability, and ultimately, a stable or improved quality of life for the community's residents. On the other hand, negative social or environmental impacts can also result from tourism developments that are not carefully considered. Understanding residents' perceptions of the conditions of their surroundings and tourism's influence on those conditions can provide guidance toward appropriate development decisions.

Residents of an area may hold a variety of opinions about tourism and other forms of economic development. They may have both positive and negative perceptions of the specific effects of tourism. Attitudes and opinions are good measures for determining the level of support for community and industry decisions. The resident attitude questionnaire addressed topics that provide a picture of perceived current conditions and tourism's potential role in the community.

Respondent Characteristics

In this section, several respondent demographic details are reported for Absarokee residents and the statewide respondents. In Table 9, respondents indicated their age, gender, residency and employment status.

Table 9: Respondent Characteristics

	Absarokee	Statewide
Age and Gender Characteristics		
Average age (yrs)	47	48
Minimum age (yrs)	18	23
Maximum age (yrs)	104	96
Female-male ratio	38:62	45:55
Residency Characteristics		
Born in Montana	45%	52%
Mean years lived in Montana	33	33
Mean years lived in community	20	24
Rural, out-of-town community		34%
Urban, in-town community		66%
Community Residency		
10 years or less	37%	32%
11 to 20 years	32%	15%
21 to 30 years	10%	18%
31 to 40 years	7%	16%
41 to 50 years	7%	10%
51 years or more	7%	9%
Employment Status		
Employed	59%	68%
Retired	21%	20%
Homemaker	6%	7%
Unemployed	14%	6%
Source of Household Income (could check more than one)		
Professional	11%	30%
Health care	4%	23%
Education	8%	16%
Services	9%	16%
Retail/wholesale trade	11%	15%
Agriculture	10%	12%
Construction	9%	12%
Manufacturing	16%	8%
Restaurant or bar	4%	8%
Transportation, communication or utilities	3%	8%
Clerical	3%	7%
Finance, Insurance or Real estate	2%	6%
Forestry or forest products	3%	4%
Armed services	3%	3%
Travel industry	1%	3%

Tourism and the Local Economy

The local economy and the role tourism and the travel industry should have in it were key issues addressed in the survey. Residents were asked how important a role they felt tourism should have in their community's economy, and whether their employment was dependent on tourism (Table 10). In addition, they ranked industries that they felt would be most desirable for their community (Table 11).

Table 10: Role of and Dependency on Tourism

	Absarokee	Statewide
Role of Tourism in the Local Economy		
No role	3%	3%
A minor role	25%	23%
A role equal to other industries	54%	58%
A dominant role	18%	16%
Employment's Dependency on Tourists for Business		
My place of work provides <i>the majority</i> of its products or services to tourists or tourist businesses.	7%	9%
My place of work provides <i>part</i> of its products or services to tourists or tourist businesses.	37%	41%
My place of work provides <i>none</i> of its products or services to tourists or tourist businesses.	56%	50%

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding. Absarokee n=193; statewide n=410.

Table 11: Desirability of Economic Development Alternatives

	Absarokee		Statewide	
	Rank	Mean ^a	Rank	Mean ^a
Agriculture	1	2.6	3	3.7
Mining	2	2.7	8	6.7
Retail/wholesale trade	3	3.9	5	4.3
Tourism and recreation	4	4.3	6	4.4
Services	5	4.5	1	3.1
Manufacturing	6	5.7	4	4.3
Technology	7	5.9	2	3.3
Wood products	8	6.3	7	5.9

^aMean scores represent the mean of responses measured on a scale from 1 (most desired) to 8 (least desired). Absarokee n=193; statewide n=410.

Taking both of these tables together shows both similarities and differences between the respondent groups. For instance, both groups indicated similar views on the role of tourism in the local economy, with majorities in each survey indicating tourism should have a role equal to other industries. Regarding respondents' employment dependency on tourism, both groups had similar proportions with about half (56% for Absarokee, 50% for the state) believing their place of work provides no products or services to tourism. Looking at the desirability of economic development options, however, the two groups diverged considerably. Absarokee's

second highest ranking option (mining) was ranked last for the statewide sample, while Absarokee's seventh-placed alternative (technology) was ranked second by the statewide respondents.

Interactions with Tourists in the Community

The extent of interaction between tourists and residents can affect the attitudes and opinions residents hold toward tourism in general. In turn, an individual's behavior may be a reflection of those same attitudes and opinions. Respondents were asked questions to determine the extent to which they interact with tourists on a day-to-day basis as well as how they enjoy those interactions (Table 12).

Table 12: Interaction with Tourists

	Absarokee	Statewide
Frequency of Contact with Tourists Visiting Community		
Frequent contact	6%	10%
Somewhat frequent contact	26%	23%
Somewhat infrequent contact	23%	36%
Infrequent contact	44%	31%
Attitude Toward Tourists Visiting Community		
Enjoy meeting and interacting with tourists	47%	63%
Indifferent about meeting and interacting with tourists	45%	34%
Do not enjoy meeting and interacting with tourists	8%	4%

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding. Absarokee n=193; statewide n=410.

Despite some differences in specific contact levels with tourists, the two survey groups share general agreement. For example, majorities in each group report some degree of infrequent contact with visiting tourists. More statewide than Absarokee respondents indicated that they enjoy meeting and interacting with tourists; yet low percentages of both groups do not enjoy interacting with visiting tourists.

Community Attachment and Change

One measure of community attachment may be the length of time or portion of life spent in a community or area. These statistics were reported earlier in the report (Table 9). Other measures may be based on opinions that residents have about their community and perceived changes in population levels.

To help assess community attachment, respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each of three statements on a scale from -2 (strongly disagree) to +2 (strongly agree). A mean response greater than 0 indicates general agreement with the statement in question, and responses with a negative score means some degree of disagreement (Table 13). The larger the absolute size of the mean the stronger the level of agreement or disagreement. Secondly, population change can also affect residents' attachment to their community if it is perceived as occurring too quickly (increase or decrease) for the residents' preference (Table 14).

Table 13: Index of Community Attachment

	Absarokee					Statewide				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Score*	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Score*
I think the future of my community looks bright.	5%	41%	45%	9%	.13	3%	28%	59%	10%	.45
If I had to move away from my community, I would be very sorry to leave.	3%	12%	56%	29%	.98	1%	22%	49%	28%	.82
I'd rather live in my community than anywhere else.	4%	26%	42%	28%	.67	2%	21%	51%	27%	.79
Index of Community Attachment**	.59					.69				

Notes: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding. Absarokee n=193; statewide n=410.

*Mean scores represent mean responses measured on a scale from +2 (strongly agree) to -2 (strongly disagree).

**The Index score is the overall mean average of the mean scores for each statement.

Table 14: Perceptions of Population Change

	Absarokee	Statewide
Population is not changing	41%	10%
Population is increasing	35%	76%
Population is decreasing	24%	14%
<i>If you feel the population in your community is changing, how would you describe the rate of change?</i>		
Too fast	30%	50%
About right	60%	44%
Too slow	10%	6%

Absarokee n=193; statewide n=410.

Overall community attachment for the two survey groups scored positive, suggesting that they feel attached to their local community to some degree. Yet there was stronger agreement among the statewide residents for two of the three variables which resulted in a slightly higher overall community attachment index score.

In contrast to the statewide residents, Absarokee respondents appear divided on whether their population is increasing, decreasing or staying the same. Yet, a majority of them feel that whatever population change is occurring in Absarokee is at about the right rate. According to the U.S. Census, Stillwater County's population increased 25.4 percent from 1990 to 2004⁵, while the state increased 12.9 percent during the same period.

Quality of Life - Current Conditions and Tourism's Influence

The concept of "Quality of Life" can be broken down into several independent aspects, such as the availability and quality of public services, infrastructure condition, stress factors such as crime and unemployment, and overall livability issues such as community cleanliness. When evaluating the potential for community tourism development, it is often desirable to get an understanding of residents' opinions of the current quality of life in their community. This approach helps identify existing problem areas within the community, in turn providing

⁵U.S. Census Bureau, 2005. State and County Quick Facts. <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/30/3035600.html>. Accessed 02/09/06.

guidance to planners and decision-makers. It is also informative to understand how increased tourism might change residents' perceptions of these current quality of life conditions. Such perceptions often define residents' attitudes toward this type of community development.

To address this, respondents were asked to rate the current condition of a number of factors that comprise their current level of quality of life using a scale ranging from -2 (very poor condition) to +2 (very good condition). They were then asked to rate how they believed increased tourism would influence these factors. The influence of tourism was rated using a scale of -1 (negative influence), 0 (both positive and negative influence), and +1 (positive influence) (Tables 15 and 16).

Table 15: Quality of Life—Current Condition

	Absarokee					Statewide				
	Very Poor Condition	Poor Condition	Good Condition	Very Good Condition	Mean Score*	Very Poor Condition	Poor Condition	Good Condition	Very Good Condition	Mean Score*
Overall community livability	.3%	7%	38%	55%	1.40	2%	6%	61%	32%	1.14
Overall cleanliness and appearance	.8%	7%	56%	36%	1.21	2%	15%	58%	25%	.90
Traffic congestion	3%	9%	47%	41%	1.13	19%	31%	37%	13%	-.05
Education system	3%	7%	61%	29%	1.06	2%	21%	56%	22%	.74
Emergency services	5%	7%	58%	31%	1.03	0%	6%	64%	30%	1.17
Safety from crime	4%	16%	48%	31%	.86	2%	10%	61%	27%	1.01
Parks and recreation areas	9%	21%	44%	26%	.57	3%	8%	52%	37%	1.14
Cost of living	5%	20%	69%	6%	.51	16%	37%	39%	8%	-.13
Condition of roads and highways	5%	38%	49%	8%	.17	9%	31%	52%	8%	.18
Infrastructure	7%	48%	40%	5%	-.12	4%	14%	70%	12%	.72
Job opportunities	17%	46%	29%	8%	-.34	24%	43%	28%	5%	-.53
Museums and cultural centers	33%	55%	11%	1%	-1.07	7%	15%	57%	21%	.71
Overall Mean**			.53					.58		

Notes: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding. Absarokee n=193; statewide n=410.

*Mean scores represent mean responses measured on a scale from -2 (very poor condition) to +2 (very good condition).

**Overall mean is the mean average of the individual mean scores.

Table 16: Quality of Life—Tourism’s Influence

	Absarokee					Statewide				
	Negative Influence	Positive & Negative Influence	Positive Influence	No Influence	Mean Score*	Negative Influence	Positive & Negative Influence	Positive Influence	No Influence	Mean Score*
Museums and cultural centers	2%	9%	78%	11%	.85	1%	9%	83%	7%	.89
Job opportunities	4%	13%	76%	7%	.77	6%	23%	60%	12%	.61
Parks and recreation areas	10%	23%	59%	8%	.54	10%	31%	49%	11%	.43
Emergency services	11%	27%	43%	20%	.40	12%	37%	24%	27%	.17
Education system	7%	27%	28%	38%	.34	2%	15%	31%	51%	.58
Overall community livability	12%	42%	35%	11%	.25	8%	51%	27%	15%	.22
Overall cleanliness and appearance	16%	38%	30%	16%	.16	13%	40%	36%	11%	.25
Infrastructure	22%	34%	28%	16%	.06	19%	29%	17%	35%	-.04
Condition of roads and highways	33%	22%	29%	16%	-.04	28%	34%	28%	10%	.01
Cost of living	37%	28%	20%	16%	-.20	30%	30%	23%	17%	-.08
Safety from crime	44%	30%	16%	11%	-.31	24%	42%	14%	20%	-.12
Traffic congestion	55%	25%	9%	11%	-.52	62%	24%	7%	8%	-.60
Overall Mean**			.19					.19		

Notes: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding. Absarokee n=193; statewide n=410.

*Scores represent responses measured on a scale where -1=negative influence, 0=negative & positive influence, and +1=positive influence; “no influence” response not included in individual or overall scores. The higher the score, the more positive the perceived influence of increased tourism on the condition of the variable.

**Overall mean is the mean average of the individual mean scores.

Considering both the current condition and tourism’s influence on quality of life, several interesting differences emerge (despite the overall scores being essentially the same for both tables). In four of the twelve current condition variables the Absarokee residents scored opposite to the statewide group. For example, infrastructure and museums/cultural centers were rated in poor condition for Absarokee respondents, but good condition for statewide residents. In addition, the Absarokee group rated traffic congestion and cost of living in good condition while statewide residents indicated those items were in poor condition. When considering tourism’s influence upon these variables, both groups shared agreement on how these items may be affect (especially museums and cultural centers). On the whole, however, these tables suggest that both groups feel these quality of life items are in good condition and that increased tourism would be marginally beneficial.

When looking at just Absarokee residents it is important to note that two of the top current conditions (overall cleanliness and appearance, and traffic congestion) fell considerably in terms of tourism’s influence. Increased tourism could have a negative effect for many residents, and tourism planners should be aware that tourism could ultimately be blamed for a lowered quality of life in the community.

Tourism Support

In addition to tourism's perceived influence on quality of life, another method of measuring the degree of support for tourism development is to ask respondents questions specific to the tourism industry and its impacts (Table 17). Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with a number of tourism-related statements. Responses ranged from -2 (strongly disagree) to +2 (strongly agree). As in previous tables, a positive score indicates agreement while a negative score indicates disagreement.

Table 17: Index of Tourism Support

	Absarokee					Statewide				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Score*	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Score*
Tourism increases opportunities to meet people of different backgrounds and cultures.	1%	8%	77%	15%	.97	1%	9%	76%	15%	.94
Tourism promotion by the state of Montana benefits my community economically.	4%	21%	68%	8%	.56	3%	11%	73%	13%	.81
I support continued tourism promotion and advertising to out-of-state visitors by the state of Montana.	7%	6%	70%	17%	.84	5%	10%	70%	15%	.79
The overall benefits of tourism outweigh the negative impacts.	5%	22%	64%	9%	.50	4%	20%	65%	10%	.62
My community is a good place to invest in tourism development.	7%	27%	60%	7%	.34	5%	24%	61%	11%	.57
Increased tourism would help my community grow in the right direction.	4%	24%	62%	10%	.49	4%	18%	68%	10%	.48
I believe jobs in the tourism industry offer opportunity for advancement.	9%	30%	54%	7%	.21	12%	36%	50%	2%	-.04
If tourism increases in Montana, the overall quality of life for Montana residents will improve.	7%	29%	57%	7%	.28	11%	46%	40%	3%	-.24
If tourism increases in my community, my income will increase or be more secure.	22%	56%	20%	2%	-.75	17%	54%	24%	6%	-.53
I will benefit financially if tourism increases in my community.	22%	59%	17%	2%	-.82	19%	54%	21%	6%	-.58
Index of Tourism Support**			.26					.28		

Notes: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding. Absarokee n=193; statewide n=410.

*Mean scores represent mean responses measured on a scale from +2 (strongly agree) to -2 (strongly disagree).

**The Index score is the overall mean average of the mean scores for each statement.

Overall, Absarokee residents show basically the same scores for tourism support as the statewide group. The only substantial difference was regarding tourism's influence on quality of life; Absarokee respondents appear to

see a connection with improved quality of life resulting from increased tourism while the statewide group does not. Yet, it may be suggested otherwise when quality of life is broken down into specific variables.

Tourism Concerns

In addition to asking respondents about their support for tourism, they were queried about some concerns that also affect their attitudes and opinions regarding tourism (Tables 18-20). Responses ranged from -2 (strongly disagree) to +2 (strongly agree). As before, a positive score indicates aggregate agreement, while a negative score implies disagreement (Table 18).

Table 18: Index of Tourism Concern

	Absarokee					Statewide				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Score*	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Score*
I believe most of the jobs in the tourism industry pay low wages.	1%	31%	54%	14%	.50	1%	14%	67%	19%	.89
Tourists do not pay their fair share for the services they use.	5%	27%	50%	18%	.49	3%	38%	38%	21%	.34
Vacationing in Montana influences too many people to move to the state.	6%	50%	33%	12%	-.05	4%	45%	38%	13%	.10
In recent years, Montana is becoming overcrowded because of more tourists.	14%	59%	17%	10%	-.49	8%	60%	23%	9%	-.36
My access to recreation opportunities is limited due to the presence of out-of-state visitors.	11%	58%	21%	10%	-.39	9%	61%	22%	8%	-.42
Index of Tourism Concern**			.01					.11		

Notes: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding. Absarokee n=193; statewide n=410.

*Mean scores represent mean responses measured on a scale from +2 (strongly agree) to -2 (strongly disagree).

**The Index score is the overall mean average of the mean scores for each statement.

Table 19: Land Use Concern

	Absarokee					Statewide				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Score*	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Score*
I would support land use regulations to help manage types of future growth in my community.	5%	32%	45%	18%	.39	4%	12%	64%	20%	.83
There is adequate undeveloped open space in my community.	11%	23%	61%	5%	.26	10%	29%	54%	8%	.23
I am concerned with the potential disappearance of open space in my community.	7%	50%	25%	18%	-.03	6%	33%	38%	23%	.41
Index of Land Use Concern**					.21					.49

Notes: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding. Absarokee n=193; statewide n=410.

*Mean scores represent mean responses measured on a scale from +2 (strongly agree) to -2 (strongly disagree).

**The Index score is the overall mean average of the mean scores for each statement.

Table 20: Tourism-related Decision-making

	Absarokee					Statewide				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Score*	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Score*
It is important that residents of my community be involved in decisions about tourism.	0.2%	3%	67%	30%	1.24	1%	2%	61%	36%	1.30
Decisions about how much tourism there should be in my community are best left to the private sector.	29%	44%	19%	8%	-.68	16%	57%	22%	6%	-.54
Overall Mean**					.28					.38

Notes: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding. Absarokee n=193; statewide n=410.

*Mean scores represent mean responses measured on a scale from +2 (strongly agree) to -2 (strongly disagree).

**Overall mean average of the mean scores for each statement.

Regarding concerns over tourism, Absarokee residents seem marginally less worried about increased tourism than statewide respondents. The Absarokee group was much less concerned about visitors eventually moving to Montana and tourist overcrowding than the statewide group. Additionally, Absarokee residents expressed less agreement in their support of land use regulations and potential disappearance of open space than statewide respondents. Finally, both groups were similar in their concerns (somewhat concerned overall) over local tourism-related decision-making.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Tourism Development

To further clarify the perceived benefits and costs of tourism development, respondents were asked what they thought would be the top advantages and disadvantages of increased tourism in their community. These were open-ended questions where respondents provided their thoughts in their own words. The responses were then assigned to general categories to facilitate comparison (Tables 21 and 22).

Table 21: Advantages Associated with Increased Tourism

	Percent of Respondents
Economic growth (e.g., jobs, income, etc.)	70%
No advantages	12%
Investment in infrastructure	4%
Opportunity to meet new people	4%
Only benefits a few	1%

Respondents could offer more than one suggestion (n=156).

Table 22: Disadvantages Associated with Increased Tourism

	Percent of Respondents
Overcrowding	44%
Stress on infrastructure	17%
No disadvantage	14%
Increased crime	13%
Increased cost of living	4%
Nonresident landowners restricting access	4%
Change in local attitudes	1%

Respondents could offer more than one suggestion (n=146).

Expectedly, the main advantages and disadvantages of increased tourism followed a similar pattern as in other recent resident attitude surveys around Montana⁶. Issues related to economic growth are the major benefits residents anticipate with increased tourism, while overcrowding and stress on infrastructure are the main disadvantages.

Absarokee-specific Questions

The Absarokee CTAP committee was given the opportunity to include questions specific to the region on the resident attitude questionnaire. The responses to these questions and other community-specific items are reported below (Tables 23-37). Several of the questions were open-ended and the responses were grouped together into relevant themes. Most single responses and non-applicable answers were not included for time considerations and presentation purposes.

⁶ Recent resident attitude surveys took place in Butte-Silver Bow and the Cooke City in 2005; in 2004 they were conducted in Helena, the Rocky Boys' Reservation, and Wheatland County. See www.itrr.umt.edu for the 2004 and upcoming 2005 reports.

Table 23: Attractions with Greatest Potential for Visitors

What types of attractions in Absarokee have the greatest potential for attracting visitors and getting them to return?

Outdoor recreation	85%
Natural areas	67%
Special events	37%
Arts & culture	26%
Historical/heritage	25%
Sporting events	25%
Retail shopping	23%
Other	8%
None of these	4%

Respondents could offer more than one suggestion (n=180).

Table 24: Outdoor Recreation Attractions

Suggested Outdoor Recreation Attractions

Fishing	54%
Hunting	36%
Rafting	26%
Hiking	24%
Camping	15%
Horseback riding	8%
Biking	7%
Guided trips to mountains	4%
Boating	3%
Kayaking	3%
ATV riding	3%

Respondents could offer more than one suggestion (n=111).

Table 25: Natural Areas Attractions

Suggested Natural Areas Attractions

Nearby mountains, rivers, lakes (Beartooths 13%, Stillwater & Rosebud rivers 12%, Mystic Lake 6%, Woodbine area 5%)	83%
Hawkins park	7%

Respondents could offer more than one suggestion (n=83).

Table 26: Special Events Attractions

Suggested Special Events Attractions

Absarokee Days	28%
Local contests and races (e.g., bike race, horse show, etc.)	15%
Farmers' market	12%
Parades and festivals	12%
Chili/BBQ cook-off	10%
Rodeo	10%
Outdoor concerts	8%
Plays	3%

Respondents could offer more than one suggestion (n=60).

Table 27: Arts and Culture Attractions

Suggested Arts and Culture Attractions

Art galleries/shows/museums	44%
Plays/theater	22%
Talented local artists	10%
Festivals	10%
Cobblestone School activities	8%
Quick draw	6%
Farmers' market	4%

Respondents could offer more than one suggestion (n=50).

Table 28: Historical and Heritage Attractions

Suggested Historical and Heritage Attractions

Crow Indian history	39%
Need museum (like in Columbus)	17%
Cobblestones	10%
Bozeman Trail	10%
Mining	7%

Respondents could offer more than one suggestion (n=41).

Table 29: Sporting Events Attractions

Suggested Sporting Events Attractions	
School sports	20%
Rodeo	20%
Ball games (misc.)	18%
Running events	10%
Biking	8%
Tournaments	5%
Shooting, archery	5%
Hunting/fishing	5%
Raft/kayak races	3%

Respondents could offer more than one suggestion (n=40).

Table 30: Retail Shopping Attractions

Suggested Retail Shopping Attractions	
Specialty shops (Glass shop 7%, quilting 7%)	40%
More stores (e.g., general, drug, grocery, etc.)	23%
Clothing store	12%
Antique shop	9%
Sporting/outdoors store	9%

Respondents could offer more than one suggestion (n=43).

Table 31: Other Attractions

Suggested Other Attractions	
Offer more services (e.g., outdoor café, barber shop, etc.)	31%
Theater and music at Cobblestone	13%

Respondents could offer more than one suggestion (n=16).

Table 32: History and Heritage Promotion

What ways could Absarokee promote its history and heritage?	
Events and festivals	61%
Develop existing sites	56%
Brochures	50%
Emphasize local Native American history	46%
Interpretive signs	26%
Museum	20%
Guided tours	12%

Respondents could offer more than one suggestion (n=174).

Table 33: Obstacle to Tourism Development

What are the obstacles to increasing tourism development?

Lack of funding	58%
Community attitudes	36%
Limited infrastructure	35%
Access to fishing and hunting	32%
Lack of volunteers	24%
Lack of signage	20%

Respondents could offer more than one suggestion (n=176).

Table 34: Absarokee Attractions

What is Absarokee's greatest attraction?

Scenery/natural beauty (Beartooths/mountains 17%, Rivers 12%)	50%
Small town atmosphere (Main street improvements 7%)	21%
Outdoor recreation (Fishing 9%)	21%
Friendly people	14%
Nothing	4%
Bars	3%
Old Cobblestone House	2%
Big Yellow House	1%
History	1%
Mine	1%

Respondents could offer more than one suggestion (n=173).

Table 35: Visitors in the Community

Do you welcome visitors in your community?

Yes	89%	No	12%
If No, why?			
Crowding	43%		
They change things, act rude	14%		
I don't live in town	9%		
Some are fine, others not	5%		
Don't promote tourism here	5%		

Respondents could offer more than one suggestion (n=21).

Table 36: Visitor Activities and Services

What activities or services should be offered to visitors that are not currently available?

Accommodations for large groups	23%
Gas station/convenience store	22%
Restaurants/cafes (better hours)	19%
More shopping opportunities	13%
Drug store	11%
Tourist information center	9%
Campgrounds/RV park	6%
Walking and biking paths	6%
More events	4%
Better park	4%
Nightly entertainment	2%
Better advertising	2%
Movie theater	2%
Internet and cell phone service	1%

Respondents could offer more than one suggestion (n=142).

Table 37: Visiting Family and Friends

Where do you take family and/or friends when they visit?

Mountains	34%
Stillwater or Rosebud River	25%
Red Lodge	15%
Woodbine	15%
Yellowstone National Park	11%
Sightseeing/scenic drives	9%
Dining out	9%
(Steakout, Cowboy Bar, Grizzly Bar 2% each)	
Various outdoor activities (e.g., fishing, hunting, rafting)	9%
Beartooth Highway	8%
Mine	6%
Fishtail	4%
Nowhere	3%
Nye	3%
Mystic Lake	2%

Respondents could offer more than one suggestion (n=179).

These Absarokee-specific questions help to give insights into residents' perceptions of local tourism-related questions. Overall, it seems that residents feel that Absarokee offers a wide range of tourist attractions. Outdoor recreation associated with the area's natural environment was consistently selected by large margins of the respondents, followed by local events, arts, and history. This suggests that although Absarokee's surrounding environment could be a strong draw for visitors, local events and city attractions are also in place for tourists.

Some of the residents had concerns about the limitations of tourism development in Absarokee. For example, a majority of respondents believed that lack of funding was a major obstacle to increasing tourism in the area, followed by community attitudes, limited infrastructure, and restricted access to hunting and fishing. In addition, many respondents indicated a lack of shopping and eating places in the area. These findings in particular can help inform the Absarokee community to address the challenges of tourism development in addition to the potential opportunities.

Conclusion

As part of the Community Tourism Assessment Program, the Absarokee action committee is in a unique position to have a discussion with their community about local tourism development. In light of this, the resident attitude survey serves as a tool to assist the community in making informed decisions about tourism-related issues. The following points highlight the main findings from the survey and the nonresident study to help provide a context of tourism development potential in and around Absarokee.

Overall, residents of Absarokee express support for local tourism development. Respondents believe that tourism should have a role in the local economy at least equal to other industries. Similarly, respondents showed considerable agreement about the advantages of increased tourism (jobs and economic growth), as well as tourism's positive influence on quality of life. Residents also expressed very little concern over increased tourism. Taken together, these attitudes suggest that Absarokee residents not only look favorably toward tourism, but they would like it to play a larger role in the economy and community life.

Looking at nonresident overnight visitors who travel in Absarokee and throughout Stillwater County, over 50 percent are primarily in Montana for vacation which is more than the statewide percentage. This may be encouraging news for local residents considering that vacationers spend the most compared to all the other travel group types⁷. However, visitors to Stillwater County were more likely to be visiting friends and relatives than the statewide average. These visitors spend less than other visitors.

Considering non-economic traveler attributes, Yellowstone National Park was the highest rated primary attraction by a large margin, followed by visiting family and friends, and visiting Lewis and Clark sites. Additionally, there were several highly rated outdoor recreation activities for the visiting nonresident travelers, indicating that these travelers are drawn to natural features that Montana and Absarokee offer. In view of all of these nonresident traveler characteristics, there appears to be potential marketing and enterprise opportunities for local entrepreneurs and residents with an interest in travel-related business activities.

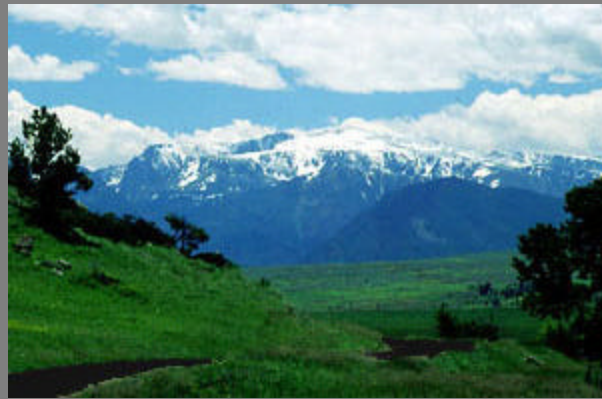
Both the resident attitude survey and the nonresident study have implications for tourism development in Absarokee. Because the overall attitudes toward tourism seem positive, development of tourism programs or projects would likely find community support. Not only does there seem to be tourism business potential, but the prospects of increased economic growth and job opportunities would likely be welcomed.

Finally, Absarokee residents have many unique attractions to share with visitors to the area. From an abundance of outdoor recreation activities, to a beautiful setting, to a quaint small town with many unique attributes, Absarokee has numerous tourism qualities. However, some residents expressed concern over the potential influences tourism could have on residents' quality of life, increased congestion (both traffic and crowding), and stress on Absarokee's infrastructure. This suggests that even though most residents are favorable towards tourism development, they should also be mindful of the additional impacts (both positive and negative) that increased tourism could have on the residents and the resources of Absarokee.

⁷ Wilton, J. 2005. 2004 Nonresident Expenditure Profiles. <http://www.itrr.umt.edu/nonres/ExpendProfiles04.pdf>. Accessed 2/9/06.

Appendix A: Absarokee Survey Instrument

Resident Attitudes Toward Tourism in Absarokee



Fall 2005

**Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research
The University of Montana
32 Campus Drive #1234
Missoula, MT 59812-1234**

Part 1. Please indicate your involvement in the tourism industry in Absarokee and the role you think it should have in the local economy.

1a How much contact do you have with tourists visiting Absarokee? Please only one.

Frequent contact
 Somewhat frequent contact
 Somewhat infrequent contact
 Infrequent contact

1b Which of the following statements best describes your behavior toward tourists in Absarokee? Please only one.

I enjoy meeting and interacting with tourists.
 I am indifferent about meeting and interacting with tourists.
 I do not enjoy meeting and interacting with tourists.

1c Which of the following statements best describes your job? Please only one.

My place of work provides the majority of its products or services to tourists or tourism businesses.
 My place of work provides at least part of its products or services to tourists or tourism businesses.
 My place of work provides none of its products or services to tourists or tourism businesses.
 I currently do not have a job.

1d Compared to other industries, how important a role do you think tourism should have in Absarokee? Please only one.

No role
 A minor role
 A role equal to other industries
 A dominant role

1e Please rank the following economic development options 1 through 8, with 1 being the most desired option for Absarokee.

Agriculture.....	<input type="text"/>	Services (health, education, etc.)..	<input type="text"/>
Manufacturing	<input type="text"/>	Technology.....	<input type="text"/>
Mining	<input type="text"/>	Tourism/Recreation.....	<input type="text"/>
Retail/Wholesale Trade.....	<input type="text"/>	Wood Products	<input type="text"/>

1f In your opinion, how is the population changing in Absarokee? Please only one.

Population is not changing (please skip to PART 2)
 Population is increasing
 Population is decreasing

1g If you feel the population of Absarokee is changing, how would you describe the change? Please only one.

Too fast
 About right
 Too slow

PART 2. The following questions are specific to Absarokee. Please share your thoughts and opinions as they will be helpful in making informed decisions for the area.

2a I support improving Absarokee's infrastructure (water, sewer, lodging, etc.) to maintain development and growth. Please only one.

Strongly disagree
 Disagree
 Agree
 Strongly agree

2b What ways could Absarokee promote its history and heritage? Please all that apply.

Brochures
 Develop existing sites
 Emphasize local Native American history
 Events and festivals
 Guided tours
 Interpretive signs
 Museum
 Other, such as:

2c What is Absarokee's greatest attraction?

2d Where do you take your family and/or friends when they visit?

2e What are the obstacles to increasing tourism development? Please all that apply.

<input type="checkbox"/> Access to fishing and hunting	<input type="checkbox"/> Community attitudes
<input type="checkbox"/> Lack of funding	<input type="checkbox"/> Lack of signage
<input type="checkbox"/> Lack of volunteers	<input type="checkbox"/> Limited infrastructure (water, sewer, etc.)

Other, such as:

2f What activities or services should be offered to visitors that are not currently available?

2g Do you welcome visitors in your community? Please only one.

Yes No

If no, why?

2h What type of attractions in the Absarokee area have the greatest potential for attracting visitors and getting them to return? Please all that apply and specify in the adjoining box.

- Arts and culture.....such as
- Historical and heritage.....such as
- Natural areas.....such as
- Outdoor recreation.....such as
- Retail shopping.....such as
- Special events.....such as
- Sporting events.....such as
- Other.....such as
- None of these

<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>

Part 3. Questions concerning quality of life in your community.

3a Please indicate your opinion of the current condition of each of the following quality of life elements in Absarokee. Please *only one response for each item.*

	<i>Very Poor Condition</i>	<i>Poor Condition</i>	<i>Good Condition</i>	<i>Very Good Condition</i>	<i>Don't Know</i>
Emergency services (police, fire, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Museums and cultural centers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Job opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Education system	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Cost of living	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Safety from crime	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Condition of roads and highways	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Infrastructure (water, sewer, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Traffic congestion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Overall community livability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parks and recreation areas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Overall cleanliness and appearance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3b Please indicate how you think the following would be influenced if tourism were to increase in Absarokee. Please *only one response for each item.*

	<i>Negative Influence</i>	<i>Both Positive and Negative</i>	<i>Positive Influence</i>	<i>No Influence</i>	<i>Don't Know</i>
Emergency services (police, fire, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Museums and cultural centers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Job opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Education system	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Cost of living	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Safety from crime	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Condition of roads and highways	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Infrastructure (water, sewer, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Traffic congestion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Overall community livability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parks and recreation areas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Overall cleanliness and appearance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3c Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements regarding tourism in Absarokee and in the state of Montana. Please only one response for each item.

	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
I'd rather live in Absarokee than anywhere else.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If I had to move away from Absarokee, I would be very sorry to leave.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I think the future of Absarokee looks bright.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It is important that residents of Absarokee be involved in decisions about tourism.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Decisions about how much tourism there should be in Absarokee are best left to the private sector rather than the public sector.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
There is adequate undeveloped open space in Absarokee.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am concerned about the potential disappearance of open space in Absarokee.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

I would support land use regulations to help manage types of future growth in Absarokee.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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**3c continued:
Please only one response for each item.**

	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
Absarokee is a good place for people to invest in new tourism development.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased tourism in Montana would help Absarokee grow in the right direction.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tourism promotion by the state of Montana benefits Absarokee economically.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If tourism increases in Absarokee, my income will increase or be more secure.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I will benefit financially if tourism increases in Absarokee.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

I support continued tourism promotion and advertising to out-of-state visitors by the state of Montana.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I believe jobs in the tourism industry offer opportunity for advancement.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If tourism increases in Montana, the overall quality of life for Montana residents will improve.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Tourism in Montana increases opportunities to meet people of different backgrounds and cultures.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The overall benefits of tourism in Montana outweigh the negative impacts.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Vacationing in Montana influences too many people to move to the state.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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In recent years, Montana is becoming overcrowded because of more tourists.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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My access to recreation opportunities is limited due to the presence of out-of-state visitors.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tourists in Montana do not pay their fair share for the services they use.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

I believe most of the jobs in Montana's tourism industry pay low wages.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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3d In your opinion, what is the primary advantage of increased tourism in Absarokee?

3e In your opinion, what is the primary disadvantage of increased tourism in Absarokee?

PART 4. Please tell us a little bit about yourself. Keep in mind that this survey is completely confidential.

4a How many years have you lived in Absarokee?

4b How many years have you lived in Montana?

4c What is your age?

4d Were you born in Montana? Please *only one*.

Yes

No

4e What is your gender? Please *only one*.

Male

Female

4f What is your employment status? Please *only one*.

Employed

Home maker

Retired

Unemployed or Disabled

4g How many people currently living in your house are employed?

4h If one or more are employed, please use the list below to let us know the type of work held by members of your household. Please *all that apply*.

Agriculture

Health care

Armed services

Manufacturing

Clerical

Professional

Construction

Restaurant/bar

Education

Retail/wholesale trade

Finance, Insurance or Real Estate

Services

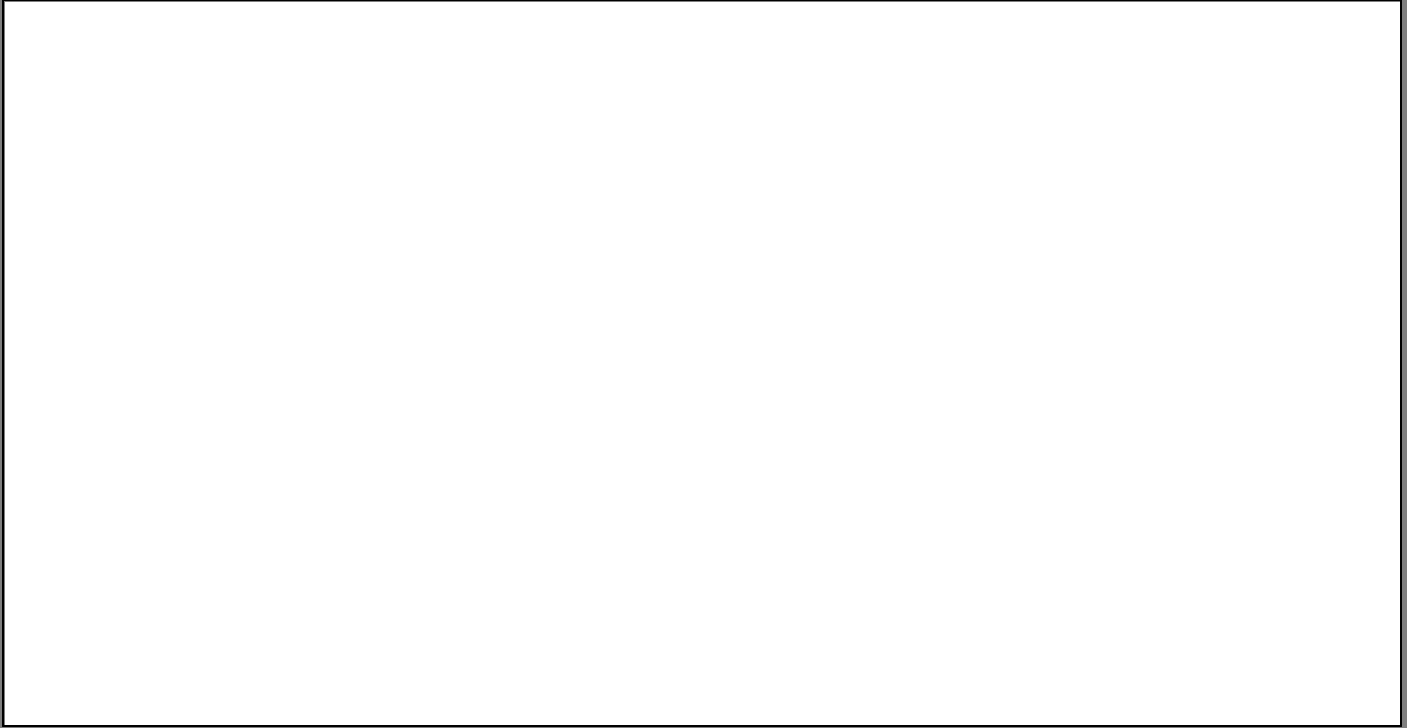
Forestry/forest products

Transportation, Communication or Utilities

Government

Travel Industry

Other:
(Please Specify)



Thank you for your participation!

Please place your completed questionnaire in the postage-paid envelope and drop it in any mailbox.



Appendix B: Respondent Comments

Respondents were provided with space at the end of the questionnaire to include their own thoughts and comments. This was an open-ended format with no guidelines as to the topic of the comments, and thus these comments deal with a wide variety of issues. The following 56 comments are presented in no particular order. Indecipherable words or phrases were replaced with "[?]."

1. A good deal of uncertainty concerning benefits of increased tourism. Montana produced, locally made products may help. Absarokee might well consider incorporation-organization.
2. The new road being built between Columbus and Absarokee should have had a bike path.
3. We need to clean out the buildings that are falling down. Maybe a small parking lot would help.
4. Some thoughts: Absarokee (from 18 years' experience) limits acceptance of non-locals. Even though I am a Montana native, I am not a local. Billings partiers (60 miles) and sight-seers are labeled "Billings Bastards-BB". This non-acceptance is sometimes typical of small towns. I mind my own business and have not become community/politically involved- it may be my fault. New enthusiastic business ventures seem to soon fall to negativity and shoppers going to Billings. I think the only thing that will make us prosper is a friendly, open, warm change of attitude. More of a "welcome and thanks" than "do not do" signs. I was ranch-raised, lived and raised a family in Billings and have traveled as often as possible- maybe the locals don't/can't travel or eyes would be open to acceptance of others. Take the community to Russia/ Ireland, etc., and see if attitude changes! Not groups, but individually. I can tell in other communities when it is friendly or not, (sincere or not). Idea: use development money to take negative thinkers to other areas and instruct them to share ideas upon return. Hope this helps- good luck. This is a beautiful area but people are what makes people want to come back.
5. Keep Montana green. Quit developing it. It's a terrible sight to see houses all over the river valleys- they tear up good farmland. Keep Montana for the Natives!!
6. I would like to see a hiking/fishing trail to Nye and/or Fishtail. With the current traffic level, it is difficult and dangerous to walk/bike along most of the roads. We need to encourage exercise- for residents and tourists.
7. Absarokee growth is somewhat at a standstill because the sewer system has reached its capacity. Tourism really has nothing to do with this problem. The new sub-divisions (out of town) have plenty of room for growth. Hwy 78 pulls some traffic through Absarokee with destination Red Lodge but I think you are kidding yourself and Absarokee trying to make it a tourist destination. The allure is on towards the rivers and mountains, Mystic Lake, Stillwater River, East and West Rosebud, USFS campgrounds. You have two river float companies in Absarokee and this is ample. Come up with \$5 million for a new sewer system and maybe Absarokee will grow.
8. I don't feel that tourism is a good economic base. It is good for a few, but not good for the community as a whole because it leads to low paying jobs (motel, restaurant workers) and high real-estate prices. These factors drive out families and make the cost of living too high for most people and families. This leads to many out of state people and retired people moving into the community. The schools go down and the community atmosphere that we now enjoy will go down.
9. Possible tourism interests that could be touted: 1. Ranching; 2. Bed and Breakfast; 3. Geological makeup- volcanic mud flow- [?] formation of outcrops on mountain face as compared to depth of formation of [?] oilfields; 4. Age of rock formations south of Red Lodge-Glacier formed valleys, erosion formed valleys, evidence of volcanic flow through crack in earth, etc.; 5. The abundance of wildlife- deer, elk, bald eagles and on and on; 6. Emphasize the talented horse trainers in valley; 7. Emphasize the availability of trail rides and pack trains into mountains; 8. I'm sure this list would be expanded and a method of getting this information out to the traveling public through numerous ways- entry establishments, lodging establishments, etc. Realizing that to get a tourist to stay one extra day would be a realistic goal.
10. Absarokee has great potential. There is nothing in town to keep the tourists here for a few days visit. They are passing through usually headed to Red Lodge or Billings. If there is something we can find to have tourists spend more time and money in Absarokee, the better.

11. I think Absarokee should be promoted as an excellent stop or route on the way to Yellowstone Park via Red Lodge and the Beartooth Pass.
12. Absarokee is a great town surrounded by many natural scenic views. A great get-away from the city if properly managed.
13. Re: Absarokee and tourism: 1. Restaurant situation: We have 2 restaurants in the town. One, the Rosebud Café, serves good food but it is a "Mom and Pop" operation and is open each day from 6am to 3pm except for Wednesdays and Thursdays when it is closed. The other restaurant, the Steakout Cafe, Casino and Bar, is open until 8pm each day except on Monday. The closest food service that is open daily is at Fishtail, MT- 7 miles distant. This is a deterrent to tourism. 2. To become a more attractive town, I believe that Absarokee needs to be incorporated, thus giving us rules and regulations that could be enforced. We have weeded lots and wrecked cars on lots next to well cared for property, and rental trailer houses "stuffed" and parked in vacant properties or on an owner's residential lot. Absarokee needs incorporation- the County Commissioners cannot do that for us.
14. I don't think that increasing tourism is the best way to promote economic development in Absarokee. Absarokee needs to attract more businesses (like Montana Silversmith's in Columbus) and good-paying jobs.
15. The financial requirements to upgrade Absarokee to a destination for tourism would almost certainly outweigh the benefits of such an endeavor. It is the nicest town to go through on the way to Yellowstone N.P. and I feel the most complete and panoramic view of the Beartooth Mountains can be had from many places right in town.
16. I would like to see more money come into Absarokee through tourism, however, because of our location, it is hard to do so. With Red Lodge, Beartooth highway, Yellowstone Park, etc. so near, it is hard to compete with such large-scale locations. Also, more local attractions are still outside of town, such as fishing/rafting/hiking/hunting/camping. Much of the community consists of mine employees and agriculture, which don't contribute to tourism. It is hard to keep this money in the community with Billings so close. It's much cheaper to buy bulk food (Costco), home improvement products (Home Depot), and go shopping for other products in Billings. I've seen stores open and close due to this closeness. I think greater tourism activity is good for the community. However, it can go too far and eventually get a "tourist tax" such as Red Lodge has. This is only more harmful for the community itself. General cost of living would eventually rise (property taxes, price of land, etc.).
17. Stillwater County discourages development. Your intentions are swell but all slanted toward tourists. People go through from I-90 to Park, Red Lodge, and Cody. We are not a stop-over community. Need a reason for people to come here-yes! (and stay). Area people (100 miles) like seasonal events. Biggest employer buses their employees. Why? It's the way people live now. We are in a state of transition like every little town in this area. Thank you. If you want to fix it- you need outside money and ideas and reasons people want to be here, e.g., golf, manufacturing, use school for summer conventions, meeting, associated with fishing-rafting.
18. 2a. The infrastructure is overwhelmed. It needs attention soon. However, as better roads let people move farther from town, leading to the need for new and bigger roads the same could be true for sewer etc. Expansion/ "progress" is okay but at what price? Some will happen no matter what. Guiding it in a positive way is a hard road as rules and red tape of government is a pain, but people need guidance. Tourism is not the pie in the sky answer to all problems. Increasing it would be good to some degree but other answers are needed also. (All eggs in one basket.)
19. Due to my age (84) and the death of my wife I have lived in Absarokee since 2003. I have had property on the Stillwater River since 1967. So I am not too versed on the town's working yet. I have banked here, doctored here, and traded here, mostly the time since I retired in 1983. Winters we spend in California until 2003. Summers on the Stillwater property.
20. Absarokee's business cannot compete with Billings. The ranches in this area work against people coming to this area for recreation.
21. I believe controlled growth should be the primary objective with a focus on development of community centers, libraries, museums, parks, etc.- to make the community a more desirable place to visit but more importantly to improve the quality of life for the current and future residents of Absarokee and the surrounding community.

22. I think we should have business geared to the average person that has a moderate income like the quilt and dress shop so that people are compelled to buy here rather than Billings. I think the Outdoor Supply's new owners are not being realistic as to the needs of the area. Can't something be done about that "blight" down from the 5 Spot that Peter Bertram has owned? Let's get a drugstore in town and a gas station.
23. We need a drugstore, Quik Way, another grocery store for some competition.
24. We need a place where tourists can shop, rest, walk around the center, and information about recreation activities. Horseback hourly rides. [?]. [?]. We have good schools and [?] medical and dental and eye care services weekly. Rooms overnight weekly etc. River floats in season available. Skiing available 25 miles away. Senior Citizen meals M-F at noon. Limited drugstore [?] IGA store, many churches. Funding schools a good public building for groups to meet. Need a clothing store.
25. Absarokee will never be a vacation destination. Money must be spent advertising its surrounding points of interest. The summer must be packed full of events- 50s-60s days at the local drive-in; antique shows at the Cobblestone; Kayak/raft races, homemade raft races; rendezvous in summer with interactive exhibits, cowboys and mountain men, Indians; push to get new highway finished; billboard to route Yellowstone-Red Lodge traffic through Absarokee.
26. Since I am retired, I haven't much influence on the topic of tourism. I haven't any objection if it were to increase as there isn't much to keep them in or around the town except the campsite. The Main Street (Woodbine Ave.) does get pretty congested when there is something going on to bring people to town- such as Absarokee Days and Farmer's Market. I don't see an answer to that problem and since they are only once a year, it's a problem that can be lived with.
27. Like to see a pharmacy back over at the clinic. A gas station and convenience store. Would like to see all building being used or occupied on Main Street. Since the Main Street and sidewalks- trees and flowers that everyone is looking after has been done, we look great. My family from Missoula and all over love coming here as they think we have the "neatest little town in the west". I live on Main Street and love all the activities- including the tour of the mine.
28. The town is fine just like it is a pass-through community. Exploiting its beauty with more housing, hotels, etc., should not be an option. It might get ruined like Hamilton, Kalispell, Bozeman, etc.
29. Development of a summer playhouse, theater, such as Virginia City, Bigfork, Fort Peck.
30. Absarokee has many assets: 1. We are 1 hour away from Montana's largest city; 2. Recreational opportunities abound. Largest detriment: Can't attract or hold large events- no place to stay re: conventions, weddings, retreats, meetings, corporate retreats.
31. Would like to see Absarokee grow in many ways but strongly believe in the importance of keeping Absarokee a safe, clean, and beautiful community.
32. Most of the people involved in this project are not original Montanans. They came here to get away from people and congestion, now they want their old ways installed in Absarokee. I am happy to live here where we do not have the big city ways. If these people are not happy as things are, then they should return from where they came from.
33. I spent 12 years in the tourism industry in Columbus, Montana and have seen first-hand the money tourists are willing to spend for goods and services. The biggest thing I see with Absarokee is negative attitudes and a very poor selection of goods to offer. Absarokee has no staffed hotel/motel for easy check-in or check-out, a grocery store that closes at 5pm on Sundays, no gas station in town, no place to buy that forgotten article of clothing, etc. The events that are held here don't bring people to town as they once did.
34. As long as tourism doesn't attract environmentalist, treehugger, animal rights activists and liberals it will be a great adventure. We really, really need a gas station and for MaryAnn Espland to move to Missoula.
35. 1. It is wrong to impede (in any way) thru-traffic on their way through Absarokee (Fed Ex to Luther, cattle trucks) as it creates a negative image for the town. 2. People who do visit find it nearly impossible to park and there are no public facilities. 3. Retail (outlet, possibly) stores can be a tourist attraction in and of themselves.

36. I feel that we have a religious denomination that is starting to have controlling effects on our community, especially the public schools. All worldly pleasures are seen as evil and start to have an impact on our community's life.
37. We need a few high quality tourist businesses to get traffic started from Billings, our best source of tourists! i.e., food, playhouse, unique shopping. Need a 20-30 unit motel!
38. It is interesting that one of the recommendations/ observations by the brain trust concerning the abundant (4 or 5) antique/ 2nd hand shops of 15 years ago versus the lack of same now, being an indicator that perhaps is an area we'd like to see more growth in...the conclusion I suppose being that the former proprietors must have been so incredibly successful they took the vast fortunes and re-located to a life of opulence in Palm Springs. Does anyone in the world of academics have contact with the wage slaves of the real world? Jobs whose focal points for employees involve tip jars will not create or establish prosperity opportunity but will continue to impoverish and subsidize the hopelessness that feeds most of our cultures social/societal problems- crime, drug abuse, indiscriminate use of cell phones, and making left and right hand turns without signaling.
39. I think Absarokee is a wonderful place for a family to raise their children! There needs to be more outlets for groceries than the IGA and places besides bars to go after 7 pm. They might even try for movies on the weekends to start. The fishing and hunting are great!
40. Although I was not born in Montana I believe it makes me appreciate the values and traditions even more, and I feel other outsiders would not feel the way, and only wish to exploit Absarokee for their own personal and economic wealth. I love Absarokee as a town, and would be forced to move if it was to change.
41. As you can see, I am not a fan of tourism. Absarokee is hemmed in by private property, so growth is limited. Without some growth, support industries will not arrive, providing a higher base wage rate.
42. We have been property owners for 14 years, using it for vacation. Now there 5 months of the year the last 3 years. Would like to see the town grow to stay alive.
43. I think we need the world's biggest palm tree up on the hill overlooking town- seen for miles.
44. We retired to Absarokee 25 years ago. My husband died several years ago. We moved here because he was born here and he liked the mountains and streams. I intend to remain here for the rest of my life. The west Rosebud River runs through the back of my property and I never refuse anyone who wants to fish. I do not live right in the town of Absarokee but I do all my shopping there.
45. My wife and I moved to Montana to be close to our daughter. Her husband is a veterinarian. I am or have been involved in the community: Senior Center, volunteer in community, supervision for delinquent minors, on the Absarokee Water Board.
46. The best kept secret about Absarokee is the people here like the fact it is small. We accept the fact that we have limited services, but the residents appreciate it and are willing to make the sacrifice to maintain the quality of life.
47. I feel tourism would be good for Absarokee, but at the same time we don't have enough services here to offer them. Very limited shopping and not much to do at night.
48. We have so much talent in this area. I would love for that to become a focus of our community. We are also developing some wonderful baseball and softball fields. It would be great if they could be completed and improved with bathrooms and bleachers. They could then be utilized for tournaments. Another idea is to promote a community walk about featuring local flower gardens and the like that can be mapped. This would not only promote tourists to stop and take a look around, but encourage locals to jazz up their yards so they participate while improving the look of their own property.
49. I take horse back rides in Absarokee. I am 5th generation and have a ranch.
50. Increased the flow of people through the Absarokee area to increase sales for just some people is not worth the trade-off for having a lot more people in the area, and a lot less rural based type people.
51. My opinion is that there is nothing in Absarokee to attract people to stop when passing through. Gift shops are not enough to draw people on their way to Red Lodge/ Yellowstone Park or camping in the Beartooths.

52. 1. No gas stations; 2. No hunting and fishing license in town; 3. Government by county commissioner whose rancher; 4. Horrible water and sewer system; 5. No place to buy knock-around clothes and shoes; 6. Too much closed to hunting and fishing; 7. No RV hook-ups; 8. Not enough lodging; 9. Too many leaders and no followers; 10. Too much friction between business people; 11. Too high cost of living in Stillwater County; 12. No one stop shopping in Absarokee and Stillwater County.
53. Keep up the good work. More diversification is a good thing.
54. Confusing as to "infrastructure"- (water, sewer, lodging, etc.). What is lodging? Motels? Apartments and what? Other places in questionnaire say (water, sewer, etc.)
55. I have surveys because often the answer options are not what I think. When I came here Absarokee was a wonderful farm community- as time passed we lost some great businesses (movie theater, the Variety Store, the 2nd grocery store, the pool hall, the Donut Shop, the Hamburger Hut, the Green Derby, Gambles, Poogies, the Meat Locker). I miss them all. New ones start but can't seem to make a go of it that saddens me. I don't think tourism could have helped them. I love to be a tourist in Montana. What I look for is affordable places to stay, interesting places to eat, take in local history and culture. I like to find good books written about the area I visited. For example, in Havre, visited beneath the streets, the Buffalo Surround, the museum, out to the fort, the Bear Paw battlefield, books, Havre wide open, the story of Long George. When I go back I have a better background for my next visit. Absarokee has Crow Agency, a museum in Columbus, serenity in Absarokee (?) a float down the river, a horseback ride, how about a hike with a person who can educate about flora and fauna, rocks, whatever. Bird watchers might be good guests, night sky watchers. Being so near a National Park could set us up with our own "Park Ranger" happenings- people come, stay, eat and return for more.
56. Too many out-of-state do-gooders are changing our state: i.e., cattle ranches, smoking laws, freedom of choice we all loved Montana for. Our choices from these tree huggers are being limited by them. If they visited and left that would suit us. But a lot are staying.