



2015 Community Meeting Recap for the City of Colstrip

This document is a summary of the 2015 CEDS community meetings. These meetings were designed to discuss local findings from the five-year CEDS document created by SEMDC, and to get community feedback as to what the current state of the community is, how things have changed from last year, and what projects are priorities to be completed for the following year(s).

This year was especially important to host a community meeting because of the many pressures the community of Colstrip has endured in the “War on Coal”. While there continues to be natural resource development projects in the area, there are many impacts on communities in southeastern Montana, and the goal is to maximize positive impacts and mitigate negative ones. The more communities understand the impacts, proactively plan, and communicate within the community and region, the better the outcome will be.

This document summarizes the thoughts, ideas, and projects discussed at the community meeting.

Colstrip CEDS Meeting 2015

Group Discussion

Rather than perform a typical Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats assessments, SEMDC led the group through the exercise by having them first examine the results of last years' meeting and then adding to or modifying the information already developed. The lists below are what the group as a whole developed.

Strengths

Parks and Recreation	Medical Center
Money and tax base	Employment (Fully Employed)
Volunteer Fire Dept	Castle Rock Lake fishing
More Churches than Bars	Effective Local Government
Trained Labor Pool	Infrastructure
Safe Community	Schools, School System
Good Community support	Police department
Deer hunting	SHAC (Arts)
City Hall	Meeting Center
Library	Senior Citizens Center
Health Department	More County Outreach
Senior/Community Van Transportation	Montana – Largest Coal Reserves in Nation
Interlocal Agreements	Supportive Major Industries
Quality of Life/Aesthetics of Area	Proximity to Billings
SEMDC	Low property taxes
EMS & Ambulance Service	First Responders Training
People of Colstrip	Rail Infrastructure
Proximity to Forest	Biomass possibilities
Safe Community	Professionals Per Capita is high
SBDC	Home Based Businesses
Airport	Billings Hospital Support
CPRD	Diverse Community
Power Plant Ownership Change	Housing Options Increased
Assisted Living Facility	Otter Creek Opportunity
Excess School Buildings	Job Opportunities – Good Paying
Quality of Life	2 nd & 3 rd generation kids moving back
Fishing Opportunities	Pharmacy
Colstrip Resident in Legislature	Class 4 Rating for Fire Insurance
Local Businesses	Skilled Labor Force, Technical and Professional
Energy Infrastructure in place – 4” gas line, Rail Service, Wire	Day Care Business
Trails (9+ miles) and Parks (32)	IBCLC Building – Opportunities
Instrument Approach Rated Airport	Students from Outside District
Wild Life In Town (Bird Watching)	CDKC Credits for HS Students
CEI	Sports Illustrated Sports Town MT/USA

Expanded Airport Hangars	Strategic location for airport to fill Tankers during fire season
Golf Course	Swimming Pool
Splash Park	Low Utility Cost
Low Cost of Living	Safe Community/Police Coverage 24/7
Medical Clinic (Unique Services)	Located on Oversized Loads Highway
Younger Families Moving In	Mine/Plant in Hiring Phase
Post Office	

Concerns

Environmental Interests and the “War on Coal”	EPA/DEQ Regulations
Aging Infrastructure/Coal Plant	Senior and Aging Population
Land Locked and Lack of Land to develop	Difficult to Attract / Keep Labor force
Housing Market - Flat	Negative Perception (East and West)
Developing Investments in the Community	Otter Creek developments may take away trained labor force here for higher wages there
Remote	Developing Infrastructure for aging communities
Absentee Ownership of Industry	Industry (“haves and have nots”) / not diversified
No Zoning for Industry	Lack of Opportunity for Labor Opportunities
People Leave town to shop	“Coal town” perceptions State-wide
Deer in City	Lack of centralized business district
Retail visibility	Lack of available commercial space
Lack of Single Family/Low Income Housing	Extreme environmentalism/no oversight
Wind farm subsidies from fed govt.	Solar subsidies
Lack of employment diversity	“Fat, dumb and happy” culture
Skilled Labor Retirement Gaps	Lack of Confidence in Future of Coal Jobs
Lack of PR Flexibility	Shift Work Effects on Community/Regional Commute vs. Living in Colstrip
Shrinking Student Population	Washington Legislature (Units 1 & 2)
Skilled Labor Force Recruitment	Youth Vandalism
Uncertain Future/Future \$\$ from taxes	Lack of Available Land
Colstrip Long Range Planning (10-30 yrs)	Public Services Training
Recruitment of Public Services Employees	Community Communications and Notices
Community Involvement	Chamber of Commerce
Seasonal Demand for Services	Lack of Recycling Program
Change in Ownership of Power Plant	Otter Creek Impacts on Area Ranchers
Internet Shopping	Legislative Redistricting Splits Colstrip
School Buildings/Excess Capacity	Basic Infrastructure: Water & Sewer
Puget Sound Units 1 & 2	Target Rate Level to Qualify for State Grants
Mine Reclamation Holdups (release)	Community Center
Bond Release Progress Slow	

Working Groups

In this second activity, the group was asked to discuss projects that would assist in addressing some of the weaknesses or needs in the community. At the end of the identification of meaningful projects, the group was given three stickers and asked to vote for specific projects. They were allowed to place their stickers as they chose with one sticker by three various projects or all their stickers by a particular project.

Economy/Housing/Quality of Life

Social Media-Colstrip Benefits

Develop vehicle to get the “Colstrip Story” out.

Energize Community

Address coal issues and become proactive, promotion, photos, leadership, facts vs. emotion, start at school age.

Economic/Industry Diversity

Encourage businesses or industry that will assist in diversifying the economy

IBCLC Building

Market vacant building to assist in expanding the economic diversity of the community.

Reclamation (Outside the Box Thinking)

Encourage the release of bonds for reclamation activities that are complete

Proposed Economic/Housing/Quality of Life Projects (Those receiving votes)

Energize Community - 26

Social Media - 9

Economic Diversity – 8

IBCLC Building – 4

Reclamation - 4

Services and Infrastructure

Water and Sewer Upgrades

Continue to pursue necessary upgrades to the aging Colstrip infrastructure system. Establish rate structure to build reserve account for future maintenance.

Proposed Projects (Those receiving votes)

Sewer Upgrades - 4