

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) 2018



2018 Community Meeting Recap for the City of Colstrip

This document is a summary of the 2018 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.

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Colstrip CEDS Meeting 2018

Group Discussion

Rather than perform a typical Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats assessment, 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

Money and tax base	Employment (Fully Employed)
Volunteer Fire Dept	Castle Rock Lake fishing
Strong Civic and Church Organizations	Effective Local Government
Active planning board addresses issues	Infrastructure Public
Geothermal Options	Schools, School System
Good Community support	Police department
Hunting and Wildlife	SHAC (Arts)
City Hall	Expanded Airport Hangars
Library	Senior Citizens Center
Health Department	More County Outreach
Senior/Community Van Transportation	Wave/Cycle of younger families
Interlocal Agreements	Supportive Major Industries
Quality of Life	Proximity to Billings
SEMDC	Low property taxes
EMS/Ambulance Service/First Resp..	Impact \$\$/\$10 million (PSE) CCIAG
People of Colstrip	Rail Infrastructure
Proximity to Forest	Biomass possibilities
Safe Community	Professionals Per Capita is high
Workforce Training Support	Home Based Businesses
Airport	Billings Hospital Support
CPRD	Diverse Community
Power Plant Ownership Change	Housing Options Increased
Assisted Living Facility	Improvement in Federal Support for Coal
Excess School Buildings	Job Opportunities – Good Paying
Colstrip Resident in Legislature	Deep water well at Colstrip
Local Businesses	Pharmacy
Wild Life In Town (Bird Watching)	Class 4 Rating for Fire Insurance
Trails (9+ miles) and Parks (32)	Skilled Labor Force, Technical and Professional
Energy Infrastructure in place – 4” gas line, Rail Service, Wire	Strategic location for airport to fill Tankers during fire season
CDKC Credits for HS Students	Students from Outside District
Instrument Approach Rated Airport	IBCLC Building – Opportunities
CEI	Sports Illustrated Sports Town MT/USA
Medical Clinic (Unique Services)	Located on Oversized Loads Highway
Day Care Business	Parks and Recreation

Splash Park	Swimming Pools
Low Cost of Living	Low Utility Cost
Golf Course	Safe Community/Police Coverage 24/7
Healthcare infrastructure in place/supported by tax district	

Concerns

Environmental Interests and the “War on Coal”	Developing Infrastructure for aging communities
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 to Declining	Negative Perception
Absentee Ownership of Industry	Industry/not diversified
Remote	EPA/DEQ Regulations
No Zoning for Industry	Lack of Opportunity for Labor
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	Extreme environmentalism/no oversight
Wind farm subsidies from fed govt.	Solar subsidies
Lack of employment diversity	Lack of Chamber of Commerce
Skilled Labor Retirement Gaps	Lack of Confidence in Future of Coal Jobs
Overall Economic Uncertainty with closing of Units 1 and 2 in 2022	Shift Work Effects on Community/Regional Commute vs. Living in Colstrip
Shrinking Student Population	Reactionary Community
Skilled Labor Force Recruitment	Long Term Water Supply/Surge Pond
Uncertain Future/Future \$\$ from taxes	Lack of Available Land
Recruitment of Public Services Employees	Destiny controlled by out of state companies and voting blocks
Public Services Training	Community Communications and Notices
Community Involvement	Post Office Appearance/Safety Issues
Seasonal Demand for Services	Community Center
Bond Release Process Slow on	Broadband Capacity (fiber optics)
Internet Shopping	Legislative Redistricting Splits Colstrip
School Buildings/Excess Capacity	Basic Infrastructure: Water & Sewer
Colstrip Long Range Planning (10-30 yrs)	Developing Investments in the Community

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.

Housing, Quality of Life, Infrastructure, Economy

Improve Broadband

Colstrip internet service is unreliable. Improve broadband speed, capacity and reliability.

Develop Marketing and Branding for Colstrip

Develop an overall marketing strategy for Colstrip to aid in recruitment, job creation/retention. Improve online appearance of community by generating attractive and factual social media as well as website content. Provide current updates through website content management.

Recruit Manufacturing/Tech Companies

Capitalize on existing transmission lines and other assets to encourage diversifying the economy with manufacturing of some type. Investigate use of reclaimed land at mine for industrial sites.

Develop Mining/Coal Museum

Tell the story of mining and coal in Colstrip and show the progress of mining through reclamation. Show the abundance of vegetation and wildlife.

R&D Project in Colstrip

Encourage the Federal Government to establish a research and development project in Colstrip.

Leverage CCIAG Money for R&D

Utilize some of the CCIAG settlement for research and development to find new technologies.

Pursue Syn Gas/ Value Added Processing of Coal/Carbon Capture and Jet Fuel Processing

Utilize coal resources to manufacture a byproduct of coal while still creating energy and utilizing the cleanest technologies available.

Work toward developing an open market for power through The City of Colstrip

Work with legislature to develop an open market for power (example: Great Falls)

Create atmosphere in Colstrip to attract people/business

Make necessary changes in planning/zoning, identify available land and key resources / infrastructure, incentivize enhancement, and discourage neglect of properties, investigate other packages the city can create.

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

Broadband – 8 Votes

Marketing and Branding – 7 Votes

Leverage CCIAG Money – 6 Votes

Colstrip Atmosphere – 5 Votes

Open Power Market – 4 Votes

Carbon Capture – 2 Votes

Recruit Manufacturing/Tech – 2 Votes