



## 2019 Community Meeting Recap for the City of Colstrip

This document is a summary of the 2019 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 2019

## 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	Healthcare infrastructure in place/supported by tax district
Money and tax base	Employment (Fully Employed)
Volunteer Fire Dept	Castle Rock Lake fishing and recreation
Strong Civic and Church Organizations	Effective Local Government
Active planning board/addresses issues	Infrastructure
Geothermal Options	Schools, School System
Good Community support	Police department
Hunting and Wildlife	SHAC (Arts)
City Hall	Meeting Center
Library	Senior Citizens Center/Assisted Living Facility
Health Department	More County Outreach
Senior/Community Van Transportation	Wave/Cycle of younger families
Interlocal Agreements	Supportive Major Industries
Quality of Life/Aesthetics of Area	Proximity to Billings
SEMDC	Low property taxes
EMS/Ambulance Service/First Resp. Trg.	Impact \$\$/ \$10 million
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
Quality of Life	Deep water well at Colstrip
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, Railroad Tracks, Transmission Lines	Day Care Business
Trails (9+ miles) and Parks (32)	IBCLC Building – Opportunities
Airport – Instrument Rated/Small Jets	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
Ash Pond Construction and issues	Low Utility Cost
Low Cost of Living	Safe Community/Police Coverage 24/7
Medical Clinic (Unique Services)	Located on Oversized Loads Highway
Potential for pipeline construction jobs	Yellowstone River water to Colstrip/Water Rights Opportunity for City
Hunting Income for area	Opportunity for RV space
Healthcare recruiting \$\$	Shooting Range
Senator Ankney - Plan	Potential for CO2 Capture
Bird Watching Opportunities	New Mountain Bike Trail by Western Energy
Utility Training Center Opportunity	

## 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 to Declining	Negative Perception (East and West)
Developing Investments in the Community	Destiny controlled by out of state companies and voting blocks
Remote	Developing Infrastructure for aging communities
Absentee Ownership of Industry	Industry/ 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	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 2020	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
Colstrip Long Range Planning (10-30 yrs)	Public Services Training
Recruitment of Public Services Employees	Community Communications and Notices
Community Involvement	Post Office Appearance/Safety Issues
Seasonal Demand for Services	Community Center
Mine Reclamation Holdups (release)	Otter Creek Impacts on Area Ranchers
Internet Shopping	Legislative Redistricting Splits Colstrip

School Buildings/Excess Capacity	Basic Infrastructure: Water & Sewer
Bond Release Progress Slow	Coal Supply – Future?
Long Term Water Agreement	Water Pipeline Condition/Rights
Chiropractor Leaving	NW Energy Depreciation Pressure
Higher Power Prices/Impacts	Vacant Housing
Transmission Line Tax Credits	Tax Base Future
Outfitting/Hunting Access	SHAC
Major Industry spokesperson	Community Communication – Online Options, Social Media
2025 Washington Legislation	Lack of Retail Space
Land for Development	Lack of Doctor/hard to attract healthcare professionals
Coal/Labor Contracts	Unwilling Power Plant Owners

## 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/Infrastructure

### ***Improve Broadband***

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

### ***Develop Marketing and Branding for Colstrip***

Develop and 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 Businesses that will Create Jobs***

Capitalize on existing infrastructure assets to encourage recruiting businesses.

### ***Develop Mining/Coal Museum/SHAC***

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

### ***Water***

Develop water agreement, assess pipeline condition, secure water rights if possible to ensure viability of water source for Colstrip.

### ***School Remodeling/Consolidation***

Consolidate school services to reduce costs based on fewer number of students to serve.

***Establish Community Foundation***

Continue to pursue the establishment of a Community Foundation to receive and oversee the \$10 million for Colstrip community.

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

Broadband – 7 Votes

Marketing and Branding – 6 Votes

Water – 9 Votes

Business Recruitment – 8 Votes