

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) 2023



2023 Community Meeting Recap for the Community of Ashland

Annually, Southeastern Montana Development Corporation (SEMDC) initiates public input throughout a four-county region to assist in developing a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). In the past, we have held community meetings to gain insight into trends, strengths, and concerns in various communities. This year we held in-person meetings, to discuss how things have changed from last year, and to note what projects are priorities to be completed for the following year(s). These conversations are incorporated into a five-year CEDS planning document created by SEMDC to be utilized in the process to assist the communities in Southeastern Montana.

This year it was especially important to host community meetings because of the economic impacts on our region recently. SEMDC is working with citizens and communities to find ways to maximize positive impacts and mitigate negative ones. The more individuals in each community understand economic change and its impacts, proactively plan, and communicate within the community and region, the better the outcomes will be.

Developed by:

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Corporation (SEMDC)

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Ashland CEDS Meeting 2023

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 year's meeting and then adding or modifying the information already developed. The lists below are what the group developed through meeting responses.

Strengths

Agriculture	Natural Resources
Buildings Available for Businesses	Outdoor recreation
Current Demographics and income levels help	Pending RV Park with Cabins
EMS Service	St. Labre
Fire Department Improvements/Equipment Upgrades	Tourism & Educational opportunities
Grocery Stores (2)	Transportation corridor
Health Fairs sponsored by the clinic	TRECO
Heritage Living Center	US and private forest land
Hunting Opportunities	US Forest Service Complex
Improved Cell Phone Service – pretty good coverage	Vacant Convenience Store re-opened
Law Enforcement Satellite Site	Very Basic Services Offered
Lodging, fuel, food	Very diverse cultures represented
Mobile Meat Processing Plant	

Concerns

Basic services – limited with construction	Lack of Chamber of Commerce
Broadband Availability/ Cell Service Reliability	Lack of Public High Schools in the Community
Business for Sale- Too Many-Main Street	Lack of sidewalks- TA grant for sidewalks
Childcare	Lack of Tourism Draw or Focus
Clearance to log on Federal Land	Limited air Transportation/Emergency Flights / Medical Evac Air Transport
Clinic has limited operating hours and provides few services, no emergency services and struggles to retain staff.	Limited EMS Staffing/Major Highway / Lack of EMTs to transport/Ambulance
Competition for current jobs when higher pay jobs	Marijuana Shops - 3
Costs associated with upkeep etc. of roads and infrastructure development	Mental Health
Environmental Rules/Regulations	Need for SPED \$\$ at school
Floodplain issues – Otter Creek/Tongue River	Senior Transition Housing
Housing – Shortages (All types)	Traffic Speed/Law Enforcement thru town
Hwy 212 Deadliest Hwy in Montana 2019	Water Tower- Leaking

Infrastructure – water/electricity/sewer	Workforce availability/hard to attract law enforcement. Labor Force competition/lack of workers
Impact of recent fires on forest	Youth Center

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 asked to vote for specific projects. They were allowed to place 5 checkmarks as they chose on various projects, they felt were the most important.

Economy

SPED \$\$

School personnel is maxed out on the number of students they can handle in their SPED program. There is a need for more resources in this region to address special education needs for students at Ashland Public.

Proposed Economic Projects receiving votes.

Housing, Quality of Life, Services

Community Center/Park

Establish Community Center and park that could be utilized by Seniors or Youth.

Heritage Center

There are many facility issues within the center that needs fixed or replaced such as a water pump for 50K, kitchen appliances for 52K, an ADA van needs to be purchased, fire system Upgrades, and new air handlers to move fresh air

Housing

Housing for residential and to attract workforce.

Speed Limit Signs

The east end of town does not have flashing lights warning trucks to reduce speed as they come into Ashland. Need more emphasis on speed reduction through Ashland to encourage safety.

Walkway Project/Sidewalk Project

There are few sidewalks through Ashland and a need for a walking trail to Rabbit Town. This is a major traffic corridor and safety for residents is key. Many residents walk to their destinations in this community and don't have vehicles to drive.

Proposed Housing, Quality of Live, and Services Projects receiving votes

Speed Limit Signs – 2 Votes

Housing – 1 Votes

Heritage Center – 1 Votes

Infrastructure

Emergency Operation Center

Building that will house the Ambulance, EMT, and Fire Department.

Fill Station

The Fire Department needs a fill station to accommodate trucks, especially during fire season. The current system is inadequate and does not allow for quick filling.

Landfill Cell

The community needs a new landfill cell.

Lift-Station (Main)

The community needs a new lift station.

Proposed Infrastructure Projects receiving votes.

Fill Station – 3 Votes

ER Center – 3 Votes