

## Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) 2023



### 2023 Community Meeting Recap for the Community of Colstrip

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:

Southeastern Montana Development Corporation (SEMDC)

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## Colstrip 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

10-year Government water Supply agreement	Low Cost of Living
100 Year Celebration	Low property taxes
200 Acre Industrial Site at Peabody	Low Utility Cost
30-year agreement - Feasibility Study (water)	Marketing-Diversification Strategy
Active planning board/addresses issues	Money and tax base
Agricultural Presence	More County Outreach
Airport – Instrument Rated/Small Jets	New Mountain Bike Trail by Western Energy
Area F+	New Veterinarian
Ash Pond Construction/Long Term Employment	Northend Water Loop
Avista and Rosebud County Impact \$\$	NW Energy Rosi Contract and \$ to community
Beautification Committee	Nuclear Possibility
Billings Hospital Support	Opportunity for RV space
Biomass possibilities	Parks and Recreation
Bird Watching Opportunities	Paser Study of Streets
Broadband Grant	People of Colstrip / Community Support
Business Innovation Center-Meeting Space / Partnership	Pharmacy
Castle Rock Lake fishing and recreation	Police department
CDBG Grants: Public Facilities / Economic Development	Potential for CO2 Capture
CDKC Credits for HS Students	Professionals Per Capita are high
CEI	Property Value Increased
CIF Impact \$\$/ \$10 million	Proximity to Billings
City Hall	Proximity to forest
City Financial Report, Increase	Quality of Life/Aesthetics of Area
Class 4 Rating for Fire Insurance	Rail Infrastructure
CMC Doc	Safe Community/Police Coverage 24/7
Colstrip Resident in Legislature	SCADA Water and Sewer System
CPRD	Schools, School System, excess buildings
Diverse Community	SEMDC / Annual Reports
Effective Local Government	Senior/Community Van Transportation
Employment (Fully Employed)	SHAC (Arts)
EMS/Ambulance Service/First Resp. Trg.	Shooting Range
Energy Studies (4)	Skilled Labor Force, Technical and Professional
Expanded Airport Hangars	Sports Illustrated Sports Town MT/USA

Fishing Opportunities	Strategic location for the airport to fill Tankers
Geothermal Options	Strong Civic and Church Organizations
Golf Course	Students from Outside District
Grid United / Transmission Lines	Supportive Major Industries
Growth Plans: 4 counties and 5 cities	Sustainable and Reliable Water
Health Department	Swimming Pool/Splash Park
Healthcare infrastructure/supported tax district & recruiting \$	Trails (9+ miles) and Parks (32)
Home Based Businesses	Transmission Line
Housing Needs Study	Utility Training Center Opportunity
Hunting and Wildlife Income for the area	Value added energy
Increase in Retiree Population	Volunteer Fire Dept
Interlocal Agreements	Unit 1 & 2 Commercial Options
Job Opportunities – Good Paying	Water Feasibility Study
Library	Wave/Cycle of younger families
Local Businesses	Wildlife In Town (Bird Watching)
Located on Oversized Loads Highway	Workforce Training Support
Long-term Coal Contracts /Coal Country	Yellowstone River water to Colstrip/Water Rights Opportunity for City

## Concerns

2025 Washington Legislation	Mine Reclamation Holdups (release)
Absentee Ownership of Industry	Negative Perception (East and West)
Advanced Close Date 2023	Non-Profit Activities
Aging Infrastructure/Coal Plant	No Plumber
Area C Road	No Zoning for Industry
Assisted Living	Nuclear
Basic Infrastructure: Water & Sewer	NW Energy Depreciation Pressure
Bond Release Progress Slow	Outfitting/Hunting Access
Coal/Labor Contracts	Out-of-state non-union workers
“Coal town” perceptions State-wide	Industry/ not diversified
Colstrip Long-Range Planning (10-30 yrs)	People Leave town to shop / Internet
Community Communication – Online Options,	Post Office Appearance/Safety Issues
Community Involvement /Reactionary	Professionals / Telehealth
Daycare – More Employees Needed	Public Health
Deer in City	Public Services Training
Developing Investments in the Community	Railway Diversified Currently
Election: Mail in Ballot Only	Recruitment of Public Services Employees
Environmental Interests and the “War	Remote
EPA/DEQ Regulations	Renewables on Transmission Line
Extreme environmentalism/no oversight	Retail visibility
Higher Power Prices/Impacts	Seasonal Demand for Services
Housing Costs Increasing	Senate Bill 87 Study
Increase costs -raw water	Local, State and Federal Elections Impact on Coal Industry.

Overall Economic Uncertainty with the closing of Units	Shift Work Effects on Community/Regional Commute vs. Living in Colstrip
Interventions NWE	Shrinking Student Population
Lack of available commercial / Retail space	Skilled Labor Force Recruitment -attract-
Lack of centralized business district	Skilled Labor Retirement Gaps
Lack of Chamber of Commerce	Social Media
Lack of Confidence in the Future of Coal Jobs	Solar subsidies
Lack of Doctors/hard-attracting healthcare	Staffing -Not enough workers
Lack of employment diversity	Status of IBES
Lack of Plan for Plant Closure	Tax Base Future- Future \$\$ from taxes
Lack of Housing (Rent & Purchase)	Unwilling Power Plant Owners
Lack of Single Family/Low Income Housing	Water Feasibility
Landfill Cell	Water Pipeline Condition/Rights
Land Locked and Lack of Land to develop	Wind Farms Tax Abatement
Major Industry spokesperson	Workforce

## **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 3 checkmarks as they chose on various projects, they felt were the most important.

## **Economy**

### **Tax District Consolidation Study**

### **MT Made Possible Expansion**

Continue to grow MT Made Possible

### **Energy Studies**

Continue to work with the 4 companies that completed the studies to move forward with clean energy options.

### **Proposed Economic receiving votes.**

Energy Studies– 3 Votes

## **Housing/Quality of Life**

### **Business Innovation Center (BIC)**

The development of a Regional Center to act as a focal point for industrial relocation and development opportunities would be critical.

### **Expand CPRD Programs**

To further engage community members, such as Basketball Court times, addition of Pickle Ball Court in the community.

### **Housing**

Housing needed for new residents as well as healthcare and education workers.

### **Middle School Feasibility Study**

The school will be empty and needs a plan of what can be done with the building to ensure its usefulness.

### **Recruit Businesses that will Create Jobs**

Capitalize on existing infrastructure assets to encourage recruiting businesses.

### **RV Park**

There are no RV parks available for short- or long-term rentals.

### **Telecommuting Opportunities**

Attract telecommuting work opportunities for residents to secure remote jobs.

### **Work Force Training Facility / Skilled Workforce Retention**

A facility is needed to retrain workers that are laid off from the coal industry. Plan to retain skilled workforce in the community.

## **Proposed Housing/Quality of Life Projects receiving votes**

Skilled Worker Retention – 2 Votes

## **Infrastructure**

### **Area C Road**

Finding funding to complete the entire road, funding for 3 miles provided by Coal Board

### **Improve Broadband / Internet Security**

Colstrip's Internet service is unreliable in 1/2 the town. Improve broadband speed, capacity, and reliability. Add a range antenna to the water tower.

### **Pazer Study**

Complete Pazer study for roads.

### **Post Office- Options**

A new post office facility is needed.

### **Sludge- Waste Water (Sewer) PER**

Upgrades on the wastewater treatment equipment.

### **Northend Water Loop**

Project in the works, to be completed.

## **Proposed Infrastructure receiving votes.**

Broadband / Internet– 5 Votes

Area C Road – 2 Votes