

Craig Community Focus Group Report

Insights, Priorities, and Ideas from Local Voices

Prepared by the Craig Chamber of Commerce

2025



Dear Stakeholders and Community Members,

In the spring of 2025, the Craig Chamber of Commerce and the City of Craig hosted a series of in-person focus groups, paired with an online community survey, to better understand the experiences, concerns, and ideas of our residents, business owners, nonprofit leaders, and civic partners. These sessions were part of a broader effort to shape a more inclusive, actionable, and grounded community and economic development strategy, one that reflects the lived realities of those who call Craig home.

This report is not a plan, but a tool for planning. It captures the themes, stories, concerns, and creative solutions voiced by community members over two days of conversation and more than 100 anonymous survey responses. Participants included local business owners, nonprofit representatives, educators, retirees, students, entrepreneurs, tourism operators, economic development practitioners, and everyday residents who care deeply about Craig's future.

Our goals were threefold:

- **Listen** Create space for honest, unfiltered feedback from a wide range of community members without shaping or steering the conversation.
- **Summarize** Clearly document the ideas, concerns, and suggestions raised, so other organizations and leaders can analyze, reflect, and act based on what was shared.
- **Connect** Provide a shared starting point for local government, nonprofits, businesses, funders, and partners to align efforts and develop responsive strategies.

Throughout this document, you'll find:

- Detailed insights from each focus group discussion;
- Thematic analysis tied to specific questions;
- Key takeaways, quotes, and example-based observations;
- Suggested strategies and "next steps" offered by participants (not mandates); and
- An appendix of survey comments for additional reflection.

Please note: the quotes and ideas captured here represent community perspectives, not policy or institutional positions. This report should be viewed as a conversation starter, and an opportunity to reflect on how your organization's goals align with the community's expressed hopes, gaps, and opportunities.

We encourage each stakeholder, whether you represent a public agency, business, foundation, nonprofit, or neighborhood group to use this report to:

- Spark new collaborations;
- Identify areas for investment, outreach, or innovation;
- Reassess your internal strategies and communications; and
- Connect with others working toward shared impact.

Thank you to every participant who took the time to share your voice. We hope this document honors that trust, and serves as a guide for deeper, collective action.

With appreciation,

Craig Chamber of Commerce

April 2025

Prepared by the Craig Chamber of Commerce	1
CRAIG COMMUNITY FOCUS GROUP REPORT	5
How can the Chamber create more value for its members, especially small businesses, while ensuring that larger businesses also feel represented?	5
Small Businesses: “I just want help that meets me where I am.”	5
Larger Employers: “Help us shape the big picture.”	5
Concerns About Representation	6
Ideas Raised During Sessions	6
What community initiatives or events would make you feel more connected to the wider Craig community?	7
Nostalgic Connection to Low-Budget Events	7
Downtown Needs to “Breathe”	7
Inclusivity & Accessibility	7
Creative Ideas Mentioned	7
What is the biggest gap in the current local economic development efforts, and how should this gap be filled?	9
Vision Void	9
Infrastructure Development	9
Data + Decision Disconnect	9
Industry Ideas with Community Interest	9
QUESTION 4	11
How can the community foster stronger collaboration between local businesses, government, and nonprofits to build a more resilient economic ecosystem?	11
Silos Are the Norm	11
Relationships Matter	11
Desire for More Strategic Conversation	11
What would encourage you to participate more actively in community activities (events, networking, collaborations, etc.)?	13
Time, Energy, and Childcare Are Barriers	13
People Show Up When It Feels Worth It	13
How can the Chamber, City, and other partners better communicate initiatives and successes to the broader community?	14
Too Many Channels, Not Enough Coordination	14
Overwhelm and Burnout	14
Need for Unified Messaging	14
APPENDIX: CITY-SPECIFIC FOCUS GROUP INSIGHTS	16
How effectively do you think the City is using taxpayer and ratepayer funds in delivering services? Do you feel these funds are being well-managed?	16
General Praise for Parks and Core Services	16
Concerns About Communication and Transparency	16
Eyesores, Abandoned Properties, and Blight	17
Administrative vs. Action Concerns	17

Would you support ongoing investment to maintain and upgrade the current aquatics facility, or do you feel the City should explore other options (e.g., building a new facility or a complete makeover)? Would you be willing to pay for it, and how?	18
Universal Support for Keeping a Pool	18
Desire for Modernization	18
Mixed Feelings on Funding Methods	18
Interest in a Broader Recreation Center	19
With the expected loss of \$195 million annually from extractive industries and power, what industries or sectors should we focus on to cushion this economic blow?	19
Urgency to Get Real	20
Industries Mentioned Most Often	20
Cross-Cutting Ideas	20
APPENDIX: Online Survey Comments	27
A Final Word	30
Moving Forward, Together	30

CRAIG COMMUNITY FOCUS GROUP REPORT

Compiled from community-led focus groups hosted by the Craig Chamber of Commerce.

Note: This document reflects **community comments, themes, and suggestions** offered during seven facilitated focus groups. These are **not formal recommendations**, but rather a **reflection of community conversation** that can support strategy development across many organizations. Readers are encouraged to adapt, interpret, and build upon these insights in ways that reflect their own missions and capacity.

QUESTION 1

How can the Chamber create more value for its members, especially small businesses, while ensuring that larger businesses also feel represented?

What We Heard

Small Businesses: “I just want help that meets me where I am.”

- Repeated requests for hands-on, real-time help, especially around marketing, licensing, startup support, and funding navigation.
 - One downtown shop owner said:
“A cheat sheet for running a business in Craig would change my life. Where to start, who to talk to, what fees to expect.”
- Many emphasized that they don’t have time to attend formal training but would love quick drop-ins or one-on-one sessions.

Larger Employers: “Help us shape the big picture.”

- Desire for Chamber involvement in long-range strategy (e.g., workforce, industrial land planning, policy advocacy).
 - Industry leaders want the Chamber to act as a voice to external partners:
“It should be the Chamber saying: ‘This is what Craig needs for workforce, for funding, for infrastructure.’ We need someone articulating our reality.”

Concerns About Representation

- Some are concerned that events and marketing often benefit the same businesses.
 - One participant noted:
“I don’t think it’s intentional, but the same three businesses always get the spotlight.”

Ideas Raised During Sessions

- Chamber-organized health insurance pools
- “Small Business Office Hours” for technical help
- A transparent Chamber marketing calendar
- Pre-written policy comment templates (e.g., taxes, RTA)
- Quarterly industry “micro-forums” by sector

Why This Matters

When businesses, large or small, don’t feel seen, supported, or heard, trust erodes and engagement fades. In a post-coal transition economy, small business retention and medium-sized employer growth are **two sides of the same coin**. Creating parallel structures that speak to both strengthens the community’s ability to weather change.

Ideas and Next Steps

To be explored by the Chamber, City, EDC, or other partner organizations.

Concept	Description	Potential Partners
Business Navigator Role	A “concierge” to help businesses navigate permits, grants, and marketing	Chamber (staff/contractor), SBDC
Industry Working Groups	Quarterly convenings by sector (e.g. trades, real estate, retail) to surface sector-specific issues	Chamber + City Economic Development
Comment Letter Toolkit	Templates to help businesses engage in policy decisions (e.g., LMD, zoning changes, taxes)	Chamber + Advocacy Partners
Member Spotlight Rotation	Transparent system for featured business promotion, ensuring fairness	Chamber marketing team

QUESTION 2

What community initiatives or events would make you feel more connected to the wider Craig community?

What We Heard

Nostalgic Connection to Low-Budget Events

- A recurring theme was the **power of simple, consistent, grassroots events**:
“People just want a reason to bump into each other again. We’re not a town of galas. Give us a BBQ and a few tables.”
- Mentioned repeatedly: sidewalk chalk events, field days, community picnics, and spontaneous street music.

Downtown Needs to “Breathe”

- Strong desire to reanimate the downtown core with regular activity:
“You don’t need to bring in a carnival. Just light it up, have music, and let people wander with their families.”
- Suggestions included:
 - Friday night block parties
 - Pop-up markets
 - Mural painting weekends
 - “I in Craig” sculpture for selfies and pride

Inclusivity & Accessibility

- Events should be accessible for:
 - Families with kids
 - Shift workers
 - Seniors
 - Latinx community
- Feedback on timing: many events are during business hours or early evening, difficult for service workers or caregivers.

Creative Ideas Mentioned

- “Adopt-a-block” downtown
- Parking lot drive-in movie nights
- Art + food nights in the alleyways
- Youth-run pop-up shops at events

Why This Matters

In places undergoing economic transition, social connection becomes a lifeline. Simple community initiatives foster visibility, safety, trust, and a sense of belonging. They are the **glue between economic initiatives and lived experience**. They also create “on-ramps” for residents to become volunteers, entrepreneurs, and future leaders.

Ideas and Next Steps

To be considered by Chamber, Parks & Rec, CNCC, Moffat County School District, nonprofits, or grassroots leaders.

Initiative	Description	Potential Partners
Field Days in Parks	Community games + vendor booths tied to existing festivals	Chamber + Parks & Rec
Revive Farmers/Artisan Market	Simple bi-weekly downtown market with food, music, handmade goods	CSU Extension, Downtown Merchants, City
Neighborhood Event Grants	Mini-grants for neighborhood events organized by residents	Chamber or United Way
Welcome to Craig Packet	Distributed via utilities and realtors; includes coupons, school info, civic events	Chamber + Realtors + City
Community Ambassadors Program	Trusted local leaders promote events and resources in underrepresented communities	CNCC, school leaders, faith-based orgs

QUESTION 3

What is the biggest gap in the current local economic development efforts, and how should this gap be filled?

What We Heard

Vision Void

- Several participants used the term “**identity crisis**” to describe Craig’s economic planning:
“We keep saying diversification but we haven’t actually defined what that looks like for us.”
- Others noted a cycle of reactivity vs. proactivity:
“We chase projects after they show up. We don’t recruit with purpose.”

Infrastructure Development

- Concerns were raised about the lack of shovel-ready housing lots and commercial sites:
“We can’t attract new people if they have nowhere to live and nowhere for businesses to operate. What we do have is outdated, needs work, and a ton of money”
- Several people pointed out that there’s land but no infrastructure:
“It’s not a land problem. It’s a utilities and roads problem, and where we put that investment.”

Data + Decision Disconnect

- No current leakage study, no updated recruitment materials, no consistent outreach to prospects.
 - A participant said:
“How do we expect people to invest here if we don’t even have a pitch deck?”

Industry Ideas with Community Interest

- Green steel or clean manufacturing
- Protein production and local food logistics
- Rail-served warehousing/distribution
- Cottage industries and fabrication
- Tech-adjacent remote team support

Why This Matters

In the wake of extractive industry loss, communities must **own their narrative**, not just respond to loss. A defined vision with prioritized sectors, aligned infrastructure, and shared accountability is essential. Otherwise, Craig risks fragmented investments and missed opportunities.

Ideas and Next Steps

To be considered by Chamber, City Economic Development, County Planning, CNCC, OEDIT, DOLA, or philanthropic partners.

Initiative	Description	Potential Lead
5-Year Economic Strategy Update	Focused on diversification, target sectors, infrastructure gaps, and regional identity	Chamber + City + CNCC
Leakage & Opportunity Study	Quantify where money leaves Craig and what businesses to attract	Partner with CSU or OEDIT
Catalytic Sites Marketing Packet	Create visual, ready-to-share site and building packets with infrastructure status	City Planning + Chamber
Infill Housing Accelerator	Partner with developers and banks to get infrastructure into platted subdivisions	City + Local Developers
Developer Roundtables	Quarterly convenings to remove permitting and utility barriers	City + Builders Guild

QUESTION 4

How can the community foster stronger collaboration between local businesses, government, and nonprofits to build a more resilient economic ecosystem?

What We Heard

Silos Are the Norm

- Nearly all groups expressed that **community efforts are fragmented**, with little follow-through or shared planning.
“Everyone is doing good work, but we’re not doing it together.”
“It’s like there are ten different strategies happening in ten different rooms.”
- Some cited examples of duplication or missed alignment, such as grant applications overlapping, multiple events on the same day, or efforts being launched without community buy-in.

Relationships Matter

- Multiple participants noted that **collaboration often depends on personalities, not systems**.
“If you know the right person, you can get something done. If you don’t, it’s a dead end.”
- There was a call for **better onboarding of new leaders**, so incoming directors or electeds can understand what’s already happening and avoid “starting over.”

Desire for More Strategic Conversation

- Ideas that surfaced:
 - A cross-sector “economic roundtable” or think tank
 - Shared messaging platform across nonprofits and agencies
 - Quarterly grant coordination meetings

Why This Matters

In a time of transition, strong collaboration is not just helpful, it’s essential. Without shared data, priorities, and communication, Craig risks duplication of effort, funding fatigue, and strategic drift. Collaboration must be embedded in **systems, not just relationships**.

Ideas and Next Steps

Reflective of focus group discussions; open to refinement by regional partners.

Initiative	Description	Potential Owners
Cross-Sector Leadership Council	Monthly or quarterly roundtable for nonprofits, government, education, and business	Chamber + City + United Way
Grant Alignment Calendar	Shared schedule of deadlines, funder visits, and proposals	Chamber, City, CNCC
Community Strategy Onboarding Packet	“What you need to know” guide for new leaders	DOLA + Chamber + Yampa Valley Community Foundation
Shared Event Calendar & Promo Hub	Collaborative tool to avoid duplication and amplify each other’s efforts	Chamber + Library + Tourism Board

QUESTION 5

What would encourage you to participate more actively in community activities (events, networking, collaborations, etc.)?

What We Heard

Time, Energy, and Childcare Are Barriers

- Across nearly every group, participants said they want to attend more events, but don't have capacity due to family or work.
*"I'd love to go to mixers, but I'm not hiring a babysitter to talk about business."
"Things are always at 5:30 or noon. What about 8PM or weekends?"*

People Show Up When It Feels Worth It

- Attendees noted that when events feel **engaging, useful, or joyful**, they'll make time.
"If it's just a networking thing with no food or energy, I'm not going."
- People want more "blended" events, where they can connect professionally but still have fun, bring their family, or learn something new.
- Several voices emphasized that community events should **reflect the full range of Craig's culture**, especially Latinx residents and blue-collar workers.
"If everything is in English, at the museum, and run by the same five people, that's not community."

Ideas and Next Steps

To be piloted or adapted by Chamber, Rec District, United Way, CNCC, etc.

Initiative	Description	Potential Partners
Family-Friendly Mixers	Quarterly events with food, kids' activities, and local music	Chamber + Rec Center
Pop-Up Street Events	Informal, low-cost neighborhood block parties with vendors	City + Library + Youth Council
Cultural Events Co-Hosted with Latinx Leaders	Food, music, art, and business showcases led by trusted voices	Chamber + CNCC + local families
Childcare at Strategic Events	Offer supervised play during public meetings or trainings	School District + Churches
Event Accessibility Audit	Checklist for organizers to review timing, cost, language, and location	Chamber + Nonprofit Network

QUESTION 6

How can the Chamber, City, and other partners better communicate initiatives and successes to the broader community?

What We Heard

Too Many Channels, Not Enough Coordination

- Residents often rely on Facebook groups, word of mouth, or physical flyers, none of which are consistently used by institutions.
“If it’s not on Facebook, I’m not going to know about it.”
“We need one calendar, not twelve.”
- Multiple people mentioned missing important meetings, deadlines, or funding opportunities because they weren’t communicated broadly.

Overwhelm and Burnout

- Leaders noted that **too many announcements are poorly timed or duplicative**, causing disengagement.
“We get five emails a day from five different groups, and they all say ‘This is urgent.’ It’s not manageable.”

Need for Unified Messaging

- Several recommended a shared communications strategy across institutions.
- Others suggested hiring a **shared communications coordinator**, or at minimum, aligning newsletters.

Why This Matters

Without clear communication, even the best plans fail. In a transition economy, narrative is power, Craig must be able to tell its story **to itself and to others**. This includes success stories, opportunities, and a unified voice.

Ideas and Next Steps

To be explored by Chamber, City, Tourism Board, CNCC, nonprofits, and media partners.

Initiative	Description	Potential Leads
Craig Community Calendar	Single shared calendar (Google-based or app) for all events, workshops, deadlines	Chamber + Library
Monthly “Community Wins” Email	Quick, uplifting summary of recent achievements	Chamber or Communications Intern
Shared Messaging Coordinator	Contract position to manage unified announcements across institutions	Cost-shared by City, County, CNCC, Chamber
Flyer Distribution Partnership	Libraries, schools, laundromats, stores agree to post key flyers	Nonprofit Network
Visual Storytelling Campaign	Short videos or photo essays celebrating Craig people, places, and wins	Chamber + CNCC students + local creatives

APPENDIX: CITY-SPECIFIC FOCUS GROUP INSIGHTS

Compiled from March 31 – April 1, 2025 focus groups

Shared as supplemental insight from public conversations facilitated by the Craig Chamber of Commerce.

Note: The following captures detailed feedback from participants during open-ended discussions around city services, facilities, and economic planning. These are **unfiltered reflections**, not consensus positions or formal recommendations. Their value lies in offering **community perception and nuance** that can inform budgeting, planning, and engagement strategies.

CITY QUESTION 1

How effectively do you think the City is using taxpayer and ratepayer funds in delivering services? Do you feel these funds are being well-managed?

What We Heard

General Praise for Parks and Core Services

- Most participants described basic city services (e.g. trash, water, snow removal, parks) as **reliable and high-quality**:
“Our parks look great. I’ve seen worse in bigger towns.”
“The snow removal crew deserves more credit than they get.”
- The new library building was mentioned as a visible point of pride and investment return.

Concerns About Communication and Transparency

- The most common frustration was **not the spending itself, but the lack of clear communication about where and why**.
“I have no idea how we decide what to fund.”
“Every time I hear about a new tax or a big spend, I think, wait, when did that happen?”
- Many expressed a desire to see **clearer line-item communication**, particularly with things like:
 - Use of sales tax revenue
 - LMD allocations
 - RTA feasibility costs
 - Building repairs and leases

Eyesores, Abandoned Properties, and Blight

- Several groups cited **abandoned or deteriorating properties** as a major pain point.
"We spend money on nice signs but ignore the falling-apart buildings on Yampa."
"How much do we actually enforce building codes?"
- Participants asked whether **code enforcement** or **vacant property ordinances** could be better used.

Administrative vs. Action Concerns

- A few participants were concerned that funds were being used for **too much "talking" and not enough "doing."**

"We hire consultants, then do nothing with the plan."
"I'm not sure we need another study. We need follow-through."

Why This Matters

When trust in spending decisions erodes, even unintentionally, residents become more resistant to necessary investments. Transparency, accountability, and visual results are vital to maintaining public trust. This is especially true in smaller communities, where most residents expect to **see the results** of local taxation.

Ideas and Next Steps

Based on public feedback, not recommendations.

Idea	Description
Annual "City Dollars at Work" Campaign	Use simple infographics, mailers, and social posts to break down how each tax type is used and what's been accomplished
Budget-by-Block Conversations	Host informal, neighborhood-based public sessions to walk through city budget priorities
Create a Blight Action Plan	Include voluntary incentives for repair and enforcement mechanisms for neglected properties
Reevaluate Public-Private Maintenance Agreements	Identify whether there are opportunities for partnerships (e.g., park cleanup, alley beautification)

Community Oversight Sessions on Big Projects

Allow pre-allocated time at City Council meetings for residents to review capital project status and finances

CITY QUESTION 2

Would you support ongoing investment to maintain and upgrade the current aquatics facility, or do you feel the City should explore other options (e.g., building a new facility or a complete makeover)? Would you be willing to pay for it, and how?

What We Heard

Universal Support for Keeping a Pool

- Not a single participant opposed maintaining a pool. In fact, it was framed as a **community asset and necessity**.

"We've always had a pool."

"You want kids to stay out of trouble? Give them water and a place to go."

Desire for Modernization

- Many noted that while the current pool is beloved, it's also outdated.
"The wave pool is iconic, but the locker rooms are embarrassing."
"It feels like the same pool I went to in 1997."
- Interest in a **year-round facility**, possibly with indoor components and expanded programming, came up often.

Mixed Feelings on Funding Methods

- Most people said they'd be **open to paying**, but only if they saw value and had trust in how it was structured.
"I'd pay more in a user fee. Not another sales tax."
"If we can show that a new pool supports tourism and youth retention, then yes, get creative with how we fund it."
- Some support was voiced for:

- Use fees for out-of-county visitors
- Matching grants
- Repurposing existing rec tax allocations

Interest in a Broader Recreation Center

- Several participants suggested **co-locating pool upgrades with other community services**:
“What if it’s not just a pool? What if it’s a community fitness, child care, event space too?”

Why This Matters

The aquatics facility is more than just recreation, it’s tied to **family life, identity, and youth retention**. Residents are willing to invest, but only if the process feels transparent, inclusive, and tied to broader community goals.

Ideas and Next Steps

Based on public dialogue.

Idea	Description
Recreation Facility Master Planning Process	Lead a public visioning and design session series (possibly with CNCC architecture program)
Create “Friends of the Craig Pool” Advocacy Group	Resident-led working group to inform design, messaging, and fundraising
User-Based Revenue Options Study	Explore how regional pool models use out-of-area pricing, membership tiers, and public/private partners
Pool + Housing Concept Study	Evaluate feasibility of co-developing housing and recreation to maximize state funding eligibility (DOLA, CHFA)

CITY QUESTION 3

With the expected loss of \$195 million annually from extractive industries and power, what industries or sectors should we focus on to cushion this economic blow?

What We Heard

Urgency to Get Real

- Many residents noted that the conversation around diversification feels **“too slow”** or **“too hypothetical.”**
“We’ve been saying ‘diversify’ for ten years. What are we actually doing?”
- There is a hunger for **actionable steps and clear leadership.**

Industries Mentioned Most Often

- **Manufacturing**

“We’re a working town. Why not be known for producing sustainable stuff?”

- **Rail-Based Logistics**

“We’re rail-connected and centrally located, why aren’t we building warehousing and distribution, or attracting businesses that use these facilities and lines”

- **Local Food Economy**

“From ranch to butcher to consumer, let’s own the whole chain locally.”

- **Outdoor Recreation**

“Start with gravel races and events. We don’t need to be Moab, just ourselves.”

- **Construction & Trade Services**

“Workforce is ready. What’s missing are the jobs and the sites.”

Cross-Cutting Ideas

- Technical education (linked to CNCC)
- Encouraging in-migration of remote workers
- Business incubator or co-work campus for entrepreneurs
- “20 businesses, 20 jobs each” model vs. one big employer

Why This Matters

Craig's economic identity is being rewritten. The choices made now will shape job types, education pipelines, infrastructure priorities, and cultural identity for decades. A clear, **shared economic vision** grounded in real assets is key to stability.

Ideas and Next Steps

Based on participant suggestions.

Concept	Description
Target Industry Portfolio	Define 5–6 focus sectors and identify needed assets and site requirements
Proactive Recruitment Packet	Updated site inventory, infrastructure readiness, labor force overview, and incentives
Small-Scale Manufacturing Incentive Fund	Local incentive for 5–50 employee businesses in trades, metal, textiles, food
Trail & Event Infrastructure	Pair outdoor recreation growth with rural tourism strategy
Data + Center Strategy	Explore small-scale data centers tied to local energy infrastructure and CNCC support

APPENDIX: CRAIG COMMUNITY SURVEY REPORT

This report provides a summary of key takeaways, participant comments, and suggested action items based on responses to the Craig Chamber of Commerce's community survey. The responses are organized by question and reflect a wide range of community perspectives that can inform strategic planning, communication, infrastructure investment, and collaborative efforts among public, private, and nonprofit stakeholders.

Q1: How can the Chamber create more value for its members?

Key Themes & Takeaways: Respondents emphasized the importance of offering tailored support to businesses of varying sizes and industries. There is a desire for clearer benefits from Chamber membership, such as better visibility, more networking opportunities, and structured mentorship between established and emerging business owners.

Participant Summary Comments:

- How to support both large and small businesses, with options tailored to their needs
- Provide mentorship between experienced and new business owners
- Grouped marketing for similar businesses (e.g., salons or service-based)
- Increase visibility and awareness of Chamber benefits
- Review membership dues and benefits structure for fairness and value

Suggested Action Items:

- Develop tiered membership benefits and tailored support for different types of businesses.
- Launch mentorship and spotlight programs for increased visibility and shared learning.
- Reassess membership dues structure to align with business size and value received.

Q2: What community initiatives or events would make you feel more connected?

Key Themes & Takeaways: There is strong interest in reviving or introducing inclusive community events that reflect a broader cross-section of Craig residents. Ideas ranged from co-ed recreational leagues and family events to arts and culture programs and better use of public spaces like Alice Pleasant Park.

Participant Summary Comments:

- Reintroduce co-ed recreational sports leagues
- Invest in splash pads, parks, amphitheaters, and other public amenities
- Encourage art displays, cultural events, and more use of downtown
- Desire for festivals and events that reflect Craig's history and personality
- Ask the community for ideas and be transparent with planning

Suggested Action Items:

- Develop and promote new community events that celebrate local identity and increase inclusivity.
- Coordinate with Parks & Recreation to invest in improved facilities and programming.
- Provide structured engagement for underrepresented groups, including youth and seniors.

Q3: What is the biggest gap in local economic development efforts?

Key Themes & Takeaways: Respondents pointed to a lack of clear strategic focus, minimal support for entrepreneurs, limited access to development tools, and an absence of visible results. Some expressed a desire for leadership accountability and better integration between agencies working on economic development.

Participant Summary Comments:

- No clear economic development direction

- Limited help for new business owners or entrepreneurs
- Disconnect between organizations working in development
- Community services (childcare, housing, mental health) are lacking
- Distrust in current development planning and efforts

Suggested Action Items:

- Centralize information on grants, training, and business development resources.
- Implement a unified economic development strategy with measurable outcomes.
- Increase visibility and accountability for economic development partners and initiatives.

Q4: How can the community foster stronger collaboration between businesses, government, and nonprofits?

Key Themes & Takeaways: There is a desire for regular, structured collaboration and better communication. Participants noted that groups often work in silos and that a shared vision with open dialogue would benefit the entire community.

Participant Summary Comments:

- Hold monthly or quarterly stakeholder meetings
- Promote cooperation between leaders instead of competition or isolation
- Reduce barriers to collaboration across sectors
- Invite the community into planning and decision-making processes

Suggested Action Items:

- Establish consistent forums or roundtables for cross-sector collaboration.
- Identify shared goals and create joint action plans.
- Designate liaisons or cross-organizational working groups.

Q5: What would encourage you to participate more in community activities?

Key Themes & Takeaways: Participants cited poor communication, repetitive events, and a lack of inclusivity as barriers. Suggestions included better promotion, varied events, and personal outreach.

Participant Summary Comments:

- Often find out about events too late
- Want to feel personally invited or welcomed
- Desire for more inclusive, family-friendly, and casual events
- Would attend if events matched their interests or age group

Suggested Action Items:

- Expand outreach channels (social media, flyers, email lists, local media).

- Appoint neighborhood or community ambassadors to personally invite and welcome participants.
- Ensure events reflect cultural diversity and appeal to various age groups.

Q6: How can the community better communicate its initiatives and successes?

Key Themes & Takeaways: Respondents expressed frustration over the lack of information and inconsistent communication. They called for better storytelling, regular updates, and transparency from local institutions.

Participant Summary Comments:

- Provide updates in the newspaper and community newsletters
- Use town halls, forums, and direct mail to explain decisions
- Regularly report progress on community projects and initiatives
- Hold leadership accountable for follow-through

Suggested Action Items:

- Establish a multi-platform communication strategy that includes social media, local press, and public meetings.
- Publish regular impact updates (e.g., "What We're Working On" emails or newsletters).
- Increase public visibility of city, Chamber, and nonprofit leadership.

Q7: If the Chamber launched a business think tank, what topics should it address?

Key Themes & Takeaways: Participants were interested in a think tank that focused on practical business support, particularly marketing, workforce challenges, and business sustainability. There was skepticism from some about intent, but others encouraged innovation and collaboration.

Participant Summary Comments:

- Marketing outside of Craig to attract business and customers
- Business funding, grants, and navigating startup processes
- Ways to improve customer service, online presence, and financial literacy
- Include workforce issues, benefits planning, and strategic growth
- Some skepticism about effectiveness and bias in representation

Suggested Action Items:

- Facilitate discussions on business marketing, workforce development, financing, and advocacy.
- Structure the think tank to produce recommendations and implement pilot programs.
- Ensure representation from diverse sectors, new entrepreneurs, and seasoned business owners.

Q8: How effectively is the city managing taxpayer and ratepayer funds?

Key Themes & Takeaways: Opinions varied widely. Many voiced distrust and skepticism, calling for more oversight and transparency. Others acknowledged basic services are well-handled but want to see better prioritization.

Participant Summary Comments:

- Many don't understand where their tax dollars are going
- Call for more transparency and public-facing budgets
- Some support for infrastructure maintenance and basic services
- Concerns about spending on grants or housing instead of needs
- Dissatisfaction with rising costs and lack of communication

Suggested Action Items:

- Publish annual budget summaries in plain language.
- Host budget Q&A sessions and community audits.
- Create a public-facing dashboard showing where funds are allocated.

Q9: Should the city invest in aquatics facility upgrades or a new rec center?

Key Themes & Takeaways: Most respondents support major investment in recreation facilities. Many prefer a multi-use rec center over patching the existing pool, though opinions on funding vary widely.

Participant Summary Comments:

- Support for a year-round indoor facility and recreation center
- Mixed support for tax increases; some prefer user fees
- Requests for feasibility study or business plan
- Recognition that such investment could improve quality of life
- Concern about prioritizing this over other needs if funds are tight

Suggested Action Items:

- Conduct feasibility study including long-term funding and community use models.
- Consider rec district, user fees, and strategic use of transition grants.
- Prioritize communication and public engagement around costs and benefits.

Q10: What industries should be developed to offset coal and power revenue losses?

Key Themes & Takeaways: Respondents called for investment in energy (especially nuclear and natural gas), manufacturing, and outdoor recreation. Some also emphasized entrepreneurship and commuter-focused services.

Participant Summary Comments:

- Support for renewable, nuclear, and natural gas energy production
- Desire for more mid-size and specialty manufacturing
- Expand outdoor recreation, but not as a sole solution
- Rail infrastructure and commuter support seen as key assets
- Concern over past inaction and need for long-term planning

Suggested Action Items:

- Develop an industry attraction strategy that includes rail, energy, and manufacturing.
- Incentivize business formation through entrepreneurship support.
- Leverage outdoor rec as a complement, not a substitute, for industry.

Q11: Would you support a 1% sales tax for a Regional Transit Authority (RTA)?

Key Themes & Takeaways: The community is split. Some support the tax to expand transit, especially for Steamboat commuters. Others oppose any new taxes or want a more equitable funding approach.

Participant Summary Comments:

- Many support the RTA concept, but want a different funding model
- Some express concern over subsidizing workforce transport to Steamboat
- Suggestions to explore alternatives like property taxes or state funding
- Others feel connectivity is important for future economic growth

Suggested Action Items:

- Develop a clear communications campaign showing the benefits for Craig residents.
- Explore diverse funding mechanisms (sales tax, property tax, employer partnerships).
- Host public meetings to gauge priorities and build consensus.

Q12: Would you support a 2% sales tax increase for the Local Marketing District (LMD)?

Key Themes & Takeaways: Most participants oppose a sales tax increase for the LMD, citing insufficient information, poor past performance, and already high tax burdens. Support was higher for a lodging tax than a general sales tax.

Participant Summary Comments:

- General lack of knowledge about what LMD does or achieves
- Skepticism about increasing sales tax when outcomes are unclear
- Some support for funding if limited to lodging and visitor-related taxes
- Suggestions for more transparency, reporting, and public education

Suggested Action Items:

- Improve public reporting on LMD impacts and spending.

- Focus on refining current funding and strategy before requesting increases.
- Clarify funding sources (e.g., retain as lodging-only tax) in public outreach.

APPENDIX: Online Survey Comments

For Stakeholder Reference Only

Sourced from the 2025 Community Survey conducted by the Craig Chamber of Commerce

*This section contains unedited, anonymized quotes directly from survey participants. These comments provide raw insight into community perspectives. They are intended for **internal reflection** by local partners and do not represent official findings or consensus opinions.*

Economic and Business Development

"We need more restaurants, not just fast food. The food scene is dismal for visitors."

"There are no stores to buy clothes. If you don't want western wear, you're out of luck."

"If one more person says 'tourism will save us,' I'm going to lose it. Tourism is seasonal and doesn't pay well."

"We need to keep and grow real jobs, not just boutiques and coffee shops."

"I think agriculture and trades are still our backbone. We should double down on that."

"Business owners are tired. No workforce. No foot traffic. No help."

"The city and county should do more to help new businesses. Permitting is confusing."

Downtown and Place-Based Development

"The west end of Victory Way is ugly and doesn't reflect how great this town actually is."

"Downtown is trying, but it's like two blocks and then it's over."

"We need outdoor dining, better lighting, and more reasons to stay downtown after 5pm."

"Yampa is embarrassing. So many empty buildings and peeling paint."

"I would like to see tax incentives for people who renovate storefronts."

Recreation, Youth, and Aquatics

"The pool is critical. Period."

"Fix the bathrooms, then talk to me about building a new rec center."

"Our teenagers have nowhere to go. That's why they leave, or get into trouble."

"The skate park is a joke. Why don't we have more for kids who don't play sports?"

“I’d support a tax for a year-round rec center with a pool, fitness, and indoor courts.”

“We should be charging out-of-towners to use our facilities.”

Arts, Culture, and Events

“It’s always the same events with the same people.”

“I love Whittle the Wood and the Balloon Festival. More of that, please!”

“Bring back community theater and kids performing arts. That’s what makes a town feel alive.”

“We could be doing so much more with music and storytelling around our Western history.”

“Support local artists and creatives. They’re the ones keeping culture here.”

Tourism and Visitor Perception

“We say we’re a tourist town but don’t act like it.”

“There’s no place for a tourist to get a good coffee or walk around.”

“The museums are hidden gems. We should advertise them more.”

“Motels are rundown and not welcoming.”

“People drive through Craig and don’t stop. That’s the real problem.”

Housing and Neighborhoods

“We don’t need more low-income housing, we need middle-income.”

“Let people build duplexes and ADUs, it’s the only way to grow.”

“The rentals are all junk or overpriced.”

“We could be doing cool small-town things like cottage courts or little neighborhoods with shared gardens.”

“It’s time to rethink zoning. It’s holding us back.”

Workforce and Youth Retention

“My kids don’t see a future here. That breaks my heart.”

“There are jobs but no training. CNCC should be part of the solution.”

“People commute to Steamboat because wages here are too low.”

“Young people don’t want coal, they want careers. We aren’t offering that.”

“We need business incubators or internships or something. Get creative.”

Civic Engagement and Transparency

“I don’t trust city hall. Too many closed-door decisions.”

“Nobody listens when we speak up.”

“Surveys are nice, but what happens after this?”

“Put up a bulletin board in City Market and post updates. That’s how people

actually get info.”

“We need a community newsletter or podcast. Something modern.”

Additional Comments

“I love this town, but I’m tired of fighting to make it better.”

“Craig is full of amazing people. We just need to pull together.”

“Thank you for asking what we think. Please don’t let this sit on a shelf.”

“I’d be willing to volunteer or help, just tell me how.”

“This survey was great. We need more listening and less talking.”

A Final Word

Moving Forward, Together

As this document closes, the work it represents is only just beginning.

What's captured in these pages is not a final answer or a polished plan, it's the start of a broader community conversation for each stakeholder and development organization to take with them for their planning. These ideas, questions, concerns, and creative strategies came directly from the people who live and work in Craig every day. Their contributions reflect a shared desire to build a more resilient, inclusive, and forward-looking community.

We encourage you to use this report not just as a summary of what was said, but as a springboard for action. Let it guide internal planning sessions, grant proposals, board meetings, and coffee shop conversations. Whether you're part of a city department, a nonprofit board, a school team, a funding organization, or a local business, there's something here that can inform your work.

We also acknowledge that no report can capture everything. This document is a snapshot, a moment in time, and we hope it sparks **ongoing listening**, **continued collaboration**, and **long-term investment** in the people and places that make Craig what it is.

Thank you for taking the time to engage with this effort. Let's keep the conversation going, and let's continue to build a future that reflects the values, hopes, and grit of this community.

With gratitude,
Craig Chamber of Commerce