



Visioning Meeting Findings

8 September 2023

Introduction:

On September 8th, 2023, the communities of Cooke City, Silver Gate, and Colter Pass gathered at the Range Rider Lodge in Silver Gate for a visioning meeting. The primary objective of this meeting was to establish a collective vision for the future of these communities. This event was facilitated by MSU Extension and the MSU Local Government Center, with the aim of harnessing the wisdom and aspirations of the residents to guide the community towards a prosperous and sustainable future.

Meeting Activities:

The visioning meeting included two core activities: asset mapping and discussions based on three key questions.

Asset Mapping:

Participants engaged in asset mapping to identify and celebrate the existing strengths and resources within the community. This exercise allowed us to recognize the valuable assets we possess that can be leveraged for future growth and development.

Discussion Questions:

Participants were asked three fundamental questions to guide the visioning process and were instructed to write their ideas down on cards:

What do you want to preserve?

What do you want to create?

What do you want to change?



Findings: Duplicate findings have been condensed together. Look at the number in parenthesis to see how many times something was written down! Raw data is also available in Excel form at the end of this document!

Preserve:

Natural Resources: Participants expressed a strong desire to preserve the rich natural resources of the area (4), including open spaces, access to public lands, local access to Yellowstone National Park, dark skies (3), access to wilderness(2), backcountry access, clean water (3), wildlife habitats, forests, and trees (2).

Recreation: The importance of preserving recreational opportunities was emphasized, including skiing, motorized use on US Forest Service lands, access to fishing, "The Plug" (a local landmark), softball fields, unmotorized trails, Bannock Dirt trail/road, and street dances.

Tourism Amenities: The community aims to preserve its tourism attractiveness.

Government Assets: Key government assets such as resort tax, zoning regulations (2), fire/EMS services (2), and the local school are to be preserved (2).

Community: The uniqueness (2), healthy way of life, community individuality and appearance, caring atmosphere, and a lack of social caste system were all identified as aspects to be preserved.

Atmosphere: The community values its rustic character (2), end-of-the-road feel, nature-oriented atmosphere, small-town/community feel (8), spirit of independence, remoteness, sense of belonging, simple way of life, and quietness (2).

History/Heritage: The rich history and heritage of the area, including mining history (2), local history (2), native history, winter heritage, western heritage, and historic structures, are all vital aspects to preserve.

Business: Local ownership of business (2), no chain establishments

Other: Additional assets to be preserved include mining remains on USFS property, local residents and families, the absence of cell phone towers, awareness of nature, and private septic systems.

Create:

Partnerships: They seek to form partnerships, particularly with Yellowstone National Park, regarding tour buses and public restrooms.

Economic Goals: The community wishes to create a more competitive and sustainable economy, with a focus on expanding winter businesses.

Events/Gatherings: Creating events like Park Talks (2), community board games/card games, and community conversations to foster community engagement.

Planning/Regulation: Revisiting zoning regulations, making recommendations for reforestation, establishing a vision for the community, and focusing on a physical pattern of development that reinforces neighborhood identity, pedestrian access, and open space.

Atmosphere/Community Interactions: Building a sense of community unity, accountability, support, and respect, as well as encouraging community participation and responsibility with a friendly face.



Create Continued:

Infrastructure: Developing essential infrastructure such as a unified water and sewer district, a laundry/shower house, a rest stop for tourists, main street sidewalks/crosswalks, speed control measures, a community septic system, recycling opportunities, and an EV charging station.

Housing: Creating housing solutions, including employee housing, seasonal housing (5), and affordable housing for young families.

Recreation: Establishing a community park and a bike path from the Park entrance to Cooke City off the highway (2).

Change:

Regulations: Enforcing zoning regulations, county regulations, or imposing a moratorium on Airbnb licenses, as well as enforcing traffic regulations regarding speed and vehicle noise(3).

Economic Changes: Diversifying wintertime activities (2) and exploring ways to monetize buses used for facilities.

The Plug: Exploring options for better access to medical resources and considering compromises or alternate winter routes regarding "The Plug."(2)

Community Atmosphere: Addressing combative attitudes, attitudes towards zoning, polarization within the community, and individual responsibilities, such as personal sewer maintenance.

Nothing: Some participants expressed that they were content with the status quo and did not see the need for significant changes.

Eliminate Cesspools: Seeking to eliminate cesspools for environmental and health reasons.

Conclusion:

The Cooke City, Silver Gate, and Colter Pass communities have demonstrated their commitment to shaping a future that preserves their cherished assets, creates new opportunities, and addresses necessary changes. This visioning meeting has provided invaluable insights that will guide community leaders and stakeholders as they work together to build a sustainable and vibrant future for these communities in the heart of Lamar Valley.

All raw data will be available to the public in an Excel sheet

This list includes all responses received when participants were asked “What are our area’s built assets?”
 Ninety-one cards were received. The card responses are organized in alphabetical order.

Actual Responses
ATM: Soda Butte Lodge, Sinclair
Beartooth and Chief Joseph Highways
Beartooth and Chief Joseph Highways
Businesses - all
Campground
Campgrounds
Church
Church
Church
Church
Church
Community buildings
Community Center
Community Center
Community Center
Community Center
Community Center
Community Center
Community Center
Community Center
Community gathering spaces
Cooke City Store
Fire/EMS Services
Fire/EMS Services
Fire/EMS Services
Fire/EMS Services
Fire/EMS Services
Fire/EMS Services
Fire/EMS Services
Fire/EMS Services
Fire/EMS Services
Gas Stations
Gas Stations
Gas stations
General Store
Green house
Grocery Stores
Highway 212
Highway 296
Historic buildings
Historic buildings
Hotels

Lodging accommodations
Motel/hotels
Museum
Museum
Museum
Museum
New bridges: Soda Butte, Wyoming, Woody
Post Office
Post Office
Post Office
Post Office
Range Rider's Lodge
Range Rider's Lodge
Range Rider's Lodge
Range Rider's Lodge
Range Rider's Lodge
Range Rider's Lodge
Restaurants
Restaurants
Restaurants
Restaurants
Retail
Rock shop and sluice
Sawmills
School
School
School
School
School
School
School
Search and Rescue
Silver Gate Park
Silver Gate Park
Silver Gate Park
Snowmobile Trails
Softball field
Softball field
Softball field
Softball field
Softball field
Softball field
Trail system
Trail system
Trails - NFS

Trash collection/waste disposal
Trash collection/waste disposal
Trash collection/waste disposal
Trash collection/waste disposal
Trash collection/waste disposal
Trash collection/waste disposal/Art Gallery/Library
Visitor's Center
Visitor's Center
Visitor's Center

This list includes all responses received when participants were asked “What are our area’s economic assets?”
 Seventy-four cards were received. The card responses are organized in alphabetical order.

Actual Responses
100% Ralph
Antlers
ATM machines
Bars
Bars - Historic
Beartooth Café
Beartooth Highway and Chief Joseph
Beartooth Highway and Chief Joseph
Beartooth Highway and Chief Joseph
Bistro
Business
Chamber
Chamber
Community Council
Cooke City Coffee
Events
Fire Department Street Dance
Fire/EMS Services
Fishing
Flathead Electric Representative onsite
Forget-Me-Knot Festival
Gas stations
General Store
General Store
Guide services
History
Hog Roast
Hoosiers
Horseback riding
Hunting
Log Cabin Café
Log Cabin Café
Mines - Historic with trails
People - diverse, talented
Public land
Quiet
Real experiences

Recreation
Recreation
Resort tax
Resort tax
Resort tax
Resort tax
Resort tax
Restaurants
Service industries
Silver Gate General Store
Skiing
Small business
Small business
Snowmobile club
Snowmobile/ATV rentals
Snowmobiling
Soda Butte
Sweat Pea Grocery
The Miners
Tourist
Tourist Dollars
Tourists
Tourists
Tourists
Tourists
Tourists
VRBO
VRBO
Wilderness access
Wildlife
Wooka’s
Yellowstone National Park
Yellowstone National Park
Yellowstone National Park
Yellowstone National Park - NE entrance
Yellowstone National Park - NE entrance
Zoning

This list includes all responses received when participants were asked “What are our area’s natural resource assets?”
 Ninety-five cards were received. The card responses are organized in alphabetical order.

Actual Responses
Beauty of area
Camping opportunities
Clean air
Clean water
Clean water
Clean water
Creeks
Custer Gallatin National Forest
Custer Gallatin National Forest
Custer Gallatin National Forest access
Daisy and Lulu Pass
Dark sky
Dark sky
Dark sky
Dark sky
Fishing
Fishing
Fishing
Fishing
Fishing access
Fishing access
Fishing streams
Forests
Forests
Hiking trails
Hiking trails
Hunting access
Lakes
Lakes
Lumber/wood
Mountains
Mountains
Mountains
Mountains
Mountains
Mountains
Mountains for hiking
Natural beauty
Offroad trails
Photography
Plug

Public land - access
Quiet
Remote location
Remote location
Remote location
Rivers
Rivers
Rivers
Rivers
Skiing
Small population
Snow
Snow
Snow
Snowmobiling areas
Snowmobiling areas
Snowsports areas
Soda Butte Creek
Soda Butte Creek
Solitude
Solitude
Springs
Trails
USFS Roads
Waterfalls
Waterfalls
Weather
Wide open spaces
Wide open spaces
Wilderness
Wilderness
Wilderness
Wilderness - access
Wildflowers
Wildlife
Wildlife
Wildlife
Wildlife
Wildlife
Wildlife
Wildlife
Wildlife
Wildlife
Wildlife

Wildlife - Buffalo
Wildlife habitat - high quality
Wildlife in community
Yellowstone National Park
Yellowstone National Park
Yellowstone National Park
Yellowstone National Park
Yellowstone National Park
Yellowstone National Park
Yellowstone National Park
Yellowstone National Park
Yellowstone National Park
Yellowstone National Park

This list includes all responses received when participants were asked “What are our area’s social and cultural assets?” Ninety-eight cards were received. The card responses are organized in alphabetical order.

Actual responses
AA
Bazaar
Cabin tours
Cabin tours
Caring
Caring
Church
Church
Church
Church
Church
Church
Church
Church - monthly dinners
Church - monthly dinners
Church - nondenominational
Church bazaar
Church BBQ
Church options
Church with a pastor
Church with a pastor
Community Center
Community Center
Community Council
Community Council
Community message board
Community newsletter
Cooke City store
Disconnected
Diversity of residents
Elementary school teacher
EMS team
Fire Department
Fire Department
Fire Department
Fire Department Street Dance
Fire Department Street Dance
Fire/EMS/SAR
Fire/EMS/SAR
Fire/EMS/SAR
Fire/EMS/SAR

Food bank
Forest Service with a Ranger
Forget-Me-Knot Festival
Forget-Me-Knot Festival
Forget-Me-Knot Festival
Forget-Me-Knot Festival
Fourth of July
Fourth of July
Fourth of July
Fourth of July
Fourth of July
Fourth of July
Fourth of July
Fourth of July
Friendliness of community
Friends of Silver Gate
Great people
Great zoning document
Helpful friends
Hemingway museum
Hog Roast
Horseback riding
Independent
Involved community
Legacy
Log Cabin Café
Mountain Belles
Museum
Museum
Museum
Museum
Park talks
Passionate people
POP group
Post Office
Range Rider's Lodge
Search and rescue
Seasonal events
Self sufficient
Shakespeare in the park
Shakespeare in the park
Shakespeare in the park

Small community
Snowmobile club
Snowmobile club
Snowmobile club
Snowmobile club
Snowmobile club
Softball night
Souvenir Shop
Talented retirees with diverse experience
Visitor's Center
Visitor's Center
Wildlife tours
Women's lunch group
Writing group
Yellowstone National Park with Local Rangers

This list includes all responses received when participants were asked “What do they want to preserve about the area?” From the card responses, Mary Anne Keyes grouped them into three themes: Economy, people, and place. Within the place theme, she further grouped responses into these themes: Infrastructure, land-use, natural resources, and transportation.

Actual Responses	Theme	Sub-theme
Businesses	Economy	
Owner/operator businesses - local	Economy	
Owner/operator businesses - No chains	Economy	
Resort tax	Economy	
Street dance	Economy	
Tourism amenities	Economy	
Tourism attractiveness	Economy	
Comforting way of life, simple	People	
Community individuality and appearance	People	
Community spirit	People	
Fire/EMS	People	
Fire/EMS	People	
Healthy way of life: social, spiritual, physical	People	
Local residents and families	People	
No social caste system	People	
Sense of community, belonging, emotional spaces	People	
Small community feel	People	
Small community feel, rural atmosphere, simple, nature-oriented	People	
Small town	People	
Small town and community feel	People	
Small town feel	People	
Spirit of independence	People	
End of road feel	People/place	
Preserve the reason you moved here	People/place	
Unique characteristics	People/place	
Unique small town attributes	People/place	
Uniqueness of community	People/place	
Dark skies	Place	Infrastructure
Dark skies	Place	Infrastructure
Darkness	Place	Infrastructure
Private, functioning to code, septic systems	Place	Infrastructure
School	Place	Infrastructure
School	Place	Infrastructure
History	Place	Land-use
History structures	Place	Land-use
Mining history	Place	Land-use

Actual Responses	Theme	Sub-theme
Mining history, local history, history of creation	Place	Land-use
Mining remains on USFS property	Place	Land-use
Native history	Place	Land-use
No cell towers	Place	Land-use
Open space	Place	Land-use
Remoteness	Place	Land-use
Softball field	Place	Land-use
Western heritage	Place	Land-use
Zoning	Place	Land-use
Zoning (already established zoning)	Place	Land-use
Clean water	Place	Natural resources
Clean water	Place	Natural resources
Clean, clear water	Place	Natural resources
Forests - intact	Place	Natural resources
Forests and trees	Place	Natural resources
Natural resources	Place	Natural resources
Natural resources	Place	Natural resources
Nature	Place	Natural resources
Wilderness	Place	Natural resources
Wildlife habitat	Place	Natural resources
Winter heritage	Place	Natural resources
Access to all public lands	Place	Transportation
Access to backcountry	Place	Transportation
Access to fishing	Place	Transportation
Access to Park	Place	Transportation
Access to the natural	Place	Transportation
Access to wilderness	Place	Transportation
Motorized use on USFS	Place	Transportation
Quiet	Place	Transportation
Quiet environment	Place	Transportation
Single dirt trail/road on Bannock	Place	Transportation
Skiing - uncrowded	Place	Transportation
The plug	Place	Transportation
Unmotorized trails	Place	Transportation
Rustic appearance	Place	
Rustic character	Place	

This list includes all responses received when participants were asked “What do they want to change about the area?” From the card responses, Mary Anne Keyes grouped them into three themes: Economy, people, and place. Within the place theme, she further grouped responses into these themes: Infrastructure, land-use, natural resources, and transportation.

Actual Reponses	Theme	Sub-theme
Monetize bus traffic that use facilities and don't pay or shop	Economy	
Wintertime activities - diversify	Economy	
Wintertime activities for economy	Economy	
Attitudes between Cooke and SG to zones of activities	People	
Attitudes: change combative attitudes against each other	People	
Attitudes: polarization in community	People	
County regulations or moratorium on STR license changes	Place	Housing
Eliminate cess pools	Place	Infrastructure
Septic ownership responsibility level	Place	Infrastructure
Enforce zoning	Place	Land-use
Medical resources - closer access	Place	Services
Alternate winter driving route	Place	Transportation
Open plug for year round vehicle access per compromise	Place	Transportation
Quiet bikes and vehicles	Place	Transportation
Traffic: lower speed limits	Place	Transportation
Traffic: slower, quieter, lower speed limits	Place	Transportation
Not much		

This list includes all responses received when participants were asked “What do they want to create about the area?” From the card responses, Mary Anne Keyes grouped them into three themes: Economy, people, and place. Within the place theme, she further grouped responses into these themes: Infrastructure, land-use, natural resources, and transportation.

Actual Response	Theme	Sub-theme
More competition	Economy	
Sustainable economy	Economy	
Winter business - more	Economy	
Accountability	People	
Community focus	People	
Community participation/responsibility	People	
Community support/respect	People	
Community unity	People	
Community vision	People	
Community: create/present a friendly face	People	
More community: conversations	People	
More community: fun, cards, board games	People	
Park for picnics in Cooke City	People	
Park talks (bring them back)	People	
Park talks (bring them back)	People	
Housing - affordable for young families	Place	Housing
Housing - employee	Place	Housing
Housing - employee	Place	Housing
Housing - employee	Place	Housing
Housing - employee	Place	Housing
Housing - employee	Place	Housing
Laundry/shower house	Place	Infrastructure
Public EV charging station	Place	Infrastructure
Recycling opportunities	Place	Infrastructure
Restrooms: more restrooms, create sewer	Place	Infrastructure
Restrooms: Rest stop facilities for buses tours with restroom facilities	Place	Infrastructure
Septic: community septic system for businesses and residents	Place	Infrastructure
Sidewalks and crosswalks	Place	Infrastructure
Single water and sewer district	Place	Infrastructure
Partnerships with YNP: buses, septic/public restrooms	Place	Infrastructure/Transportation
Reforestation recommendations (forest service)	Place	Land-use
Revisiting zoning regulations	Place	Land-use
Bike path from YNP to Cooke	Place	Transportation
Bike path from YNP to Cooke and walking trail	Place	Transportation
Traffic: Speed control	Place	Transportation
Opportunities for town to remain small/local		