



ENVISION EAST PALESTINE



INTRODUCTION

The Village of East Palestine is a participant in the Ohio Rural Community Assistance Program's (RCAP) Building Thriving and Resilient Communities Program. This federally-funded program seeks to help communities grow and prosper through grass-roots economic and community development, by focusing on existing assets, placemaking strategies and building entrepreneurship opportunities. This process is being facilitated by the East Palestine Think Tank.

The East Palestine Think Tank is a dynamic and collaborative assembly of individuals that has been strategically curated to serve as the driving force behind a transformative process. Our collective expertise spans various facets of community life encompassing leadership, social services, education and business. United in purpose, we aim to spearhead initiatives that foster innovation, inclusivity and positive growth within the Village of East Palestine. Through thoughtful collaboration, targeted public engagement and comprehensive representation, we aspire to shape a future that reflects the diverse needs and aspirations of our community members, ensuring a vibrant and thriving community for all.

The program began with a community-wide visioning process to get input from the broader community through a series of surveys and focus groups, culminating with an in-person visioning workshop. The information gathered from this outreach process provided the foundation upon which the planning committee is able to:

- Assess the community's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats;
- Examine the character, image and assets of the community;
- Develop the vision and identify strategic initiatives to achieve our collective vision.

This report summarizes the outreach process and presents the vision statement and strategic initiatives.

PURPOSE

The purpose of articulating a long-term vision for the community is to provide a roadmap for recovery and future development following the devastating derailment that occurred on February 3, 2023. Village Council quickly recognized the importance of charting a course for the future to ensure East Palestine's sustained reputation as unique, friendly, historically significant community with good schools and a safe environment for families.

By creating a clear and compelling vision, the Village aims to:

1. *Foster Community Cohesion:* Articulating a shared vision encourages unity and collaboration among residents, organizations and stakeholders, fostering a sense of belonging and collective purpose.
2. *Guide Decision-Making:* A long-term vision serves as a guide for strategic planning and decision-making, helping prioritize initiatives and allocate resources effectively to achieve desired outcomes.

3. *Inspire Engagement and Action:* A compelling vision motivates community members to actively participate in shaping the future of their community, driving engagement and commitment to realizing the shared aspirations.
4. *Enhance Resilience and Adaptability:* Having a clear vision enables the community to adapt to challenges and changes, providing a foundation for resilience and agility in responding to future uncertainties.
5. *Position for Success:* By proactively shaping the future trajectory of East Palestine, the Village Council aims to position the community to thrive economically, socially and culturally, ensuring its long-term vitality and prosperity.

In summary, the purpose of articulating a long-term vision is to provide direction, inspire action and position the Village of East Palestine for sustained success and resilience in the face of challenges and opportunities.

USE OF THE VISION

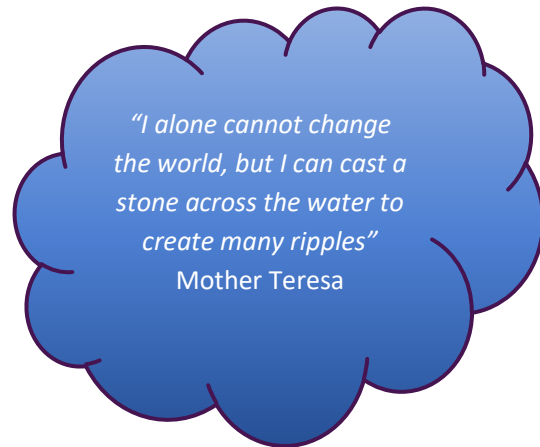
A vision is not an operational or strategic plan, rather involves incorporating it into decision-making processes and collaborative efforts to shape the future of the community. Here's how the vision for East Palestine can be utilized:

1. A guiding framework for the Village Council and its departments and local organizations (such as the Chamber of Commerce and the East Palestine School District) and other stakeholders in decision-making. It informs decisions related to infrastructure, community development, policies and programs that align with the with the long-term goals and aspirations of the community.
2. To provide a foundational framework for the development of operational and strategic plans as well as other initiatives aimed at advancing the well-being and prosperity of East Palestine. It ensures that plans are aligned with the overarching vision, fostering coherence and synergy across various efforts.
3. The vision offers a holistic perspective on how different elements of the community-property owners, residents, businesses, industries, developers and others-can collaborate and contribute towards achieving shared goals. It promotes a sense of unity and collaboration, highlighting the interconnectedness of various stakeholders in shaping the community's future.
4. Achieving the vision requires the collective support and cooperation of all stakeholders in East Palestine, including local schools, social service clubs, businesses, residents and partner organizations. Therefore, implementation efforts involve engaging the community and fostering partnerships to ensure broad-based participation and ownership of initiatives.

By leveraging the vision in decision-making, planning, integration of community parts and collaborative efforts, East Palestine can work towards realizing its long-term aspirations while fostering a sense of shared responsibility and commitment among its diverse stakeholders.

PLANNING PROCESS

As previously mentioned, the Ohio RCAP facilitated a very intentional public outreach campaign to inform the work of the Think Tank in articulating the vision and identifying the strategic initiatives. This was key as the vision must reflect the needs, wants and desires of the whole community-not just the exclusive vision of Village Council, Village Staff or other community leaders.



The outreach program included an online public survey, a series of 4 focus groups, individual interviews and a public visioning workshop. The online survey was launched in August 2023 and ran until December. The survey was publicized through Facebook, flyers and word of mouth. At the closing of the survey, 111 responses were received. On September 5-6, 2023, a series of focus groups were conducted in East Palestine. Four focus groups, covering education, social service groups, local businesses and business resource organizations were held. Finally, on November 16th, a visioning workshop was held at the East

Palestine Elementary School Cafeteria where approximately 60 residents participated. Once the vision statement was created, it was posted on the East Palestine Information and east Palestine Talk Facebook pages with a survey to collect feedback from the community. The summaries of these activities can be found in the appendices attached to this report.

These efforts enabled the East Palestine Think Tank to articulate a shared community vision and identify a set of strategic initiatives to achieve the vision.

Village Council and the members of the Think Tank would like to thank everyone in the community for their participation in this process and look forward to working with the members of the community and its partner organizations in turning this vision into a reality!

COMMUNITY VISION

Visions reflect our highest aspirations and speak to us on an emotional level. They are the guiding lights that illuminate our path toward a brighter future, inspiring us to reach beyond the constraints of the present and envision the possibilities that lie ahead. In the heart of our community, nestled within the aspirations of its members, lies a vision that resonates with hope, ambition, and unity. It is a vision that transcends the mundane and ignites the spirit of collective purpose. Let us embark on a journey guided by this shared vision, as we strive to

We envision a vibrant, safe and cooperative community utilizing our diversified talents. This vision propels us into a future rich with optimism and innovation, positioning East Palestine as a beacon of opportunity and a shining example of community revitalization.

realize the potential of our community and chart a course toward greatness. It is a reflection of what East Palestine is and what it wishes to become.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Strategic priorities are the key areas of focus identified by the Think Tank to guide the actions of the Council towards achieving the long-term success outlined in the community vision. These priorities represent the most important objectives or goals that need to be addressed in order to bring the vision to fruition. They provide a clear direction for decision-making and resource allocation, ensuring that efforts are concentrated on the areas that will have the greatest impact on realizing the desired future for East Palestine.

The Think Tank has identified the following 4 strategic priorities:

1. *Create a dynamic downtown:* Cultivating a bustling downtown area, enriched with locally-owned shops, restaurants and entertainment venues that serves as a dynamic hub for both residents and visitors alike.
2. *Create attractive housing and amenities:* We will advocate for the development of attractive housing and amenities to attract young families, youth, allow seniors to age in place with dignity and small manufacturers who appreciate our geographic advantage and work ethic.
3. *Educational excellence:* Create a community of life-long learners by building a robust educational system that is a cornerstone of the community, preparing students and adults for future high-tech careers and entrepreneurial opportunities.
4. *Hub for innovation and business:* Positioning East Palestine as an ideal location for start-ups and small businesses, leveraging the community's educational strengths and entrepreneurial spirit.

NEXT STEPS

Having a vision is only the first step. An old proverb says,

*A vision without a plan is just a dream.
A plan without a vision is drudgery.
But a vision with a plan can change the world.*

The next steps will involve the collaborative effort between the Think Tank, Village leadership, organizations and other stakeholders to further refine the strategic priorities into actionable goals and initiatives. This process entails:

1. *Identify Goals:* Stakeholders will clearly define the desired outcomes or objectives, representing the end result that the Village aims to achieve within each strategic priority area.
2. *Defining Key Initiatives:* Specific actions or projects will be identified to support the attainment of each goal. These initiatives outline the practical steps and measures necessary to realize the stated objectives.

3. *Collaboration and Consultation:* Input and perspectives from various stakeholders and the community will be sought to ensure comprehensive and inclusive goal-setting and initiative development processes.
4. *Alignment and Integration:* Goals and initiatives will be aligned with the overarching community vision and strategic priorities, ensuring coherence and synergy across all efforts.
5. *Implementation Planning:* Detailed plans, timelines, responsibilities and resource allocations will be developed to guide the execution of the identified initiatives effectively.

By defining our clear goals and actionable initiatives, these next steps aim to translate the broader vision into tangible outcomes and mobilize collective efforts.

Appendices

- Survey Results
- Focus Group Summaries
- Workshop Summaries

Are you a resident of East Palestine?

Yes	102
No	9

If yes, how long?

0-2 years	2
3-5 years	6
6-10 years	9
11-20 years	12
More than 20 years	73

Do you work or own a business in East Palestine?

Yes	48
No	63

What do you like best about living, working or owning a business in East Palestine

Mostly friendly people: cheap.

Small town

The small town feel

Friendly, outgoing people

I use to like the close knit community

Small town .

Safe environment.

Small town living. Love our village. People working together to make it the best place to live

The sense of community, the small town feel, no big city traffic/congestion.

I love the small town feel here. I like for my kids to grow up in a school they don't get "lost" in hundreds of faces. It's nice to be able to run to the store, library, shops in a matter of a few minutes. I also enjoy the many activities available thru the town or local businesses

A majority of our town is full of wonderful citizens who work hard for the better good of our community.

It was a peaceful town with good amenities and decent schools.

Cost of living, my church, low crime, the library, kind neighbors, excellent teachers

The low cost of living

Small town

Small village

When positive attitudes and perspectives come together, the warmth that can be felt throughout the community is like no other.

I love the closeness of the community and engaging with residents and their families.

Everyone looks out for one another

I DID like that I lived near nice creeks and wooded areas for my family to play abd explore. I think focusing on business in town right now other than essential is responsible. Theirs no indication of future health of residents. When 1/2 are sick with the many varieties of illnesses and cancer there won't be any extra money for people to frequent these businesses.

Great place to raise a family it WAS a safe haven of sort when considering raising children until the uncertainties of the derailment and as always Support from the community for small businesses

I work from the comfort of my home here in EP. I love being home and able to work in our quiet community.

Getting to see people I care about every day

The small town community support.

Friendly people who help each other.

Nice safe community to work and live in

Generational traditions. Quiet place

Its a small community close to many other large cities, and is generally safe and quiet

I like the small town atmosphere.

The sense of community

The communityis friendly and open to new ideas and activities (senior citiens)

Small community with enough business to meet basic needs

Small town, family history

My location

Small town

Nothing. Have to go out of town to eat or shop.

Small town "Mayberry" vibe.

As far as living, its one of the greatest types of communities to raise a family , own a small business as well as serving when youve reached your later years. Its small town America the heartbeat of our nation. Typically it was safe, supportive, everyone always offering a lending hand when in need with what they were able to contribute may that be financial, time, or just encouraging support. The trusting relationship and support amongst the community members are what make owning and operating a small business worth all the while. Most small businesses aren't in business to make millions, but to make an honest dollar and everlasting memories and opportunities for yourself as well as the community that serves you!!

Small town feel, people are willing to help each other

Very welcoming

Nice friendly community with a hometown feel.

Knowing your customers by name.

Small town atmosphere

Close knit community

Small community

Nothing

I loved everything about this community. Especially the pool and park. I am not from here but CHOSE this town in 1999. I raised my son in this town. He is now 33 and has fond memories of the schools and friends he grew up with. I planned, and still plan, to live in my house until the end of my days on this earth. I always felt safe. I also love being close to my own friends and enjoy the moose club as well as the library.

Small town feel, feeling safe and supporting local

People, safety

Small town atmosphere and low crime rate

I like the small village atmosphere

Convenient and safe environment

Close knit for the most part

The memories of growing up here

The small town atmosphere

Central location, size, real estate

My neighborhood and my grandkids

Great community and caring people

Small town life.

I love living and working in a small town where resident are close and are there for each other. I like going to town events or just walking downtown and everyone knows each other. It's special when you grow up in a town that you love so much you never want to leave.

How it feels like home, everything you need you can almost get in town

It's not a big city

Tightness of community, closeness of neighbors

Small town feeling, closeness

Love the feeling of a safe small town

No place like home♡

Small town vibe.

Family is close. Family activities and sports for kids.

Park, nice people, low cost of living, simple family activities around the holidays

I like living in a place where the ppl are friendly and helpful, no crime, and a great place to raise a family.

the small town community

no answer

no answer

good people, low cost of living, beautiful area

Know citizens here. Feeling of community.
 Family
 The small town feeling, most people know each other and are friendly and caring.
 It's a close-knit community with a lot of great people
 Less traffic, quiet
 no answer
 It's a beautiful small town.
 Small town vibes
 The tight-knit community. The main drag being decorated throughout the seasons
 no answer
 Good people, close access to needs
 Friendly people
 the small community
 the sense of community
 no answer
 small town, know most people
 This is my favorite place to live!!
 small town environment
 small town, friendly, safe
 small town, old buildings, the feel, safe, most everyone is friendly
 small community and family
 small town life, neighbors are friendly
 Employment is close to home; people are friendly; public library
 The people
 I love that it's a small, friendly town. It's home!
 I love the friendly, welcoming atmosphere of the town.
 Nice, small town
 nice small town feel with good people
 You get to know a lot of people in a small town.
 People, community, life in town
 very stressful!
 no answer
 no answer
 volunteering at the way-station, sitting on my porch having coffee and enjoying family.
 small-town, easy living, good schools
 The people
 Nice, small community to raise a family; safety

Grade the quality of each of the following characteristics of East Palestine

	A	B	C	D	F	no opinion
Arts and cultural events	2	9	35	39	19	7
Historic character	11	46	30	16	4	4
Social events and activities	11	34	39	19	4	4
Family events and activities	16	44	31	12	3	5
Restaurants	3	4	29	51	23	1
Affordable, quality housing	24	44	19	14	4	6
Vibrant downtown	1	10	35	40	20	5
Public spaces for people to gather	15	31	36	15	8	6
Natural areas and outdoor recreation	26	41	33	5	5	1
Affordable cost of living	36	47	18	5	2	3
Career opportunities and financial security	1	10	38	33	21	8
Quality of local schools	15	49	31	11	1	4

Safety and security	38	55	12	1	3	2
Quality of available healthcare	10	34	39	16	6	6

Which of the following do you think should describe the economic identity of East Palestine in 20 years?

A full service community where people can work, live and purchase all of their goods and services	26	23.40%
A bedroom community where people live but go elsewhere for jobs, goods and services and entertainment	28	25.20%
A source of innovation in the region	5	4.50%
A destination that attracts visitors for shopping and entertainment	8	7.20%
A mix of bedroom and full-service community	35	31.50%
No Answer	2	
Other:		
Nothing I have read indicates it is safe now nor will it be in the future		
A community ran by people that don't care about the community. Businesses that want there pockets full at the cost of the community		
I would like to keep the small community feel but have full service along with visitors wanting to come to our community for restaurants, shopping and entertainment.		
Very unclear after derailment		
nice, small village with room to improve		
forward thinking, welcoming community		
needs more restaurants and fast food		

Which of the following do you feel create a vibrant and thriving downtown? Select up to 3.

A diversity of shops and businesses	84	75.70%
Walkability and pedestrian safety, biking access and infrastructure (bike racks and lanes)	25	22.50%
More entertainment and dining options	88	79.30%
Mixed-use developments (housing, office and retail in the same building)	9	8.10%
Creation of live/work spaces (such as artists' in residence or relocation programs)	4	3.60%
Beautification projects and green space	33	29.70%
Spaces for people to gather, social activities in public spaces (games, places for children to play)	38	34.20%
Art installations and performance space	8	7.20%
Seasonal markets and pop-up shops	23	20.70%
Co-working and shared spaces	4	3.60%
Housing options	15	13.50%
Architectural quaiaty and preservation, streetscape (lighting, street furniture, signage and wayfinding)	43	38.70%
No answer	3	

Other:

First I want to feel safe and don't want norfolk southern hands in everything

Business friendly council is necessary

A thriving bedroom community NEEDS family entertainment space community center, bowling, social gathering space, low cost high influence woul dnot let me select above

Make use of empty buildings/eliminate unsafe buildings

Fewer vacant buildings and id its vacant, maintain it. People don't want see someone else's junk/storage space. We have beautiful old building with architectural qualities that should be preserved. Bring those beauties back to life!

Refurbish store fronts, windowboxes, install electric outlets on every building to decorate with lights. New lower street lights as in columbiana that we can hang christmas lights on and flower baskets, add underground electric.

Clean up downtown

more fast foods (like Wendy's, Burger King)

What type of housing do you feel is most needed in East Palestine?

Mid-range single family homes	45	40.50%
Townhomes or condominiums	16	14.40%
Multi-family units (duplexes, apartments)	6	5.40%
Mixed-use developments	6	5.40%
Senior housing, communities	16	14.40%
High-end single family homes	6	5.40%
Cottage style housing (small, clustered single family homes)	9	8.10%
Secondary or accessory dwelling units		
Tiny homes	8	7.21%
No Answer	2	

Other:

Rehabilitated, affordable homes

Buy out residents who don't believe its safe based on science provided by independent sources and EPA record

A combination of all above condos, senior living and mid-range homes. We need to clean up slum landlords homes and being them for some type of code for curb appeal.

Affordable first time homes, comparing the surrounding areasmake it be an oppotunist town as well housing, businesses, lodging communities (think Master bedroom...soft bedding lol)!!

None of the above due to contamination!

The housing we have is adequate. needs outside maintenance. Make strong fines to deter unsightly exteriors and yards.

Fix the existing before building new

Which of the following are most important to you? Select up to 3.

Quality housing and preventing displacement	18	16.20%
Reducing crime and public safety	28	25.20%
Job training and employment programs	11	9.90%
Educational and other opportunities for young people	38	34.2%
Reduction of slum and blight	61	55%
Health and wellness	19	17.10%
Diverse business and employment opportunities	33	29.70%
Thriving downtown	61	55%
Quality streets, sidewalks and public spaces	28	25.20%
Services and programs for seniors	20	18%
Parks and recreation	34	30.60%
Preservation of architectural and cultural amenities	10	9%

What types of new businesses and services would you like to see in East Palestine over the next 20 years?

New retail options (bookstore, stores that sell everyday items, hardware, etc.)	47	42.00%
New industry (manufacturing)	59	53.20%
More professional services (attorneys, accountants, etc.)	9	8.10%
Clothing stores (specialized or boutique)	20	18%
One-stop grocery stores	22	19.80%
Specialized or organic grocery stores	10	9%
Chain stores	9	8.10%
Niche or boutique retail to attract visitors	26	23.40%
Restaurants	94	84.70%
Personal Services (full service salon, gyms, event planners, pet sitting, etc.)	20	18.00%
Tourism activities (Air BnB, wineries, breweries, outdoor recreation)	53	47.70%
Other:		
Light industria;/Tech		
Medical SPECIALIST for those who stay. I am 100% serious.		

Large entertainment opportunities...a way to pull people from surround communities to come enjoy the small town feel and enjoy what we have that they do not. Water slides, mountain bike trails, (OFF SEASON SNOW RECREATION TUBING, CAMPFIRES, WEEKEND STAYS), i like to call these real world escapes...activities to enjoy when not dealing with everyday life...make them come here!!!(year round)

positive attitude

office supplies

public transportation

coffee shop or café

What types of parks and recreation programs would you like to see developed or expanded over the next 20 years?

Special events	63	56.80%
Youth-oriented recreation (playgrounds, skate park)	50	45%
Passive recreation (picknicking, wildlife viewing, hiking, geocaching, fishing, archery, etc)	52	46.80%
Active recreation (team sports, tennis, running, etc.)	24	21.60%
Education and enrichment programs (community gardening, education programs, arts and crafts, photography)	41	36.90%
Fit parks (outdoor fitness stations that provide for aerobic activity, strength building, balance and core development)	32	28.80%
Group activities such as bike rides, guided wildlife tours, outdoor skills, etc)	19	17.10%
Winter activities (cross country skiing, snowshoeing, sledding, ice skating)	24	21.60%
Summer camps	25	22.50%
Water activities (kayaking, canoeing, other paddling activities)	16	14.40%
Camping, overnight experiences	14	12.60%
Development of old girl scout camp	29	26.10%
No answer	3	

Other:

Fishing

YMCA type of facility

Indoor track for the winter months

Bike trails, also to use of park more in the winter for kids and families to go for sledding, cross country skiing, snowshoeing, skating with a hot chocolate stand available. i

Multigeneration playgrounds

Year round pool

Festivals that offer alcohol

We have a beautiful park with lots of wasted space. Utilize the upper brick pavillion space small cabins and weekend getaway opportunities!

Boy scout-build one or enlarge current one. Scouts I've hear have to go to New Waterford with our new pool, new scout cabins would be perfect good, healthy fun for kids

attitude, better communication

I would not like to see the city expanded. Roads are too busy now.

Something for young people

campfire cabins uses by school for outdoor learning

youth have lost the desire for unorganized sports, pick-up games

What arts and cultural activities would you like to see developed or expanded over the next 20 years?

Concerts, events and festivals	86	77.50%
Theater, dance performances	21	18.90%
Public art	19	17.10%
Movies (indoor or outdoor)	59	53.20%
Art galleries	3	2.70%
History, historic tours, cultural activities	32	28.80%
Art activities and camps	16	14.40%
Poetry and other performance art	2	1.80%
Art classes and workshops	27	24.30%

Working spaces/seasonal markets for artists and makers	46	41.40%
No answer	4	
Other:		
Not a new park		
I truly value history. Learn from it here and other chemical catastrophe		
Maybe a drive-in theater for summer		
art festivals downtown, photography, paintings, jewelry, etc. Cemeteries, historic tours		
Beautiful buildings worth a walking tour		
farmers markets-chamber of commerce		
We have some of these activities but low attendance		

Over the next 20 years, what changes do you believe need to occur to attract more youth and young families to the community?

Improve quality of schools	63	56.80%
Encourage a wider range of housing options	44	39.60%
Improved recreational opportunities	39	35.10%
Expand activities and venues for youth	53	47.70%
Provide public transportation options	15	13.50%
Increase ethnic and socio-economic diversity	13	11.70%
More restaurants, entertainment and nightlife	89	80.20%
Provide more entrepreneurial opportunities, spaces and infrastructure for remote workers	27	24.30%
No answer	2	
Other:		
Data to suggest that EP is environmentally safe.		
I believe the quality of local schools is great but needs to be promoted more		
We need a senior center and transportation for our seniors for banking and postal services. Services that help them feel independent. We also need more local delivery services from local grocery stores and future restaurants.		
We have too many kids who live in our town going to other schools!!!!		
Build strong STEM program; renovate our schools, landscape them, weed and feed lawns. School grounds need maintenance. Spend money on better education that will bring families to town. Refurbish and maintain existing homes and businesses.		
Fix the beautiful houses/buildings in town		
Vision of possibilities		
Decrease rental homes, increase single-family		
Manufacturing which creates wealth to support the above.		

What 3 factors do you believe will contribute to improving the community's overall health over the next 20 years?

More opportunities to safely walk and bike instead of drive	27	24.30%
Provide healthy and safe activities for children	51	45.90%
Help seniors to age in place with safety and dignity	47	42.30%
More public facilities for exercise	26	23.40%
Better access to fresh, local produce	28	25.20%
Improved access to healthcare, including mental health	39	35.10%
Improved accessibility for persons with disabilities	15	13.50%
Connection to natural areas and outdoor recreation (bike trails and lanes, connection to Greenway Trail)	47	42.30%
Farmers markets, other local food options	55	49.50%
No answer	3	
Other:		
A change in the city politicians		
Data to suggest EP is environmentally safe.		
More big activities and diversity in shopping. Think Volant and their Witches Night Out and other events they do throughout the year. Also a bigger chain grocery store like Aldi where pantry food would be cheaper.		
Clean up the train wreck COMPLETELY. DEMO HOUSES CONDEMNED AND CONTAMINATED AND FULLY RESTORE OUR CREEK (IF POSSIBLE)		

Activities that invite outsiders (food, concerts, events)

Senior community center

Get back to church and family activities

no one will live in a contaminated community

Indoor community center-all year activities, exercise classes, indoor pool for use (9 months outside pool is closed)

Briefly describe your own vision for East Palestine

A ghost town. It will take more than twenty years to lose the stigma of another "Love Canal."

Columbiana downtown is really nice.

Cleaned up downtown with pride

A combination of manufacturing and service businesses, with a majority of owner occupied homes.

Right now all I see is cancer clusters and dead fish.

A town that is safe for everyone , community leaders who stand up for residents. Growth . Leadership that wants growth and not because Norfolk southern is pouring out the money

We will either take advantage of this opportunity and prosper, or the town will die.

Would like to see more growth, more businesses , updated downtown buildings , place for senior citizens to exercise, walk or just to met up for the day .

The place you want to be.

I want EP to be safe in 20 years. I want the village to be more open to new ideas. I wish the blighted vacant properties were taken care of. Cleaner town all around not just the Main Street. I wish the schools had more class options & variety.

Somewhere you can raise a family and be proud to live

Would love to see a full down town revitalization with additional businesses and restaurants maybe a microbrewery.

Updates to our school buildings some are in need of internal repairs.

I'd like to see more opportunities for small relevant and niche businesses to open and thrive through a welcoming attitude, facilitating a means to grow the interest of outsiders and ultimately stimulating the local economy.

Data to suggest EP is environmentally safe , leadership that is proactive & transparent, high quality schools, more restaurants and entertainment options, more industry

Clean it up. Better support for businesses. More involvement of council and a thriving Chamber

A nice small town with opportunities for it's citizens

Keep the small village feel but yet offer more activities and job opportunities

I would love to see every downtown storefront in use with unique and diverse stores and food options. I would love to see people walking the sidewalks from store to store on a Saturday, walking by cafe tables and benches where people take a break, sipping on a local cup of coffee. Flowers blooming and fresh community green space/gardens for anyone to stop an grab something they need. I believe in this community and I can see it's potential!

A thriving community safe for children and seniors. Improve housing options for elders who would like to stay here in our community.

Thriving downtown with lots of entertainment options for all ages

Again very honestly from looking at other situations and talking to survivors; a community full of people who are sick, who spend every extra dollar on health care and the others who got lucky and don't get sick judging them.

To reinvent itself as the place you really want to be. To sustain as a quaint safe haven of close knit community members who work AND COMMUNICATE in a way that not many other places do. Provide openness for growth and opportunities at all levels and age groups. Simply to be a place at all stages of life people are proud to call home again.

I hope to see East Palestine thrive as a small, yet exciting community. I love this town and would love to see more outsiders have a reason to bring their business here and support our community.

I would love to see the downtown area thriving instead of empty blighted buildings

Unique businesses in the downtown area. Restaurants that you can dine in or sit outside, shops, coffee shops, winery/brewery, fresh markets, a place you can ride your bike or walk to. Bike trails to connect EP to Columbiana area and to Greenway Trails, not a bike lane but a route for bikes only and no cars. Senior Center that seniors can even get picked up by a van or bus to take to activities at the center. A bus to transport people to the downtown area for shopping, banking or the post office or Drs. Events for the community and visitors to come and enjoy. Music, concerts, movies in the park. also, an Artistian Center of local and nearby artists. Curb appeal not only in the downtown area but in the

A thriving town with opportunities for employment and recreation for all ages.

Downtown store front need to be not vacant. Expand to sr 14 to grow ep.

Columbiana

I hope to see something similar to Columbiana, especially Firestone Farms area

I would like to see East Palestine keep the small town atmosphere but also provide addition outdoor activities (biking, hiking, fishing,camping) And additional retail and restaurant options as well as the arts.

A place the youth wants to stay and not a place they can't wait to leave

Thriving business district, senior services that include fitness, meals on wheels, growth

Continue to be a small community that offers food, ,fuel, hardware, church, post office, etc - everything in one place and easy to access

Keep it green. And small. The bigger the city the bigger the problems. We can stay small and still be a place that people enjoy

Population 7,000. Big box stores such as auto parts, dealerships and different stores.

A thriving downtown with family friendly entertainment

More places to go for entertainment. Be more like Columbiana.

A place desirable to raise a family where there are opportunities for youth to want to stay and raise families of their own.

Restoring the foundation for Small town America. Safe, self sufficient, affordable, and fun.....a place where people simply want to work, live, love and simply just be..without all the chaos our natural world consists of in everyday life.

Have water and sewer lines installed to north of Route 14, new school buildings, incentives to build new housing. Annex this area into village. This would increase tax base and services and attract new residents.

It's hard to say, Hopefully a village rebuilding

Making East Palestine a quaint peaceful place from the past to live and shop, while incorporating the current amenities needed for todays society.

It has to get better

Moving forward economically estecically and preparing the village for the future

Within the next 20 years, our village as a thriving community. With increasing census because East Palestine has grown in all the many areas which in turn pulls in many more families and community members to enjoy living in, working in or just visiting because of everything East Palestine has to offer.

A small but vibrant community that cultivates their small business owners making this a place people want to open up shop. We need to bring people in before we start making demands of those people. Ex: food truck vendor brought people in to town. Making food truck vendors pay a ridiculous fee to operate in town simply convinced them to leave. We're not Salem, or even Columbiana. We first need to bring in people, then, when we're booming, charge a fee. Vendors won't make as much in EP as they will anywhere else. What sense does it make to force them to pay a fee they won't make up as easily as somewhere else? We need to be welcoming, not hindering. Bring commerce back to EP in an original way.

Clean the village up. It's a filthy disgrace. Tear down the blighted buildings. Make trains go slow thru the village. Cleaner!

I would be happy if I didn't have to go to columbiana or Chippewa to meet most of my needs. I would like to see more services for seniors and people on disability. A reliable affordable handyman service would also be very appreciated especially for the elderly. Help for the elderly to be able to stay in their home and keep up with their property. a safe and vibrant community with options for eating and entertainment.

I want people to WANT to be a part of this community....to draw people here to raise their children and to see the potential for economic growth. We need to stop doing what we have always done! We need to use this tragedy as an opportunity to improve our future.

A cleaned-up town that is appealing to visitors. Get rid of all the run-down slumlord rentals. Clean up the grounds of the local schools that look horrible. Expansion/annexation out N. Market St to SR 14 is a must if the town is ever going to grow. Tax abatement opportunities for new homes and businesses. Senior housing/community to keep the baby boomers here.

My vision for east Palestine is a small business shopping community with restaurants, bakery, coffee shop

More diverse business atmosphere

A safe place where people of all ages and backgrounds can come together. A place where there are things to do and people, no matter their circumstance, can thrive. A place that's clean and full of opportunity.
I hope to see the town improve and become a great school district for the kids
A town that supports its local businesses and school. A place where people enjoy spend time in town.

Either focus on industry that will drive real estate or attract modern businesses that attract a blend of 18-49 and youth.
I want our town to be safe for us our kids and our grandkids Better healthcare to make sure we are safe

People need more options such as restaurants to eat and purchase items. Some additional manufactures to assist in local jobs. Support the local businesses that are here instead of paying more elsewhere. Housing options for all incomes- Meadowview is always full- Claybrook, there's people waiting for those to open, and developments sell out property. Comfortable and affordable living for the hard working residents. And quality affordable one floor living for seniors. Improve the education in our schools to increase enrollment. Our elementary use to be one of the best around and we need to work to get that back. Increase enrollment and get bigger classes which means bigger/better sports. Get the town excited and bring the town together to celebrate the school and sports. More activities and places for family's to enjoy working the town. Make our town the place people want to come visit.
A thriving town, updated downtown, streets filled with people buying local.
Diversity

I would like to see a functional town government able to advocate for an invest in community health along with economic development. Residents must feel and be supported as they continue to cope with the physical and psychological effects of the derailment. The business community must be supported as they invest in the town and in their employees.

Restoring sense of community and success for the town economically similar to 20 years ago and before. More quality housing options for middle-class families. Possible development of Unity area to attract restaurants, entertainment, etc. I would love to see a thriving downtown, with the empty eyesore stores fixed up and put to use. More place to eat including fast food and sit down. A business like Columbiana Birdfish would bring so many people. I would also love to see some development of an industrial park to attract some companies and get some jobs here.

I don't think it'll ever be exploding with new businesses. People will always drive to Pittsburgh or boardman for the big stuff to do. Offering the daily hip outdoor stuff to do with a nice school and park will attract more families than anything.

*Turn historic buildings into unique eateries or brewery or winery with small plates/apps. Showcase the beauty of the buildings. I love what Nate Foster has done with the Escape Room and ghost tours at the old hotel!

*Maybe summer pop up events on a regular basis, like First Friday of the month, so people know it's the same every month.

*DORA events at the park or downtown

*We need more food options, just one more fast food option in town would be nice. Chipotle would draw a lot of people to town! Or clean up one of the historic buildings and create a destination restaurant experience.

Less focus on historical preservation and more focus on people and sustainable progress. We don't need to invite any big industry, and we have a real opportunity to be a sweet, homegrown vacation destination niche. We could host an annual national event like a race or music festival. We need to build up our restaurant and hotel options downtown to attract visitors and encourage them to stay here.

Safe community that has a beautiful park and great restaurants downtown to dine at.
coffee shops or places to go with friends

A growing and expanding community with sufficient industry and business to employ a significant percentage of the population
expansion and growth

Less negativity and skepticism; appreciation for what Palestine does offer and a desire to work together to accomplish growth and well-being

more entertainment

I would like to see more diverse unique shops, restaurants and entertainment that will draw others into town for experiences they can't get elsewhere.

A new park, lots of kids in the park and in the schools. A vibrant and busy downtown.

I believe in 20 years EP will be the best little town in the US. Once we have strengthened our schools by having a magnet program that draws students/families to EP, better pay for new teachers and incentives to come to EP. Having property codes on residential properties and enforcing them would be beneficial, providing incentives to businesses to expand and/or establish and providing the resources to our fire and police departments, with these accomplishments we'll do more than survive, we will thrive! EP strong!

A new downtown with many places to shop at and restaurants. A nice place in EP for families to live.

A bright small town with unique shops, restaurants, proud of its history

Be more progressive

A place that attracts families to move here and patrons to shop here and come for entertainment. EP can be very attractive to people, especially from PA to shop and move here due to lower taxes. We already see that on a small scale... We need to maximize the opportunity.

A very desired bedroom community in high demand surrounded by suppliers of basic needs involving high-tech employment and manufacturing with a population of 7,000 to 10,000 including access to a robust high-speed internet. I shop at Aldi's and my family does too. We would like an Aldi's food store. They have the best prices. Thank you. We will be dying of cancer due to nfs while they have turned our village into nfs village.

A vibrant, active community that has progresses but still maintains the sense of

I just hope the village is a city and everyone is alive and well

To do what Columbiana is doing, either as good or better

safe community, affordable housing, restaurants and shops to encourage visitors

expanded city with full night life, active park, shops, store, manufacturing

Safer and cleaner community for the next generation of youth. Ability to stay in homes and work legally.

Retain the neighbor helping neighbor atmosphere. Improve local employment opportunities. Offer a variety of activities so people don't have to leave town for everything.

A thriving full-service community with several manufacturing companies and a diverse retail market. Open-air markets, quality housing, apartment buildings and transportation options.

I see East Palestine coming back fully from the railroad disaster and thriving economically with new and expanded businesses and services.

A beautiful, well-maintained, historic downtown with every store front filled! Factories with good paying jobs.

A safe, family-friendly place. Good schools and a vibrant park with concerts and movies, similar to Firestone complex in Columbiana

We need young families to keep it growing (that are working)

To get somewhat back to how i grew up.

I don't know. All I know is this is now and day by day. Like everything go back to norman, have families, friends to come back home!

I won't be here to experience any of it

a small, diverse community with fun, healthy options for all age groups. Entertainment, restaurants, activities.

Distillery to take advantage of water resources. Train wreck festival to promote rail safety. Bob Hope remembrance.

A community that works together to draw people into our area to eat food, purchase goods and attend events. A thriving town! A great downtown area and a variety of restaurants.

Do you have any final thoughts or comments you would like to share?

At this moment in time, EP is a dangerous place to live. Long-term health will suffer.

I would like to share that it's a shame that the city is not looking out for there community members I would also like to state that the federal epa did check my soil and found formahyde and there will be a press release very soon stay tuned. Change in leadership in this town .

We have to get past the petty jealousy that has plagued the town for years, and realize that all ships rise with the tide.

I feel everyone working together can build our village in a great place to call home

East Palestine has potential to be great, but it's going to take a paradigm shift in the local community to accomplish substantial and sustainable improvements.

Please share survey results and an update on what the think tank has been working on, who the members are, and how the community can provide continued feedback.

Just because it's "always" been that way or done a certain way doesn't mean it has to stay that way. Growth and change are needed.

Please look at other past chemical disasters. Not only vinyl-chloride multi chemicals. I don't want to watch the whole region sick, suffering and dying because folks here can't believe it happened here. In other communities they didn't know they were exposed for many years, we have the benefit to learn from them. They have been begging us to. They reached out early on. They are watching in horror.

I think there's tons of opportunity here to thrive, we just have to make some changes.

I want to see this community thrive and grow. I want to see all community members have a voice and feel they have input and are a part of this. This survey is a great start. BUT, you must continue to include the community in decisions moving forward. You must let the community feel that they are a part of this growth or you will have division. You must open up and have community input meetings. This is a close come together helping supportive community and you must first gain community support and openness of what is happening. I fully support moving forward, but please do this with the community as a whole and not just a select few of people. Again, thank you for the survey and hearing the voices of the community. I look forward to a fabulous future for East Palestine.

I would like to see more walking and biking trails in EP.

Thank you for listening and trying to help us get started rebuilding our community.

I would like to see all organizations work together

They won't matter, no one listens.

I feel we are moving forward in a positive direction. Keep up the good work!

We need NEW people, Young minds, Loving citizens in our local government and organizations.....before the train we were failing as to the direction this town was going. It's time to be open minded and optimistic and believe in each other and love one another if we do not UNITE.....it will be a hard road to move forward positively and efficiently.

Tired of people telling me they know where EP is because they go past the sign on 14. They never mention going into town. We need to bring the village to where the people are and that is along Route 14.

East Palestine is a great place to live. The derailment is a blessing in disguise for this town, aside from the ones truly suffering from illness, home, & business losses.

When walking or driving around town I see homes, yards, and buildings neglected to the point of embarrassment! In the summer some slug residents will cut their grass and leave the grass clippings all over the sidewalks! Is that from a homeowner or a renter? Just an example of something that should not be tolerated! I'm sure that is the least of things to deal with!

Village management must make it a priority to crack down on the owners of these unsightly properties to clean this village up.

I want to move forward!!!!

In order to move East Palestine forward with any kind of true progress it has to be understood that the saying "it takes a village" is indeed right. The practice that seems to be consistently happening of gaining information with the SAME small group of people can no longer continue. Using the same people & having the same business people being on most all the development committees only paints a partial part of the full picture. If most people, businesses & organizations continue to be dismissed East Palestine will continue to struggle moving forward.

In the survey introduction it is mentioned the East Palestine Think Tank? Who are the actual people as the group has not been introduced and why haven't they? Who choose the members of the group? What is the diversity of the group? On what basis were they chosen? Was the opportunity afforded to any member of the community? Please don't provide further division of the village. Include the village. Keep us whole.

Sad to watch...we went from city status to village. Won't let new chain businesses in...we never grow, just a stagnant and dirty village.

Please make all residents health and welfare a priority. I would like to see testing of homes and properties given the same consideration as businesses. I think the ball has been dropped in this area. Residents health should be tested and monitored for the rest of their lives. The village needs to do much more to bring residents together instead of all the fighting that has been going on.

EP has a unique opportunity to revive the town. The train derailment was an awful thing, but maybe the recovery is a gift we need to appreciate. It would never happen otherwise.

Check agendas at the door. Whatever the old way is, isn't THE way. Light your entire charter on fire and adopt whatever New Waterford, Columbiana, Lisbon, Columbiana and even Negley is doing. Increase public engagement with fairs and festivals.

This entire survey seems a little surreal in light of eight months ago. I understand the spotlight on East Palestine has freed up economic development funds and opportunities not dreamed of a year ago, but dumping economic development money into a town where those living in town (and moving into town) are still getting sick seems like a recipe for failure. Economic development is sorely needed but health and wellness is needed much more - and is necessary to support economic development.

I think improvements to the park would be wonderful. A pool that can be used all year would be great. Something like the salem community center would be fantastic!

Please consider approaching Norfolk Southern in installing the necessary rail crossings to make the town a "Quiet Zone." That prohibits the train from blowing the whistle unless in an emergency. Noise pollution is a big problem in EP and IMO keeps a lot of people away. No one wants to live next to a noisy train.

Residents need to understand the history of EP. Why are we on the map? Why are residents proud to live here, at all ages/stages of life? Do something fun, like a contest for residents to come up with a new town slogan or city seal/emblem. Then let residents vote, so they feel included in the decision making.

Stop taking money from Norfolk Southern.
The city is very divided right now because of the derailment and we need to get it back to the way it was before. It was never perfect, but a good place to live.

Thank you to the people/organizations who have initiated the development of community input and explored what we want for East Palestine. A good community is cohesive, safe, confident, prosperous and happy place. It is free of poverty and crime, providing a high quality of life for everyone that lives there. It values and promotes open, participating development processes. So a big THANK YOU to those making this possible. Shirly Glavan
Why would our community, not to mention leaders on council, city manager and mayor, tolerate the public display of the "f" word?

This is a beautiful town. Fix what you have before building more. Take pride in your history.
Safe and secure, great people.

Yes, my family and I really appreciate the efforts of all the volunteer workers and the donations following the derailment. There is a lot of potential for small town growth in EP but issues like blight, unused commercial space and a lack of entertainment/shopping/food options are holding us back.
This all takes time, people working together. Communication is a must.
Efforts must be made now to avoid any more division in this town. Some way must be found to convince people that you can respect the opinions of those who don't agree.

I love this community! Even though I am a new comer (32 years)npeople have welcomed me and made me feel at home. Better than Mayberry! LOL
Start tearing down condemned buildings!

I feel that big jobs are easy to "put off" and some things feel unattainable so its hard for people to be motivated. But good/positive change starts somewhere-someone has to be the one to start it. Thank you!
I think NF is doing a lot but so much uncertainty
Free up all the contamination in this town. Tell the truth!
We want the truth. No lies, no cover ups.
All community organizations working together for the common good
We need positive growth. We need some industries to keep people working close to home. We need people to come and want to live and raise their family in this beautiful town of EP.

Please state your age			
Under 18	1	0.90%	
18-35	15	13.60%	
36-50	30	27.30%	

51-65	32	29.10%
66-80	28	25.50%
Over 80	4	3.60%

Please state your gender:

M	36	32.70%
F	65	59.10%
Prefer not to say	10	8.20%

Education Focus Group

9/5

1 pm

Attendees:

Chris Neifer, EP Superintendent

Michael Demster, EP Community Liason

Willard Adkins, CCCTC

Tracy Hostetler, EFC Eastern Ohio

Dwayne Pakovich, EP Athletic Director/Asst Principal

Michelle Merkel, JA

Linda May

Rube Ginder

What trends have you seen over the past 5-10 years? What is better, what is worse?

- Superintendent came in under academic emergency
- Looking at child holistically
- Providing more focused opportunities for kids
- Modernizing techniques
- Providing other opportunities than just being college focused
- 3-e's pre-apprenticeship program as a pathway for kids-enrollment, enlistment, employment. ESC has career counselors working with kids to lead themselves.
- Negative to this approach is that factories are closing down and not returning. There is a push for kids to go into manufacturing and skilled trades, but there is apprehension on their part because these jobs are not sustainable.
- There is difficulty in getting kids involved in vocational training, those that are want to be there, however, they are not seeing this as financially rewarding, higher wages take time.
- Home schooling kids are going to be left behind and they need help. State requirements have changes and the school district no longer needs to approve their curriculum, eliminating accountability for home-schooled kids.
- Although CCCTC is small, vocational training is growing, including adult education. The medical field is in high demand, but we are seeing rapid burnout in these jobs, which is a concerning factor.
- Open enrollment is hurting EP schools
- Culture has shifted from perception of the vocational center as a detention center to valuable education.

What do people compliment or appreciate about EP?

- EP high schools has principal's advisory council that kids are involved in. Students feel they have opportunity here with both college prep and career tech.
- There are lots of extra curricular activities for students to participate in
- Generally the community is supportive of each other but haters are strong.

- JA offers many programs for free including financial literacy, entrepreneurship, work readiness, etc. Offer full semester curriculum that can be taught by teachers in school.

Complaints/general comment or concerns

- Need to rally the community to stop being its own worst enemy.
- Need to let people know what the district provides; people take it for granted. District is still losing students despite advantages. Parents do not want change.
- Agreement that there is a negative vocal minority, however they are seeing a shift away from the naysayers to a more positive outlook.
- The formula for open enrollment is changing and it will likely stop the movement of kids from one district to another.
- Need consistency in leadership
- Need an ambassador group to get the messaging right.

How can schools work with the community to engage young people

- School district is starting to build relationships in the community (i.e. Threshold and community garden). Need to see the school and students as resources and let them participate.
- Bring back police and fire programs that engage the community and youth
- Invest in the community-livable wage jobs, thriving downtown, housing, safety, grow pride, change the narrative.
- Invest in our kids, including working with marginalized students
- Mentors (i.e. Compco program, seniors)
- School is on the cusp of developing entrepreneurship class/curriculum

What are the most critical issues impeding growth and sustainability?

- Negativity
- Poverty mindset
- Lack of collaboration, pool resources
- No communication (between council, schools)
- Need to build trust between the village and schools
- People don't want change

What is an underdeveloped or under marketed potential or identity of EP?

- Caring community, giving motivates people
- People finally standing up to negativity
- Land bank working in E Liverpool

Local Business Focus Group

9/6/23

9 am

Attendees:

Jana Grimm, realtor

Denise Leakes, Leake Oil

Eric Oltman, Bush Heating

Carrie, McDonalds

John Varley, Nene's Collectibles

Cory Brittain, Brittain Motors

Missy Smith, The 1820 Candle Company

Rick Sievers, Gorby's convenience store

Jessica Oates, Insight Counseling and Wellness

Strengths of the community for business to grow and succeed

- Like the historic character of the community
- Family-oriented businesses
- Reasonable rents
- Good community-safe, good schools and park, low crime
- One located in EP due to lack of transportation options for those needing their services.

It was mentioned that several new businesses are set to open (but not confident some will):

- A restaurant
- Western store
- Children's store
- Bakery and deli
- Meat shop

Critical issues/weaknesses for business

- Not a lot of (local) support for opening new business-council did not give them warm or welcoming feeling, lack progressiveness, feels daunting to open a new business in EP.
- Multiple Chamber issues:
 - Not functioning as a business support organization-does not provide business support such as marketing, events, networking, education or programming.
 - Limited Chamber events are strictly community-based, nothing is done during the summer
 - Chamber needs to engage with council
 - Only interaction with chamber or council is when there is an issue such as a zoning problem or some other negative issue but never in a positive way.
 - Chamber needs to be proactive, appears to be lacking in energy, new ideas and just "going through the motions".
 - Perception is that they are set in their ways, not open to new ideas, young blood.

- Chamber is operated by volunteers rather than a paid administrator. No leadership.
- Village is absent in the business process, need city manager.
- There is a perception that Council acts in secrecy, no public meetings, no transparency. Lacks leadership. There are a few council members that care, however the perception of the group as a whole is not reflected in this way.

Expectations from village:

- Encouragement and support
- Communication is lacking
- Community calendar-either mailers and/or online
- Community support-buy local/education campaign

Where to business owners go for support and advice

- General feeling that they are on their own:
 - Business events are planned by individual business owners, often not coordinated with others
- Rotary runs the soccer league rather than acting as a business organization

Missing services and amenities

- Financial support and coaching
- Need functioning space-most not rent-ready. Aging buildings that are failing are a deterrent to opening a business
- ADA accessibility is lacking
- Business directory
- Resource directory
- Village should be issuing business and/or occupancy licenses to facilitate fire/police visits to understand what and how each business operates.
- Need more resources for fire inspections
- General consensus is that there is no reason why EP isn't thriving
- Joint marketing
- Networking, socializing, mentorship
- Incubator, co-working space

What types of businesses are needed?

- Full service restaurants
- Brewery
- Food trucks
- Tradesmen
- Something that acts as a magnet-entertainment
- Office supplies/stationary/cards
- Niche/quality businesses
- Need diversity in businesses

General/final comments:

- EP is not known for anything (except the derailment).
- Local ceramics manufacturer left after derailment leaving a large industrial building available
- Another factory/industrial building being used for antiques storage
- Used to have a business incubator downtown-need to bring one back
- Taggart street is an industrial areas that needs to be focused on and developed as the industrial area along the tracks is going to be difficult to develop.
- Develop cabins at the park or girl scout camp to grow recreational sector
- Need new, young fresh ideas and older organizations need to be open to them
- Need to keep young people in town, develop mentors
- Businesses need (opportunities) to develop professional netowrks.

Social Services Focus Group

9/5

3 pm

Attendees:

Don Havenstein-American Legion Post
George Bolinger-American Legion Post
Patty Sugar-EP Community Foundation
Carol Harvey-EP Eagles
Julie Young
Pam Figley-EP Garden Club
Jack Barnhouse-EP Masonic Lodge
John Hersch-EP ministerial assn
Barb Kliner-Stick to it fitness
Chris Page-Threshold
Sandy Wells-EP Social Concerns
Tamara-EP Library and Friends
Chaney Nesbith-The Way Station
Susan Wagner-EP Alumni Assn
Dwayne Johnson-EP Moose
Marti Grimm
Carolyn W
Linda May

What trends have you seen in the past 5-10 years? What's better, what's worse?

- Seeing more seniors included in public events, which is good
- Northern part of the county is booming
- EP is unique in that it straddles the line of Appalachia and we see opposite ends of the socio-economic scales living here together, working together, being educated together, co-existing together.
- We have an aging population, but we have lost meals on wheels and other (senior) programming. We need more programming and services for seniors. Lack transportation for those who cannot drive.
- There is less and less church participation, resulting in less programming and services to the community.
- There are less bars and other places for people to gather-only Moose and Eagles

What do people appreciate most about East Palestine?

- The park
- Activities (always something to do)
- Everyone chips in-there is strong community spirit here
- Biggest strength is the 1820 candle company. Missy is phenomenal.

- Civic organizations are a strength: Moose, Masons and library were specifically mentioned

Complaints

- The same people continually volunteering, stretching them thin. Others may join (organizations), but won't roll up their sleeves and do the actual work. Example given was the Historical Society which is on the brink of being lost. We are not recruiting young people.
- Lack of communication. There is no real newspaper anymore, seniors are not internet savvy. Local newspaper fails the community, things are reported, articles written and sent in but never published. Other communities get their news published, but not EP unless it has something to do with the derailment.
- The alumni association still has its original members operating it. Trying to recruit young people, but they do things differently and they are not receptive to their ideas.
- Empty buildings downtown look bad
- Outside of organized sports, there is no place for kids to hang out

Strengths of community to grow successful business

- Not a whole lot, a couple of businesses are slowly collaborating

Strengths of community to live and raise a family

- Parks
- Schools
- Low crime
- Affordable
- Sports programs
- Generous to people who need help

What are the most critical issues impeding growth and sustainability?

- Empty buildings downtown
- Belief that village leadership make it unfriendly to do business and that there is a lack of incentivizing businesses
- Lack of food/restaurants
- Village leadership and employees don't give back
- Dilapidated buildings
- EP is a place to live, it's not a destination...you can't make a day here.
- People don't like change-there's a negative perception of the challenges to opening businesses here
- Lacking tradesmen-HVAC, electricians, plumbers, etc. (Note: the Eagles give out tradesmen scholarships). Comment was made that the schools are trying to offer trades programs and focus less on college readiness-"this has to be our focus". These are the young people that will stay and pay taxes.
- There are no scout troops, or other organizations for young people.

- Need places for seniors to congregate and services that promote “solo aging”.

What is an underdeveloped or under marketed potential of EP that should be explored and developed further?

- Missing large industry. Largest employers are the school and Threshold, which has 25 openings they cannot fill.
- Recycling is gone
- Pottery is gone
- There is hope that the railroad does create a training facility.
- The park is our greatest asset.
- Lacking housing for singles, small families-need something smaller to live in.

What social services, programs or amenities would you say are missing that would help?

- Healthcare
- Businesses: dry cleaner, shoe store, clothing, convenience, affordable grocery, coffee shop.
- Meals on wheels
- FISH (church-based organization)
- Community/Rec center.

Final Comments:

- We have to change the conversation, mindset. We are our biggest enemy.
- Get rid of negativity
- Outsiders see us differently than we perceive ourselves.
- “haters” are losing their cheering section and people are starting to stand up to them.
- The history and future of EP is tied to the railroad but we need to figure out what we want before we can move forward.

Developing a Business Support Eco-System to support long-term Economic Development efforts for East Palestine

Preamble:

The development of robust business support resources plays a pivotal role in shaping the foundation for a sustainable, long-term economic development plan for East Palestine, Ohio. These resources serve as the catalysts for fostering growth, innovation, and resilience within the local business community. By establishing a comprehensive network of support services, East Palestine can empower entrepreneurs and small businesses to thrive in a competitive marketplace.

Access to financial assistance, mentorship programs, and training initiatives can equip aspiring entrepreneurs with the skills and capital they need to start and scale their ventures. Collaborative partnerships between local government, educational institutions, and industry experts can further facilitate knowledge sharing and drive innovation.

In conclusion, the strategic development of business support resources in East Palestine is essential to lay the groundwork for a sustainable, thriving economy. By nurturing a favorable environment for businesses to flourish, the community can secure a prosperous future built on economic diversity, job creation, and enhanced quality of life for its residents.

Areas of focus for Business Support Resources focused on workforce development, business trends, critical issues, and opportunities in East Palestine:

Workforce Development:

- Youngstown State University offers workforce development support, including robotics and welding training
- Regional organizations such as Youngstown Business Incubator have funding to expand their scope to communities like East Palestine for areas of development such as additive manufacturing and 3D printing initiatives

Business Development Trends:

- Many businesses are eligible for programs such as COVID-related loans but lack education on the process
- EP Emergency Loan process has seen high application levels
- There's a need for auditing and up fitting businesses for modern technology
- Some downtown EP buildings need upgrades to be viable areas for commerce
- Regional land and property issues hinder industry attraction
- Shared working spaces are a significant opportunity, potentially publicly or privately owned

Critical Issues and Opportunities:

- Development of Route 14 Corridor is a opportunity
- Benefits of EP need better marketing out into the regional ecosystem, specifically Western Pennsylvania
- Workforce talent retention is a challenge
- Opportunities for financial counseling and business coaching exist, but are not well known
- YSU interns could assist in an EP business incubator or resource center.

Additional Insights:

- Critical regional issues include lack of support, legal and accounting services, and marketing
- Assets to leverage include the ACG program, outdoor amenities, a new park and museum, recreational opportunities, and potential Airbnb options

Potential Action Items:

1. Explore YSU's workforce development program
 2. Investigate the benefits of the Techcred program for businesses
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3. Increase awareness of available grants and loans for small businesses
4. Explore collaborations with law and accounting firms
5. Consider marketing efforts to promote EP's advantages
6. Explore the potential for a business workshop and internships
7. Collaborate with Unity Township to secure funding for projects
8. Utilize outdoor amenities and promote them for tourism
9. Promote the new park, museum, and recreational opportunities

East Palestine's SWOT analysis reveals several strengths and opportunities, along with some weaknesses and threats:

Strengths:

1. City Park and recreational amenities
2. Strong School District and modern school facilities
3. Efficient Village Emergency Services, including EMS, Police, and Fire Departments
4. Strategic location near Pittsburgh Airport
5. Proximity to renowned universities in Cleveland, Pittsburgh, and Mahoning Valley
6. Access to entrepreneurial hubs like Youngstown Business Incubator and centers for Medical and Tech
7. Affordable cost of living and available housing
8. Convenient access to water and sewer infrastructure along Route 14

Weaknesses:

1. Communication challenges among community leaders
2. Overlapping efforts by multiple Civic Organizations (EPCF & EP CC)
3. The need for proactive leadership in economic and community development
4. Lack of a clear and unified vision for East Palestine's identity and future
5. Limited public relations, public affairs, and community outreach efforts to promote the town

Opportunities (Action Items):

1. Establish a dedicated civic organization to lead community and economic development efforts, fostering collaboration among stakeholders. Develop a concise vision and strategy for East Palestine
2. Create effective communication channels among key community entities such as schools, the Village, and Civic Organizations
3. Develop marketing materials and strategic communications to showcase East Palestine's offerings to emerging industries and communities
4. Conduct a property audit of available residential and commercial properties in the community

Threats:

1. Declining tax base for the community, impacting both the Village and schools
2. The risk of an increase in "slum-lords" due to the low cost of housing
3. An aging population that may pose challenges for workforce development
4. Lagging behind similar communities in regional planning
5. The absence of a clear vision and strategy leading to ineffective development efforts
6. The need for a comprehensive economic development plan
7. Fragmented development efforts that could reduce the overall effectiveness of plans

Conclusion: By leveraging its strengths, engaging with business support resources, addressing critical issues, and capitalizing on opportunities, the community can revitalize its economy, increase housing values, and create a vibrant future for its residents. Collaboration between public and private sectors, along with a focus on workforce development and technology adoption, will be key to achieving these goals.

Group Number	Identity/Values	Asset List	Vision Statement	Strategies	Challenges	Outcomes
			In 20 years our community will be....			
1	Supportive, passionate giving community	Physical/Built:	a caring, tight-knit, educated, family-based community with opportunities for entrepreneurship and great social activities for all	Grow student body by offering diverse, good programs	Shrinking student population because of open enrollment that drive lack of programs and funding	Strong school with great programs to give students diverse education. Give students a reason to stay. No open enrollment
	We believe in taking care of others	Park		City needs to accommodate new houses and develop programs to take care of old ones	No activities for 20's, 30's, 40's people	
	Safe place to live where neighbors look after each other	schools/track/fields kid friendly neighborhoods (low traffic)			New park with activities for all ages and seasons	No good dining options-restaurants, coffee, beer Some still don't feel safe due to rr accident
	Supportive community	Downtown opportunity		Make it easy to do business in EP		Lack of nice houses to bring in educated families
	Role: Teach the next generation to be a good community member!	Walking trail Community center				
		Library				
		Social/Relationships				
		Stick to it Fitness				
		Library-kids activities				
		Pride				
2	Close-knit community	Schools	strategically moving forward with positive energy, community-based, local self-sustaining businesses. We will be a safe, happy and cohesive community where people want to live work and play.	School and education-STEM	Refurbishing storefronts and existing delapidated (buildings)	Best little town in (the) US-"quaint, charming, picturesque"
	Older population	City park		Expansion of Village		
	Safe	Local churches		Downtown refurbishment	Lack of retail businesses	More businesses, small businesses
	Great people	Holiday parades		Recepticals on stores		
	Volunteer organizations/people	Walking trail		Increase in retail business, economic growth	Lack of industry	More students and families living in EP
	Historic preservation	City Lake		Increase in entertainment and activities	Reasonable housing/affordable	
	Good neighbors	Frisbee golf park			Lack of school programs (STEM)	Expansion of city limits-leading to more businesses and residential housing
	Conservative	Street fair		Need incentives to come here		
		Football stadium		Job creation	Increase of city revenues	
		Volunteer organizations		Lack of entertainment		
				Money is the fuel that will drive our future. Finding sources for getting the money will require people that can find the sources. You can only tax just so much.	If we achieve all of our goals, we will have no problem attracting the people who can move our vision forward for infinity and beyond	
					We will do more than survive, we will thrive	
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	Alumni-stayed	Safety services				
		Good relationship with County				
		Historic association				
5	Small, rural town	Library	A samll quaint town with amenities. Maintaining community goals and growing population thrugh technologies and advancements	Community	Negativity	Move from village to city (>5,000 people)
	Tight-knit	EP Fire and EMS		Faith	Being scared of growth, change; don't want to change	Bring revenue to EP including manufacturing
	Values:	Post office		Educational	Willingness to get it done	Technology, social services and etc.
	Family	Park		Opportunities	Grant seeking resources	Keep EP graduates employed and happy in EP
	Community	Schools-great school campus		Pride	Health and wellness for future generations	Bridging relationships with nearby communities
	Hard-work	Football field			Becoming marketable to new jobs and opportunities	Expanding to SR 14 and developing the area with job opportunities
	Helping each other	Organization			Data collection and tracking for continued future growth	Promoting academic success and bring awareness to EP schools (thorough marketing and promotion)
	Traditions	Sensory park				Communication: social media/facebook, bulletin/newsletter of month events and activities
	Bulldogs	Moose/American Legion/Eagles				Appreciation of our fire and security (police) services in the area. EMS is greatly appreciated. Local men and women who help at a call for help
	Spirit	Claybrook Chats				Appreciation of committees who have supported EP during the derailment
	Caring community	Ham Radio Club				Apprecaiation of EP people who have gathered together and supported our community
	Safe	Masonic Temple-Rainbows, Eastern Star, Demomay, Masons				
	Friendly	Churches				
	Home	Entertainment-oldies, hee haw				
	Supportive/fundraising					
	Social concerns					
	Way station					
	Caring hands					
	Threshold					
	Volunteers-Dog Days/Service Day					
	Being innvolved-Rainbow Dreamland					
	Community Service-Turkey Trot, July 4th, Snowflake Festival, Garden Club Home Tours, Boy Scouts, Girl Scout cabins, 1940 EP park					
6	Family	School	Clean, safe bedroom community	New housing	Capital	The more things change...
	Volunteer	Park		More business opportunities	Educated workforce	
		Small businesses			Community pride/ lack of pride	
		Community groups				
7	Small, family-oriented community	Schools	competitive with neighboring communities and will have grown physically and economically	#1-Expansion to the north out to Rt 14. Retain seniors-housing community	Lack of employment	EP will be cleaned up. No more dirty, empty storefronts.
	We come together to celebrate holidays with well-attended events-parades, activities at park, christmas home tours	Park		#2-Marketing our assets! Low taxes, tax abatements, affordable housing	Lack of entertainment	The housing/zoning codes will be enforced to get rid of blight
		Fire Department/EMS			Lack of food entertainment	
		Small businesses			School enrollment decreasing	
	Family connections-many people have lots of relatives living in town	Low/non-violent crime		#3-School system improvements-better maintenance, pride in school, retain enrollment	Where will the money come from to made the needed improvements?	Village leaders will have marketed all the positives to attract new business and residents, e.g. tax abatements
					How can we retain young people?	
				#4-Entertainment-bowling alley, mini-golf, restauranys, fast food.	Is there available land/space for new businesses or housing?	We will have new housing developments, senior housing community, recreational options
					Is there available land/space for new businesses or housing?	
				#5-Healthcare-more options for doctors, dentist, optometrist, etc	Blight	

8	Values:	Location-Cleveland, P-brg,	provide a secure community environment that promotes recreational, educational and economic prosperity while maintaining small neighborhoods and public amenities that generate community pride and active citizens	Parking-ample and easy access	Financial	Become a destination
	Prideful	Youngstown, near airports		Entertainment, restaurants, coffee shops, activities, great park	Controlling misinformation	Where young people will stay here (with ample opportunities) and raise their families
	Safety	Small businesses, shops		Community functions, public realtions efforts	Revitalization of older structures	
	Low crime	EMS services		Innovate the delivery of village services and communication	Lack of community cohesiveness	
	Compassion	Low tax base/low cost of living				
	Respectful	Beautifu geograpphy				
	Passion	Schools				
	Identity:	Health facilities				
	Hard working	Strong local government				
	Small village vibe					
	Great location					
	Community participation					
	Great schools					
	Great park					
9	Pretty hard-working middle-class community	Alumni and friends	Thriving city focused around community, involvement, long-standing traditions, future-focused opprotunities	Downtown development-amenities, housing, events	People's attitudes	Thriving community
	Sense of family	Community foundation		Cultural, historic tourism	Infrastructure	Annexation/growth north
	Community pride	Social concerns		Local foods	Lack of involvement	More opprotunities
	Share schools	Churches		Business recruitment	Communication	Year-round park operation
	Safety and security	Park-needs to operate all seasons		Edcation development		Politician from EP to represent us in Columbiana County
	Tradition	People				
	Keep positive	Old hotel				
	Be a part of the solution	Old theater				
		Train depot				
		Log cabin				
		Schools				
		Library				
10	Resilient	Family	a healthy, vibrant, safe, well-populated city where people want to live and have their children educated in the district	Need: long-term plan for guaranteed health insurance coverage if become ill (from) derailment	Need more condos for aging residents	More people
	Family-oriented	Elderly residents who know the history of EP		Inviting atmosphere for festivals (beer, wine, food trucks, DORA)	Other fast food restaurants (besides McD)	
	Poverty-level community	Barb Lynch/Socail Concerns		Fitness, recreation center for community use and extended walking	ABANDONED BUILDINGS!	
	Safe and affordable community	Churches		Raise school testing scores/performance indicators to make EP schools a district that parents want their children to attend	open enrollment	
	Don't move away!	Park (pool, disc golf)			Lack of occupancy of downtown buildings	
	Values:	EMS/Fire Department			Feral cat problem in town	
	Honesty	EPHS drama department				
	Truth	Support for EPHS sports				
	Being good neighbors	Caring community				
	Hard-working					
	Loyal					
11	Dedicated Bulldogs-Believe in working together	The developmental disability community	thriving economically due to business expansion with revitalized and attractive infeasructure for new comers; visually appealing	Business expansion and incentivization-coffee shops, restauranst	Money	All the above not happening
	Integrity	Socila clubs (Garden)		Downtown revitalization	Inaction	New people and an influx of money come to the village.
	Friendly and welcoming	The park/walking trail		Welcome diversity	Resistance	
	Multiple generations traising family	Schools		Attracting youth and young families. Create reasons to stay.	Capacity	A change in mindset-->positivity
	There is no place like home	Commitment to each other		Home improvements and renocation. Maintianing investments.	Lack of open-mindedness	Welcoming to all types of people.
	Cost of living-->outsiders				Infrastructure	Business friendly
	Encouragement, evolution, take action				Yes, potential	Futuristic, inclusive, safe for families, population growth
					Yes, there are partnerships can be developed	

12	Transient community	Park	growing to the north along Rt 14 with the development of business and industry due to the extension of utilities. This will be followed by housing developments and an increase in population	Water and sewer to Rt 14	Mone-overcome with NS	Increase in population
	Majority lower income	Library		Business and industry development	Lack of industry-need more business/industry	Increase in business
	Law and order/security	Community groups-social concerns,		Followed by housing	Market town as affordable place to live	Increase in tax-base
	Helping take care of others/philanthropic	Garden Club, School plays, band/choir concerts		Attract people from Pa with lower taxes		Annexation to the north
	Dedicated to the continuation of a secure community			Eco-tourism--> Beaver Creek State Park, hikers, canoes, North Country Trail Extension	Comeback story	
13	Close-knit	Park	A propserous community that is full of life with a thriving downtown, school system and community pride	Local food		A vibrant community
	Friends	Geographical loation		Business recruitment		Youth retention
	Strong community	Respectful community		Increase tax base		Thriving school system
	Safe community	chool district		Youth engagement		Youth amenities
	Community involvement	Community outreach programs		Education development		Houseold sustainable jobs
	Community pride	Churches				
	Social media					
14	Family	Land preservation	thriving with a new hospital and a movie theater and restaurants that will attract more people to our town. Improved community representation-inclusive of all voices for community empowerment.	Coming back from the disaster with great success	Lack of communication	More approachable leaders
	Low crime	Value of trust			Lack of representation	Inclusivity
	Close-knit community	Word of mouth networking		Booming with new businesses	Community division	Empowering all voices
	Kid-friendly	Value of peace		Health care development	Money	
	Good schools			Tech-Great kid activities!	Education	
				1-day events National Celebration	Political will	
15	Family-oriented	First responders	A community that will be attractive to industries, new businesses and cultural events and thus a growing population and we see expansion toward Rt 14-extend utilities in that direction.	Revitalize and modernize downtown buildings and properties	Not in prime geograhical location off major highways	Population growth
	Tight-knit and caring	City ark				No empty storefronts or unused properties
	Small-town atmosphere	Social concerns		Musicaland theatrical events at new city park	Declining population	Flourishing downtown
	Participate in civic and charitable activities	City manager system		Indoor and outdoor coffee shop, wine tasting, gathering for socializing	Outdated infrastructure	A destiantion that will draw visitors from Pa and other counties
		School theater productions			Unused buildings and land	
		Annual car show		Greater variety of shops		A center of cultural and recreational activities-think city park
				More emphasis on our community's history and tradition		