

What kind of community do you want?

Kids don't leave, or they choose to come back

Welcomes and celebrates diversity

More for young people to do

Ample arts, culture, and community spaces

Variety of shopping and restaurants

Entrepreneurship is encouraged

Better uses existing resources

Vibrant downtown

More collaborative

Positive narrative, pride

Good infrastructure-bridges, roads

Lots of walking and biking trails

More activities and events that bring the community together

Plentiful job opportunities

(= indicated as most important, dominated suggestions)

Specific comments: Many people go to other cities. Stop putting up road blocks, get out of the way of entrepreneurship. Promote the positives; we have an image that is not tied to fact. We need to do a better job of promoting Battle Creek, marketing community activities, and fostering a sense of pride.

What concerns do you have?

Perception that Battle Creek is a great place to work, but not to live

Schools are struggling, unsure of quality of education, students are failing

Lack of family support systems

Not taking personal responsibility for positive narrative

There is not enough leadership, same people, no leadership opportunities for non-traditional leaders

Citizens don't promote community

Neighborhood building-lack of connection

Specific comments: School of choice causes. Kids are getting pushed ahead in school when they aren't performing at grade level. People that are proud don't necessarily speak highly of Battle Creek when not "on the clock." Go to school board meetings to be heard; if you want to create change, you have to use your voice, you can't remain quiet.

How do these issues affect you personally?

Don't always have the money to go to other cities for arts/culture/activity

Don't feel heard

My kids are leaving the area

Child is being forced to move ahead despite not performing at current grade-level, feel hopeless

Specific comments: In Post Addition, there is not a community "space" for people to take pride in-no art or culture. I don't want to have to go to Kalamazoo or Grand Rapids. I want my kids to be able to experience that here. I don't always have the money to go elsewhere.

Voices aren't being heard, it's like I'm cheering to an empty stadium when I talk about the positive things going on.

My kids are leaving. Coming back to BC is not even on their radar.

It's cumbersome to open new business, there are zero incentives for entrepreneurship downtown.

How do you feel about what's going on?

Frustrated

All talk, no action

Hopeless – regarding education

More optimistic than I used to be, but we still need more improvement

Underrepresented – not enough diversity, same people at same tables having same discussion

Specific comments: Money talks, BS walks.

Schools are not doing anything for my kids, I feel hopeless. (Response) Parents can't complain if they don't participate in school and board meetings, you have to be involved if you want change; I'm frustrated with those who complain.

I'm optimistic about the amount of people collaborating.

Throwing money at things is not the answer. I'm pessimistic about Harwood. (Comments in agreement) How much money have we paid to outside experts that come in and tell us the same thing? We throw money at all of these programs, but do we get real results?

What do you think is keeping us from making the progress we want?

Apathy

Lack of trust

A select few are in control and are the only ones with the power

Segregation – socioeconomic, diversity, school districts, etc.

Lack of celebration of what we do have

Frustration

Lack of action – both personally and collectively

City government

Gaps in information, poor communication

Specific comments: People in power don't want to let go of that; it's a control issue.

I'm frustrated that we talk but don't act. No one ever asks me to *do* anything.

I've come to Project 2020 for a long time, but now I have to try to make myself come because I don't know what happens to all of the ideas. Where do they go? Where does the information go? Where is the action?

Suggestion- Send summary of notes to the power players- city government, boards etc.

When you think of what we've talked about, what are the kinds of things that could be done that would make a difference?

Have action plans after meetings and support when unsure of what to do

Communicate results

Less meetings and silos

Strategically communicate

Hold ourselves personally accountable/responsible

Connect with people outside of our organizations

Engage business and government more

Make it easier to open a business

Have a "how can I help you" attitude

Specific comments: I want to leave a meeting with an action plan. If you had an assignment, you could make things happen, but sometimes I'm not sure what to do or I don't know how to help, I need support.

We need to condense the different collaboratives down so we don't have to go to virtually the same meetings every week. (Comment in agreement) We need more connectivity with groups meeting about the same things, people can't attend all of these meetings. (Additional comment) And we need to be strategic about the way we communicate to those that don't attend the meetings.

Actions have to come from people here, we can't just rely on organizations.

We need to involve business people, and really listen to them.

Thinking back over the conversation, what groups or individuals would you trust to take action on these things?

Ourselves
Neighbors
Colleagues
Legislature (some)
People with vested interests

Specific comments: People who want things to happen have to step up and be part of the solution.

Lots of talk. What's doable?

People with a vested interest need to be involved in the conversation.

If we came back together in 6 months or a year, what might you see which would tell you that the things we talked about tonight were starting to happen?

New business opening
More people downtown after 6pm
New homes being built, empty houses full
Kids excited about getting a job
Feel a sense of "we did it"
Feel encouraged
Small wins-different vibe
Big billboard about what's going on in Battle Creek
Business incentives
Lots of promotion of Battle Creek

Specific comments: I'm going downtown because something's down there.

People who work here but don't live here would start coming here for dinner and activities too.

We could say, "Wow! We finally did it!"

Pivotal Moments/Observations:

Frustration with a lack of action was prominent throughout the discussion. Although many participants shared feelings of frustration over previous attempts at changing things and noted they never seemed to last, they also expressed a need for everyone to take personal responsibility in making things happen or change.

Although participants were encouraged to participate as people in their everyday lives, a lot of responses and dialogue was organization focused.

Other comments:

Great job in convening the participants and coordinating the conversations! The participants seemed to learn from each other and perhaps work through some tensions by being in the same space and talking about those things together.

Conversation Details:

Participants: 11

Demographic Notes: most were from organizations, one self-identified as an advocate not being from anywhere-a stay at home mom; mix of ages approximately 30-65; most, if not all, Caucasian

Catalyst for convening: Project 2020 invitation

Convener: Project 2020/Amanda Lankerd

Process: Project 2020/Amanda Lankerd coordinated the facilities, communications, and participants. Other community partners were enlisted to serve as support in the roles of facilitators and note takers. All conversations took place in Burnham Brook in different rooms and at different tables. 4 total.

Logistics: Burnham Brook, 7:30am-9:00am

Facilitator: Laura Otte

Note Takers: Lyssa Howley, Cheryl Peters