

1. What kind of community do you want?

Initial responses:

- Walkable
- Environmentally safe
- Welcoming of diversity – individuals with disability are a part of the community and there are no divides between ethnic groups
- Strong downtown that is the center of the community and the center of activities where there are more stores, food chains, and the current businesses are sustainable
- Strong arts community with diversity in all types and kinds of arts with appropriate venues to display, perform the arts

Next responses moved the theme:

- We need JOBS; a workforce to support business.
- We need a stratosphere of jobs from blue collar to high management and not just blue collar or high management.
- Jobs need to be varied so the city is not reliant on one company or business.
- We need our high school graduates to be competent and have the “best” schools available to all students.
- We then need to retain those graduates in the community so that our community has varied age ranges living and working here.
- There was discussion on our youth: We need activities for teens, besides sports, so they do not have to choose partying as the social activity. We need to find out what youth want to do. The activities need to be affordable (Full Blast, YMCA- are too expensive for many families). Teens need a voice and we need to show them that we value their input.

Next wave of responses:

- We need to get rid of the stigma that we are a blue collar town.
- We have the arts in our community but it is not displayed culturally and promoted. People are going to other towns to seek out art.
- We need cooperation; the ability to work together and not against each other. One art group became upset when another art group opened up in town.
- We need to take actions that are coordinated, not in isolation to move us forward beyond one initiative at a time. Young college grads are moving into town drawn in by the city’s promotion of low cost housing in the older homes.
- These individuals in theory will have extra income to spend that they are not spending on expensive housing. So, are we keeping them socially active so they stay and spend their money in BC?

Final sentiment:

- We want a community where people are proud to live so they recommend to others that they should live here.

- We want a community where healthy lifestyles are promoted.
- We want healthy neighborhoods.

2. Given what we just said, what are the 2-3 most important issues or concerns when it comes to the community?

This question was initially met with some silence.

1. Jobs
2. Education – there was some feelings of negativity of the past perceived inadequacies of the high schools in BC while others felt that the high schools have made improvements in education in the past 5-10 years.
(Culture, Arts, Health)
3. Proud to live here
There was much discussion about how we needed to be proud to live here so others will move here and stay here. This one combines a lot of what has been said and there was common ground and positivity over the inclusiveness of this statement.

3. What concerns do you have about this issue? Why?

The first concern was about the sustainability of jobs.

- Some felt that big companies were needed
- Some wanted to focus on the ‘mom and pop’ businesses and encouraging and supporting entrepreneurship.
- Brainstorming of ideas then began stating we needed a Baskin Robbins and a TCBY. Others added that we have some good ice cream places already. There was a connection over our need or love of ice cream.

The topic of our downtown re-emerged:

- There are people downtown so why do we have empty buildings? There are people downtown but businesses are not downtown. What are the barriers and how do we break down those barriers to having thriving downtown businesses?
- Downtown festivals are great, but they do not happen very often.
- One offered that we have a wide income equality disconnect in BC so maybe that is the reason retailer are suffering.

A new topic and concern emerged:

- BC does a poor job of promoting itself.
- We are our own worst enemy.
- People who live here are negative about BC. Several commented that when they have guests from out of town, they comment about how nice BC is and can see the good here. It has been described as a great town to visit.
- There was common ground on the statement that “Our community has low self-esteem.” Someone stated we might need therapy and the group laughed.

- It was felt we relive things that have happened in the past. No one is denying the lasting impact those events and issues have on people, although there was a feeling that we needed to live toward the future.
- There was a feeling that this negativity could stem from the income inequality that is present in BC and we cannot promote ourselves out of inequality. The example was given that data shows that teen pregnancies are higher in communities with income inequality.
- It was shared that we are giving our youth the message that there is no opportunities in BC.
- Youth are told that this town is bad, they are bad, and there is no hope.
- It was offered that we need a ‘Pay it Forward’ concept in BC.

4. How do the issues we’re talking about affect you personally?

- Families cannot afford to take their children to Full Blast.
- One person was told as a youth that this town is bad and there are no opportunities here.
- We have a hockey rink downtown that is barely surviving as community financial support is decreased from benefactors and foundations combined with people losing jobs or income so they cannot afford to pay to play.
- It was shared that there is a 14 year old boy in our community who has had trauma in his home life, trauma in school, and is involved with the Courts. That boy is being told that he is a bad kid. This situation angers an adult in our group. Many in the group were touched by this example.
- When you are in situations, you cannot always reach out to use resources. There is an 18 year old teen dad in our community who is working and taking care of his child. He works a 4:30pm-1:00am job. The GED offerings are only from 8am-12pm and 4pm- 8pm.
- There is a person who has lived in BC for the last 7 years and can see the potential and progress yet agrees there are problems.
- A person walks down Michigan Ave. during the day and is given a positive feeling with seeing all the people, some you know and some you do not.
- A person has made so many efforts over time and has become burned out when not enough people joined in the efforts to sustain them.

The personal stories led to the following conversation:

- BC has opportunities if you can afford them and we all cannot afford them. Resources are not connected to those who need to use them. There was much agreement about this statement.
- Activity opportunities are decreasing as philanthropic support is decreasing and businesses and organizations providing the activities are told to “do it on their own.”
- There are no wintertime activities for youth.
- Transportation barriers are an issue for BC.

- Our youth are “beat up” in the traditional educational system. Our youth have low self-esteem. Our youth cannot “see the light at the end of the tunnel.”
- BC has “have-not” kids. Although the group seemed to believe that youth are encouraged when they are given a choice.
- It is felt that BC lost the “mid-level” workers. They choose to live elsewhere.

The topic of disconnection in our community re-emerged here:

- We currently have some urban activities going on in our community that are not inclusive of varied age groups. It is then isolated excitement that is not sustained or supported or even open to support. Urban renewal occurred by a previous generation and is now repeated today due to no communication between age groups.
- It was offered that we have a “scarcity mentality” that overrides reality. This feeling of there is not enough and I have to protect what is mine and what I have leads to the disconnect.

5. When you think about these things, how do you feel about what’s going on?

- Burned out
- Disappointed
- Frustrated
- Angry
- Hopeful (I have to)
- Encouraged
- Energized
- Constrained, limited, cannot do it all

A comment was made that there is a desire for this not to be just an exercise without action.

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

- Communication. How to know what else is out there and how to help each other.
- A lack of feedback from the community, inclusive of all types, ages, to see if we are on the right track.
- Turfism
- Engagement is not two sided. There are opportunities that people choose not to take advantage of.
- Class or education differences create barriers.
- Lack of understanding between class and culture.
- There is a perception that people are “unwelcome” in some situation and they do not feel invited or feel permission to engage.

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

- Mutual engagement
- Engaging diversity
- Private sector creating opportunities and making efforts. The example was provided that Detroit companies offered people financial incentives to live in Detroit if you worked at the company. After a time period, the company paid some of mortgage or rent.

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

Two main themes of who to trust emerged:

1. It was stated that this person was going to trust the people in this room to go out and talk positively about BC.
2. It was stated that this person trusted themselves and had hope that everyone else trusted themselves so they will step up and lead and jump in.

Additional comments included:

- We need to trust one another (including city gov't, non-profits, and schools) and not focus on the scarcity or preserving our piece of the pie.
- We need to share and not just protect ourselves.
- We need to trust entrepreneurs.

Time did not permit this group to respond to questions #9 and #10.