



**Acme Power Plant Reclamation Project  
Community Visioning Session  
August 24th, 2017**

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Sheridan Memorial Hospital Conference Center**

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TAB Partners:



Local Partners:



## Site Background:

Located near the banks of the Tongue River outside of Sheridan, Wyoming, the Acme Power Plant was completed in 1910, and provided power to the local mines, coal camps, and the City of Sheridan. As the mining industry changed and the City of Sheridan grew, the power plant became obsolete and shut down in the late 1970s. Since then, it has been the site of several different industrial uses, including auto dismantling, and battery disposal. The site has been unoccupied for the past few years; it was purchased in June 2017 by the Sheridan County Conservation District. (source: The Sheridan Press)



**Top:** Acme Power Plant, ca. 1950s

**Photo Credit:** Diers Collection | The Wyoming Room

**Bottom:** Acme Power Plant, ca. 1913

**Photo Credit:** Sheridan Area Coal Camp Photos | Wyoming Tails and Trails



## Environmental Issues:

A Phase II Environmental Assessment is being completed for the site. Preliminary results, as of the August 24th, 2017 meeting date, indicate that some level of cleanup will be needed to address debris, drums, asbestos, and other contaminants at the site.

Acme site, present day

**Photo Credit:** Chelsea Coli | The Sheridan Press

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## Workshop:

Held in the conference room of the Sheridan Memorial Hospital on the evening of August 24th, 2017, the visioning workshop was attended by 56 members of the community. In addition to community members, there were six representatives of local and state stakeholders, three facilitators with the Kansas State University (KSU) Technical Assistance to Brownfields (TAB) Program, and one representative of US EPA Region 8.

Workshop Presentations **Photo Credit:** Blase Leven, KSU TAB



The workshop host, Carrie Rogaczewski (Sheridan County Conservation District or SCCD) began the conference with a brief presentation about the former Acme Power Plant, the history of the site, and the expectations for future use, followed by presentations by Blase Leven and Mary Hashem (KSU TAB facilitators) on the planning and visioning process to be used. After the presentations, the participants began the re-use visioning process.

Community participants were generally seated at seven (7) tables of eight (8) participants each. Each group received a flip chart with the first two pages labeled with their group number and sections for each category for a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis. The SWOT analysis was used to evaluate the site in each of the four categories, which creates a base for brainstorming redevelopment ideas. The groups also received handouts including a color aerial photograph of the Acme Power Plant site and questions to stimulate discussion.

Following the presentations, the participants were given an hour to work through the SWOT analysis at their table and note their findings on their group's flip chart. At the end of the hour, an appointed spokesperson for the group reported out on their findings. As part of the report-out, they were directed to identify the top three re-use opportunities for later voting. When all reports were complete, the participants moved into the next room to vote on their preferred site re-use opportunities. At the end of the voting, facilitator Blase Leven summarized the results of the voting based on a visual review of the votes and informal tallying.



**Left:** Acme site, Present Day;  
**Right:** Participants work in groups to analyze strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats

**Photo Credit (left):** Blase Leven, KSU TAB Program  
**Photo Credit (right):** Mary Hashem, Adaapta

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## Expectations for Future Use:

1) Ensure Public Use/Access

2) Capture Historical Importance

3) Protect Land and Water Quality

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## Potential Participants and Stakeholders:

Each visioning workshop participant was asked to identify themselves based on their relationship to the project site, as well as their professional affiliation, if applicable. This information was summarized by KSU TAB and provided to the SCCD to help identify those particularly suited to help achieve certain goals. Attendees were also asked to identify other stakeholders who could possibly serve on an advisory committee. The listing of stakeholders is included below.

### Potential Stakeholders Identified:

- Padlock Ranch
  - Big Horn Coal
  - History Museum
  - Montana Dakota Utility
  - Wyoming Room
  - Ramaco
  - Trout Unlimited
  - Tongue River Fire District
  - Tongue River Women's Club
  - Game and Fish
  - Audobon Society
  - Landowner Rep
  - Former Residents
  - County Commissioners
  - Pheasants Forever
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## Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis:

For the SWOT analysis, each group was tasked with identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the community as a whole, as well as the opportunities and threats unique to the site. While each team came up with their own list of strengths and weaknesses, they generally fell under one of four broader categories: *Local Community/History, Recreation, Economic Opportunity, and Accessibility.*

Generally, participants were more likely to see the community's current and historical community aspects and recreation opportunities as a strength, while economic opportunity and accessibility issues were more likely to be viewed as weaknesses. Lists of strengths and weaknesses are shown on the next page; while these lists are not exhaustive, they are a representation of the ideas presented during the workshop.

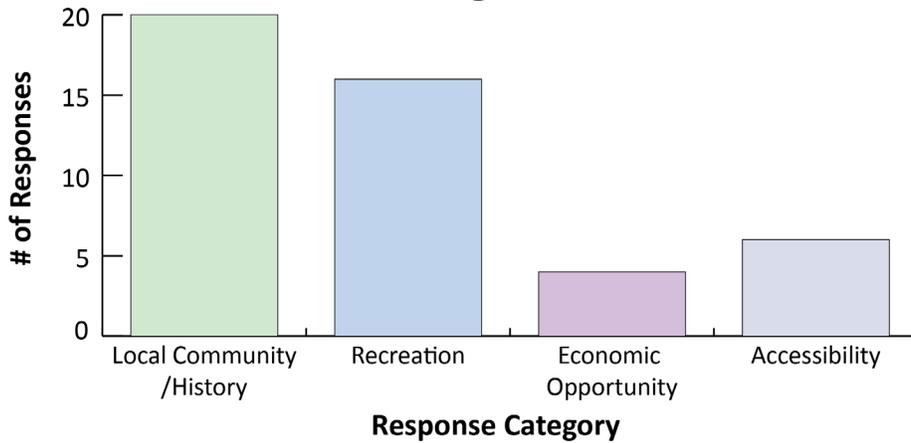


Participants use maps while brainstorming ideas for re-use.

**Photo Credit:** Mary Hashem, Adaapta

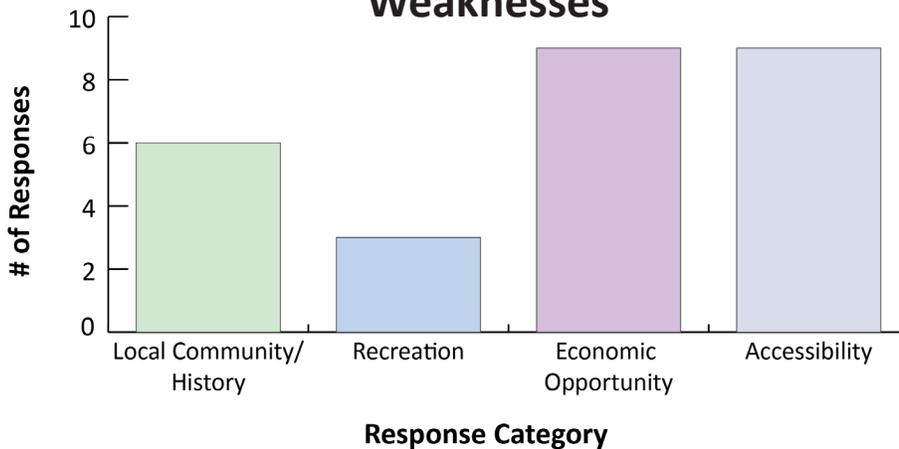
**SWOT (Continued):**

**Strengths**



Local Community/History	Recreation	Economic Opportunity	Accessibility
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community involvement</li> <li>Rich local history</li> <li>Philanthropy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trails and open space</li> <li>Natural beauty</li> <li>Tongue River access</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stable</li> <li>Strong tourism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accessible to public</li> </ul>

**Weaknesses**



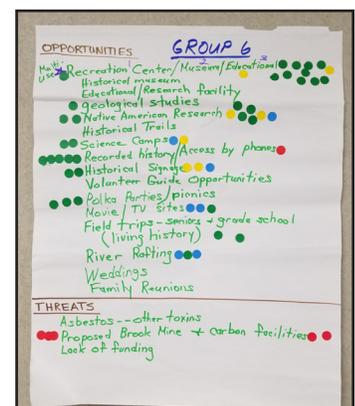
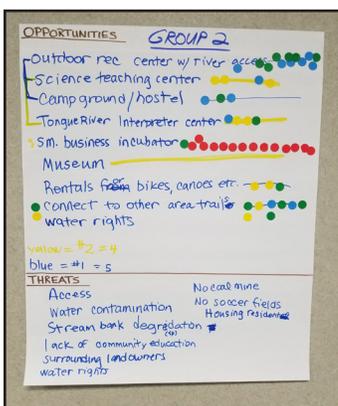
Local Community/History	Recreation	Economic Opportunity	Accessibility
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of diversity</li> <li>Lack of historical research</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>General lack of recreation facilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of funding</li> <li>Low wages and few employment opportunities</li> <li>Expensive housing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of transportation</li> <li>Small city/low population</li> <li>Isolated from other communities</li> </ul>

## Opportunities:

After analyzing the community's overall strengths and weaknesses, each group brainstormed redevelopment options and threats unique to the site. On average, each group came up with around 3-10 different ideas for redevelopment, and 2-7 ideas for threats. After the brainstorming session ended, each group presented their ideas. Once all the ideas had been presented, each individual was given 6 "positive" sticky dots (blue, yellow, and green) and 2 "negative" sticky dots (red), which were then placed by their favorite and least favorite re-use ideas.

## Redevelopment Ideas: Most Popular vs. Least Popular

- Outdoor Recreation Center (especially with river access) (76)
- Science/Teaching Center (22)
- Natural Park with Trails and Water Park (21)
- Botanic Gardens (14)
- Greenhouse/Vertical Farming (14)
- Trail Hub (10)
- Replica Mine Town (10)
- Preserve Unique Sheridan History (10)
- Native American Research (9)
- Recorded History - Accessible by Phone (6)
- Film Production Center (6)
- Indoor Recreation Center (6)
- Drone Racing (5)
- Golf Course (-24)
- Small Business Incubator (-14)
- Remove Building to Increase Access to River (-8)
- Film Production Center (-6)
- Resort (-5)

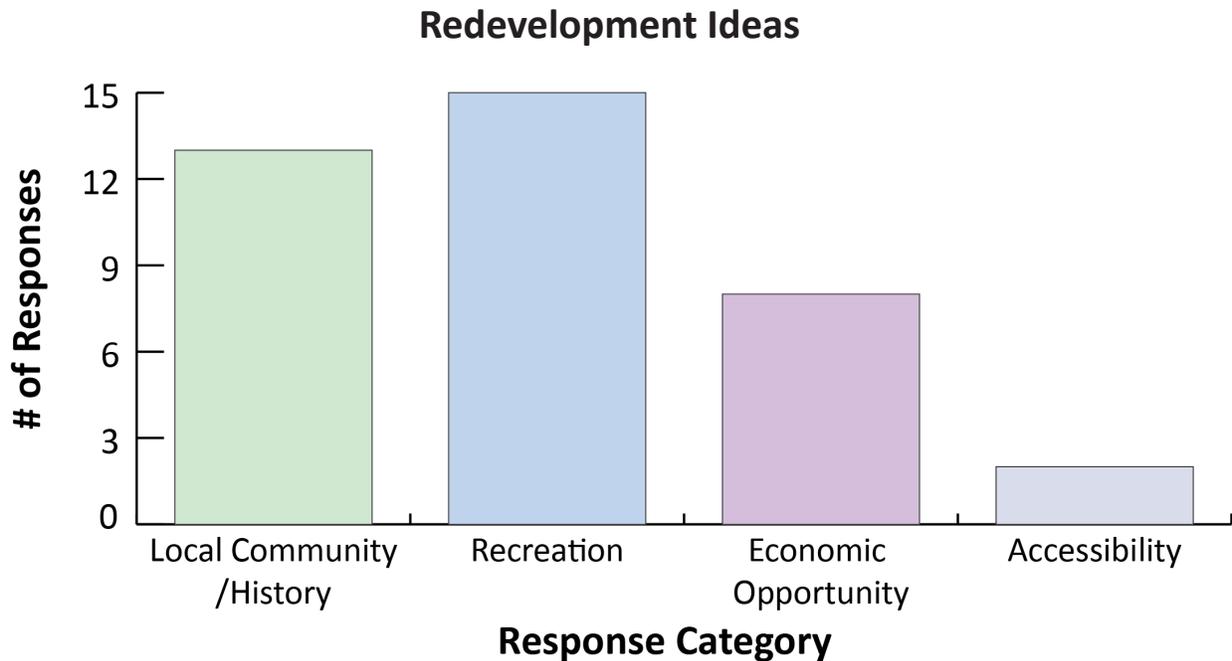


**Outside:** Examples of voting results for two out of seven groups

**Center:** Participants vote for their favorite and least favorite reuse ideas

**Photo Credit:** Blase Leven, KSU TAB Program

## Opportunities (Continued):



Interestingly, while the participants identified economic opportunity and accessibility as major weaknesses within the area, less than half of the ideas for redevelopment were focused on economic opportunity, which included ideas like a small business incubator, resort, or a film production center, and accessibility, which included ideas like providing bike connectivity through the site. Instead, the most popular suggestions emphasized outdoor recreation, especially with river access, or educational/historic elements. In fact, the least popular ideas for redevelopment were generally the most economically productive uses. One notable exception is the Film Production Center, which received both 6 “positive” votes and 6 “negative” votes.

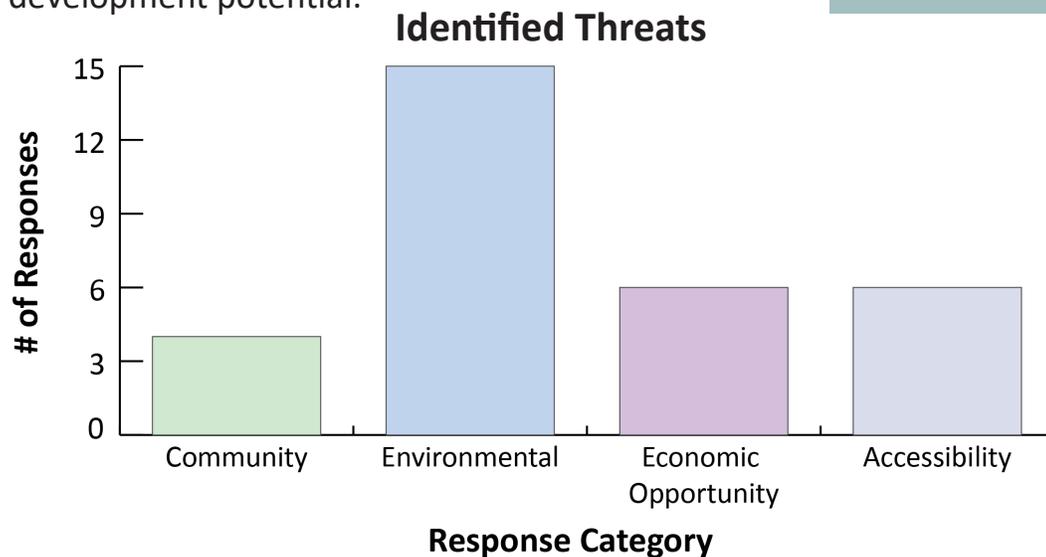
While the number of suggested recreation uses is only slightly higher than the number of local community/history uses (ie. education center, community center, history museum) shown in the bar chart above, participants overwhelmingly supported some sort of outdoor recreation center (76 “positive” votes) over a science/teaching center, the second most favorable type of use (22 “positive” votes). While it should be noted that other uses, such as Native American research and replica mine town would also fall under the Local Community/History response category, participants still heavily favored some sort of outdoor recreation use.



Participants vote on their favorite and least favorite reuse ideas **Photo Credit:** Blase Leven, KSU TAB Program

## Threats:

For the Threats portion of the SWOT analysis, participants were asked to identify the most pressing obstacles facing the site. Environmental concerns, including contamination, floodplain issues, and proximity to existing and future coal mining operations were identified as threats most frequently by participants. Community members also considered the site's isolated location and accessibility issues as a point of concern, as well as the economic sustainability of the redeveloped use. While several groups brought up the issue of neighborhood opposition, this category posed the least threat to the site's re-development potential.

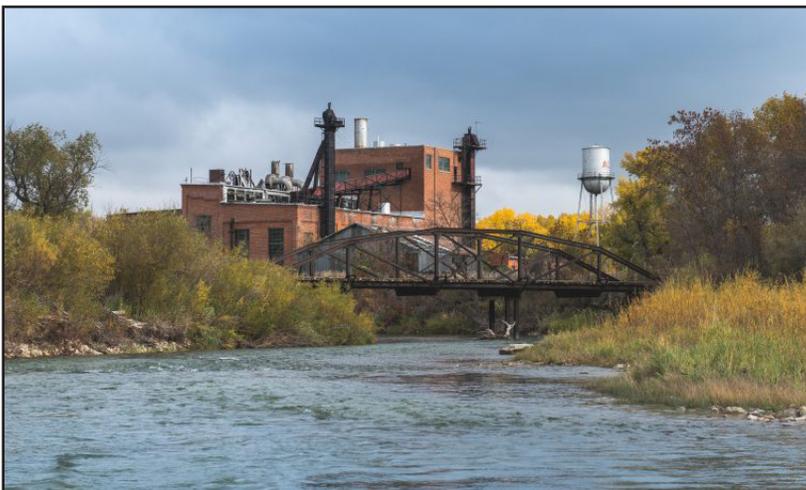


## Threats:

- Contamination/Environmental Concerns
- Access
- Funding/Ongoing Maintenance Costs
- Opposition from Neighbors
- Water Rights
- Nearby Coal Mine

In order to more accurately describe the Threat sources, the “Local Community/History” category has been changed to “Community”, and “Recreation” has been changed to “Environmental”. However, these categories still roughly correspond to those shown in the previous charts.

## Conclusion:



Acme Site, Present Day

**Photo Credit:** Sheridan Community Land Trust

While the former Acme Power Plant still has a long way to go on its path to re-development, the Community Visioning Session summarized in this report has provided valuable insight into potential partnerships, community priorities, and potential future uses for the property. The historic significance of the site, as well as its architectural value and proximity to the Tongue River, makes it a valuable community asset that could be enjoyed for years to come.