

Workshop Participants' Input for the CCSD 2024 Strategic Plan Update

Background: As part of the strategic planning process, District staff gathered community input to the District SWOT analysis, through a questionnaire on the website and during the February 8, 2024 CCSD Board Meeting. The Strategic Planning Ad Hoc Committee (Directors Dean and Thomas) grouped and organized the community input which had been received up to the February 8, 2024 CCSD Board Meeting. This organized community input was distributed to workshop participants on 2/14/2024 along with a similar questionnaire.

Workshop participants provided their input to District staff. These responses were distributed 2/23/2024 in the agenda packet for the 2/26/2024 special meeting. The Strategic Planning Ad Hoc Committee then grouped and organized this input from workshop participants, which is the content of this document.

The sentence or phrase in bold font above each set of bullets is a summary of that grouping of bullets attempting to capture the gist of that group of comments.

- Each of the bullets is a verbatim comment received from the participants, with very minor spelling and punctuation corrections only to enable the comments to be more easily understood. Commentary in *blue font in italics* was added by the ad hoc committee in effort to clarify some of the workshop participant comments.

The list is generally organized with themes with the most bullets further up in the list, but also with similar themes grouped together.

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District Accomplishments: What are the Cambria Community Services District's accomplishments since the January 31, 2023 Strategic Planning Workshop?

Workshop participants see the significant improvement in key District Staff as an accomplishment.

- The Board hired an outstanding General Manager, Matthew McElhenie.
- Hiring a new General Manager.
- Successfully brought on a new General Manager and other key Staff.
- Hiring Matthew McElhenie as General Manager was an excellent Board decision, resulting in tremendous improvements in transparency, community engagement and communication, decision making, and organizational effectiveness.
- Excellent response to staffing challenges; through excellent hiring decisions, organizational structure refinements and promotions from within, we now have a top-notch management team in place at all levels.
- Reorganization of Administration.
- Reorganization of administrative department.
- Hiring/promoting key Mgmt. Staff, i.e. Jim and Dave.
- Installation of new management.
- Hiring a new Fire Chief.
- Hiring new Water/Wastewater leadership.
- Positive changes in key departmental management staff, including Fire Chief.

Progress is being made with the Water Reclamation Facility Coastal Development Permit Application.

- CDP Project Description almost ready for final submission to the County.
- Progress on WRF CDP.
- Made significant progress, at last, toward the Coastal Development Permit for WRF.
- Addressing the WRF project description.
- Started advancing the permitting of the WRF for normal, non-emergency use. (*Note: this comment was included twice.*)
- Significant improvements in District relationship with the Coastal Commission and County, resulting in progress towards a Regular CDP for the Water Reclamation Facility.

Many Infrastructure projects are moving forward.

- Substantial progress in upgrades to the Wastewater Treatment Plant.
- The Wastewater SST projects are underway.
- Progress on WWTP upgrades.
- Started the engineering and permitting portions of two major projects: the Stuart St. Tank Replacement project and the SS Well Field and Secondary Effluent pipeline replacement project. (*Note: this comment was included twice.*)
- Moving projects forward, i.e. WRF permit, electric charging station, Stuart Street Tanks, etc.
- Started 10 water meter Advance Metering Infrastructure pilot project. (*Note: this comment was included twice.*)

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Improvements are being made with District Finances.

- Investing reserves with an investment fund management group for improved return on our reserves.
- Cutting Administration Budget by \$500k.
- Investment Strategy.

Fire Department has seen upgrades in both staffing and equipment.

- Hiring a new Fire Chief
- Full-Time permanent Firefighters added to roster.
- Achieved NFPA Standards with the inclusion of the SAFER Grant.
- Approved purchase of Type 5 Fire Apparatus.

Accomplishments were made with storm damage repair and fire safety issues.

- Survived, cleaned up from, and repaired damage from two significant flooding events last winter. (*Note: this comment was included twice.*)
- Mitigated an unusually high and precarious fuel hazard situation in an extraordinary short amount of time.
- Initiated a feasibility study for an evacuation route from the Marine Terrace to Hwy 1. (*Note: this comment was included twice.*)

Skate Park Grant is undergoing final steps towards approval.

- Skatepark qualified as one of the 16 projects being considered for a grant.
- Skatepark grant success.
- Pending grant for the Skatepark for \$600,000.
- Obtaining Skate Park Grant.

Improvement is being made in transparency and public engagement.

- Overall transparency.
- Significantly improved quantity and quality of public communication.
- The updated Strategic Planning Process engages the public earlier in the process, makes much more effective use of that input, and establishes the first Vision for the CCSD, promoting a longer-term perspective.

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Internal Strengths: What are the Cambria Community Services District's current internal strengths?

The CCSD has strong leadership and knowledgeable, competent management staff and personnel.

- We have a top-notch management team in place at all levels, providing clear direction and leadership to staff, aligned with and responsive to Board policy direction.
- Strong operational competence in all departments.
- High level of integrity at all levels, transparency, and effective communications with the community.
- Excellent, highly qualified Administrative and Management Staff.
- Good Staff.
- The Staff is motivated and competent, with strong leadership.
- Excellent, hardworking staff.
- Highly skilled and educated staff.
- Sound leadership.
- Dedicated, hard-working, and knowledgeable staff. (*Note: this comment was included twice.*)
- General manager is responsive and sympathetic to the issues of the community, district, and Fire Department. In the short time he has been in office there has been a positive change in morale and direction of the district. Issues that have been plaguing the community, district, and Fire Department for decades are being addressed with careful consideration and tact.
- Our administrative staff has been efficient and advantageous in regard to our budget, public relations and overall district operations.
- Staff.
- Decisive and strong leader. Understanding of each department's primary responsibilities.
- General Manager, Board, and Staff who work well together responsibly and transparently.
- Our Fire personnel has also reported a great improvement in morale and are expressing excitement for our direction as an agency.

The Board of Directors functions well with Staff, the community, and among themselves.

- Good BOD for the most part.
- Board of Directors works in a business-like, non-contentious manner.
- We have a well-functioning Board of Directors.
- Strong Board member relationships.
- Board of Directors are responsive and sympathetic to the issues of the community, district, and Fire Department.

Strides are being made to improve District finances.

- Solid finances in both Enterprise Funds, Water and Wastewater.
- Enterprise funds are fiscally sound.
- Financial stability.

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Standing Committees engage the citizens' help to assist staff.

- Robust advisory standing committees.
- Dedicated citizens' committees that take some of the workload off of staff and provide additional input options for residents. (*Note: this comment was included twice.*)

Improvement is seen with communication and relationships.

- Improved relationships with regulatory agencies.
- Monthly opportunities for one-on-one discussions with the GM and Fire Chief.
- Biweekly social media posts and emailed updates to better keep the community informed of District business.
- Communications.

Additional Input.

- Strategic Planning.
- Shared vision for a healthy community.
- Dedication in maintaining a safe and accessible community.
- Resiliency.
- Hard work.
- Great network and relations with consultants that can assist in obtaining goals and infrastructure improvements.
- Despite a lack of the below mentioned policy/procedures and training facility, fire personnel continue to seek out new and creative ways to maintain a high level of proficiency in the deliverance of service.

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Internal Weaknesses/Challenges: What are the Cambria Community Services District's current internal weaknesses/challenges?

Many ongoing infrastructure needs.

- Aging infrastructure, especially within the wastewater gathering system, as evidenced by high levels of inflow and infiltration during major storms, will require significant long-term investments.
- Aging infrastructure. (*Note: this comment was included twice.*)
- Funding constraints for infrastructure repair and upgrades. (*Note: this comment was included twice.*)
- The district's coastal location increases equipment and infrastructure maintenance requirements.
- Unable to raise enough funds to pay for infrastructure and adequate staffing.

General Fund revenue constraints.

- Insufficient General Fund revenue to meet the long-term facilities, park, and recreational needs.
 - Lack of enough revenue and personnel for the Facilities & Resources Department for the maintenance of the ranch on top of maintaining all the District's other assets.
 - Lack of General Fund Revenue.
 - Limited revenue streams.
 - General Fund fiscal outlook is poor – not enough revenue to meet future needs.
 - The CCSD is a smaller district and lacks some of the economies of scale available to larger entities.
 - Administrative overhead is an area that warrants a discussion and continued evaluation.
- △ Not enough resources to meet all goals.

Water Reclamation Facility and Water Supply Challenges.

- A decade after the major investment in building the Water Reclamation Facility, the District still does not have a regular operating permit.
- Need for an affordable method of brine concentrate disposal if the ZLD pilot does not prove workable for Cambria's WRF.
- Challenge finding a sustainable supplemental water source in addition to the San Simeon and Santa Rosa aquifers.
- After 2 decades of a drought-induced building moratorium, the District still lacks sufficient sustainable water supply to satisfy existing and future commitments.

Fire Department updates are needed.

- Lack of updated policies/procedures for Fire Department/District.
- Lack of Fire Department training facility.
- Fire Department facility infrastructure, upgrades are required to meet mandatory OSHA requirements that are constantly increasing.
- Fire Department personnel continue to be underpaid by a significant margin.

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Administration and Personnel.

- △ Lack of engineer on staff.
- △ Not having enough staff to take advantage of the funding opportunities for infrastructure projects that are available now and that will likely not be available in the future. (*Note: this comment was included twice.*)
 - Need for better administrative office space.
 - Office hours are too short.
 - Open positions are sometimes difficult to fill.
 - Limited personnel resources.
 - Over leveraged Facilities & Resources Department.
 - Over staffed in some areas.
 - Lack of customer service ethic.

Other Input.

- Although there is an improved Strategic Planning Process in place, the District remains somewhat hampered by a short-term focus. Resolving the major District challenges will require long-term thinking and strategic planning.
- Continued distrust by some community members.
- Dissatisfaction (lack of understanding) by lot owners on the water wait list.
- Legal challenges by past employees.
- Need to negotiate utilization of well located on the CUSD property.
- Many areas that need improvement.
- Unable to focus on most critical tasks with competing priorities and committees.
- Minimal collaboration and team-building opportunities.

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Positive External Factors: What are the external factors/trends (e.g., economic, political, technological, health, and environmental) that will/might have a positive impact on the Cambria Community Services District?

Advances in water reclamation technology may enable the District to operate the Water Reclamation Facility to enhance our water supply.

- Potential for zero liquid discharge technology may enable the District to operate the Water Reclamation Facility to enhance our water supply.
- Advances in technology for water reclamation (e.g., Zero-Liquid-Discharge brine treatment, Direct Potable Reuse) hold great promise for the future.
- New technology for water reuse.
- Direct water reuse technology.
- Availability of new technologies to address previous challenges.
- Technological advancements in water and wastewater.

Recent above average rainfall has fully recharged the aquifers, giving the District a temporary break from drought condition operations.

- Multiple years of higher-than-average rainfall to supplement the aquifers.
- Heavier rainfall in the past two years so that drought conditions have not been in effect

Grant funding opportunities may enable completion of underfunded projects.

- Potential grant funding to enable completion of underfunded projects.
- Opportunities for government funds or grants for District projects.
- Significant opportunities for grant funding
- Increased funding options for water and wastewater infrastructure from both the State of CA and federal sources.
- Federal Grant funding is becoming more readily available.
- Increased funding options for water and wastewater infrastructure from both the State of CA and federal sources.

Growing trust within the community.

- At least a small proportion of the community is very engaged in District decision making.
- More positive input from the public.
- Growing trust from most of the community based on grand efforts by District staff.
- Supportive Board Members and community.
- Maintaining relationships with community organizations.
- Staying transparent with community on CCSD current and future events (Directors newsletter).

Improving relationships with the County the Coastal Commission, and other state officials.

- Improving relationships with the County and the Coastal Commission.
- Greater opportunities to work with the County of San Luis Obispo for shared services.
- Good relationships with County Supervisor and Congressman.

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Other input:

- Continued improvements in information technology will drive increased operational efficiency and effectiveness in all departments, such as Advanced Metering Infrastructure, and Fulcrum mapping of District properties and facilities.
- Completion of the East Ranch Community Park.
- Beautiful community
- According to the National Library of medicine, the industry is trending towards BLS (*Basic Life Support*)
- Two 24-hour Paramedic staffed ambulances that are reporting stability.
- SLO CAL's tourism industry earnings (total after-tax net income for travel including wages and salary disbursements) \$865 million. This is an increase of 16.9 percent year over year as well as an increase of 6.13 percent from 2019. Tourism comprises 9.78% of SLO CAL's countywide GDP. (Tourism contributes \$62.7 million in transient occupancy tax revenue, which was 6.3 percent increase year over year. Tourism spending totaled \$22 billion in 2022. (I don't have the 2023 numbers yet; however, the assumption is an increase from the year before)
- San Luis Obispo Economy relative stability: Gross regional product: \$21.7b (increase of \$1.9b from prior year/2021) Private Sector Jobs 100.3k (increase of 607 from year prior)

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Negative External Factors: What are the external factors/trends (e.g., economic, health, technological, political, and environmental) that will/might have a negative impact on the Cambria Community Services District?

Increased frequency and severity of storms and droughts resulting from global warming.

- Climate change.
- Ever increasing frequency and severity of storms and droughts resulting from global warming creates huge challenges on our ability to reliably deliver water, maintain District facilities, and protect the community from natural disasters.
- An increase in rainfall that has led to flooding and damages.
- Multiple years of drought causing uncertainty in water supply.
- Climate change could reduce rainfall and/or increase its overall unpredictability.
- Sea level rise affecting low-lying infrastructure. (*Note: this comment was included twice.*)
- Climate change could reduce rainfall and/or increase its overall unpredictability.

Lack of adequate housing, especially for low and moderate income residents and workers.

- Not enough affordable housing.
- Trends in the housing market, driving costs higher, a large proportion of housing owned by part time out of towners, pricing many of the locals and labor supply out of the market, puts increasingly intense economic pressures on residents and creates challenges in hiring & retention in a tight labor market. This housing shortage exacerbates the challenges the District faces balancing the needs of the unhoused with the needs of the community.
- High cost of housing will continue to disadvantage Cambria as a place for working people and families to live.

Rising costs amplified by higher costs in Cambria put pressure on residents and create staffing challenges for the District and for local businesses.

- Inflation so that the cost of goods has increased.
- Inflation increasing the cost of everything needed to run the water and wastewater operations and increasing the costs of capital improvements.
- Inflation increasing the cost of everything needed to run the water and wastewater operations and increasing the costs of capital improvements.
- Overall, Cambria is more expensive than any city/town/area in San Luis Obispo. Additionally, San Luis Obispo is one of the most expensive counties in California.

Budget shortfalls at the County and State level.

- Many of the significant District challenges are affected by County funding and support for Cambria, including maintaining our roads, providing safe pedestrian pathways, and recreational opportunities.
- Reportedly the county is currently operating under a more than \$25 million budget deficit and nearly \$1 billion in unfunded pension liability.
- Reportedly \$58 billion California State deficit.
- State and County budget issues that ripple down to us.

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Coastal Commission:

- Coastal Commission biased view on Cambria.
- An ongoing skepticism from the Coastal Commission related to CCSD's programs.
- Negotiations with Coastal Commission on agreed-upon mitigation measures for the Water Reclamation Facility.

Wildfire risk.

- Ever-present risk of wildfires in the dry season compounded by limited evacuation routes.
- Fire danger and lack of evacuation routes.

Declining population.

- Declining population and graying population.
- Decreasing population.

Other input:

- Political instability and uncertainty at the national level.
- Increasing reporting requirements in all areas of CCSD operations, increasing staff's mandatory workload, and adding additional costs to the ratepayers if more staff or consultants' time is needed for reporting compliance. (*Note: this comment was included twice.*)
- Significant concern and uncertainty regarding the potential impact from offshore wind farm projects.
- Inadequate parking for businesses.
- Lack of Volunteers to help the community thrive.
- A lack of renewable energy to use for District programs.
- Environmental factors that complicate the District's ability to utilize natural resources.
- Limited access to state water.
- Significant partisan arguments over growth versus no growth, and its impacts on Cambria's water supply.
- Paramedic/EMT shortage. Reportedly, Nationwide, more than a quarter of paramedics leave their jobs every year.
- Our district does not collect a TOT (Transient Occupancy Tax) of 12.5%.
- Inability to raise rates.
- Explaining the roles and responsibilities of the several CCSD departments.
- Clear separation of duties from other government agencies; for example SLO County, Coastal Commission.

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Vision Statement: Please describe your vision of the Cambria we want future generations to inherit.

The following draft vision was drafted based on community input received up to 2/8/2024, and included for consideration in the summary of community input distributed to workshop participants on 2/14/2024.

Our Vision for Cambria CSD: *A thriving multigenerational community where all feel welcome and valued. The natural beauty that attracts us all to Cambria is preserved for generations to come. District facilities and core services are well maintained and improved such that future generations feel that "these are the good old days." Cambrians largely agree that we work together to balance the many and diverse needs of those who love Cambria - those who live here, those who work here, those who want to live here, and those who visit here.*

5 responses indicated "I think this vision statement is just about right!"

Other comments:

- In general, it could be more concise. See my version below.
- Way too long and wordy.
- Something should be added about financial stability. I do think the sample Vision created by the ad hoc committee is well stated and pretty beautiful.
- I do not think our actions support the vision of a multigenerational community where all feel welcomed. Would rethink a statement that aligns more with our actions. *District facilities and core services are well maintained and improved such that future generations feel that "these are the good old days."* This is very subjective and hard to measure success.
- I think the vision statement is mostly right. I would like to offer an additional statement that emphasizes an increase of environmental awareness, supporting programs and facilities geared toward the younger population in Cambria.

The following 4 alternatives were offered for consideration as our Vision Statement:

Cambria has a welcoming and unique small-town charm, a place where residents and visitors can enjoy all that the village and surrounding area has to offer: the beautiful coastal bluffs and beaches, forests, trails, open spaces, and abundant wildlife. The CCSD maintains the District's infrastructure, facilities, and core services in the most fiscally responsible and transparent manner to support the well-being of the community.

A thriving multigenerational community where all feel welcome and valued, with its natural beauty is preserved for generations to come. District facilities and core services well maintained and improved to meet future needs. Cambrians working together to balance the many and diverse needs of all who live here, work here, visit here and want to live here.

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The Cambria Community Services District is dedicated to preserving our picturesque coastal environment while fostering a resilient and vibrant community. We commit to innovative and responsible stewardship of our natural resources, ensuring a balance between growth and ecological sustainability. Our vision is to enhance the quality of life for all residents through exceptional public services, community collaboration, and a dedication to preserving Cambria's unique charm and cultural heritage. Together, we aspire to create a harmonious and inclusive community where every resident can flourish and future generations can thrive in the beauty of our coastal haven.

An inclusive and flourishing multigenerational community, Cambria is a place where everyone is not just welcomed but deeply valued. Our commitment extends beyond the present, aiming to preserve the natural beauty that draws us all to this unique locale for the benefit of generations to come. In our vision, district facilities and core services are not merely maintained but thoughtfully improved, creating an enduring legacy that evokes a sense of nostalgia for future generations. In a spirit of unity, Cambrians harmoniously collaborate to strike a balance among the diverse needs of all our community members. This shared commitment reflects a collective understanding that our strength lies in working together, ensuring that the essence of Cambria remains a beacon for all who cherish it.

Core Values: what refinements are needed to the existing core values, which if any should be deleted, and what additional core values should be added.

The only comment from workshop participants was:

Based on the draft Vision Statement, and considering public input on the vision, I believe we are missing a Core Value:

- **Long-Term Stewardship:** In every decision we make, we strive to leave our infrastructure, community, and environment in a better condition for future generations.