



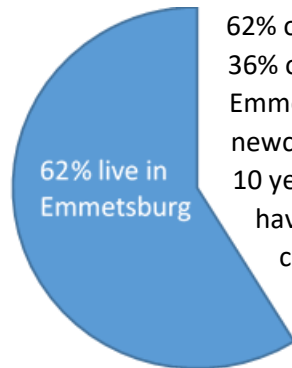
Input Summary for Strategic Planning

To fully inform the strategic planning process for the City of Emmetsburg, Emmetsburg Municipal Utilities, and the Emmetsburg Community School District, the Steering Committee took great strides to gather input from the public. Using public input to develop strategic plans is critical to creating plans that are embraced by the community being served, and are meeting their needs for the future.

Public input was gathered through a questionnaire (available online or in paper form) as well as from six small group virtual interviews. 329 people offered responses to at least one question in the questionnaire and over 30 individuals agreed to participate in the interview groups.

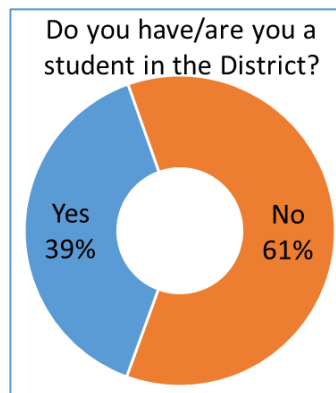
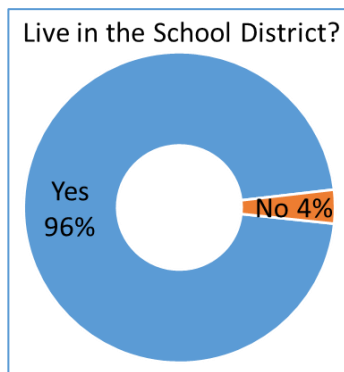
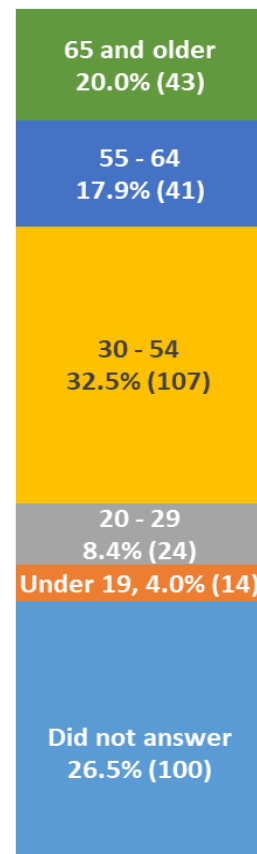
The Questionnaire

About the Respondents:



62% of Respondents indicated they live in Emmetsburg, with 36% of respondents noting they both live and work in Emmetsburg. Of those who live in Emmetsburg, 15% were newcomers (1 to 5 years), 9% have lived in Emmetsburg 6 to 10 years, 15% for 11 to 20 years, and 30% of respondents have lived in Emmetsburg over 20 years. As shown in the chart to the right, about one-third of the respondents indicated that they were in the age range of 30 to 54. Respondents were asked whether they lived in the Emmetsburg Community School District and whether they had or were a student in the school district. About two-thirds of the respondents answered the questions:

Respondent Age Ranges



Respondent Zip Codes (108 did not answer):

Zip Code:	50527	50528	50535	50536	50537	50546	50578	50581	50598	51005	51301	51342	51358
# of respondents:	3	3	2	203	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1

Themes – Assets and Strengths

Major assets or strengths that make the City of Emmetsburg unique

- Recreation & Entertainment
- Education and Healthcare
- Business, Industry and Jobs
- Community Appearance, City Infrastructure
- Culture and Character



Major assets or strengths that make the Emmetsburg Community School District unique

- The District's Facilities
- Teachers, Staff and Leadership
- Programming and Curriculum
- Small Class Sizes
- School Pride/Community Engagement

Major assets or strengths that make the Emmetsburg Municipal Utilities unique

- Reliable, high quality services
- Customer service and employees
- Affordable Rates
- Community ownership
- Support of community events, projects and/or economic development

Themes – Challenges & Needs

- Community Infrastructure (sidewalks, street repairs)
- Public/Outdoor Amenities and Entertainment (more to do outdoors, pool/splash pad, dog park, trails, events, etc.)
- Aesthetics/Appearance (clean up properties, spruce up appearance, trees)
- Economic Development (need high quality job creation, need retail, restaurants and other small businesses)
- Housing (need affordable and decent housing options)
- City leadership and services (need to be forward thinking, need better internet and more safety/code enforcement)

Themes – What is working? Activities/progress that should continue.

- Amenity or infrastructure improvements
- Existing events or activities of all types
- New businesses and the Business Park, existing business storefront/façade improvements
- Younger people getting involved, more collaboration

Envisioning the future (in 2027)

When you envision Emmetsburg in 2027 as a thriving and prosperous city, what do you see or picture in the community?

- Ample community recreation amenities and entertainment activities being used by a growing population.
- More businesses for shopping, dining and services; and jobs that support a good lifestyle.
- Affordable, decent and diverse housing options for all incomes and age groups.
- Improved or increased City services that support the community's residents and businesses.
- Attractive community appearance that makes people proud to live and work in Emmetsburg.

In 2027, the Emmetsburg Community School District is a vital part of the community, what are some specific accomplishments and achievements the School District has realized?

- School facilities have been updated and maintained to ensure an excellent learning environment and offer competitive extracurricular opportunities.
- School programming is meeting the needs of all students and offering diverse opportunities to participate; while producing graduates prepared for post-secondary education and/or the workforce.
- The district is attracting and retaining educators, administrators and staff who are working together to provide a superior learning and extracurricular experience for students of all abilities and interests.

In 2027, the Emmetsburg Municipal Utilities has helped to position the community and its customers for long term success. What will the EMU have undertaken and accomplished to ensure the community and its customers are successful?

- EMU will be continually upgrading and/or expanding infrastructure to ensure sufficient, clean, and high quality water to residents and businesses.
- EMU will have constructed a new or expanded wastewater treatment facility.
- EMU will be proactive in exploring other opportunities for shared community utilities that result in a better service or more affordable option for residents (e.g. internet, telecom, cable)
- EMU will have financially supported many community events and development projects that lead to more (or the retention of) businesses, jobs and people in the community.

*****More detailed responses and "Big Ideas" from respondents will be made available to the Planning Team*****

Small Group Interviews

Six small group virtual interviews were held on January 12 & 13, 2021. The groups were structured as follows:

- Small business owners
- Large employers
- Older residents
- Younger residents
- High school students
- School district parents

In general, the questions asked of participants were similar although targeted to the group's "category" where appropriate.

Best Things...

...About doing business in Emmetsburg:

- Small town atmosphere, support and sense of community
- Willingness of residents to shop locally first
- The resources needed to address issues are available – easy to get help

...About living in Emmetsburg:

- The community has so much to offer (e.g. trail system, golf course, wellness center, the lake, the river, the casino)
- The community atmosphere (e.g. friendly people, safe, close-knit, welcoming, Midwest values, manners, great place for families or raising kids)
- It is livable and has everything you need (e.g. schools, Iowa Lakes CC, hospital, HyVee, Fareway, other businesses)

...About attending Emmetsburg Schools:

- The diverse choices and small size offer many opportunities to be involved (sports, band, choir)
- The lifelong friendships and relationships
- The opportunity to get college credits while in high school
- The community support of school activities (whether or not they have kids there)

Challenges...

...To doing business in Emmetsburg:

- Finding employees with the right skills/interests/license/qualifications and availability (due to off-hours, childcare, health insurance needs, work-life balance expectations)
- Resistance to new ideas (city rules, codes, etc.)
- The downtown environment is such that it makes it hard to add outdoor seating (too much noise pollution downtown due to truck traffic)
- Emmetsburg needs some electricity infrastructure improvements, experience outages and brown-outs
- Finding rental or temporary housing for students and entry level employees

...To living in Emmetsburg:

- Resistance to change and an unwillingness to think regionally or take chances
- The lack of larger shopping (Target, Walmart, etc.)
- The distance to the nearest commercial airport
- The cost of housing is high

...That Emmetsburg might face over the next three to five years:

- A decreasing and aging population
- Less revenue, so things are left undone or not maintained
- Casino and other businesses closing or having reduced capacity

...That the school district might face over the next three to five years:

- Declining enrollment – decreases amount of money to school
- Keeping up with technology – broadband access
- Attracting and retaining quality teachers
- Facilities that need maintenance and expansion for the future

Ideas to Address Challenges...

...For businesses:

- Develop incentives for new businesses to locate in the downtown area
- Create programs to help refurbish older buildings that are in poor condition so they are available for business
- Offer access to capital to start a business (lower rates, grants, prize money, etc.)
- More/continued support for existing businesses (new competitors get incentives that existing businesses aren't eligible for)
- Build the local support for local businesses. Develop a strong cooperative web presence for our businesses
- Provide new/existing businesses with information on all the available loan or assistance program opportunities
- Attract more people, recruit more working age adults (with students/families) to the community

...To living in Emmetsburg:

- Promote the community to attract new people
- Organize events to get people downtown
- Improve the appearance of the downtown
- Do some research on community beautification and why people choose to work in Emmetsburg, but live elsewhere
- Incorporate more community signage and improve the general appearance of the community
- Collaborate with the community college to fully leverage assets to make Emmetsburg a stronger community
- Expand the trail system
- Need an airport – someday to get from here to a major hub
- Support affordable housing development
- Create sports and recreation opportunities for adults (leagues, tournaments) that encourage engagement and interaction
- Increase the number of jobs
- Build an outdoor swimming pool

- Increase volunteerism
- Develop more family activity places/spaces/events

...To improve the School:

- Help the band to get good quality instruments
- Allow kids to get an earlier start to using instruments
- Make more opportunities for the band to perform (radio, for younger kids, at nursing homes)

Is there something you wish the school provided that it doesn't now?

- Different language classes beyond just Spanish – like French or sign language
- Career exploration and financial literacy training in high school
- Peer tutoring – or group tutoring

Communication and Information Services, Sources and Needs

Broadband/Internet Service

- Some businesses have two service providers (or a backup) to ensure consistent connection
- Would like to see a community-owned service, so the money stays in Emmetsburg
- Internet speeds vary, some experience lags and interruptions (not reliable). If many people are using it, it can be slow

How do you learn about what is happening in the community?

- Word of mouth – on the street, employees, coffee shops
- City's website (much easier to navigate now)
- Facebook (different business FB pages. City FB page)
- Get regular communication from Chamber (newsletter)
- The roll-up on local television station.
- "Call Kim, call Gretchen"
- Newspaper and radio
- Digital signage
- School

What information would you like to have, but don't?

- A business-focused City newsletter
- Volunteer opportunities
- Everything that is going on (e.g. nature center events, 4-H)

What would help keep you informed?

- One central place to go to learn about all of the events that are going on in Emmetsburg. One Emmetsburg Events Facebook page
- Various methods are best given diverse age groups
- Send letters with important information in separate mailings (people are more likely to open something that comes separately rather than being included in an EMU bill)
- Use the Chamber of Commerce rolling news

Students would like to know:

- The skills you need after high school (bills, taxes, writing a check, car loans)
- Having an understanding of all the activities you can participate in at school – when they will be held, etc. (Idea: create a big board somewhere – things you can sign up for and what is going on)

Parents would like to know:

- School communicates “excessively” well. Like to get communications when they need “my help”

Knowledge about the jobs and career opportunities available in Emmetsburg

Students:

- Think first about jobs for them now, not about the future (restrictions on jobs for those under 16)
- Know about careers or opportunities that family members or friends have

Parents:

- Also mention job restrictions for those under 16
- Some are limited in knowing what is available in Emmetsburg (but as they think about it, they realize that there are many different opportunities/positions within a large employer)
- There are many jobs that are great careers that are just as good as the preconceived notion of “professional”

How students learn about job and career opportunities

Currently:

- Family
- The newspaper
- Classes and/or teachers
- TRIO Talent Search Program (through Iowa Lakes)

What would help you know more?

- A class on interviewing, etc. (not just a day, but a semester)
- Job shadow opportunities for younger high school students
- A wider variety of classes to help find areas of interest

Why would you (or your kids) live in Emmetsburg as an adult?

- Would want more diversity
- Family
- Job stability and career opportunities

*****More detailed responses from the small group interviews will be made available to the Planning Team*****