

## WBR ARTICLE

### Community works on economic development plan

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GILLETTE — The Campbell County Economic Development Corporation served up dinner and ideas at Thursday night's economic development planning session. About 100 members of the community, ranging from the mayor to local real estate agents, attended the meeting to launch CCEDC's Power Initiative. The five-year \$2 million Power project will create a plan to grow, innovate and sustain the community.

During the meeting, attendees identified strengths and weaknesses in the community as well as areas of opportunity that need to be developed. Collecting ideas from small groups sessions throughout the evening, CCEDC board and staff members said they were pleased about the ideas gathered.

"We want to turn it [brainstorming sessions] into something actionable and achievable by our community," said Jaime Tarver, CCEDC board member. "We do not want this economic development plan to be developed in a vacuum."

CCEDC Executive Director Philippe Chino said he plans to create a steering committee that will work from the ideas generated during Thursday night's planning session. The committee will be responsible for gathering community input and putting a plan in place to work toward enhancing the community from bringing in more retail business to strengthening city infrastructure.

"A large group discussion where we can see repeated issues that come up – those are likely the issues we're going to need to work on in our five-year plan," Tarver said.

Mayor Duane Evenson said he was pleased to see a number of people attend the event and share ideas openly.

"Any time an organization, a community can come together on a grassroots effort to try to build a plan people can buy into – it's a way communities should be built," Evenson said. "I hope the steering committee happens and that they would come up with a vision and implement that plan."

Attendees were welcome to volunteer for the steering committee that Chino said he hopes to have pulled together soon, with its first meeting scheduled in late October.