

# Other issues

Community leaders agreed the high cost of **healthcare** was a major issue.

*"The cost of healthcare and the cost of prescription drugs are very high."*

They also pointed to a chronic shortage of skilled medical professionals and emphasized the need to maintain good quality service.

*"Right now, Sheridan cannot afford the quality physicians that Billings has."*

*"We need more nurses and certified nurses assistants."*

*"We are at a critical point now regarding the hospital. We need to maintain good quality medical services."*

Community leaders also agreed there were very good doctors working in the local health care system. Respondents emphasized the high quality of emergency and senior citizens' center services.

*"There is an excellent senior citizen center and adequate emergency services, although they might not have enough people."*

According to leaders, the improvement of healthcare depended on the ability of the community to address the needs of people without insurance.

*"We need a place for people who don't have insurance."*



## In response

The Community Needs Assessment identified some real challenges for the Sheridan Area communities. Through our dialogue, fifteen issues were discussed affecting the immediate future. Our goal is to build long-term, sustainable relationships with the community by being part of a coalition of local problem solvers. Evaluating and sharing the results of our survey is the first step to identifying which issues can be addressed through the combined resources of the community, the local government and neighboring businesses.

KEC is pleased with the response to this effort and hopes the results will help drive further meaningful discussion. The result of our assessment will be used to help find the best way for KEC to play its role as a good citizen within the community, with a focus on sustainable development.



# 2005

## Sheridan Community Needs Assessment



Kennecott Energy Company (KEC) has been a part of the Sheridan community for more than eleven years. As a member of this community, KEC strives to ensure continued growth - both economically and socially. The company also works to protect the environment and make efficient use of natural resources. We are committed to measuring and improving the effect KEC has on people's quality of life, now and in the future.

Because we are a mining company, our location is determined, in great part, by nature. KEC employs more than 1,700 people in three states. We are one of the nation's largest producers of low sulfur, high Btu "compliance" coal. KEC is affiliated with the Rio Tinto group of companies - leaders in finding, extracting and processing mineral resources.

In an effort to better understand the community's needs and to improve our many community efforts, KEC conducted a Community Needs Assessment in Sheridan. This process involved interviewing community leaders to discuss the most significant challenges they saw for the region. We then sent KEC employees out into the community to interview a broad cross section of our neighbors.

We are pleased to share the results of our Community Needs Assessment in this report. We are also grateful to the community who helped us gather people's opinions and share their insights. Our commitment to sustainable development means we are committed to the long-term health of the communities where we operate and where our employees live. We look forward to working together to identify and support projects that will be of lasting benefit to the community.



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# What **community leaders** had to say...

## Who was involved?

The Sheridan Community Needs Assessment involved a cross section of our neighbors, including representatives of local business, charitable groups, environmental and community associations, financial and cultural organizations, government officials, health professionals, and educators.

**"Meth leads to violent crime and is costly for everyone."**

**"Prices of houses and land are high."**

## How was it conducted?

Nineteen community leaders were asked to participate in an interview conducted by managers and employees of KEC. The interviews explored various issues facing the community ranging from "drug and alcohol abuse" to "quality of life."

Leaders were asked to discuss 15 economic, environmental and social issues as strengths or weaknesses in Sheridan. The interviewees rated each issue based on the nature of the challenge they present to the community. They were then asked to comment on each issue and suggest possible solutions.

**Drug and alcohol abuse** was considered the most critical problem facing the Sheridan community. Economic and community development issues - including **attracting new businesses** and **housing** - were the next most important.

Community leaders considered **attracting new businesses** to Sheridan the most important economic challenge facing the area.

Leaders said Sheridan had not made a coordinated effort to attract new businesses. Some factors considered advantageous to attracting businesses to Sheridan were: an attractive lifestyle, variety of recreational activities and overall low taxes.

Factors considered obstacles to attracting new businesses were: high prices of housing and land, and unfriendly building codes.

*"Limited housing and strict building codes are not user friendly for businesses."*

*"Zoning is not directed at industry."*

*"Houses and land prices are high."*



Community leaders cited **education** as a major issue for Sheridan. Although a partnership between the college and community existed, they recommended the relationship be improved. Leaders hoped a relationship like this would increase the number of apprenticeships, internships and entrepreneurial training available in Sheridan.

Leaders also emphasized the need for **training** in high schools and **retraining of unskilled workers**.

*"We need to focus on high school age children and teach them how to be adults."*

*"Retraining is a problem - 40 percent of Sheridan workers are unskilled."*

Community leaders agreed the **need for professionals and educated people** was a major issue for Sheridan. The problem appeared to be twofold. While there was a need for better educated people, there were also many employees who were educated but were underemployed.

*"We need nurses and teachers, and the service industries need reliable community members."*

*"The challenge is attracting a 'middle-educated' group of people - more money needs to be available to raise the pay scale."*

According to most community leaders, **infrastructure** was another issue that needed attention. Lack of good financial planning had transformed the current infrastructure into a hurdle for economic development. Leaders emphasized a more proactive approach was needed to tackle the downfall in infrastructure.

*"The current infrastructure is a problem. It is not supportive of economic development."*

*"There is no money put aside to upgrade the water and sewer systems."*

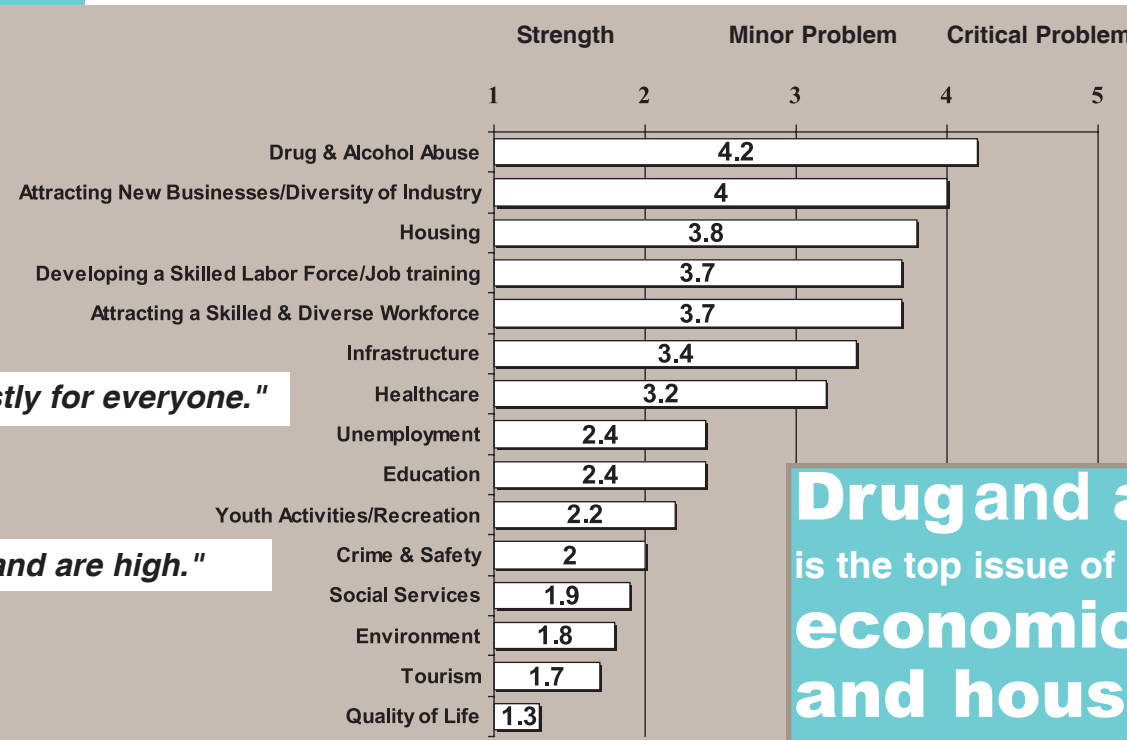
*"We need to have transportation improved. We are currently making progress on improving our streets."*

Community leaders particularly emphasized water issues and lack of adequate telecommunication services as important areas where improvement efforts needed to be focused.

*"Expanding the existing infrastructure for more water pressure hurts the development."*

*"Sewer and water facilities need expanding."*

*"Cell service is bad due to hills and valleys. Five miles out of town there is no service. We need more towers."*



**Drug and alcohol abuse** is the top issue of concern, followed by **economic development, and housing.**

Community leaders agreed Sheridan needed to address **drug and alcohol abuse** throughout the community.

*"Alcohol is the main abuse problem."*

*"Wyoming has a culture of acceptance for alcohol."*

Many community leaders were also concerned with the growing use of methamphetamines. They observed that abuse of such drugs increased crime in the community. More parental involvement was recommended as a potential solution.

*"Meth is a real problem in Sheridan; it's scary."*

*"Meth leads to violent crime and is costly for everyone."*

Leaders pointed out the community's youth were most affected by the issue. They recommended involving young people in **healthier activities**.

*"We need to encourage more use of the YMCA and college and activities that occupy our young."*

*"We need to give kids something else to do."*

Some community leaders pointed out that **preventive education** could be an effective approach to solving the problem of alcohol and drug abuse in the community. One recommendation was to start **community education initiatives** through awareness campaigns.

Most community leaders had a number of ideas on how to attract new businesses. Recommendations ranged from pursuing partnerships that do not detract from the area's quality of life throughout the community to building on existing industries instead of fighting them.

*"I would like to see businesses that would not detract from the quality of life we already have, for example, a prison is not an attractive industry."*

*"Sheridan needs to work with the cards it's dealt and work with industries like the methane gas growth instead of fighting it."*

Other recommendations touched on increasing base salaries and actively pursuing specific industries to open business in the area.

**Lack of affordable housing** in Sheridan was also an important issue. According to leaders, there was a discrepancy in wages and housing costs, especially in terms of starter homes.

*"We need affordable housing and better wages to attract these people."*

*"We need more low income and middle income housing."*

*"There is a lack of single dwelling home ownership."*

Community leaders also cited the **lack of housing maintenance** as an important issue to be resolved.