

Longest Table Executive Summary

550 Statesville residents from all walks of life came together at one common table to build new relationships. The family style meal created new and positive interactions in the community, which was the main goal behind the Longest Table event. During the event, we also asked questions to focus the conversations on sharing individual perceptions of the strengths and challenges of our community. We have summarized a few of the most common themes below, as well as we have attached the full list of responses from the event participants.

Statesville is centrally located and growing quickly but maintains an easy going small town feel. We have a vibrant and beautiful downtown. The city, especially the south side area, can be unified further through tearing down or renovating unused buildings. In particular, participants raised a need for a cultural arts center and more activity spaces for teens and young adults.

We have a good variety of restaurants and shopping options for a town of our size, but developing additional retail and restaurant options was cited often as a continuing need, particularly in the area surrounding the mall.

We have strong institutions working to support our communities in education and health. We maintain a high quality of life because of them. Providing the resources needed to maintain that strength as the county grows is an ongoing challenge. Participants identified a need for government to provide incentives to encourage small business development and foster growth through reviewing rules and regulations that hamper development. In particular, the suggested goal would be attracting higher paying jobs targeted at young adults.

Statesville residents work together with a strong sense of community. Our diversity and compassion, as well as our friendliness, were often mentioned as strengths. Keeping all generations in mind, food options, safety, transportation, additional school support, crime, and basic human needs can be addressed by government with speed.

We can't measure or quantify the success of all the new relationships in the community. The atmosphere of love and acceptance this event created helped to form new friendships that are a part of the long-term solutions within our community. For example:

Two individuals who met at the longest table, saw one another at the grocery store the next week and the young man was able to help the almost shut-in, elderly individual to load her groceries into her car. While helping her, the young man reconnected with her by speaking with her. That may have been her only human interaction for the week.

A gentleman sitting on a bench was suddenly joined by another who just wanted to reconnect and say hello after meeting at the Longest Table.

The biggest lesson learned from the day was that you never know how one little action, smile, hello, or conversation can impact the entire life of another person. Thank you all for participating and we plan to continue to look for opportunities to take the spirit of the Longest Table and spark conversations across our community.