

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Key Issues in Community Development

- Increase Entertainment (Page 2)
- Increase Importance on Small Town Businesses (Page 3)

Countywide Goals

- Enhance all recreation and entertainment areas in order to retain the County's youth.
- Ensure that the ability to keep community centers and Main Street businesses open, remain a focal point of all communities within Nobles County.

Introduction

The communities that reside within Nobles County provide a lot more than just a place to live for most citizens. Communities bring many families together and provide all who live there with a place to eat, work, shop, and attend worship services. Communities within Nobles County, however, should be more than that. Nobles County should explore all possible avenues in order to find funding for building community projects that will provide some form of entertainment for its residents.

The sustainability of the area depends on the ability to provide people with a reason for wanting to live within Nobles County. One of the primary goals of CBP is to “promote cooperation among communities to work towards the most efficient, planned, and cost effective delivery of government services by coordinating planning to ensure compatibility of one community's development with development of neighboring communities.” While meeting all of the basic requirements of human and overall city needs is an appropriate goal to strive for, County residents must ask themselves if it is really enough. Minnesota residents, just like every resident of the country, require some form of excitement in their lives. The County cannot continue to question why the younger generation continues to leave the area if it cannot provide reasons for them to stay.

Issues Summary

Throughout the various public meetings, cooperation and unity were major issues for community development. Many in the County feel that working together as a community in order to get things accomplished will certainly benefit all involved but it is not to be looked at as the one answer to all problems. There also needs to be a collaborative effort to sustain entertainment resources, which could include partnerships such as City and County, City and City, as well as City and Township coordination.

The rural areas should not be overlooked in these amenity improvements as cooperation and coordination of all involved is extremely important. The relationship with Worthington and the surrounding communities as well as the outlying areas needs to be improved wherever possible. A negative overall perception of the County by its own residents will seriously limit all attempts

at cooperation. In order to help limit the out-migration of young people, rehabilitation funds should be accessed for residential and commercial properties, especially those that can either provide adequate housing that young adults are shopping for or provide entertainment opportunities that are sought by most all citizens within the County.

Community Development Strengths

Many throughout the County believe that the positive attitudes of the diverse group of people making up Nobles County is one of the main foundations to build on in the community development arena. The area has attractive communities that provide a low cost of living and the County should make a serious effort to promote amenities that make these communities attractive and, wherever possible, expand on them.

Some cities have taken large strides to be proactive and innovative. Examples include keeping important facilities open such as swimming pools and fire halls. Keeping areas open for youth and making sure the County's parks have received required maintenance is vital in ensuring the sustainability of small communities. In addition, providing day care facilities and various amenities such as cultural events, athletic activities, and entertainment sources are all-important in terms of community development.

Community Development Weaknesses

The largest concerns are raised due to the fact that the area is seriously lacking in the area of youth programs. The costs of these programs are deemed to be too high for the area residents, but at the same time, they are deemed essential. There are various indications that the area is lacking in terms of entertainment type developments.

The issue of water quality in the County's lakes was mentioned at several of the community meetings. As previously mentioned, many residents continued to voice their opinions in that something must be done to preserve and protect the water supply.

The Future of Community Development

In order to reach and maintain a high quality of life within Nobles County, not only will environmental and employment concerns need to be addressed, but entertainment opportunities should continue to be provided to the County's youth. The young people in the area will need good job and entertainment opportunities if they are to be expected to remain in the area. Youth programming in smaller communities should be deemed just as necessary as in larger communities. If required, smaller cities could consolidate and spread the funding out to ensure all communities can offer recreational opportunities for the County's youth. Community education should be incorporated wherever possible.

As mentioned earlier, stronger councils and boards that are active in seeking community development initiatives will be instrumental in forming bonds between the public and government and in getting new programs funded and under way.

Sustainable Community Development

Although economic development has been discussed in the previous Section, it has a place in community development as well. For example, the reuse and refurbishment of older existing buildings is an example of sustainable community development. This type of community development not only increases the worth of the building itself and allows it to be used for a certain purpose, but it also greatly benefits the local economy. Area communities should continue to maintain attractive resources such as old fire halls, while swimming pools and city parks provide a very attractive recreation for younger and older persons alike. Many bed-and-breakfasts, for example, are located in older large single-family homes that have been renovated to provide a place for lodging.

Economic Expansion

Although it may be hard for communities in Nobles County (especially the smaller ones) to attract new businesses, the County does already host a number of fruitful enterprises. Instead of offering free land and/or tax breaks to new business, the ones already doing business in Nobles County should be supported in order to help guarantee their retention and possible expansion.

Local governments should continue to work with planning agencies and area businesses in order to remove some of the obstacles that may be slowing growth of these businesses. For example, this Nobles County Community Based Plan has been created largely on the part of public input, which may positively affect local business. The input has addressed water needs, transportation requirements and agricultural concerns. Continuing this open communication between the area businesses and local government allows for all businesses to expand with an atmosphere of common goals.

Workforce Development

As Nobles County moves further into the new millennium, its workforce will have to become higher skilled. In the present day, this training centers mainly on operating computers in the workplace. The many computer applications range from the more complicated programming positions to the office duties of setting up a network. Plus, factories are continuing to require more workers that know how to use computers to perform complicated tasks, which can include anything from cutting and punching holes in metal to running a computerized lathe. The ability to understand and operate computers is becoming increasing more important.

Important considerations arise as to who is going to provide and pay for this training and for which jobs should workers train for. Since there are not a large number of high tech positions currently operating within Nobles County, computer education would have to focus on enabling workers to advance within those businesses already operating in the County. In addition, training should be focused on regional positions. Training that is not implemented this way will only benefit the workforce if they leave Nobles County.

Computer training could take place in area schools during evening hours. They should be aimed at providing skills for the workforce to get jobs that existing Nobles County businesses are looking for or that the County is actively pursuing.

GOAL 1: Enhance all recreation and entertainment areas in order to retain the County's youth.

(related goals/objectives: Demographics 1)

Objective: To stabilize the population rates and keep the idea of growth and expansion as a viable option for Nobles County.

Policies

1. To understand that in terms of labor force and overall population, youth represents the future of Nobles County.
2. Identify adequate funding to provide additional entertainment opportunities with the County.

Strategies

1. Conduct surveys with young adults within the County in order to ascertain why those that remain in Nobles County remain, and to find out why those that leave the County, leave.
2. Consider having run down and dilapidated buildings either refurbished or demolished in an attempt at keeping the communities attractive and appealing to young adults wanting to start families.

GOAL 2: Ensure that the ability to keep community centers and Main Street businesses open, remain a focal point of all communities within Nobles County.

(related goals/objectives: Residential 2)

Objective: Support and encourage growth in small communities, as the role they play is a vital asset to the future of Nobles County.

Policies

1. Further the development of small business owners and farmers through advanced training and classes so as to achieve their utmost potential.
2. Support all forms of cooperation between the various levels of local government: Watersheds, School Boards, Townships, Cities, and the County.
3. Recognize rural areas in community development, as these residents will be burdened by the costs and receive benefit from the creation of any new such projects.

Strategies

1. Encourage businesses and farmers to use all available technology to enhance their interests.
2. Encourage local shopping and community pride.