

Visioning

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- When your community does not have agreement on such issues as growth and change.
- When there is lack of hope and the future looks dim.

Visioning is a useful tool in community planning; it can assist a community in identifying important and current issues, understanding of its strengths, weaknesses and challenges of meeting community needs and pulling community residents together in developing a shared vision based on community values.

Who should determine a community's future, other than its residents? Should it be a consultant hired by the local government to develop a plan, a state or federal agency making decisions about highway bypass or a private developer constructing a residential subdivision or a strip mall? All these implications could have a large impact on a community's future. A small group of individuals in the community may be making decisions about the community's future without input from a broad range of residents.

Community residents need to participate in and actively envision the future of their community; otherwise, it will be determined for them.

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and thorough input from the community as possible. Participation makes for a better vision and comprehensive plan: the more people are involved, the more input; the more input, the better quality and quantity of information. With better information better decisions can be made to improve the quality of life.

The Listening Sessions lasted approximately one hour and included the following groups:

- Senior Diner members
- Bennet Elementary School staff
- Business owners
- Youth
- Parents with young children

Each session targeted one specific demographic segment of the community and two listening sessions were held as open public meetings allowing anyone living in Bennet to participate in the process. The participants were asked three questions:

1. What are the major problems and challenges in your community?
2. What are the major strengths and assets of your community?
3. What is your vision of Bennet 10 to 15 years from now?

Results of the Listening Sessions

The listening sessions were quite successful and attended by 106 community residents. The answers were recorded by facilitators and analyzed and compiled into a report. Through the report, the major themes were identified:

Major Issues & Concerns:

- Lack of appropriate infrastructure (water quality issues)
- Fear of growth
- Business district development
- Recreation opportunities for all ages

Major assets of Bennet:

- Small town atmosphere
- Great school system
- Rural environment
- Proximity to Lincoln

Vision of Bennet:

- Preserve small town atmosphere
- Improved infrastructure to accommodate commercial & residential growth



Listening Session



Second Visioning Town Hall Meeting

- Controlled growth
 - Business development
 - Increased opportunities for recreation
- The whole report is available at the UNL Extension at Lancaster County Web site at http://lanaster.unl.edu/community/community_Bennet.shtml

Second Town Hall Meeting

A second Visioning Town Hall Meeting was held in February. The results of the listening sessions were presented back to the community. Residents then divided into small groups and discussed the results of the listening sessions.

Afterwards, a Citizen Advisory Committee was formed. The primary role of this committee is monitoring the vision-

ing process, assisting the Village Board and Planning Commission in establishing communication linkages between the citizens and local officials, ensuring incorporation of vision statement and the results of the listening sessions into the comprehensive plan.

Next Steps

Information from the entire community visioning process is being used by local officials and the Citizen Advisory Committee to develop a vision statement. Hanna-Keelan Associates is developing a comprehensive plan for Bennet based on the community input. The comprehensive plan is expected to be finished by the end of April.

Extension Can Facilitate Community Input

In addition to helping facilitate a community visioning process for the Village of Bennet, Extension Educator Yelena Mitrofanova has also worked with the Villages of Roca and Firth to conduct community attitudes surveys. The Firth Village Board has decided to undertake a visioning process.

UNL Extension can be a resource for communities in southeast Nebraska to help gather community input and facilitate citizen participation in the process. For more information contact Yelena at 441-7180.

At Nebraska, this Lincoln Student Works Smarter, not Harder

Alexis Wismer, a junior industrial and management systems engineering major at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and a Lincoln Christian alum, knows there isn't one solution for every problem. In her major, she uses her critical thinking skills to come up with new ways to make work safer, easier and more rewarding. This year, she is redesigning laparoscopic surgical Center and observed surgery, had us work on their tools. It's a research - I have gotten to know



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Wondering how to get that pot hole fixed? Tired of the neighbors barking dog? Acting with Citizens to Improve our Neighborhoods (ACTION), a new interactive system on the City of Lincoln's Web site is now available to answer your non-emergency inquiries.



The ACTION system includes a list of about 70 topics, covering issues in all departments. Dangerous sidewalks, special event permits, electrical outages, junk cars and illegal dumping are just a few of the issues covered.

To get answers to your concerns, visit <http://www.lincoln.ne.gov/asp/action/default.asp>