

COMMUNITY BUILDERS

A Process for Revitalizing
Rural America

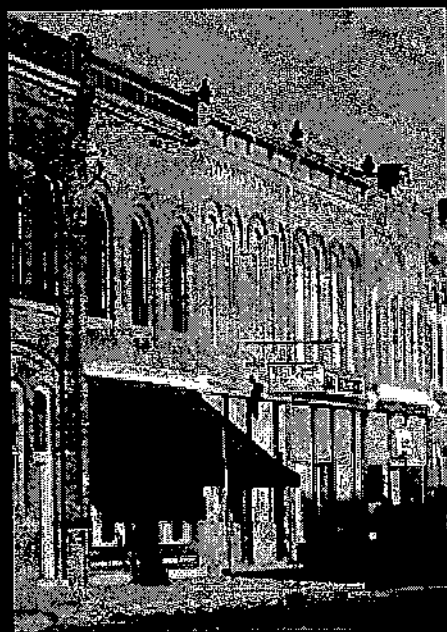
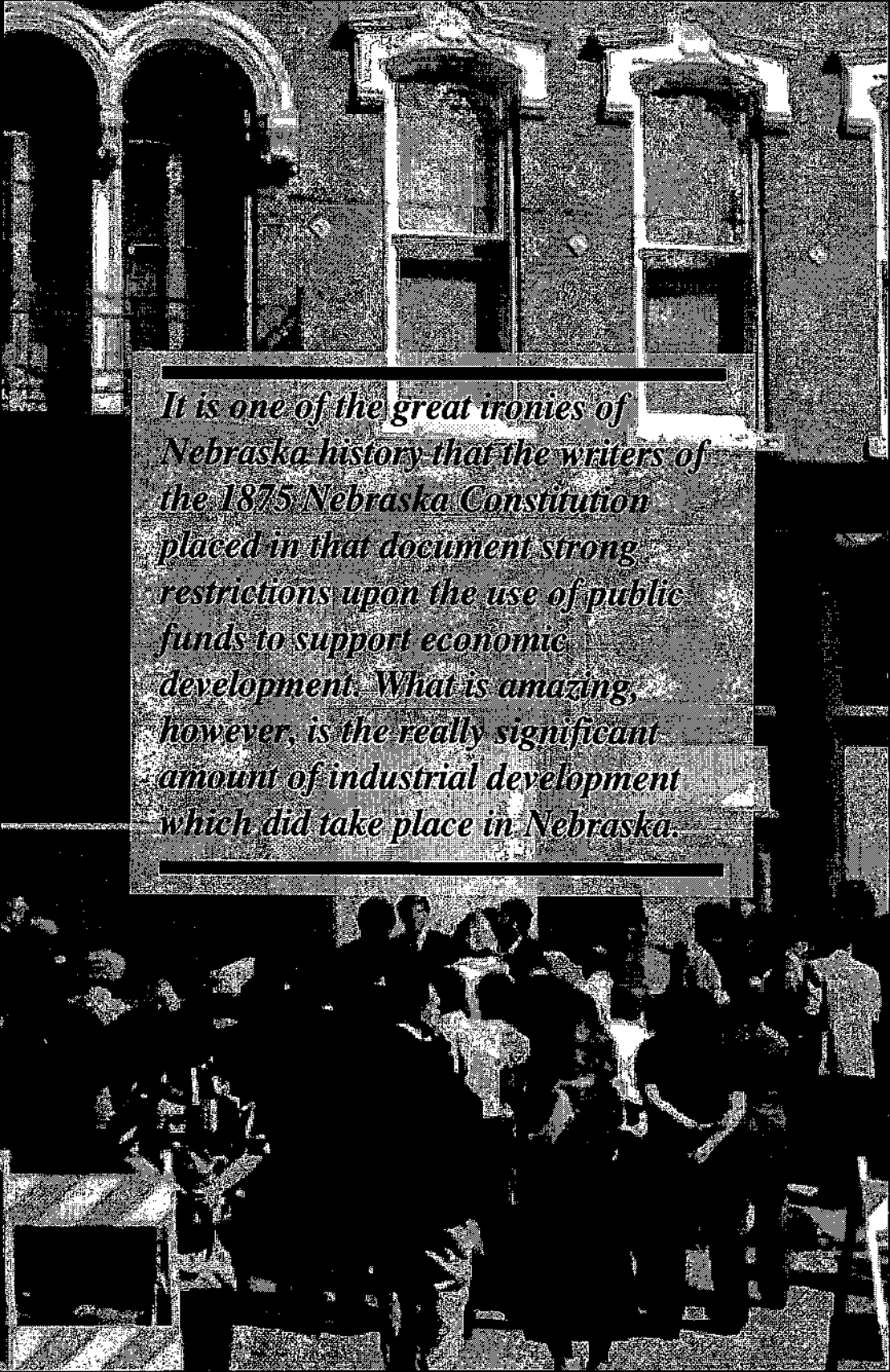


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It is one of the great ironies of Nebraska history that the writers of the 1875 Nebraska Constitution placed in that document strong restrictions upon the use of public funds to support economic development. What is amazing, however, is the really significant amount of industrial development which did take place in Nebraska.



Community Builders

By

Robert N. Manley

It is not surprising that history influences the way we think and act. After all, what we know from the past is often the only guide we have for deciding how we should act in the present and in the future.

There is nothing wrong with using history in this way. However, we need to be sure that the history we act upon is accurate. Since the beginning of recorded time, leaders have intentionally invented histories that justify their actions and policies.

Sometimes the misuse of history is more or less unintentional and comes about when people accept the version of the past which is handed down to them without question. That has been, I believe, the case in Nebraska.

When Nebraska began as a state in 1867, much of the land which lay west of the Missouri River was considered a desert incapable of supporting an agriculturally-based society. Pioneer Nebraskans didn't like having their state referred to as a sterile desert and set out to conquer the desert and to make it "blossom as the rose."

George Miller, editor of the influential *Omaha Herald*, set the tone of the campaign in the 1870s when he declared that "Nebraska is agricultural or it is nothing!" Thanks to advances in scientific agriculture and to a series of enthusiastic promotional campaigns, farmers moved into the desert and began breaking the sod and planting crops. During

the last half of the nineteenth century and most of the twentieth, much of Nebraska's political and economic capital has been invested in building up


production agriculture.

Where did this emphasis upon agricultural development leave the towns which were springing up in Nebraska? It is obvious that pioneer town builders understood that their towns depended upon the farmers. Towns provided markets and shipping points for farm products, and stores stocked the goods needed by farmers and their families.

The operators of Nebraska's railroads supported the creation of an agriculturally-based economy. They believed that their lines would be profitable only if boxcars carried farm produce east and returned filled with eastern manufactured goods.

Well into the twentieth century, railroad rate structures encouraged agricultural production and curtailed local industrial development.

It didn't take long for Nebraskans — both farmers and town merchants — to realize the railroads were more interested in profits than in the economic development of their state. It is one of the great ironies of Nebraska history that the writers of the 1875 Nebraska Constitution (which remains the state's fundamental law) placed in that document strong restrictions upon the use of public funds to support economic development. Of course,



It is easy to understand why town residents become discouraged if they believe the future of their town is tied to agriculture.

the writers had in mind placing limits upon the ability of railroads to secure bond issues from precincts, towns and counties to help pay construction costs.

However, the courts ruled that the constitutional restriction applied to *all* industrial and economic development bond issues, not just to railroad bonds. As a result, persons who wanted to encourage manufacturing in Nebraska were unable to secure public financial support. That constitutional limitation remained in force until the 1980s. What is amazing, however, is the really significant amount of industrial development which did take place in Nebraska.

Call it luck or call it stubbornness, local entrepreneurs started businesses and opened factories. Successful industries were established, but these accomplishments were frequently overshadowed by the enduring conviction that "Nebraska is agricultural or it is nothing!"

For the 30 years I have been working with Nebraska communities, I have repeatedly run into the same two problems. First, the belief that towns prosper only when agriculture prospers. And second, the conviction that most towns don't have an economic future because nothing of importance, in terms of economic development or otherwise, ever happened in the towns.

It is easy to understand why town resi-

dents become discouraged if they believe that the future of their town is tied to agriculture. They watch as, year after year, the farm population de-

clines. They conclude that with fewer farm families on the land their town has, at best, an uncertain future. But, in my opinion, history offers an alternative view.

In the first place, we must understand that not every pioneer town in Nebraska "boomed." Most towns were built by the railroads in accord with their needs. Many railroad towns never did prosper for the simple fact that too many towns were built. So it is not surprising that as farm population dwindled and branch railroad lines shut down, many towns died. These deaths were inevitable.

That is the downside of Nebraska's community history. But there is an upbeat side, too, which is often overlooked. In scores of communities, men and women built flourishing businesses. They built for their towns' futures.

When I was asked by the Nebraska Department of Economic Development to devise a program which would help Nebraska towns move into the future, I started with the conviction that community residents must understand that—while agriculture is and will remain an important part of Nebraska's economy—it no longer holds life and death power over a town's economy.

Technology—which comes with the Information Age—promises to open new opportunities to community businesses. Nebraska is no longer

“that long, hot, flat, dry place between where I am and where I want to go.” Technology now ties Nebraska to markets around the world.

That opportunity will not be seized, however, unless townspeople understand that there are men and women in their town who possess the skills necessary to tap into this new economy. And here is the second thing Nebraskans must understand: That, in the past, successful entrepreneurs operated in their towns. In every generation there have been men and women in their town who have had ideas, which, when put into practice, have created businesses and jobs for the local economy.

Community Builders, then, encourages town residents to free themselves from a pessimistic, fatalistic view of the past. The truth is, towns have always been effective business incubators. There are men and women in Nebraska's towns, right now, who have ideas that can be turned into successful businesses. We who want to build communities of the future must encourage those persons who have dreams and visions.

Understanding the positive past. Encouraging men and women to implement their ideas. These are two blocks in the founda-



tion of community economic development. There is a third block, however, and it is a vital one—community cooperation.

Once again the past shows the way, for in Nebraska's pioneer days it was not at all uncommon for merchants in established towns to start branch businesses or new businesses in the towns which sprang up along the rails. A strong case can be made for the principle that towns grew as they gave. In pioneer days "growing by giving" was a key to economic growth. Then came decades of hard times and business contraction, and towns became competitors not cooperators.

Community Builders will reconnect towns in a region. Community Builders will encourage people to discover what neighboring towns are doing; to think about how capacities in their town can be utilized to create jobs; how men and women with business-creating ideas can be encouraged. Community Builders can put an end to antiquated and destructive rivalries.

Community Builders is based upon four principles:

1. Nebraskans must understand that there are business opportunities in their towns today.
2. Town residents must know the history of their towns. This knowledge will help residents build a positive vision of the future.
3. Town residents must discover what is

going on, in business and economic terms, in their towns and in neighboring towns.

4. Men and women who want to start businesses must be encouraged and supported.

Inscribed on the wall of the rotunda of the State Capitol in Lincoln is this phrase: "A

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"A community like an
individual has a work
to do."*

community like an individual has a work to do." That "work" includes the creation of jobs and the establishment of a viable local economy. Commu-

nity Builders is designed to help townspeople get on with this important work.

Robert N. Manley

Towns finding innovative ways to support economic development

Lincoln Star, April 4, 1995

ELWOOD (AP) - By joining forces, towns can launch economic development projects they couldn't afford on their own, an official of the Nebraska Department of Economic Development says.

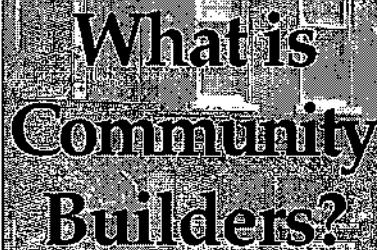
Gordon Ipson, director of DED's Nebraska Development Academy, is heading a program that helps communities do job creation, business development and generate funds.

Community Builders aims to provide citizens with the skills and information needed to support economic development activities in their communities, and to broaden citizen participation in those local activities. The economic links are being forged in a Commu-

nity Builders project involving representatives of 15 towns and villages in six south-central Nebraska counties.

People from Furnas, Gosper, Phelps, Harlan, Franklin and Kearney counties have been working with Community Builders for two years. The process is guided by representatives of the DED and KN Energy.

Ipson said three to five volunteers from each community are selected to become a community team. "It is up to the local people to do this," Ipson said. "We let them know they can do it, and then we introduce them to the resources that will help them to do it."



What is Community Builders?

In 1992, Dr. Robert Manley, Sr., talking with Steve Buttriss (then director of the Nebraska Department of Economic Development), made a

convincing argument that the key to economic success in rural communities was tied directly to investment in rural economic leadership.

His point was based on more than 20 years of research on how communities function. In that time, Dr. Manley concluded that there were really two very different kinds of "leaders" in communities, and both types were essential if a community was ever expected to prosper and grow.

The first kind of leader is what most people think of when asked who is a community "leader." They include the mayor, city council members, school board members, etc. They are essentially "conservators" of resources. They have an obligation to their constituencies to use public resources wisely and prudently. They are not, nor should they be, risk takers.

The second kind of leader is what Dr. Manley calls a "community builder." These people are typically business owners, concerned citizens and activists.

Frequently, they are not appreciated during their tenure or lifetimes. But, they are definitely risk takers and are more concerned about getting something done than pleasing a constituency. In fact, they may not have a constituency.

If asked, they probably would not classify themselves as "leaders," but they are essential to building a viable community.

Observing that traditional leadership development programs did not work very effectively with business people in smaller communities, Dr. Manley proposed a community builders approach to ensure the development of the right kind of economic leadership for rural communities. Nebraska decided to test Dr. Manley's approach.

The First Community Builders Academy

Dr. Manley began this effort by creating the first Nebraska Community Builders Academy in Southwest Nebraska in 1992. The community builders approach was simple, and quickly proved highly effective in raising economic development awareness and mobilizing new leaders with the skills to push for more economic development efforts in their home communities.

In time, it was clear that the level of economic development activity in southwest Nebraska was on the rise with concrete examples of new businesses being formed, existing businesses expanding, and overall economic competitiveness increasing.

Based on this experience, Nebraska made a commitment to see if the Community Builders process could make a difference in other parts of rural Nebraska.



VISION

Community Builders envisions healthy communities capable of creating quality economic opportunities for residents within the emerging global society and economy.

MISSION

Community Builders is a process that identifies, encourages and empowers citizens to build strong and viable local area economies. The process is managed by a coordinator-facilitator team composed of area development service providers and, in subsequent years, Community Builders alumni.

GOALS

- Enhance citizen awareness of their local area economy.
- Enhance leadership for local area economic development.
- Stimulate appropriate and sustainable local area economic development.
- Increase citizen involvement in civic affairs.
- Stimulate multi-community collaboration.
- Promote the formation of institution and enterprise networks.
- Strengthen local and regional capacity for effective economic development.
- Create lasting partnerships that support long-term, local and regional economic development efforts.
- Increase the effective use of economic development resources.

BUILDING BLOCKS

- Local residents are best suited to define what economic development is for a community.
- Most answers to the

challenges of economic development can be found in the local area.

- The resources, both human and financial, for successful economic development are generally available within the area.
- Economic development leadership is enhanced by doing economic development.
- Outside perspectives and assistance are critical ingredients to successful development.
- Community Builders must be a good fit for citizens' lifestyles, learning approach and time limitations.

PROCESS

The Community Builders process is simple and direct. It creates an opportunity and environment for community residents concerned with economic development to gather once monthly over a six-month period. They talk about economic development challenges and opportunities, learn from each other, gain greater awareness of available resources, and discover the diversity of their local area economies.

A cluster of communities provides the geographical basis for the Community Builders process.

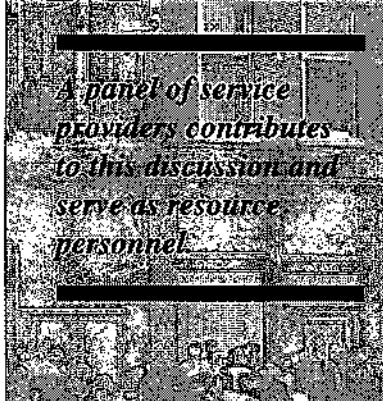
An "opener-motivator" is provided by the state-wide Nebraska Development Academy.

The opener-motivator meets with leaders in the communities to explain the process and get them to select participants.

Three to five persons are selected from each of the communities and make up the Community Team. Five to six monthly meetings are held. Each one is scheduled in a different town.

The format of a typical meeting is: 4 pm, meet for a tour of the host community; 6 pm, dinner; 7 to 9 pm, Community Builders workshop. The evening is spent discussing topics of local interest such as community tourism, developing new businesses and cre-

A panel of service providers contributes to this discussion and serve as resource personnel.



ating a vision for their towns. A panel of service providers contributes to this discussion and serves as resource personnel.

Once each month, following the Community Builders workshop, Community Teams meet with a facilitator (Listener-Encourager) to discuss ways they can apply what they have learned to their communities.

Community Builders Team Members select persons to participate in the process the following year. The graduates, however, remain on the Community Team to be mentors for new participants.

Curtis, Maywood leaders form community builders

Curtis Hi-Line Enterprise 12/19/94

Group to assist businesses, community improvements

CURTIS-MAYWOOD — The Medicine Creek Community Builders¹ has been organized with members from Curtis and Maywood. It is the result of the academies conducted by Southwest Community Builders and will serve as a resource for community organizations to coordinate and stimulate improvements.

At the organization meeting, Jerry Wilcox was elected president, Ken Mortensen, vice president, and Carol Brown, secretary-treasurer. Other members include Lou Werkmeister, Jean Werkmeister, Delma Foote, Rusty Fritz, Tom Brown, Sandy Stencil, Dick Hald and Terry Amstutz.

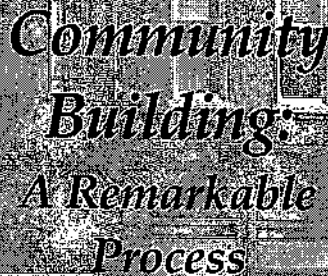
SOUTHWEST COMMUNITY BUILDERS is one academy initiated by the Nebraska Development Academy. Sessions are held each month

from October through April in a different community. Each community sponsors three or four individuals to the academy each year. Participants tour the host community and attend sessions such as telecommunication, funding, business development and retention.

SOME PROJECTS the Medicine Creek Community Builders hope to establish, encourage and promote include:

- Establishing a community foundation which could be used for financing future projects.
- Star Theater improvements.
- Assisting in the completion of the Maywood Park Privy project.
- Welcome signs for both communities.
- Highway signs directing travelers to the area.
- Housing for both communities.
- New brochures for the Medicine Creek area.
- Developing a database of resource people.

Medicine Creek Community Builders is a subgroup of the Southwest Nebraska Community Builders.



Community Building: A Remarkable Process

By Tina Kitt
Wauneta, Nebraska

For the past year, a remarkable process has been unfolding throughout the little communities

along the Republican River Valley. A process in which representatives of 14 of these communities have been coming together, not as rivals, but as friends in a quest of vision building for the future of southwest Nebraska.

With a fine disregard for the nay-saying of the "Buffalo Commons" advocates, Bob Manley has taken 43 people, some gung-ho optimists and some bah-humbug pessimists, and inspired in all of us a sense of pride in the heritage of our pioneering past and a belief in the limitless possibilities of our future.

As a result of joining together to voice our fears and dreams for our communities, we gained the insight that we are not alone.

Benkelman worries about keeping its hospital. Stratton worries about keeping its high school viable. Culbertson fears losing its identity and heritage as it becomes more of a bedroom community of McCook. McCook regrets the loss of business to North Platte and Kearney.

Each of our communities faces obstacles, but as the group's favorite curmudgeon put it: "It doesn't do any good to stick our heads in the sand and do nothing, so let's just do

what needs to be done and quit talking about it."

We had a chance to show off our towns and businesses to each other, and in doing so, we saw

just how much each little town has going for it. When the Community Builders Academy came and toured Wauneta, people who had never taken the time to turn off the highway and look around fell in love with our town, just as we saw how wonderful the towns and people of Maywood, Trenton and Beaver City are.

We began to view this region differently, with the eyes of children—fresh and new and full of wonder and grace. This is the mindset we must embrace in order to successfully engage in the creative problem-solving and community-building necessary to insure the quality of life our grandparents and great-grandparents forged here on these great plains.

I am grateful to have been a part of this inaugural year¹ of the Community Builders and for the opportunity to experience the warmth and wisdom of Dr. Manley. I hope with all earnestness that we, as a community, will continue to take part in this dynamic program for the betterment of our town, and the future of our children.

¹ Ms. Kitt was a member of the first Community Builders Academy in 1992. She wrote this essay to describe what the process had shown her about the area. The essay was later printed by the *Wauneta Breeze*, a weekly newspaper serving the area.

Community Builders Today

Community Builders is a process—a learning process for rural economic development leadership. It embodies a philosophy of how rural citizens learn and how they are supported in their efforts to develop their communities and regions.

With each new academy and every passing year, Community Builders evolves, changing and growing from its beginning roots. Each group of Community Builders adds its own personal chapter to the process, incorporating fresh insight as well as new lessons and experiences into the basic model.

Today there are five active Community Builders Academies in Nebraska:

West North Central Community Builders

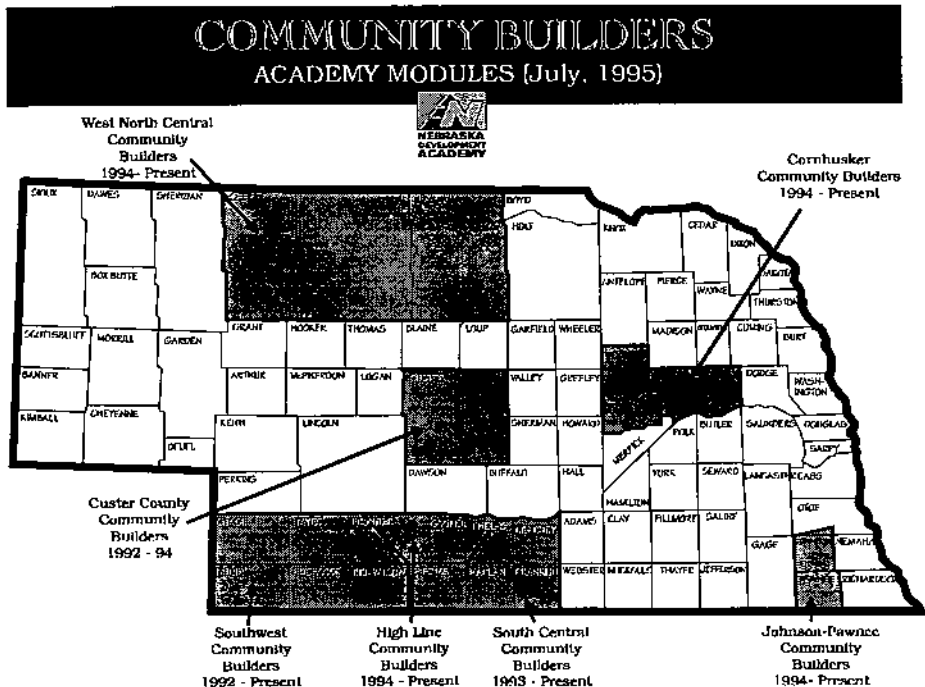
which includes communities in Cherry, Keya Paha, Brown and Rock counties.

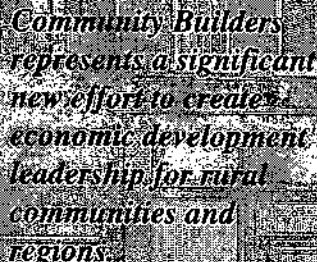
Cornhusker Community Builders

which includes communities in Boone, Nance, Platte and Colfax counties.

Southwest Community Builders which includes communities in Chase, Dundy, Hayes, Hitchcock, Red Willow counties, and part of Frontier County.

South Central and High Line Commu-





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nity Builders which includes communities in Furnas, Gosper, Phelps, Harlan, Kearney and Franklin counties, and the remaining portion of Frontier County.

Johnson-Pawnee Community Builders which includes communities in Johnson and Pawnee counties, plus Talmage and Humboldt.

A Community Builders Academy has been attempted in Custer County. It is not currently active.

Partnerships

Community Builders represents a significant new effort to create economic development leadership for rural communities and regions. However, Community Builders was not created in traditional ways.

No new law was passed or state appropriation authorized. No new federal or foundation grant was received to "seed" the program. Community Builders has largely been nurtured and supported through the following "partnerships" and the redirection of public and private resources:

Local Communities

Local communities form the backbone of the partnership. They decide to participate in Community Builders and identify, recruit and support local participants in area academies.

Regional Development Organizations

Regional Development Organizations — Community Colleges, Resource Conservation

and Development Areas, utility companies and development corporations — provide critical support to area academies ranging from direct finan-

cial and staff support to serving as resources for Academy programs.

Nebraska Department of Economic Development

The Nebraska Department of Economic Development continues to be the Community Builders' primary institutional champion and supporter. The department has redirected significant financial (\$50,000 per year) and human resources (two full-time staff plus the efforts of the field service representatives and other staff) in support of Community Builders.

Center for Rural Community Revitalization—UNL

The Center for Rural Community Revitalization at the University of Nebraska (UNL) and UNL's Cooperative Extension Service have become increasingly important partners in support of Community Builders. Center staff members provide human and administrative support to Nebraska's Community Builders academies. Extension has an internal grant program allowing for support of Community Builders Academy sessions.

Nebraska Development Network Inc.

The Nebraska Development Network Inc., and particularly certain Network Regional Groups, are providing direct human resource

support for area Community Builders Academies. This support ensures that regional and outside resources are available to Academy participants.

Rural Development Commission

The Nebraska Rural Development Commission advocated the creation of the program and continues to champion additional Community Builders Academies. It also promotes

The Nebraska Community Foundation is working to raise and manage funds for Community Builders, including an endowment.

the effort statewide and is engaged in fund-raising. **Nebraska Community Foundation**

The Nebraska Community Foundation works

with the program and area academies to identify, raise and manage funds. The foundation is pursuing the creation of a Community Builders endowment as a permanent funding source.

Association hopes to increase wealth for south central region

Feb. 25, 1994

ARAPAHOE (AP)—Residents in six Nebraska counties have formed the South Central Community Builders Association—the state's third such association—in hopes of boosting the region's economic development.

Linda Fetting, a field representative of the state Department of Economic Development, said the association will meet for the next six months to discuss how to create wealth for each town or for the region.

"Economic development is not just jobs," Fetting said. "It can also be keeping dollars in the community at the grocery store, retail stores or doctor's office."

An organizational meeting here on Tuesday drew 60 representatives from 14 communities in Franklin, Harlan, Furnas, Gosper, Phelps and Kearney counties.

"Community is whatever people define it as," Fetting said. "If a particular town has medical care or strong retail businesses, it can be serving a wider community."

The first Community Builders organization was established in southwest Nebraska in

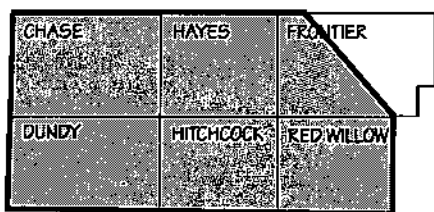
1991. It included Dundy, Red Willow, Frontier, Gosper, Furnas, Chase, Hays and Hitchcock counties. The third Community Builders organization has been established in Custer County, Fetting said.

The idea for the associations came from Nebraska historian Robert Manley, said Frank Spillers, DED field service representative in North Platte. Manley first used the concept in schools and then turned to communities when he began working for DED, he said.

The department will bring specialists in problem areas to association meetings to help members find solutions.

Some Community Builders success stories include recruiting a telemarketing business and marketing a home-based business, both at Indianola, Spillers said.

"Probably one of the best success stories, however, came from a recent meeting of the Southwest Nebraska Community Builders," he said. "One of the members stood up in the meeting and said, 'Who would have thought people from Beaver City would even care what happened in Benkleman, much less ask for their advice.'"



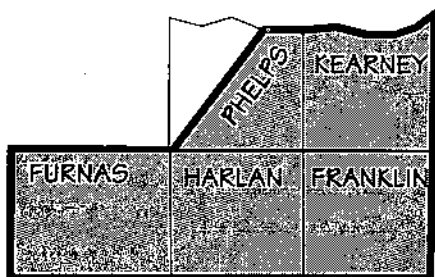
Southwest Nebraska Community Builders

In 1991, this area was the first to experiment with the Community Builders Process when Dr. Robert Manley, state historian and "community ambassador" for the Nebraska Department of Economic Development, began driving to communities in the state's most southwestern counties.

Originally, the area included 14 communities which held their first Community Builders workshops on May 22, 1992, in McCook.

Today, the Southwest Community Builders encompasses communities in Chase, Dundy, Hayes, Hitchcock, Red Willow and parts of Frontier and Furnas counties. The divisions were mapped by community participants to reflect real-life relationships in the Republican River Valley, rather than artificially-drawn county boundaries.

In 1993, communities in Furnas and Fron-



tier counties, part of Phelps County, and communities in Kearney, Harlan and Franklin counties started the South Central Community Builders

A third group, the High Line Community Builders, was formed in 1994 and includes



communities in Gosper County as well as the remaining communities in Frontier and Phelps counties.

The Community Builders Process in the southwest garners support from McCook Community College, Red Willow County Cooperative Extension, Southwest Public Power District, Nebraska Public Power District, Prairie Lakes Tourism Council, Nebraska Department of Economic Development and the Nebraska Development Network's Southwest Regional Group.

The Southwest Community Builders has held four economic and community development classes administered by the Nebraska Development Academy, the teaching arm of the Nebraska Development Network, Inc.

HISTORY

- | | |
|----------------------|------------|
| First Academy Class | • 1992 |
| Second Academy Class | • 1993 |
| Third Academy Class | • 1993-'94 |
| Fourth Academy Class | • 1994-'95 |

CHALLENGES

Since its inception, this area has been a staunch supporter of the network learning

process. A challenge for the Academy and Department of Economic Development has been translating their early successes to participants of each year's

new classes. Also, the logistics of keeping in touch with former graduates and helping them share their development experiences with new class members has, at times, been overwhelming considering that the Academy has a staff of two, with one support person.

Consequently, for the program to truly succeed, community members and other sponsors have had to pick up some of the duties. Part of the challenge involves garnering more institutional support—both in cash contributions and in kind services—from the Network and Academy partners.

LESSONS LEARNED

- "Nothing is free." If a module is offered at no charge, participants don't understand the costs. Charge a fee to cover direct costs.

- Organize and train the coordinator-facilitator team (that runs the academy) and the listener-encouragers (who work with each community).

- Regional Group involvement and support



*"People do not know
their own community,
let alone the next one
down the road."*

are critical to successful implementation and ongoing replication of Community Builders modules.

- Use Regional Group members and Community Builders' alumni as listener-encouragers.

- Listener-encouragers must fulfill their roles for the process to be successful. They must be sure to meet with their assigned communities between each workshop.

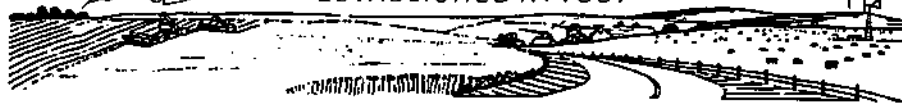
- It helps to have the listener-encouragers prepare written reports of their meetings with each community and distribute them to all listener-encouragers and members of the coordinator-facilitator team.

- "People do not know their own community, let alone the next one down the road," according to Dr. Manley. The economic tour conducted by the host community is vital to the process. It shows other participants what can be done, breaks down barriers between the communities, and encourages the participants to either "do that in our town" or continue what they currently are doing right.

- It helps if the listener-encouragers are members of the coordinator-facilitator team.

THE WAUNETA BREEZE

ESTABLISHED IN 1887



Thursday, November 26, 1992

First Class Of Community Builders Graduates

Forty-three community leaders from 14 Southwest Nebraska towns became the first graduates of the Community Builders Academy last week. Among the graduates were Wauneta Community Builders Karen Steckman, Tina Kitt and Russ Pankonin.

The Academy is a pilot program launched earlier this year by the Department of Economic Development to teach community leaders how to help revitalize their towns. Dr. Robert Manley of Lincoln directed the new program.

In developing the program, Manley conducted town meetings in Wauneta and 13 other Southwest Nebraska communities to identify needs and help begin the process of building a vision for the future of each town and the region as a whole.

The program was initiated after Governor Ben Nelson signed a rural development pact with Southwest Nebraska in October 1991. The pact offered the help of state agencies to assist with community and economic development.

During Thursday's final meeting of the community builders, members of the Academy revealed about the success of the program.

Randy Dean, a community builder from Indianola, said the program has given his community a new outlook, one for the future.

Dean said the networking they have learned through the Academy has become essential for their community.

He said they used the networking of state agencies and resources to help with product development for a local manufacturer. Eight months later, sales are nearing \$2 million and the manufacturer has increased

the number of his employees to 10.

Dean attributed this success directly to the Community Builders Academy.

Dean said Manley kept emphasizing the need to build a vision for the future and to develop a sense of community if they are to survive and thrive.

He said the program has enabled his community to begin dreaming about their future and looking into ways to turn those dreams into reality.

"We've learned the economic skills to revitalize our communities."

Susan Broeker, a community builder from Beaver City, said people in her community didn't seem to care where their town was headed.

However, after the Community Builders Academy met in Beaver City last month, a new attitude has started to emerge. "Beaver City is starting to come alive."

Before the Academy program began, Broeker feared her community might be dying. Now she feels a new sense of hope as they begin to build a new vision for their future.

Communities participating in the program include Arapahoe, Beaver City, Benkelman, Cambridge, Culbertson, Hayes Center, Imperial, Indianola, McCook, Maywood, Palisade, Stratton, Trenton and Wauneta.

Each community selected at least three people to participate in the Academy, which was launched in McCook in May.

The Academy also met in Wauneta, Trenton, Beaver City and Maywood. During each meeting, community builders toured each host town to learn more about the com-

munities.

Each meeting focused on a different economic development topic, including how to start and nurture businesses, tourism, community development and vision building.

"This is the most rewarding experience I have ever been involved in," Manley said.

He said the people really came together to make the pilot program a success. Funding has been approved to continue the program next year. Manley will again oversee it.

Manley and several community builders briefed Lt. Governor Maxine Moul on the success of the program during a regional development network meeting at UNL's School of Technical Agriculture in Curtis Friday morning.

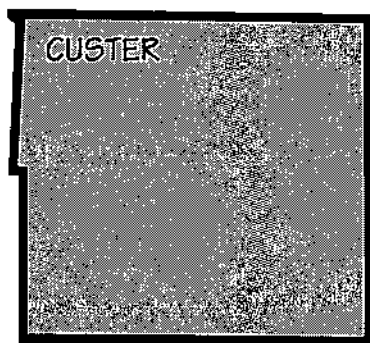
Manley said the community builders can now have the knowledge and tools to go into their communities and help build a plan for the future.

"If we look into ourselves, we're going to find the capacity is there."

Now each community will be asked to enlist three more participants for next year's academy. Wauneta-area residents can contact Steckman, Pankonin or Kitt if they are interested in participating in the program.

Palisade-area residents can contact Frank Pothoff, Wanda Cooper or Mike Anderson.

The program was jointly sponsored by the Nebraska Department of Economic Development, Nebraska Development Network, McCook Community College, The George Norris Foundation in McCook, the University of Nebraska, and Southwest Public Power in Palisade.



Custer County

The Community Builders Process was started in Custer County, in central Nebraska, in the fall of 1992 as the first attempt by the Nebraska Development Academy to replicate its successes in the Southwest part of the state. The Custer County effort involved the communities of Broken Bow, Arnold, Calloway, Merna, Sargent, Anselmo, Ansley, Berwyn, Comstock, Mason City and Oconto.

Partners

- Custer County Cooperative Extension.
- Nestbuilders Network, Inc.
- Custer County Economic Development.
- Mid-Plains Community College.
- Nebraska Department of Economic Development.

HISTORY

- | | |
|----------------------|------------|
| First Academy Class | • 1992-'93 |
| Second Academy Class | • 1993-'94 |

A third class was proposed for 1995, but did not materialize. There have been several successes from the Custer County effort, and primary among them was the creation of a

Home-Based Business Association.

The effort also established a Community Builders funding partnership between the Department of Economic Development, Cooperative Extension Service and participants, each of whom paid a \$25 fee.

Another success was an effective program to involve young people in community affairs.

CHALLENGES

- Making the process work in a small area.
- Replication of original Community Builders model.
- Integrating the process with an existing organization.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Involving youth is a good idea. (When recruiting participants for this academy, each community selected two adults and two high school students, preferably sophomores.)
- Communities are not "turned off" by charging a participant fee. Asked to pay \$25 for four participants, communities asked if it "would be all right if they sent eight participants and paid \$200?" instead of just four and \$100.
- Academies work best when they are locally controlled and run. The "steering committee" must have the responsibility and authority to run the Academies, make decisions on agendas, control the use of funds, select listener-encouragers. Things don't work well when someone comes in from the "outside" and does it for them.

South Central Nebraska

The South Central Nebraska Community Builders involves communities in Furnas, Harlan, Franklin, Kearney counties, and portions of Phelps County (13 original communities). For the 1994-1995 Academy, the "High Line" communities from Frontier, Gosper and Phelps counties participated.

ORIGINS

Community Builders from communities in Furnas County (who were part of the original Southwest Academy in 1992) began working with communities in counties to the east and formed the South Central Academy.

PARTNERS

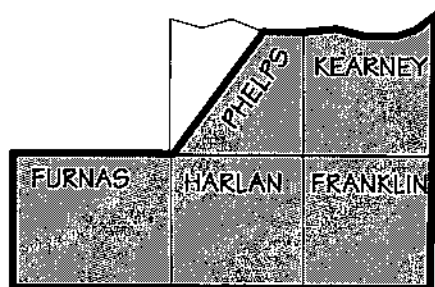
- Central Plains Technology and Business Development Center.
- KN Energy, Inc.
- Three Past Southwest Community Builders Graduates.
- City of Oxford.
- University of Nebraska-Lincoln.
- Nebraska Department of Economic Development.

HISTORY

- | | | |
|----------------------|---|----------|
| First Academy Class | • | 1993-'94 |
| Second Academy Class | • | 1994-'95 |

OUTCOMES

South Central was the first Academy to make use of the new *Community Builders Process Training Handbook* and recommend process. They pioneered seeding a new Academy by neighboring Community Builders. They also developed a more independent governance structure for Academies.



CHALLENGES

- Sustaining the process with new classes.
- Remaining connected with former graduates.
- Finding institutional support for the Academy.

LESSONS LEARNED

- People who have been through the process are better able to run a module, either as participants or coordinators.
- The *Community Builders Process Training Handbook's* replication process works.
- Workshops should spend 75-80 percent of their time on small-group discussions and reports, and 20-25 percent for presentations from resource providers or other nonparticipants.
- If fully informed of the purpose and use of the fees collected, Academy participants support or have no objection to paying the fees.
- Coordinator-facilitator teams must have written cost agreements with all parties.
- An academy's lead administrative entity should be one of several members of the coordinator-facilitator team. This provides accountability measures.



CPDC

CENTRAL PLAINS TECHNOLOGY AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER

P.O. BOX 7 • 416 CENTER AVENUE • HOLBROOK, NEBRASKA 68948-0007

2/20/95

The Community Builders program has given me a strong sense of direction regarding my volunteer efforts. The Community Builders program provides a wealth of information for the participants. I believe everyone likes to volunteer or be involved, if they can help make a difference. The information available through Community Builders is a big help for rural Nebraska communities.

The most important part of Community Builders is the multi-community involvement. The communities involved in the program share ideas and even work together. The process of having the monthly meetings in different communities gives everyone a chance to show off their community. The format of Community Builders is very successful. The idea of each year bringing in new replacement volunteers helps increase the number of volunteers. The community that I serve as a Community Builder is Arapahoe. Seven very active volunteers are involved in Arapahoe's economic development needs, because of the Community Builders Academy.

I strongly feel that Community Builders is one of the most worthwhile community organizations to become associated with. I have and I am still involved in projects that are becoming realities for Arapahoe, because of the information learned in Community Builders. I recently was named the director of Central Plains Technology and Business Development Center. My involvement in Community Builders made this possible. I highly recommend Community Builders to any rural community that wants to survive and prosper.

Sincerely,

Janell L. Anderson
Director

GRANDMA'S BRAG BOOK

Following are some successes shared by the participants of the South Central Community Builders for the 1994-'95 year. They were compiled by Linda Fettig — "Grandma" as she is affectionately called by Community Builder participants — who is a field representative for the Nebraska Department of Economic Development and works closely with the Community Builders in her assigned counties. (Names of participating towns are in capital letters).

ARAPAHOE had a successful Woman's Day of Wonder, held a town hall meeting, is currently working on a Comprehensive Procedures Plan, has started a retirement center.

AXTELL now has Pizza Hut delivery on Sunday evenings from a nearby town as the direct result of information learned from Community Builders, had new town signs designed, is working on an Internet connection, had publicity in the *Kearney Hub* as a result of Community Builders.

BEAVER CITY is putting in new sidewalks.

BERTRAND is reviving its chamber of commerce, is forming an umbrella committee, is having a town hall meeting, had a resource team meeting.

CAMPBELL (Pop. 441) started a Community Builders' fund, is having Dr. Ed Nelson (founder of Leadership Seminars and a self-described "community cheerleader") make his second presentation, has formed its committees, has raised \$600 with a skating fund-raiser, had a resource team meeting, has started a newsletter, had 90+ people at a dinner theater fund-raiser.

ELWOOD is developing a roadside information park and rest area, now has water to its new park, is planning a housing survey.

EUSTIS held a "Rumbles" dance with proceeds going to business development, is in the process of enlarging its medical facility, has the youngest Community Builders graduate in this module.

FARNAM (Pop. 268) raised \$2,700 from a community carnival, is involved with a dairy recruitment project, had Dr. Ed's second presentation, formed seven committees, had 67 people attending Dr. Ed's presentation.

HILDRETH (Pop. 394) had 70+ people at a Dr. Ed Nelson presentation on rural leadership, formed an umbrella committee, started a weekly newsgram, had 96 people in attendance for Dr. Ed's second presentation, formed seven committees, will have a resource team meeting, is joining CNF for local computer bulletin board service, had its resource team meeting, is choosing a logo for a Nebraska Community Improvement Program project, is starting a community foundation, is preparing a park and recreation brochure.

HOLDREGE has a housing task force and is applying for a planning grant and first-time homeowners program, is forming a Community Reinvestment Authority, its alumni have purchased the old school to start a business incubator called Dreams, Inc.

ORLEANS has formed a technology task force with ALMA, BEAVER CITY, STAMFORD, REPUBLICAN CITY and OXFORD.

ORLEANS is scheduling the Heartland Center for Leadership Course, is participating with Community Networking Inc. for local electronic bulletin board service, has new community signs planned.

OXFORD razed six houses and cleared lots, is preparing its old hospital building for sale.

SMITHFIELD has new sidewalks, is paving its road.

Additionally, the communities of FARNAM, ARAPAHOE, CAMPBELL, BEAVER CITY, HOLDREGE, BERTRAND AND HILDRETH have signed up to participate in the Nebraska Community Improvement Program. Of the eight already committed to participation, four are new to the program.

Johnson-Pawnee

This Academy includes communities in Johnson and Pawnee counties, plus Talmage from Otoe County and Humboldt from Richardson County.

PARTNERS

- Peru State College.
- Omaha Public Power District.
- Peoples Natural Gas Company.
- Five Rivers Resource Conservation and Development Area.
- Nebraska Department of Economic Development.
- Nebraska Development Network — Southeast Regional Group.

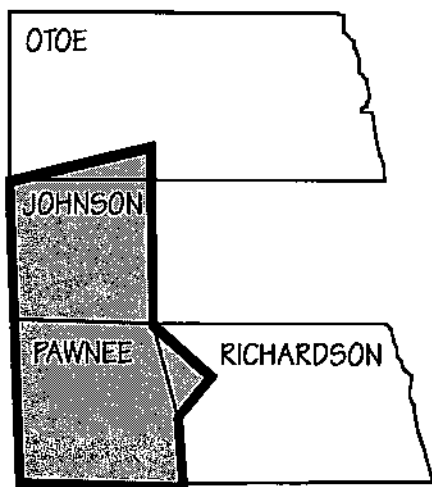
HISTORY

First Academy Class • 1994 - '95

This was the first effort to transfer the process to an area that had no previous experience with Community Builders, either as participants or administrators.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Involve existing leadership. Community leaders need to be aware of the initiatives of the Community Builders participants to ensure their support.
- Involve more than one person per com-



munity. One person generally does not feel comfortable initiating activities.

- Training for coordinator-facilitators and listener-encouragers works extremely well when it includes some direct exposure to an existing module, or participation in training that includes past graduates and members of the coordinator-facilitator and listener-encourager teams.

- Husband/wife participants are great Community Builders attendees. Not only does the Academy provide them with an evening's activity, but they are very supportive of each other's involvement.



West North Central

This Academy includes communities in Cherry, Rock, Brown and Keya Paha counties. Eight communities initially joined the academy.

ORIGINS AND HISTORY

Starting an Academy in this area was studied for more than a year. The first Academy (1994 - '95) started with the first workshop on Oct. 17, 1994, in Springview. Seventy-two participants from eight communities engaged in this workshop.

PARTNERS

- North Central Resource Conservation and Development Area
- North Central Development Center, Inc.

- Nebraska Development Network—North Central Regional Group
- K N Energy, Inc.
- Nebraska Department of Economic Development

OUTCOMES

Because of Community Builders, this area is trying to organize a regional united chamber of commerce. Participants now look at each other as resources for economic development, and not as competitors. Community bulletin boards on the Internet are being developed by the participating communities.

CHALLENGES

- How to cope with a Community Builders' region more than 100 miles wide and encompassing two time zones.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Have a backup plan to replace important partners who have to quit.
- Train listener—encouragers.

Community Builders begin "BIG" in North Central Nebraska

Ainsworth Star-Journal Nov. 2, 1994

The Community Builders Process began Oct. 17 in North Central Nebraska with four counties involving 11 communities. The first meeting in Springview was attended by 72.

Community Builders brings communities together to address area needs, not just a particular community. Looking at the four counties involved, it is difficult to imagine this area as a community, but judging by the first meeting's attendance, participants are on their way.

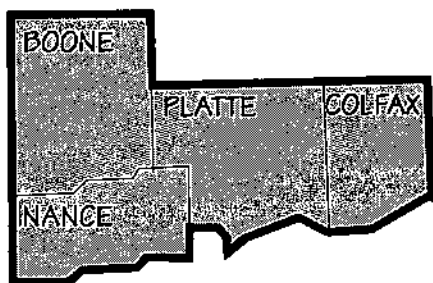
Counties participating include Cherry, Brown, Rock and Keya Paha, an area 146 miles from east to west and 64 miles north to

south, or 9,280 square miles, enough to encompass Delaware, Connecticut and Rhode Island and have 1,000 square miles to spare.

The four counties' population is 14,400 while the above three states have 4.4 million. A challenge? Definitely, but these people are accustomed to commitment and determined to make it work.

Community Builders is sponsored by the Nebraska Development Network Inc., North Central Nebraska Regional Development Group and the North Central Nebraska RC&D.

The next meeting will be in Ainsworth Nov. 14.



Cornhusker Academy

This Academy includes communities in Nance, Platte, Boone and Colfax counties.

PARTNERS

- Cornhusker Public Power District
- Central Community College—Platte Campus
- Nebraska Department of Economic Development
- Nebraska Development Network—North-east Regional Group
- Northeast Nebraska Economic Development District
- K N Energy, Inc.
- Petersburg Telephone Company

HISTORY

First Academy Class • 1995

OUTCOMES

Participants have started an effort to develop regional telecommunications assistance for businesses. They also express better attitudes about other communities and there are the beginnings of regional cooperation in economic development. Also, partners have shown increased financial commitment. An active, supportive steering committee has emerged to run the academy.

CHALLENGES

- Too far from nearest established module to benefit from Community Builders' experience on a regular basis.
- Education of new partners.
- How to get more area Academies started.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Strong local partners are essential for a healthy academy.
- Good publicity in the press is essential.
- Extend role of opener—motivator into second year to serve as a mentor.

9 area cities meeting to talk growth

Columbus Telegram-Jan. 1, 1995

COLUMBUS—Nine area communities tonight begin a six-month program aimed at identifying and solving common problems.

The Community Builders program kicked off at 4 p.m. in St. Edward with 30 representatives from St. Edward, Albion, Fullerton, Genoa, Petersburg, Humphrey, Howells, Leigh and Clarkson.

Program goals are to provide citizens with skills to support economic development activities and to broaden citizen participation.

The representatives will meet monthly in dif-

ferent towns to discuss topics geared toward improving their communities.

Tonight's discussion will focus on attracting new and expanding existing businesses. Tom Hanson of the Department of Economic Development will speak.

In addition to discussing issues, each monthly meeting will include a tour of the host town.

The state program operates through an Aspen Institute grant and has started similar programs in the McCook, Pawnee City, Minden and Valentine areas.

Clarkson a fitting end to small-town gatherings

Columbus Telegram, June 18, 1995

The past few weeks have seen many graduations from area institutions.

On Tuesday, some different graduates completed their own studies—a study to find out how to make small towns successful in a growing world.

A six-month series of meetings in area towns ended Tuesday in Clarkson with more than 30 people from 10 cities graduating as Cornhusker Regional Community Builders, a program through the state Department of Economic Development that's sponsored locally by Cornhusker Public Power District.

The program unites small towns that are geographically and demographically similar. Towns involved were: Albion, Clarkson, Creston, Fullerton, Genoa, Howells, Humphrey, Leigh, Petersburg and St. Edward.

The program's goal is to engage leaders of these communities in conversations with their counterparts to learn successes and struggles of small-town living. Since January, folks have been gathering for four hours a month and shar-



TODD FRANKO

Editor's
Notes

ing many tips on many topics, including housing, business development, recreation and customer service.

It was fitting that the final meeting of this year's class was at Clarkson.

Clarkson is home to one of the more intriguing small-town businesses, Bluebird Nurseries, which ships plants worldwide. Another is that it probably has the most intriguing legal battle going on for a town its size with the landfill battle.

Harlan Hamernik, founder of Bluebird, was our Clarkson tour guide and was a fountain of business wisdom for the group.

"I probably succeeded because, when I started, I was too young to know I couldn't succeed," said Hamernik, outlining that among his many successes are many failures. But he and his wife kept plugging away.

We drove by an early 1900s school building that held its last classes this past year. Said Harlan: "A lot of people call that a

closed building. I call it a new opportunity. Can't you see that as a business incubator, an antique mall or an apartment complex?"

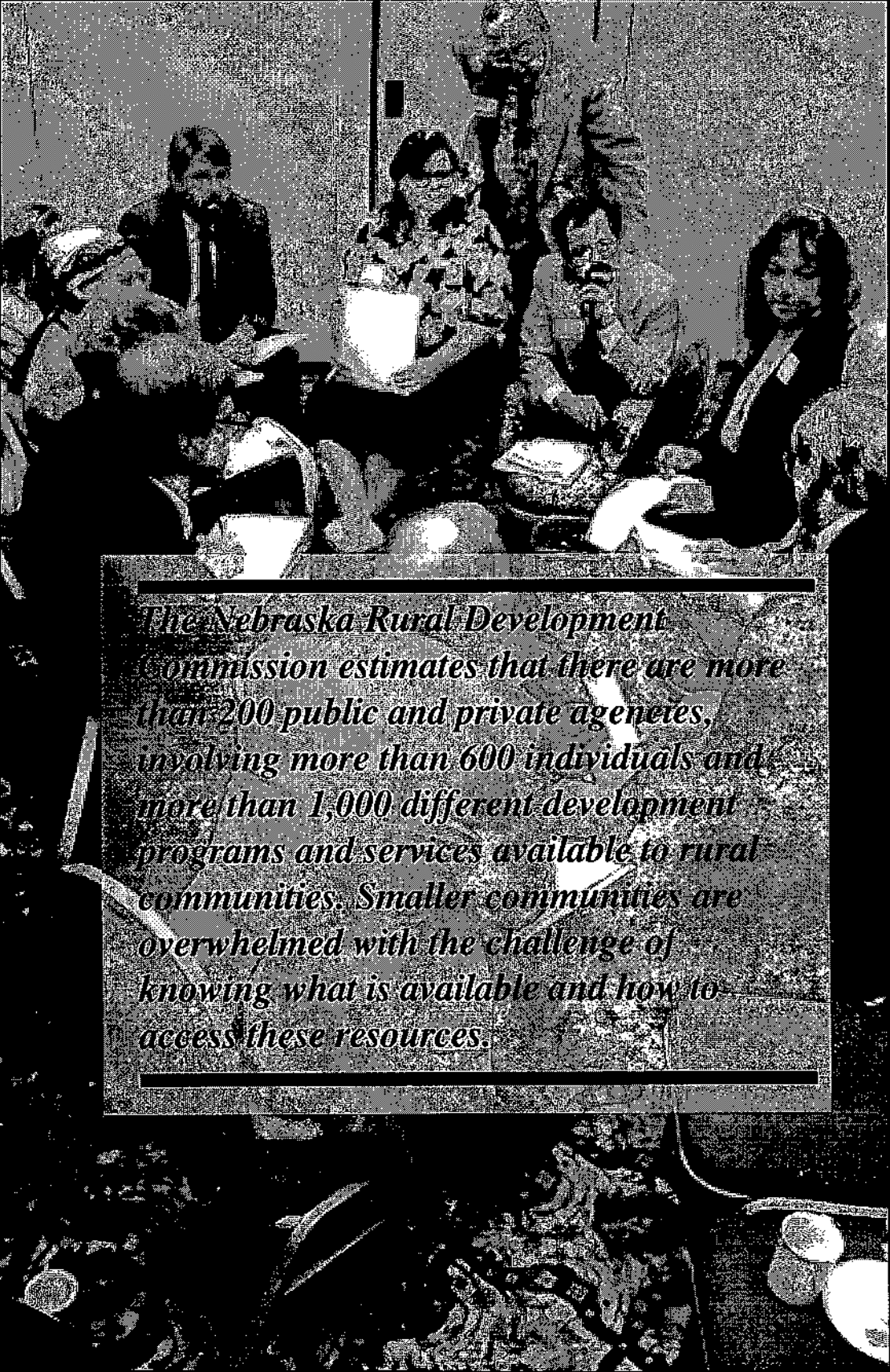
During our hour-long hayride tour, it was obvious what Harlan's interest was. Take a tour with a Realtor, you see a city of increasing market values. Take a tour with a high school coach, you see a city of recreational opportunities.

A tour with Harlan the nursery man goes like this: "There's our city hall. It's new. There's our library. It's new. BUT LOOK AT THAT NORWEGIAN MAPEE TREE! I GUARANTEE IT'S THE FINEST TREE OF ITS TYPE FOR 500 MILES MAYBE MORE."

Harlan's witty, sincere, blunt outlook was consistent with many of the folks over the past six months. Among the other unique comments:

"I deliver groceries to my customers. And when I'm there, I change their light bulb, I empty their mousetrap. Heck, I even take down their laundry."

Or: "As a small-town businessman, you HAVE to know your customers, names. You don't HAVE that many."

A black and white photograph showing a group of people, including men and women, sitting around a table. They appear to be in a meeting or discussion, with some looking at papers or documents. The setting is indoors, possibly a conference room or a community hall. The image is grainy and has a high-contrast, somewhat distressed appearance.

The Nebraska Rural Development Commission estimates that there are more than 200 public and private agencies, involving more than 600 individuals and more than 1,000 different development programs and services available to rural communities. Smaller communities are overwhelmed with the challenge of knowing what is available and how to access these resources.

New Community Builders Partnerships

The Nebraska Rural Development Commission estimates that there are more than 200 public and private agencies, involving more than 600

individuals and more than 1,000 different development programs and services available to rural communities. Smaller communities are overwhelmed with the challenge of knowing what is available and how to access these resources.

An important objective in Nebraska has been to "rationalize" development resources for communities. This rationalization process involves the integration of programs and ser-

vices, cross-training among service providers, and more effective communication with rural communities.

Community Builders

can become just one more resource available to rural communities. But from the very beginning, Community Builders has attempted to ensure the fit of this program in the overall development of communities and regions. Towards this end, Community Builders has sought out new partnerships. One new partnership is with the Nebraska Community Improvement Program (NCIP). Today, NCIP and Community Builders are working to-

Meetings put community first

☐ Towns vie for NCIP honors

Kearney Hub, Nov. 2, 1994

By **DONNA FARRIS**
Hub Staff Writer

KEARNEY—Strengthening communities will be the focus of two groups meeting at a dual conference in Kearney Friday.

The 31st annual Nebraska Community Improvement Program Recognition Day and the first Community Builders Conference will be held Friday at the University of Nebraska at Kearney Nebraska Student Union.

Both programs are projects of the Nebraska Department of Economic Development.


COMMUNITY BUILDERS, adminis-

tered by the Nebraska Development Academy, is a process in which teams from each of eight-12 communities from a geographic cluster attend a series of six workshops to learn about other communities in the area, identify key issues they wish to address and learn about resources available.

Community Builders was conceived and designed by Robert Manley, a Nebraska historian who has studied communities for some 40 years.

gether in support of community betterment. NCIP promotes Community Builders and Community Builders promotes NCIP. The staffs of both pro-

grams are working together to clarify how these programs can compliment and support each other in support of local and area development efforts. An illustration of this new partnership can be found in the joint annual conference hosted by NCIP and Community Builders. The programs created a stronger in-



The staffs of both programs are working together to clarify how these programs can compliment and support each other.

tegrated learning program with Community Builders hosting the awards luncheon and NCIP hosting the awards dinner.

A second partnership is with Nebraska's Enterprise Zone Program. This Program has adopted organizing concepts from Community Builders in supporting the development of rural enterprise zones. This collaboration represents an innovation from the Community Builders model.

"The (Conference) was filled with success stories and questions on what we can do better for our communities. No one could ever put a monetary value on what the NCIP/Community Builders Recognition Day and Conference together did for the economic development of our fine state.

"It was heartening to know that there are people sincere enough about helping in their communities. This conference made me realize that everything is changing and by networking with other communities we can help each other meet today's demands and be ready for tomorrow's needs. Better education makes better citizens and better citizens make a better community in which to live.

"Thank you for allowing us to share our secrets to our accomplishments, practical solutions to our problems and resources available locally, regionally and statewide. A big thank you to the Aspen Institute and every sponsor involved for a great day. I look forward with anticipation to our 2nd Annual Conference.

Linda Taylor
McCook Community Builder
Class of 1992

Gordon receives NCIP awards for local projects

Gordon Journal, Nov. 9, 1994

Governor Nelson presented nearly 130 plaques and cash awards to communities and counties at the 31st annual Nebraska Community Improvement Program (NCIP) recognition day and banquet held at the University of Nebraska at Kearney's Student Union on Friday, Nov. 4.

More than 450 persons from across the state attended the full day of workshops, a luncheon and the evening banquet and awards ceremony.

Concurrent workshop sessions included discussions on establishing technology centers, electronic marketing of community assets, visioning and leadership development, Community Builders Process and tours of Kearney and Axtell.

The participants also discussed multi-community collaboration, leadership development strategies, fund-raising and financing, housing planning and financing, tree planting advantages, enterprise zones, Nestbuilding Networks, uses of the Internet and youth involvement techniques.

The Community Builders Process held its first annual awards luncheon as part of the day's events. Several individuals and communities were honored for their work in developing present and future leaders in their communities. Named Outstanding Builders were:

Russ Pankonin, Wauneta - organizer. Pankonin was honored for his organizational skills in helping obtain ownership of the downtown theatre.

Linda Taylor, McCook - applicator. She was cited for applying business opportunities seen in other southwest Nebraska towns to expanding her own business in McCook.

Sue Broeker, Beaver City - encourager. Broeker was honored for providing the essen-

tial activity in encouraging economic development in her town.

Jim Sughrue, Indianola - risk taker. Sughrue took an enormous risk a year ago when he launched a newspaper, *The Red Willow County Times*, which has become an important community building agency. His paper emphasizes the history of Indianola and Red Willow County, helping readers know where they have been so they can determine where they want to go.

Jackie Johnson, Cambridge - vision builder. Johnson was honored for helping Cambridge develop a vision of the future and means to achieve that vision.

A community development award went to Indianola where the Indianola Economic Development Corporation is a direct result of the Community Builders Process. The corporation was a non-functioning program when the graduates of the first Community Builders program in southwest Nebraska took over and brought a breath of new life to Indianola.

The other illustration of success is the *Red Willow County Times*. Started in July of 1993, this weekly newspaper has 475 subscribers after one year of operation and is one month away from becoming a legal newspaper. James J. Sughrue, editor, started the paper with little more than an ability to write.

Another community development award went to Wauneta for its acquisition and renovation of the Chateau Theater which closed in 1989 after more than 10 years of struggling to keep going. It sat vacant for more than three years until the Department of Economic Development launched its Community Builders Process and participants saw they had a potential business to resurrect.



Community Builders: Foundation for Enterprise Zone Development

Thirty-one Nebraska communities became eligible for enterprise zone designation by having a targeted area meet two of three conditions of economic distress based on population loss, poverty and high unemployment. The Enterprise Zone Act makes tax credits available to employers who hire residents living in distressed areas that have been designated as enterprise zones. The Act requires a minimum investment of \$75,000 in exchange for a \$4,500 tax credit for each employee living within the zone. In addition, the business will receive a \$3,000 tax credit for each \$75,000 invested.

The Act attempts to identify, encourage, and empower individuals, groups, and governments who are willing to rebuild the economies of their enterprise community and influence their own future. It does this by

connecting necessary agency directors, staff and affected enterprise community groups and individuals in problem-solving clusters.

The creative problem-solving and changes in attitudes that occur during this process motivate participants to affect real change in their community. The Enterprise Zone strategic planning process is participant-driven; that way, the process meets the true needs of citizens and communities by allowing them to find answers and help implement ideas.

This process allows enterprise communities the opportunity to create their own capacity for economic development.

The state will be using many innovative programs and resource partners to deliver services in the designated areas, including Community Builders training which helps

"Tangible results of the Community Builders initiative were evident in the first (Enterprise Zone) application process. Trained Community Builders in the Trenton (NE) area came together as the driving force in the enterprise zone initiative. When city officials expressed concern that the requirement for an Enterprise Zone Board of seven community individuals would stall the process, Community Builders participants stepped forward to volunteer their services. Without the leadership capacity created by the Community Builders Academy, Trenton would not be ready to make application for Enterprise Zone designation in April 1995."

Darl Naumann

Enterprise Zone Coordinator

Nebraska Department of Economic Development


identify and train leaders, and encourages the continuing strategic planning processes.

Tangible results from the Community Builders were evident in the first application process. One of the 31 communities qualified for application was Trenton, a participating community in the Southwest Community Builders Academy. Trenton officials were reluctant to participate in the enterprise zone initiative because of a well-founded frustration with previous development projects which had failed because of a lack of leadership and sustainable community interest.

Trained Community Builders in the Trenton area came together as the driving force in the Enterprise Zone Initiative.

When city officials expressed concern that the requirement for an Enterprise Zone Board of seven individuals would stall the process, Community Builders participants stepped forward to volunteer their services, their knowledge base about the community's history, and their vision of the future. Without the leadership created by the academy, Trenton would not have been ready to make application for Enterprise Zone designation in April 1995.

Following designation, existing business assistance is offered to improve a community's global competitiveness by determining specific needs and providing sup-



Tangible results from the Community Builders were evident in the first application process.

port in the areas of training for existing / new employees, identifying new markets, access to risk capital and improved technology, management training and assistance, community infrastructure investments, access to information technology and training.

Also essential is new business growth assistance. New businesses can be created by identifying residents with business ideas and supporting them through Community Builders Information and Technology Centers, One-Stop Business Assistance Centers, revolving loan funds or other small scale financing.

Promotion and attraction of tourists/travelers based on local and regional attraction opportunities, and recruitment of new businesses that can benefit from the locational advantages of the community are other good strategies.

In addition, the state anticipates establishing inter-government response teams that will form new partnerships with these community-based organizations to help target assistance where it is needed the most. The state will remain flexible in adapting new ideas and methods to enhance the economic development and social service efforts in the enterprise community. Our effectiveness in working together can serve as a model for reinventing government, breaking down bureaucratic barriers, minimizing red tape and eroding old hostilities.

Harlan Co. towns seek link to information superhighway

Kearney Hub, June 20, 1995

By GINGER JENSEN
Regional Correspondent

ORLEANS Harlan County is miles away from an interstate, but its residents are involved in a two-year project to help put south central Nebraska on the information superhighway.

Residents of Orleans, Stamford, Alma and Oxford met Saturday in Orleans with Paul Ekberg of Orleans to discuss how to get that so-called superhighway connected to Harlan and Furnas counties.

EKBERG IS a former Orleans Public School teacher who now owns an education consulting business, Telecomputing. He sets up computer programs for student use in Kansas, Iowa and Nebraska.

"We (south central Nebraska) need an on-ramp to the superhighway," he said. "If we don't have an on-ramp, we won't get on the superhighway, and it will pass us by."

He said computer-generated telecommunications can make it possible for rural areas of the country to continue to grow and prosper.

Ekberg and members of a committee formed Saturday intend to apply for a federal Community Development Block Grant, administered by the state Department of Economic Development, to set up a computer center. That would be the on-ramp that would enable citizens to access the international computer system called Internet.

Ekberg said he expects the project to take two years. The next step will be a regional town hall meeting tentatively scheduled for July 14 at the Harlan County Ag Center in Orleans.

It will be followed by a survey and a letter of intent to DED explaining what the project will do and estimating its cost.

EKBERG SAID the committee will have

nine months to prepare the grant application. Funding approval could be expected for March 1996.

Betty Streff of Orleans, owner of Apple Kay's and part of Nebraska Home Based Business Association, said she thinks this would be the first regional Internet center in Nebraska and could serve as a demonstration project.

Grant funds would purchase five computers to be located in Orleans or Alma and networked with other computers to establish an Internet node or server. Cost of the computer equipment, the node, software and laser printer was estimated at \$25,000.

TO HAVE THE Internet node, it's necessary to have access from a telephone company headhouse - there is one in Orleans and one in Alma - with copper wire and a 24-hour open line. That means the node can't be hooked to a switchboard system. Cost for the telephone line to the headhouse will be \$75-\$150 per month, and the line to and access to Internet will be about \$1,000 per month.

Ekberg said that while LB452 provided access to Internet by Nebraska's educational service units, it didn't include access for private citizens and businesses.

"THIS INTERNET node will be ours," he said. "It will not be attached to any others."

By using the Harlan County Internet node, Harlan and Furnas county citizens and businesses with a computer and modem won't be charged for a long-distance phone call. All hookup calls will be considered local calls. Only the time actually on Internet will be charged as a long-distance call.

Ekberg said sending an Internet message anywhere in the world takes about 17 seconds.

The idea for the Harlan County Internet cen-

Continued on Page 34

Harlan

Continued from Page 33

ter developed this spring from a Community Builders' meeting attended by Deb Christensen of Orleans, Craig Tripe of Alma and Susan Helmink of Harlan County Hospital in Alma.

"CHRIS HOY of the Department of Economic Development told us about telecommunications technology, and it sparked our interest," Christensen said. "Paul (Ekberg) has made things happen for us. We're ready to go."

Christensen, who works at Apple Kay's, will serve as chairwoman of the committee formed Saturday. Other members are Tripe, Valerie Brady of Stamford, Jim Brown of Republican City, and Max Hejtmanek of Orleans. A representative from Beaver City will be added to the task force.

Ekberg said the worldwide hookup can be used by businesses looking for suppliers and markets for their products, for tourism schedules of events, for towns to distribute promotional videos and for professionals to seek and work with national and international clients.

WITH COMPUTERS at local libraries, Ekberg said, patrons can access desktop publishing programs, data bases and spread sheets

and can learn to use a computer.

"We want to provide an atmosphere so easy that anyone can learn computer telecommunications and can access the world," he said.

Jim Miller of the Harlan County Soil Conservation Service said that through Internet, farmers can access SCS databases and place orders for service.

Tripe said the parts department at his family's business, Tripe Motor Co. in Alma, can use Internet to find suppliers offering better prices and to find used cars.

Thus (setting up the state's first regional Internet node) is the greatest thing that has happened to us since they invented corn and constructed the Harlan County Dam," he said.

HARLAN COUNTY Hospital Administrator Allan Van Driel said the Internet hookup will make it possible for the hospital to access the University of Nebraska Medical Center or other medical facilities worldwide to keep up on the progress of medical technology.

If approved, the grant would pay half the project cost for the first two years. Ekberg said the matching funds will be obtained from foundations or private donations. After the grant period, it's expected the project will be self-supporting.



Dr. Robert Manley, left foreground, facilitates an Academy discussion group

More Information?

Nebraska wishes to share its experiences with Community Builders with all who might be interested. For more information about Nebraska Community Builders, contact:

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Order Form

This report is one in a series prepared by Nebraska about Community Builders. Other publications in this series are:

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[] Community Builders: A Process For Revitalizing Rural America	November 1995	66 PAGES	\$10.00
[] Community Builders Brochure	May 1994	Tri-Fold	Free
[] Community Builders Process Training Handbook	1995	3-Ring Binder	\$15.00

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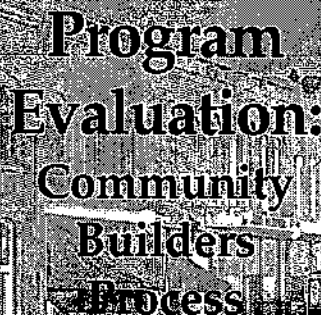
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A black and white photograph of the Nebraska State Capitol Building, a large, ornate structure with many arched windows and a decorative roofline. The building is the background for the text.

*“A community
like an individual
has a work to do”*

*—Inscription on the Nebraska
State Capitol Building*



Program Evaluation: Community Builders Process

Replication of the Community Builders Process was made possible by a grant from the Rural Economic Policy Program of The Aspen Institute. The

grant was made to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Department of Agricultural Economics with major portions subcontracted to the Nebraska Development Academy at the Nebraska Department of Economic Development. One of the requirements of the grant was to conduct a formal, scientific evaluation of the process. Dr. John C. Allen and Lisa Thompson of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln conducted the following evaluation.

By John C. Allen &

Lisa Thompson

Department of Agricultural Economics

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Section 1. A.

Introduction

Nebraska's Community Builders Process is a community-based leadership process intended to facilitate an increased human resource base leading to more available community leaders and increased economic development at the community level.

A definition of community stresses multi-township or village cooperation in building a larger leadership cohort. Thus, "community" in this evaluation generally means a self-defined geographic region of multiple communities and often times multiple counties.

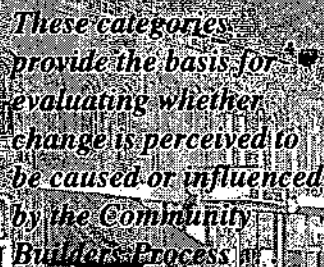
Four areas were evaluated. The first was a baseline comparison of the characteristics of the participants in the Community Builders

Process with those of traditional rural community leaders. Nonparticipants were selected geographically to correspond to the Community Builders Regions. A random sample was selected from a list of traditional leaders supplied by the Nebraska Department of Economic Development.

General characteristics of the survey respondents were compared to identify any specific age, gender, income or longevity in the community differences among the two groups. This was done based on the assumption that increased diversity in community development activities (Flora & Flora, 1992) leads to stronger communities. Therefore, a potential positive impact of the Community Builders Process could be increased diversity among the rural community leaders.

The second comparison was conducted of the level of volunteer activities during the last year between the participants and the nonparticipants. The assumption here was that we could expect activities of the participants to increase at a higher level than that of nonparticipants. If that were the case, we could extrapolate that participation in the Community Builders Process was related to increased volunteerism in the communities.

The third analysis was conducted on the



*These categories
provide the basis for
evaluating whether
change is perceived to
be caused or influenced
by the Community
Builders Process*

change in overall community economic development activity in each region. These regions were combined to provide a participant versus nonparticipant

analysis. The need to provide a check on the perception of economic development by the participants and nonparticipants was necessary to guard against an overly-enthusiastic perception by the participants.

Surveying both participants and nonparticipants, we are able to check for face validity. That is, do both groups see current economic development activity as being at similar levels? If so, then we can say that current economic activity is dramatically increasing, slightly increasing, staying the same, or decreasing.

These categories provide the basis for evaluating whether the change is perceived to be caused or influenced by the Community Builders Process and the individuals who participate.

The final evaluation area was the perceived impact of the Community Builders Process on rural communities where it has been piloted. Both groups were asked if they believed that the Community Builders Process played a role in the increased community economic development activity.

The importance of this evaluation can not be overlooked. If we find that nonparticipants (the traditional leaders) and the participants (emerging leaders) all identify the Commu-

nity Builders Process as playing a role in increased activity, we can say that a relationship seems to exist between increased economic de-

velopment activity and the organization of the Community Builders Process.

This report is designed using quantitative and qualitative data. Tables illustrate the statistical significance of participating in the process and not—as it is related to volunteer activities—donating money, overall activity in economic development, and the perceived role of the Community Builders Process on increased economic development activities in their communities.

The qualitative data is derived from open-ended, free response questions provided for respondents to place their answers in context. The qualitative data is provided to place the statistical relationships in context, and also to provide grounded feedback from participants and nonparticipants. Each of the previously noted evaluation components will be presented followed by a summary evaluation of the Community Builders Process.

Section 2. A.

Evaluation Procedures

A self-administered mail survey was used to collect data to examine the impact of the Community Builders Process. The Total Design Method (Dillman, 1978) was used to collect information from participants in the Community Builders Process (from here on

identified as participants) and nonparticipants, individuals who had a long history of being identified as leaders in the region (from here on identified as non-participants).

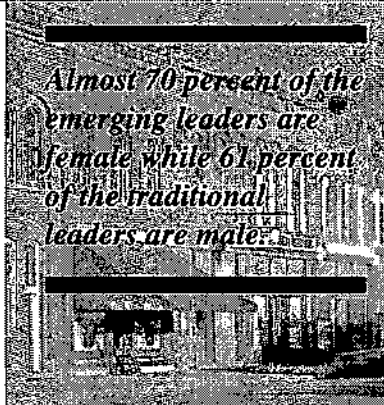
A response rate of 38 percent (N = 195) and 24 percent (N = 55) was achieved. The analysis included descriptive statistics, cross tabulations using Chi-square as a statistical significant test and correlation coefficients. Qualitative text statements were selected on their best representation of specific core areas identified in the written responses. Every effort was made to provide anonymity to the respondents.

Section 3. A.

Analysis

A baseline comparison of the participants and nonparticipants shows similarities and differences between the two populations. Several differences emerged while comparing the two groups. The first is age: Traditional leaders average a full 10 years older than emerging leaders. The second is gender: Almost 70 percent of the emerging leaders are female while 61 percent of the traditional leaders are male. Traditional leaders tend to also have higher household incomes than the emerging leaders who participated in the process.

These differences between the populations provide some interesting insight into the composition of the traditional leadership in rural communities of Nebraska and the potential



Almost 70 percent of the emerging leaders are female while 61 percent of the traditional leaders are male.

to add to the human resource base. By facilitating the emergence of new community leaders, it is possible that the diversity of rural commu-

nity leadership may be increased by the Community Builders Process, although these data can not confirm or deny such a relationship.

What the data show is that those participating in the Community Builders Process are not similar to the traditional rural leaders. This increased diversity within a community leadership base is said to increase the probability of successful economic development

Table 1: Demographic Comparisons of Participants and non-participants.

Response	Participants	Non-participants
<u>Average Age</u>	39.6 years	49.5 years
<u>Gender</u>		
Male	30.8%	61.0%
Female	69.2%	39.0%
<u>Marital Status</u>		
Married	71.2%	87.7%
Divorced	1.9%	4.8%
Single	23.1%	4.3%
Widowed	3.8%	3.2%
<u>Education (Average)</u>	Some College	Some College
<u>Income</u>		
<\$29,999	44.9%	22.7%
>\$29,999		
to \$49,999	42.4%	44.2%
\$50,000+	12.0%	33.1%
<u>Relatives Previously Lived Here</u>	64.7%	49.4%

activities (Flora & Flora, 1992).

Section 3. B.

Previous Participation in Local Economic Development Activities

To provide a baseline of data specifying the similarities and differences between the two groups—participants and nonparticipants—several questions were asked. The first was:

"In the last year have you participated in local economic development activities?"

The findings suggest a slight difference

Table 2: Previous Participation in Local Economic Development Activities

Response	Participants	Non-participants
Yes	80.4%	72.2%
No	17.6%	26.7%
No comment	2.0%	1.1%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

does exist between those who participated in the process and those who did not. During the last year, 8.2 percent more participants were involved in economic development. While these differences are not statistically significant, they show that five more individuals were involved in development activities who might not have been involved without the availability of the process.

The motivations of the traditional and emerging leaders were analyzed to evaluate whether a difference in motivations existed. Nonparticipants (traditional leaders) said they

*"I care what happens
to my town. I want to
know who and how
decisions are made."*

became involved in local economic development activities because, in their words:

*I believe you get out
of a community what
you put into it. If you don't put back soon
there may not be a community to give to.*

*The desire for our community to still be
here for my children and persons my age who
grew up here, into and during the next century
is my main stimulus for participating.*

*Desire to attract businesses to our community
so that it has a chance of surviving
and growing in the future. If we just sit by,
the opportunities will be gone.*

*I participated because of a strong love and
belief in small rural communities in America.
I do not believe "they" get their "just due"
in the overall picture of the country.*

Participants stated their motivations for participating in local economic development activities this way:

*I care what happens to my town. I want to
know who and how decisions are made.*

*I will live in my community for the rest of
my life and I would like to see it prosper and
also provide jobs. My children need a reason
to return after college.*

I volunteer time on behalf of our youth.

*Community development and the Internet
node. I can see how that could generate new
businesses as well as help return and attract
new people to our community.*

The knowledge and contacts I made

through Community Builders.

Statements were selected to provide a qualitative context in which to evaluate the impact of the

Community Builders Process and reveal several similarities and at least one difference. Both groups take a long-term perspective indicating they are motivated to participate in economic development activities—primarily volunteer activities—because of a strong desire to see their community survive for the next generation.

One difference seems to be that participants (often female and younger than the traditional leaders) want to learn how decisions are made so they can participate.

Section 3. C.

Previous Multi-community Economic Development Participation.

Respondents also were asked:

"Have you participated in economic development programs and activities that combined members from more than one community?"

The findings illustrate a statistically significant difference exists between the groups

Table 3. Previous Participation in Multi-community Economic Development Programs or Activities

Response	Participants	Non-participants
Yes	70.0%	55.6%
No	26.0%	43.4%
No Comment	4.0%	1.1%
Total	100.0%	100.0%
P = .0396		

Both groups take a long-term perspective indicating they are motivated to participate in economic development activities.

($P=.0396$). Participants were significantly more likely to have been involved in multi-community programs or activities than were the tradi-

tional leaders.

Section 3. D.

Recency of Multi-community Activity

Respondents also were asked if and when they had participated in multi-community development activities. The findings (Table 4) suggest that nonparticipants were more likely to have participated in the multi-community program activity within the last three months. Overall a smaller percentage of them had participated in multi-community activities (55.6 percent versus 70 percent).

Section 3. E.

Current Volunteer Activities

To gain an understanding of behavioral similarities and differences between those

Table 4. Multi-community Development Activity in the Last Five Years

Response	Participants	Non-participants
Last Month	20.6%	31.1%
Two to Three Months Ago	20.6%	25.5%
More than Three Months and Less Than One Year Ago	38.2%	23.6%
One to Three Years Ago	20.6%	17.0%
Three or More Years Ago	0.0%	1.1%
Total	100.0%	100.0%
P = .3497		

who could be identified as traditional leaders (nonparticipants) and those emerging leaders (participants), the respondents were asked about their current volunteer activities. The first question was:

"Do you currently volunteer in your community?"

Table 5. Current Volunteer Activities

Response	Participants	Non-participants
Yes	92.5%	88.8%
No	7.5%	10.6%
No comment	0.0%	0.5%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

P = 6910

While no statistically significant difference exists between traditional and emerging leaders (Table 5), both were likely to volunteer. The quantity of volunteer effort also is important. Community self-development research often cites such activities by a variety of residents as a measure of successful community development (Flora and Flora, 1992). Respondents were asked:

"When you think of the time you work as a volunteer, would you say that in an average month you volunteer about . . ."

While the findings are not statistically significant, 30.6 percent of the participants volunteer 10 or more hours per month versus 30.9 percent for nonparticipants. The findings (Table 6) indicate that little difference exists between the two groups when it comes

Traditional leaders are more likely than emerging leaders to donate money to volunteer organizations.

to volunteer activities and the amount of time they volunteered.

Another measure of residential ties to one's community is the voluntary

donation of money to local causes. Respondents were asked if they had donated

Table 6. Hours Volunteered Per Month

Response (Hrs/Month)	Participants	Non-participants
Up to 2	6.1%	12.1%
2 < 5	26.5%	23.6%
5 < 10	30.6%	30.9%
10 < 20	16.3%	24.2%
20+	14.3%	6.7%
Don't Know	6.1%	2.4%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

P = 2489

money to local volunteer organizations within the last year. According to these findings (Table 7), traditional leaders are more likely than emerging leaders to donate money to volunteer organizations. Yet, fully two-thirds of the emerging leaders not only give of their time but also of their money.

Table 7. Voluntary Money Donation

Response	Participants	Non-participants
Yes	64.2%	75.0%
No	35.8%	25.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

P = 1177

Section 3. F.

Level of Local Involvement

During the Past Year

All participants had either completed or begun going through the Community Build-

ers Process during the past year. Therefore, respondents were asked if their involvement in community affairs had changed in the past year. To evaluate the

potential impact of participating in Community Builders, respondents were asked about changes in their participation levels (Table 8). No significant difference was found between those who participated in the program and those who didn't.

Increased activity was noted by 56.6 percent of the participants and 40.4 percent of the traditional leaders. Traditional leaders were more likely to say their activities stayed

Table 8. Past Year Community Involvement

Response	Participants	Non-participants
Increased dramatically	17.0%	10.1%
Increased slightly	39.6%	30.3%
Stayed same	34.0%	48.4%
Decreased slightly	9.4%	8.5%
Decreased dramatically	0.0%	2.1%
Don't Know	0.0%	0.5%
Total	100.0%	100.0%
N=2924		

the same. This makes sense considering that traditional leaders have previously-established roles with previously-established time commitments. We would expect that traditional leaders would be more likely to say their efforts remained unchanged.

To more precisely measure whether the change in activities was related to changes in

Community Builders participants were slightly more optimistic about the change in local economic development during the last year.

local economic development efforts, respondents were asked:

"During the last year would you say that activities focusing on eco-

nomic development in your community have changed?"

Community Builders participants were slightly more optimistic about the change in local economic development during the last year (Table 9). Of the participants, 69.8 per-

Table 9. Change in Local Economic Development Activity in the Past Year

Response	Participants	Non-Participants
Increased dramatically	15.9%	26.4%
Increased slightly	46.6%	43.4%
Stayed same	26.5%	22.6%
Decreased slightly	7.4%	3.8%
Decreased dramatically	0.5%	0.0%
Don't Know	2.5%	3.8%
Total	100.0%	100.0%
N=2924		

cent said they believed community economic development had increased, compared to 62.5 percent of nonparticipants. Overall, a majority of participants and nonparticipants indicated they have observed an increase in community economic development activity.

Section 3. G.

Increased Economic Development Activities Due to Community Builders Process?

As in any program evaluation, the direct

Local residents who are participants are more likely to say the Community Builders Process helped increase economic development activity.

linkage between programming and change in the community must be evaluated. Participants and non-participants were asked if they saw increased economic development activity in their community, and—if so—whether the Community Builders Process played a role in the increase.

Of all responses, 188 traditional leaders (69.8 percent) and 37 participants (62.5 percent) believed economic development activity increased.

Table 10: Increased Economic Development Activities Related to the Community Builders Process?

Response	Participants	Non-participants
Yes	72.7%	47.7%
No	15.9%	11.4%
Don't Know	11.4%	40.9%
Total	100.0%	100.0%
P= .0015		

These findings are statistically significant and show that local residents who are participants are more likely to say the Community Builders Process helped increase community economic development activity. This finding is not surprising. One would expect that those who had completed the process would have believed it to have an impact. Surprisingly, nearly half the traditional leaders (47.7 percent) believed community economic development activities had increased and that the Community Builders Process played a role in that increase.

Slightly over 40 percent of the traditional

leaders indicated they did not know if the process had played a role. Many of the traditional leaders who were not participants (40 percent)

had not heard of Community Builders. Yet, 47.7 percent indicated the process played a role in increased community economic development activity. Several examples were used to illustrate the point:

Development of HERO board. Community Builders was involved.

New homes were built.

Because of a person involved in Community Builders, we had a wagon train come to our community and stay one night. We had a community supper, played old fashioned games and had a great time.

Local group of citizens helped raise money to reopen businesses.

The statements illustrate the types of programs identified by non-participants as influenced by the Community Builders Process. Traditional leaders could identify specific community projects, but many were unaware of the Community Builders Process in their area. Several explanations may exist. First is that any new group takes time to gain recognition. The second, which may be most worrisome, is stated succinctly by a traditional leader in the state's central region:

When Community Builders was sold to our community they asked for people not involved in Chamber work. Therefore, those citizens

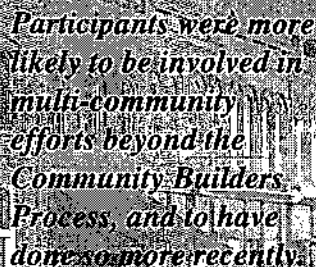
had no avenue for taking their ideas to the public. Now that our economic development organization is involved, I expect to see activity increase.

The issue is highlighted in the open-ended responses by the traditional leaders. A mechanism to link traditional and emerging leaders seems to be called for as the program evolves. In rural areas where human and economic resources are somewhat finite, it makes little sense to alienate the community's traditional leaders. Therefore, a mechanism that facilitates the interaction between the participants and nonparticipants would be beneficial.

Summary

In evaluating the impact and potential impact of the Community Builders Process, we must reflect on the composition of the traditional leader group and the nontraditional participants in the program.

A striking difference is found in gender, age and income. The Community Builders Process does bring into the local community development arena residents who are different from the traditional leaders. Previous research indicates that more diversity in the leadership pool increases the chance of successful community economic development. No difference exists between the groups when volunteer activities are examined. Both groups are involved in volunteer activities. The quantity of activities are also similar. Participants are more likely to see an increase in

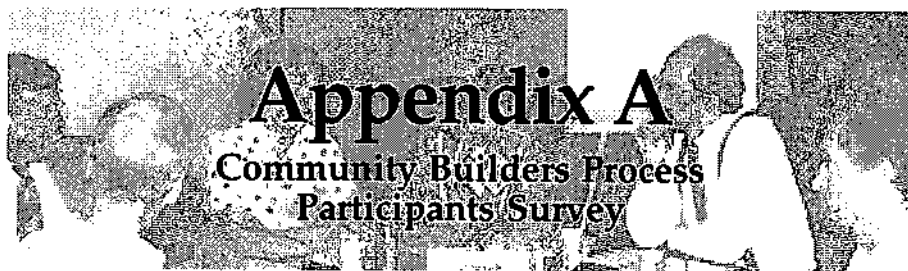


Participants were more likely to be involved in multi-community efforts beyond the Community Builders Process, and to have done so more recently.

local economic development activities. One reason is their involvement in multi-community development activities. Participants were likely

to be involved in multi-community efforts beyond Community Builders, and to have done so more recently. Participants also are slightly more likely to have increased their own involvement in community affairs during the last year. About half of the traditional leaders had not heard of Community Builders. Of those who had, 47.7 percent believed the process was related to increased community economic development. It is interesting that traditional leaders who knew about the process and saw an increase in development activity pointed to specific community projects as evidence of the impact. According to respondents, one area for improvement is the link between Community Builders participants and the traditional leaders.

Therefore, it is suggested that meetings, mailings or another mechanism be developed which enables traditional leaders to know about and work with the Community Builders participants as they become involved in community development activities. Overall, Community Builders has shown to be related to increased community economic development. Participants believe they have increased their leadership skills and knowledge, and their ability to guide economic development activities.



As community development efforts occur in rural areas of Nebraska, it is important to know what efforts are successful and what changes would make them better. Please take a few moments of your time and answer the questions below. All of your answers will be anonymous and no one individual's answers will ever be reported.

Q 1. What did you like best about the Community Builders Process?

Q 2. What aspect of the process did you find to be most in need of improvement?

Q 3. Why did you become involved in the Community Builders Process?

Q 4. What did you hope to gain by your participation in the Community Builders Process?

Q 5. When you think about your personal expectations of the Community Builders Process, would you say that your expectations were: (Please circle one answer)

1 Exceeded 2 Met 3 Not Met

Please explain your answer

VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES

Now, I would like to ask a few Questions about your volunteer activities in your community.

- Q 6. How will your level of activity in community volunteer organizations be affected by the Community Builders Process? (Please circle one statement.)

Will Increase Will remain the same Will decrease No comment

In ten words or less, why? _____

- Q 7. As you look ahead, what support do you need for community and economic development programs? (Check all that apply.)

Information / Educational materials on: _____

Assistance with: _____

Workshop training on:

- ☐ Strategic Planning
- ☐ Support for Main Street Businesses
- ☐ Support for Home Based Businesses
- ☐ Training on Environmental Issues Facing Rural Nebraska
- ☐ Coalition Building
- ☐ Leadership Training
- ☐ Tourism Development and Planning
- ☐ Grant Writing
- ☐ Entrepreneurial Training
- ☐ Recruiting New Businesses
- ☐ Retention and Expansion of Existing Businesses

- Q 8. In the last year, have you participated in local economic development activities? (Please circle one.)

1 YES 2 NO 3 NO COMMENT

- Q 9. What caused you to participate in economic development or community development activities?

- Q 10. Have you participated in economic development programs and activities which combined members from more than one community? (Please circle one.)

1 YES 2 NO 3 NO COMMENT

Q 11. If YES, was it? (Please circle one.)

- 1 WITHIN THE LAST MONTH
- 2 2 TO 3 MONTHS AGO
- 3 MORE THAN 3 MONTHS AGO BUT LESS THAN 1 YEAR AGO
- 4 MORE THAN ONE YEAR AGO BUT LESS THAN THREE YEARS AGO
- 5 MORE THAN THREE YEARS AGO

Q 12. Do you currently volunteer in your community? (Please circle one answer.)

- 1 YES 2 NO (If No, go to Q 14) 3 NO COMMENT

Q 13. When you think of the time that you work as a volunteer, would you say that in an average month you volunteer about (Please circle one answer)

- 1 UP TO 2 HOURS PER MONTH
- 2 MORE THAN 2 HOURS BUT LESS THAN 5 HOURS PER MONTH
- 3 MORE THAN 5 HOURS BUT LESS THAN 10 HOURS PER MONTH
- 4 MORE THAN 10 HOURS BUT LESS THAN 20 HOURS PER MONTH
- 5 20 OR MORE HOURS PER MONTH
- 6 DON'T KNOW

Q 14. Have you donated money to any volunteer organizations within your community during that last month?

- 1 YES 2 NO 3 NO COMMENT

Q 15. If YES would you say that you donate money to: (Please circle one answer).

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1 1 TO 2 ORGANIZATIONS | 3 6 TO 10 ORGANIZATIONS |
| 2 3 TO 5 ORGANIZATIONS | 4 MORE THAN 10 ORGANIZATIONS |

Q 16. When you think of your past role in community affairs (during the last 12 months) would you say that your level of involvement has (Please circle one answer):

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 INCREASED DRAMATICALLY | 4 DECREASED SLIGHTLY |
| 2 INCREASED SLIGHTLY | 5 DECREASED DRAMATICALLY |
| 3 STAYED THE SAME | 6 DON'T KNOW |

Q 17. During the last year would you say that activities focusing on economic development in your community have:

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 INCREASED DRAMATICALLY | 4 DECREASED SLIGHTLY |
| 2 INCREASED SLIGHTLY | 5 DECREASED DRAMATICALLY |
| 3 STAYED THE SAME | 6 DON'T KNOW |

Q 18. If you answered that there has been an increase in economic activity, would you say that the Community Builders Process has PLAYED A ROLE IN THIS INCREASE?

1 YES 2 NO 3 DON'T KNOW

Q 19. Please explain your answer. _____

Q 20. When you think of the consensus within your community about the direction it should move in economic development, would you say that there has been (Please circle one answer):

- | | | | |
|---|---------------------|---|--------------------|
| 1 | A DRAMATIC INCREASE | 4 | A SLIGHT DECLINE |
| 2 | A SLIGHT INCREASE | 5 | A DRAMATIC DECLINE |
| 3 | STAYED THE SAME | 6 | DON'T KNOW |

Q 21. Would you say that during the past year that you have worked (Please circle one answer):

- 1 MORE CLOSELY WITH STATE AGENCIES
- 2 HAVE WORKED THE SAME
- 3 HAVE DECREASED WORKING WITH STATE AGENCIES
- 4 DON'T KNOW

Please Explain Your Answer: _____

Q 22. Would you say that in the last year the number of local leaders has (Please circle one answer):

- 1 INCREASED
- 2 STAYED THE SAME
- 3 DECLINED
- 4 DON'T KNOW

PERSONAL GROWTH

Q 23. When you think about your participation in the Community Builders Process, what changes do you think you went through as you participated?

Q 24. What new skills did you develop?

COMMUNITY SUCCESSES

Q 25. Please list any community successes that you think can be attributed to the Community Builders Process.

To finish the survey I'd appreciate it if you would answer a few questions about yourself and your family. Remember, that your answers will be summarized anonymously and no one individual's answers will ever be reported.

Q 26. What is your age? ____ YEARS

Q 27. What is your sex? 1 MALE 2 FEMALE

Q 28. What is your marital status?

- | | |
|-----------|--------------------|
| 1 MARRIED | 2 DIVORCED |
| 3 SINGLE | 4 WIDOW OR WIDOWER |

Q 29. Which category below best describes your highest level of formal education?
(Please circle one.)

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 ELEMENTARY SCHOOL | 5 SOME COLLEGE |
| 2 SOME HIGH SCHOOL | 6 COLLEGE GRADUATE 2 YR. |
| 3 HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE | 7 COLLEGE GRADUATE 4 YR. |
| 4 VOCATIONAL/TRADE SCHOOL | 8 POST GRADUATE |

Q 30. If you graduated from a college, in what field did you obtain your degree?

Q 31. What is your general occupation?

Q 32. Do you generally work in your home community? 1 YES 2 NO

Q 33. Do you do some of your work at home? 1 YES 2 NO

Q 34. Listed below are some broad income categories. Please indicate which category best describes your household income for 1994. (Please circle one number.)

- | | |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| 1 UNDER \$12,000 | 4 \$30,000-\$39,000 |
| 2 \$12,000-\$19,999 | 5 \$40,000-\$49,999 |
| 3 \$20,000-\$29,999 | 6 \$50,000 OR MORE |

Q 35. How long have you lived in this community? _____ YEARS

Q 36. Before living in this community did you have relatives that lived in the community?

- 1 YES 2 NO 3 DON'T KNOW

Q 37. If yes, how long did they live here? _____ YEARS

Q 38. Would you be willing to be contacted about local economic development activities during the following year?

- 1 YES 2 NO

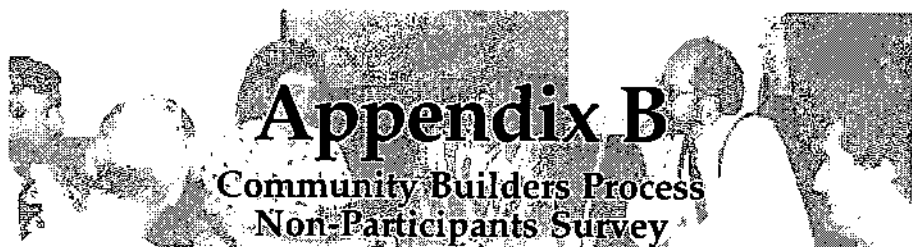
If YES please write your name and address on the following lines. Thank you.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE # (Optional) _____

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this short survey. If there is something you would like to add that you think is important about the Community Builders Program or your community that we failed to ask, please feel free to add it here. Thanks again.



As community development efforts occur in rural areas of Nebraska, it is important to know what efforts are successful and what changes would make them better. Please take a few moments of your time and answer the questions below. All of your answers will be anonymous and no one individual's answers will ever be reported.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

I would like to begin by asking a few questions about local economic development activities in your community and in your region.

- Q 1. In the last year, have you participated in local economic development activities? (Please circle one.)

1 YES 2 NO 3 NO COMMENT

- Q 2. What caused you to participate in economic development or community development activities?

- Q 3. Have you participated in economic development programs and activities which combined members from more than one community? (Please circle one.)

1 YES 2 NO 3 NO COMMENT

- Q 4. If YES, was it? (Please circle one.)

- 1 WITHIN THE LAST MONTH
- 2 TWO TO THREE MONTHS AGO
- 3 MORE THAN THREE MONTHS AGO BUT LESS THAN ONE YEAR AGO
- 4 MORE THAN ONE YEAR AGO BUT LESS THAN THREE YEARS AGO
- 5 MORE THAN THREE YEARS AGO

VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES

Q 5. Do you currently volunteer in your community? (Please circle one answer.)

- 1 YES 2 NO (If No, go to Q 14) 3 NO COMMENT

Q 6. When you think of the time that you work as a volunteer, would you say that in an average month you volunteer about (Please circle one answer):

- 1 UP TO 2 HOURS PER MONTH
- 2 MORE THAN 2 HOURS BUT LESS THAN 5 HOURS PER MONTH
- 3 MORE THAN 5 HOURS BUT LESS THAN 10 HOURS PER MONTH
- 4 MORE THAN 10 HOURS BUT LESS THAN 20 HOURS PER MONTH
- 5 20 OR MORE HOURS PER MONTH
- 6 DON'T KNOW

Q 7. Have you donated money to any volunteer organizations within your community during that last month?

- 1 YES 2 NO 3 NO COMMENT

Q 8. If YES would you say that you donate money to (Please circle one answer):

- 1 1 TO 2 ORGANIZATIONS
- 2 3 TO 5 ORGANIZATIONS
- 3 6 TO 10 ORGANIZATIONS
- 4 MORE THAN 10 ORGANIZATIONS

Q 9. When you think of your past role in community affairs (during the last 12 months) would you say that your level of involvement has (Please circle one answer):

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 INCREASED DRAMATICALLY | 4 DECREASED SLIGHTLY |
| 2 INCREASED SLIGHTLY | 5 DECREASED DRAMATICALLY |
| 3 STAYED THE SAME | 6 DON'T KNOW |

Q 10. During the last year would you say that activities focusing on economic development in your community have:

- 1 INCREASED DRAMATICALLY
- 2 INCREASED SLIGHTLY
- 3 STAYED THE SAME
- 4 DECREASED SLIGHTLY
- 5 DECREASED DRAMATICALLY
- 6 DON'T KNOW

Q 11. If you answered that there has been an increase in economic activity, would you say that the Community Builders Process has PLAYED A ROLE IN THIS INCREASE? 1 YES 2 NO 3 DON'T KNOW

Q 12. Please explain your answer. _____

Q 13. Do you think the level of activity in volunteer organizations in your community will be influenced by the Community Builders Process (Please circle one answer)?

Activity will increase	Activity will remain the same	Activity will decrease	No Comment	Don't Know
---------------------------	-------------------------------------	---------------------------	---------------	---------------

In 10 words or less, why? _____

Q 14. As you look ahead, what support do you need for community and economic development programs? (Check all that apply.)

Information / Educational materials on: _____

Assistance with: _____

Workshop training on:

- ☐ Strategic Planning
- ☐ Support for Main Street Businesses
- ☐ Support for Home Based Businesses
- ☐ Training on Environmental Issues Facing Rural Nebraska
- ☐ Coalition Building
- ☐ Leadership Training
- ☐ Tourism Development and Planning
- ☐ Grant Writing
- ☐ Entrepreneurial Training
- ☐ Recruiting New Businesses
- ☐ Retention and Expansion of Existing Businesses

Q 15. When you think of the consensus within your community about the direction it should move in economic development, would you say that consensus has:

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 INCREASED DRAMATICALLY | 4 DECREASED SLIGHTLY |
| 2 INCREASED SLIGHTLY | 5 DECREASED DRAMATICALLY |
| 3 STAYED THE SAME | 6 DON'T KNOW |

Q 16. Would you say that during the past year that you have worked MORE CLOSELY WITH STATE AGENCIES, HAVE WORKED THE SAME, OR HAVE DECREASED WORKING WITH STATE AGENCIES (Please circle one answer)?

- 1 MORE CLOSELY WITH STATE AGENCIES
- 2 HAVE WORKED THE SAME
- 3 HAVE DECREASED WORKING WITH STATE AGENCIES
- 4 DON'T KNOW

Please explain: _____

Q 17. Would you say that in the last year the number of local leaders has INCREASED, STAYED THE SAME, OR DECLINED (Please circle one answer)?

- | | |
|-------------------|--------------|
| 1 INCREASED | 3 DECLINED |
| 2 STAYED THE SAME | 4 DON'T KNOW |

COMMUNITY SUCCESSES

Q 18. Please list any community successes that you think can be attributed to the Community Builders Process.

To finish the survey I'd appreciate it if you would answer a few questions about yourself and your family. Remember, that your answers will be summarized anonymously and no one individual's answers will ever be reported.

Q 19. What is your age? ____ YEARS

Q 20. What is your sex? 1 MALE 2 FEMALE

Q 21. What is your marital status?

- | | |
|-----------|--------------------|
| 1 MARRIED | 2 DIVORCED |
| 3 SINGLE | 4 WIDOW OR WIDOWER |

Q 22. Which category below best describes your highest level of formal education? (Please circle one.)

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 ELEMENTARY SCHOOL | 5 SOME COLLEGE |
| 2 SOME HIGH SCHOOL | 6 COLLEGE GRADUATE 2 YR. |
| 3 HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE | 7 COLLEGE GRADUATE 4 YR. |
| 4 VOCATIONAL/TRADE SCHOOL | 8 POST GRADUATE |

Q 23. If you graduated from a college, in what field did you obtain your degree?

Q 24. What is your general occupation?

Q 25. Do you generally work in your home community? 1 YES 2 NO

Q 26. Do you do some of your work at home? 1 YES 2 NO

Q 27. Listed below are some broad income categories. Please indicate which category best describes your household income for 1994. (Please circle one number.)

- | | | | |
|---|-------------------|---|-------------------|
| 1 | UNDER \$12,000 | 4 | \$30,000-\$39,000 |
| 2 | \$12,000-\$19,999 | 5 | \$40,000-\$49,999 |
| 3 | \$20,000-\$29,999 | 6 | \$50,000 OR MORE |

Q 28. How long have you lived in this community? _____ YEARS

Q 29. Before living in this community did you have relatives that lived in the community?

- 1 YES 2 NO 3 DON'T KNOW

Q 30. If yes, how long did they live here? _____ YEARS

Q 31. Would you be willing to be contacted about local economic development activities during the following year? 1 YES 2 NO

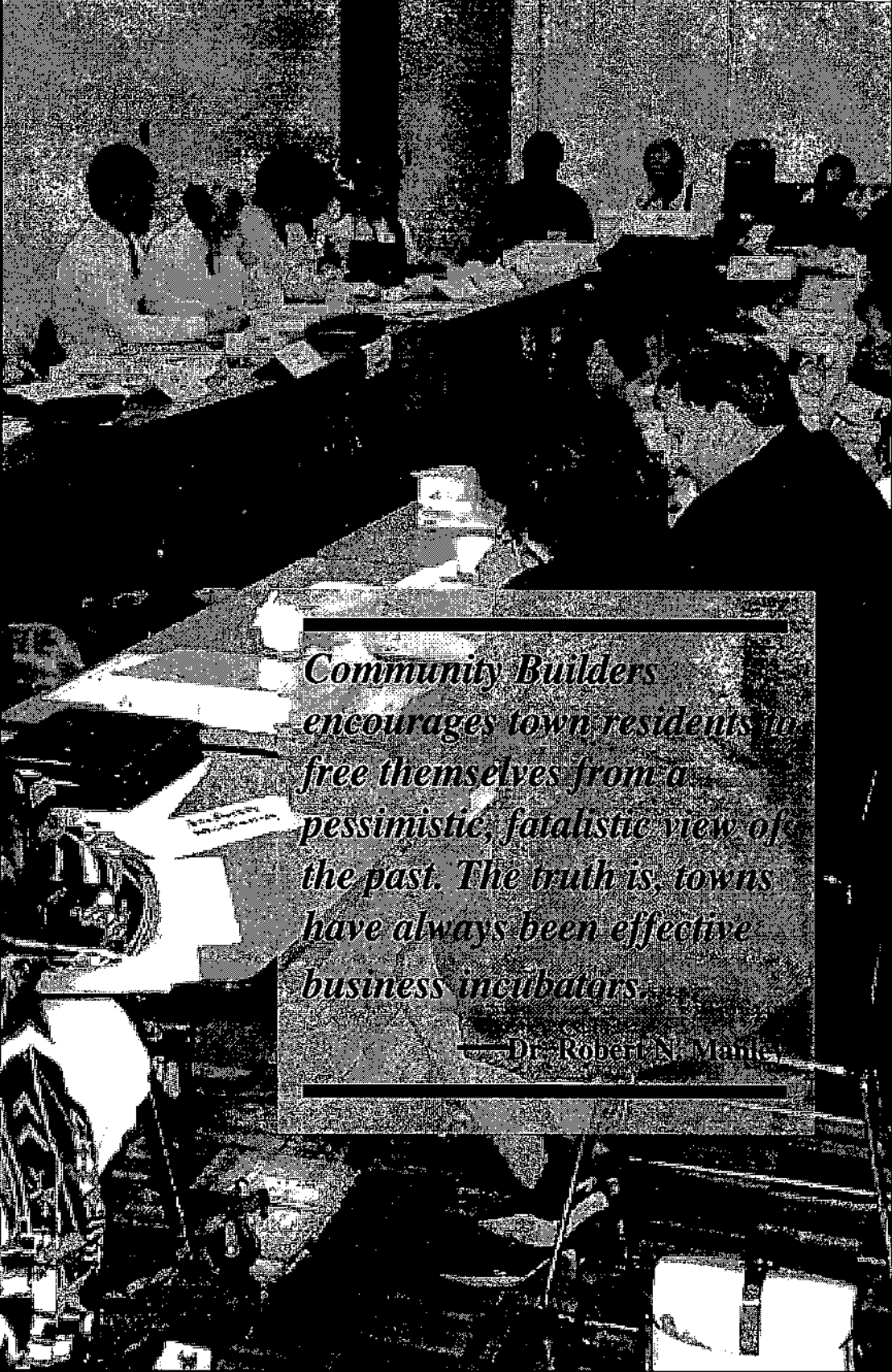
If YES please write your name and address on the following lines. Thank you.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

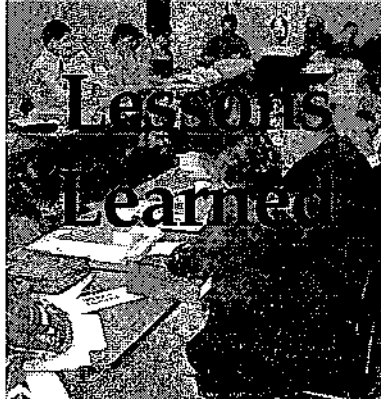
PHONE # (Optional) _____

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this short survey. If there is something you would like to add that you think is important about the Community Builders Program or your community that we failed to ask, please feel free to add it here. Thanks again.



*Community Builders
encourages town residents to
free themselves from a
pessimistic, fatalistic view of
the past. The truth is, towns
have always been effective
business incubators.*

—Dr. Robert N. Mailey



Lessons Learned

The Community Builders experience is greatly enriching Nebraska's understanding of how it can effectively support local and area development ef-

forts. The following list highlights the program, policy and development lessons learned from four years of Nebraska Community Builders.

1. How smaller rural communities operate now is much better understood by state and regional economic and community developers.

2. The process has been successful in stimulating multi-community collaboration.

3. The process has graphically demonstrated the value of networking, not only between participants and service providers, but between participants from different communities.

4. The Community Builders Process illustrates the importance of patience. Not every community will "take off" immediately. Some of them require two or three years before they are ready or have the necessary ingredients in place to use what they have learned.

5. Continuity and sustainability are necessary ingredients. Too many programs are here today and gone tomorrow. This has demonstrated that a process, not a program, that takes a long-term view, continues year after year, is locally controlled, and is finan-

cially sustainable can make a difference in the economic future of small, rural communities.

6. There are real challenges to replication of the process. A number of key pieces must be in place for the process to work. Those pieces include regional support, an Area Champion, and financial commitment.

7. Community Builders is an empowerment process. The philosophy behind the effort must be one that reflects genuine commitment to the idea that local residents know best what they want for the future of their communities and area and are, in fact, capable of building that future if they have the proper tools. Community Builders introduces them to a variety of tools, including their neighbors.

8. The role of outside service providers is that of being a resource for the communities. Local residents need to know what resources are available, but decision making powers and development of vision must rest in their hands. It does not work when outsiders come in and do it for them. The service providers cannot come in with the idea that they are going to "teach" locals what they need to do to be successful.

9. Existing and traditional local leaders must be involved and kept informed. While the Community Builders process seeks to identify and empower emergent leaders, it

is a mistake to ignore those who already are in positions of leadership, whether positional or influential. They control the local resources. This process

was never intended to undermine the existing leadership of communities, but rather to broaden and strengthen the leadership base.

10. The process must be kept simple. It works because it has a singular focus — the economic health of the area and participating communities. Introducing multiple goals or purposes dilutes the effect, confuses the participants and, ultimately, results in failure of the process in that area.

11. To ensure participation, there must be value in attending. Participants must receive information that they can use. It must be relevant to their problems and situations. This is why it is so important to let participants choose the topics at the beginning of each academy.

It also is the reason that the majority of the time spent at the workshops should be devoted to common problem-solving or brainstorming instead of listening to "talking heads."

12. Funding for this process IS available. The demonstrated results have attracted the attention of outside funding sources. As with any other worthwhile effort, it must be marketed. It helps if local matching funds are required and available.

13. Local matching financing is also pos-



sible. Money is available in rural areas if the need and expected results are properly presented. Participants and/or communities are willing to pay

reasonable per-participant fees. They help to demonstrate commitment to participate. Lack of such a fee indicates the program is worth nothing.

14. Sustaining the process requires a true partnership between regional service providers, state and federal resources, communities, and the participants. It must be a win-win situation for everyone. Each must gain from participating.

15. It is important to support the people who support the Community Builders Academies. Ongoing training for these individuals in the form of "Learning Clusters" allows them to meet with their counterparts from different areas of the state to share problems, solutions and ideas.

16. The importance of peer support and mentoring cannot be overemphasized. Over and over, participants have been inspired to achieve spectacular results by the encouragement of their peers and mentors whom they met through the Community Builders Process.

17. The process creates a positive environment for innovation, risk taking and the sharing of experiences—one of the primary achievements and greatest strengths of Community Builders.

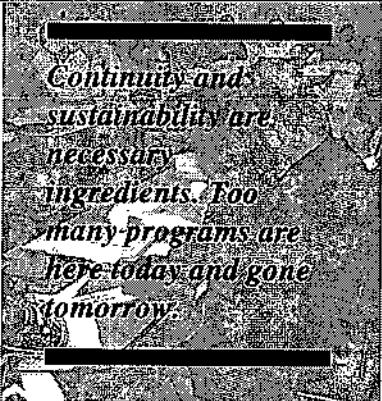
Community Builders Evolving

Community Builders continues to evolve as a process. It contains a dynamic that those who have

worked extensively with grassroots citizens' efforts, or are themselves participants in such efforts, can understand. That dynamic is the ability of ordinary people to develop a vision of their future, understand the forces affecting their ability to achieve that vision, and marshal the effort needed to reach it.

It is not by accident that this process is called "Community Builders." Many people, especially those in rural areas, are reluctant to think of themselves as "leaders." They see others in those roles; however, they are comfortable in being referred to as a "builder" of their community's future. And there are many more people willing to be "builders" than there are willing to be "leaders." Once they become active in their communities, however, many of them begin to do the things that we think of as what leaders do.

From its beginnings in 1991-'92 in southwest Nebraska, Community Builders has grown, stumbled, laughed, cried and occasionally triumphed. Along the way, we have learned—and hopefully profited—from the experiences. There now are a number of people involved in building the future of their communities that were not involved prior to participating in the process. There are some who did not feel they profited by being in-



Continuity and sustainability are necessary ingredients. Too many programs are here today and gone tomorrow.

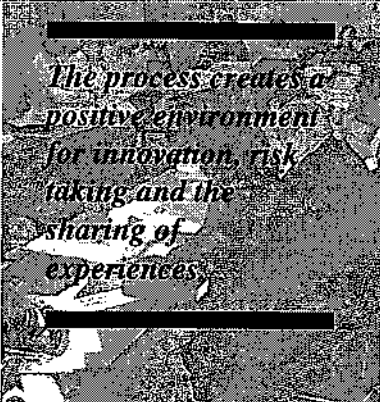
involved or who consider the process a failure. Fortunately, they are few. It is next to impossible to please everyone, but just because there are

a few detractors is no reason to abandon the process. The "failures" experienced can help us improve the next generation of the process. Indeed, we often learn more from what didn't work than we do from what did.

The concepts of process management, using teams to fill the necessary roles and local control embodied in the *Community Builders Process Training Handbook* are still valid. They must be supplemented with the additional lessons learned embodied in the *Module Musings* provided as updates to the handbook and the various information sheets provided to area individuals and groups interested in starting Community Builders Academies. Those sheets are reproduced at the end of this section. They include:

- A checklist for determining if an area is ready for Community Builders.
- Information on the costs and funding of new and subsequent Community Builders Academies.
- An example of a solicitation to raise funds through the Nebraska Community Foundation for the support of Community Builders.

Other innovations or evolutions include the concept of "Learning Clusters." This is an idea that was adapted from the model developed by the Rural Economic Policy Pro-



*The process creates a
positive environment
for innovation, risk
taking and the
sharing of
experiences.*

gram of The Aspen Institute. Two "Learning Clusters" are held each year. The first takes place in late Spring or early Summer after the various Acad-

emies have graduated their year's classes. Invitees are the previous year's and new members of the various Academies' coordinator-facilitator teams (sometimes referred to as steering committees), opener-motivators/mentors, others involved in running the Academies and especially persons interested in starting and running a new Academy.

In a one-day session, the original concepts of Community Builders are reemphasized, and training is provided to new members of the existing teams and to the new teams. Most of the learning takes place through having the existing teams share their experiences. It is very much of an interactive, peers-as-teachers learning environment.

At the conclusion of the Cluster, the importance of the listener-encourager role is discussed. Characteristics of a successful listener-encourager are described. Coordinator-facilitator teams are instructed to go back to their area and identify persons to be listener-encouragers for the following year. The second "Learning Cluster" takes place in late Summer or early Fall, just before the new year's Academies begin. Its purpose is to train Listener-Encouragers. In this Cluster, combinations of peer teaching, experience sharing and role playing are used. Again, it

is very interactive. These "Learning Clusters" have proven to be valuable, but they are not without their challenges. Difficulty has been experienced

in getting the people who need to be there to the "Learning Clusters" and getting the same people to all of the sessions they need to attend.

All of this is despite the fact that the Nebraska Development Academy and the Nebraska Community Foundation pay all of the costs of conducting the clusters and even provide lunch for all of the attendees. In other words, no registration fees are charged.

The Future of Community Builders

As of July 1995, each of the five existing Community Builders Academies (Southwest, South Central/High Line, Johnson-Pawnee, Cornhusker and West North Central) has committed to doing another Academy class in 1995-'96. In addition, two other areas—one in northeast Nebraska and one in the southern Panhandle—have committed to starting Academies in 1995-'96. Interest in starting Academies has also been expressed by three other areas.

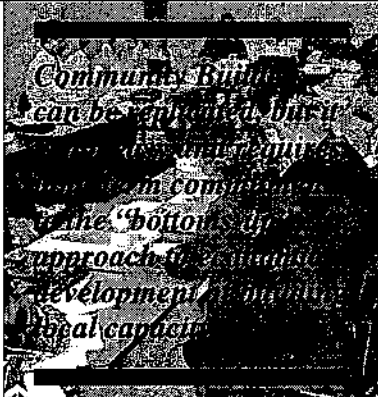
One interesting development is the beginnings of an effort to replicate Community Builders in urban neighborhoods. Terry Harris, executive director of the Main Street Corridor Development Corporation in Kansas City, Missouri, is attempting to adapt the

Community Builders Process model for use in major cities. Further information on this project may be obtained by contacting him at 4550 Main Street, Suite

202, Kansas City, MO 64111, FAX (816) 753-3821, or by calling (816) 753-3820.

Final remarks

The Community Builders Process has two goals: Providing citizens with the skills and information they need to support economic development activities in their communities,



and broadening citizen participation in these vital local activities.

The last four years (1991-'95) have proven that Community Build-

ers can achieve those goals. Any other area or state can use this process. Community Builders can be replicated, but it is not easy and requires long-term commitment to the "bottoms-up" approach to economic development of building local capacity. Overall, however, the results are well worth the effort. ■

Are You Ready For Community Builders?

Academy Readiness Checklist

The following **Readiness Checklist** has been developed by the Nebraska Development Academy to help local areas assess their readiness for starting and sustaining a Community Builders Academy. The checklist is not absolute, but can provide a yardstick to help your area determine if it is ready to launch a successful Academy.

Academy Champion?

Academies are run and supported locally. Successful Academies have one or more organizations or persons committed to championing the Academy. Personal and organizational leadership are essential to establishing and supporting an Academy. Does your area have a champion?

Regional Partners?

Successful Academies have three to five committed regional partners willing to actively support the area's Academy over the long-term. Regional partners often include area utilities (telephone, natural gas, electric or cable television), community colleges, state colleges, banks, development districts, resource conservation and development areas (RC&Ds), chambers of commerce, etc. Who are your area's regional partners?

Community Interest?

Successful Academies require active community commitment. Are there at least three to five communities in your area interested in starting an Academy?

Funding Match?

The Nebraska Community Foundation offers a grant for up to 60% of the cost of starting an Academy. The balance must be matched from within the region. Can your area raise \$4,000 to meet this match? Additionally, will communities/participants pay \$25 to \$50 annually to support the ongoing operational costs of an Academy?

For More Information

Tom Hanson or Gordon Ipson
Nebraska Development Academy
P.O. Box 94666 • Lincoln, NE 68509-4666
Outside Lincoln • 1-800-426-6505 • Inside Lincoln • 471-3779
FAX 402-471-3778

Funding Community Builders

Starting an Academy

First Year Costs. On average, it costs about \$10,000 to start a Community Builders Academy. First-year costs include salary and travel expenses for an "Academy Organizer."

Second & Third Year Costs. Academy costs generally drop significantly in years two and three. Organizing and facilitation costs average \$5,000 in year two and \$3,000 in year three. In subsequent years, Academy costs can generally be covered through participant fees.

Ongoing Costs. Most Academies in Nebraska assess a fee ranging from \$25 to \$50 per participant. For an average Academy (10 communities with 3 participants per community) between \$750 and \$1,500 can be raised annually through participant fees. This income is used locally to pay for speakers, mailings and other day-to-day costs associated with an Academy. In most Academies, meals are paid separately by attendees at each session.

\$6,000 Scholarship Available

The Nebraska Community Foundation is offering a limited number of \$6,000 scholarships (funded by the Omaha World-Herald Foundation) to new areas of Nebraska wishing to start a Community Builders Academy.

Regional Match. The region wishing to establish an Academy is required to match this \$6,000 scholarship with \$4,000. The match ensures the formation of strong regional partnerships and regional participation. The Nebraska Community Foundation arranges for Ward Schrack to assist in organizing the regional funding partnership. There is no additional charge to the region for Mr. Schrack's services.

Second- and Third-Year Scholarships. To ensure the successful establishment of area Academies, the Nebraska Community Foundation can provide matching scholarships for organizing during years two and three. The Foundation will provide up to \$3,000 in year two (matched by \$2,000 from within the region) and \$2,000 in year three (matched by \$1,000 from within the region).

Optional Community College Opportunity. A number of Academies have teamed with their local Community College to strengthen Community Builders. Through this arrangement, participants sign up for Community College credits, pay tuition, and the Community College provides program and organizational support services.

For More Information

Tom Hanson or Gordon Ipson
Nebraska Development Academy
P.O. Box 94666 • Lincoln, NE 68509-4666
Outside Lincoln: 1-800-426-6505 • In Lincoln: 471-3779
FAX: (402) 471-3778

Nebraska Community Builders Academy

In 1992, Dr. Robert Manley, Sr., talking with Steve Buttriss (then director of the Nebraska Department of Economic Development), made a convincing argument that the key to economic success in rural communities was tied directly to investment in rural economic leadership. Observing that traditional leadership development programs did not work very effectively with business people in smaller rural communities, Dr. Manley proposed a community builders approach to ensure the right kind of economic leadership for rural communities. Nebraska decided to test Dr. Manley's proposal.

The First Community Builders Academy

Dr. Manley began this effort by creating the first Nebraska Community Builders Academy in southwest Nebraska in 1992. The community builders approach was simple, and quickly proved highly effective in raising economic development awareness and mobilizing new leaders with the skills to push for more successful economic development efforts in their home communities. In time, it was clear that the level of economic development activity in southwest Nebraska was on the rise with concrete examples of new businesses being formed, existing businesses expanding, and overall economic competitiveness increasing. Based on this experience, Nebraska made a commitment to see if Community Builders could make a difference in other parts of rural Nebraska.

The Academy Today

Nebraska Community Builders today has successfully spread to south central Nebraska, the High Line Communities, southeast Nebraska, northeast Nebraska, and the Highway 20 corridor in north central Nebraska. With more than a dozen Academies completed, the success first demonstrated in southwest Nebraska is now being experienced in other regions as well. Community Builders is an economic leadership development program that works. Nebraska is committed to making the Academy available to any region in Nebraska.

How Donors Can Help

It costs about \$15,000 to establish a Community Builders Academy in a multi-community area (about \$300 per Academy participant). Between \$5,000 and \$8,000 is required to sustain the Academy annually in an area (about \$150 per participant). Donors interested in supporting this investment in rural Nebraska's future economic leaders can help in one of two ways. First, donors can support the Academy directly through an unrestricted gift. These gifts will be used to support existing Academies and to help form new ones. Second, donors can restrict their gifts to provide specific scholarships or to establish and sustain an Academy in their area.

Acknowledgements

Nebraska Community Builders would not be a reality without the vision of Dr. Robert Manley and the efforts of rural citizens across Nebraska who have embraced Community Builders and are contributing to the betterment of their communities and regions. This publication was made possible through the support of the Rural Economic Policy Program of The Aspen Institute of Washington, D.C., with funding from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation.

The State of Nebraska thanks The Aspen Institute and the Kellogg Foundation for their support. With this support Nebraska was able to explore many new possibilities using the Community Builders approach. Particular thanks are extended to Nancy Stark with the National Association of Towns and Townships for her vision, insight and support.

Special thanks go to the many individuals and organizations that have made Community Builders possible:

Maxine B. Moul, director, and Stu Miller, deputy director, of the Nebraska Department of Economic Development; Steve Buttress, former director of the Nebraska Department of Economic Development; Sam Cordes and

John Allen with the University of Nebraska's Center for Rural Community Revitalization; Gordon Ipson, Tom Hanson and Charlotte Gronewold with the Nebraska Development Academy; Frank Spillers, Linda Fettig, Roberta Pinkerton and Connie Justis, field service representatives of the Nebraska Department of Economic Development.

Finally, this series of publications would not have been possible without the talent and hard work of the staff of the Department of Economic Development's Public Information Office: Donald G. Wright, Susan Sitzmann and Dan Curran.

Contributors and reviewers included Dr. Robert Manley Sr.; Gordon Ipson, director, Nebraska Development Academy; Tom Hanson, Nebraska Community Builders; Dr. Sam Cordes and Dr. John Allen, Center for Rural Revitalization; Nancy Stark, National Association of Towns and Townships; Robert Manley Jr.; and Community Builders Susan Broeker, Janell Anderson, Tina Kitt, Linda Taylor, Russ Pankonin, and Jim Albers.

Report Project Coordinator was Don Macke, director of the Nebraska Rural Development Commission. 