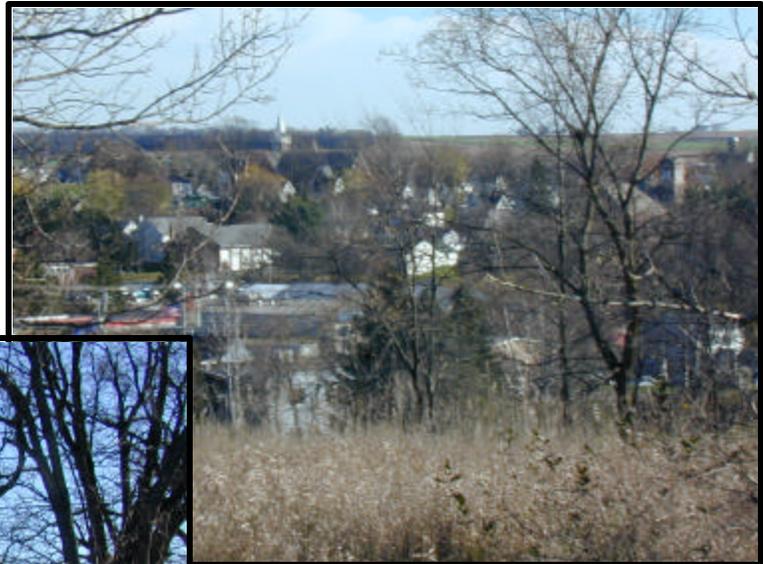


MARKESAN, WISCONSIN

Community Resource Team Report

October 30 - November 3, 2000



Wisconsin Rural Partners, Inc.



United States Department of Agriculture
Wisconsin Rural Development

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Introduction

Our Appreciation

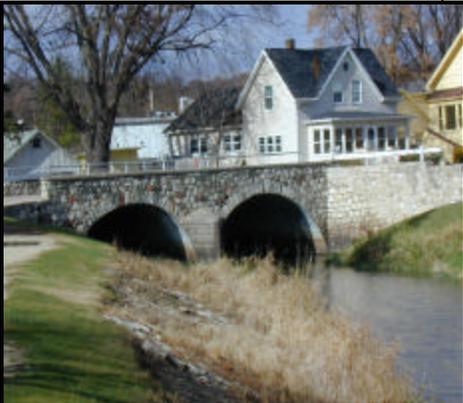
Our team wishes to thank the many individuals, organizations and businesses who invited us into their community, extended their warm hospitality, and participated with us in frank discussions. The tours of local businesses and facilities were especially helpful and illuminating for the team to get a good sense of the community in a short amount of time. We thank Mayor Ken Paskey for his initiative and organizational acuity. Together, with city staff including Lelia Ziebell and Karen Weese, he organized a rigorous agenda which provided a comprehensive view of Markesan and the surrounding area.

We know the community's commitment to this project extended far beyond the meetings. Various groups and businesses contributed cash and in-kind donations to provide meals, lodging, and other facilities for the team during their stay. We appreciate your efforts.

Community Resource Team Project

This Community Resource Team project was organized and coordinated through Wisconsin Rural Partners, Inc.¹ (*WRP or Partnership*) and the Wisconsin office of USDA Rural Development. The project has two objectives: to provide a candid view of a community from a variety of perspectives and expertise; and to offer a professional development team-building experience to the participants.

Markesan is the first community to participate in this program, which was developed by an inter-agency task group. The Markesan Community Resource Team's experience will be studied and 'lessons learned' applied to future Resource Team projects. For this, Wisconsin Rural Partners is grateful to the community of Markesan for its significant contribution to the program's development.



Members of the Team

Wisconsin Rural Partners and USDA Rural Development is indebted to the team participants who gave of their time and expertise to this project. The Team members volunteered, and were either sponsored by their respective organizations and agencies, or took vacation time and made an individual commitment.

Kelly Haverkamp, Wisconsin Rural Partners, Inc.
Scott Koegler, Wisconsin Rural Community Action Program
Peter Kohlen, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Rural Development Agency
Jim McCaulley, Iowa County Land Conservation Department
Bill Pinkovitz, UW – Extension, Center for Community Economic Development
Arlene Scalzo, Wisconsin Housing & Economic Development Authority
Gail Sumi, Wisconsin Alliance of Cities
Jane Thomas, Wisconsin Department of Commerce, Rural Health Development Council



The Team's Mission

Our mission was, as one team member put it, “to hold a mirror up to the community of Markesan, and provide our impressions as a reflection.” The team spent four days meeting with various stakeholder groups throughout the community, asking pointed questions of community residents, and listening to their concerns and issues. Team members were encouraged to ask questions only, and refrain from offering solutions or opinions until they were able to process the information together and provide a unified reflection to the community. More than 30 stakeholder groups were visited and interviewed by the team from Monday through Thursday. The Team worked together throughout Thursday afternoon to analyze its observations, and provided a public report in an open community setting on Thursday evening. More than 70 residents of the community joined the team to hear its report. On Friday, the team translated its community report into this publication, which will be distributed widely throughout the community, and to other interested parties. Special thanks go to the USDA Rural Development team from Stevens Point who provided logistic support and produced and distributed this report: David Gibson, Joan Dorschner, John Burris, and Kristine Groshek.

Executive Summary

The Community Resource Team traveled throughout the community, consulted with diverse constituencies, shared with each other our observations from the listening sessions and community visits, and applied our perspectives to local situations. We identified ten major issues which the community either is dealing with, or needs to deal with:

- Financial Issues
- Housing
- Business Development
- Health
- Declining School Enrollments
- Youth
- Leadership
- Change
- Amish Neighbors
- Communication

This report represents the team's assessment of the major assets, challenges and priorities of Markesan, as well as some recommendations and resources for creating future opportunities for the community.



Trends in the Broader Society

During the listening sessions, we heard of many challenges that are familiar to rural and even many urban communities throughout the country. These are trends that are, for the most part, out of Markesan's control. Yet it is important that the community be aware of, acknowledge, and plan for how these trends are likely to impact the Markesan and surrounding area. These trends include some of the following:

The Changing Nature of Farming

For several decades, Wisconsin farmers have faced difficulties in pricing, higher expenses, and increasing competition both nationally and globally. Small family farms are declining. They are either being consolidated into larger, corporate (or family owned) farms or are surviving as small, specialty farms. For Markesan, with a significant farm economy, the economic impact can be substantial.

Population Trends

Changes in population are having a significant impact throughout the country in every segment of the economy. Within the next two decades, these effects will be even more profound. Some of these population issues include:

- The aging of the population.
- Fewer school age children, leading to declining school enrollment.
- Greater racial and ethnic diversity.
- Families are smaller than in the past.
- Most families now have two working parents.
- There are an increasing number of non-traditional families, with many families now headed by grandparents or single parents.
- The population is more mobile. Families not only move more often from place to place, but also, are willing to drive long distances to work with parents sometimes working in two different places than their home base.

These population trends are already affecting the workforce, making it difficult for all employers to find workers. With women already a significant part of the workforce, there are fewer new workers in this area to draw from. The two-worker family, who may work far from their home, places an even greater strain on children and family. The mobility of families has hurt small town retail shops, as people think nothing of driving long distances for their shopping and services.

Markesan needs to tell its story.

Aging of Rural Communities

Rural communities have been aging at an even greater rate than urban communities as their youth leave for greater opportunities outside the area. Eventually, many return for retirement, adding to the aged population.

Tight Labor Market

Not only are the population and economic trends affecting the labor market in terms of available workers, but the aging population and two worker families are requiring more services to meet their needs.

Health Care System Changes

Beyond every community's control, the health care system is experiencing significant strains. Health care consolidation has been rampant in the past two decades. This means fewer locally owned clinics. At the same time that the population is aging, placing heavier demand on the system, Medicare reimbursement for home health services has been severely reduced. For rural elderly residents, this makes independent living much more difficult and places a strain on young families as they attempt to care for aging parents. Dental services are in short supply in Wisconsin and nationally and this is expected to become even more of a problem in the near future. Mental health services are less and less available, especially in rural areas, because of the unavailability of insurance coverage.

Growing Influence of Technology

Internet access is one of the most significant phenomena to occur in this century. It is affecting communications, commerce, and information exchange in profound ways. For rural communities, this is a tremendous opportunity, for it reduces the impact of distance on commerce and can connect rural communities to institutes of learning and other resources that, before, were only available in much larger communities.

Traditional Retail Shopping

Small, rural downtowns are declining because they can no longer support traditional retail shopping. This has been affected both by the mobility of the population and the impact of large, national retail chains.

"I like Markesan as is. It is an uncorrupted town"

Assets to Build On

What most impressed the Resource Team were the tremendous number and variety of assets already available in Markesan. These assets crossed every segment of the community and included:

Cultural and Quality of Life

- Strong sense of community with people who know each other well and enjoy each other's company. "There are good people here in Markesan" was a common comment.
- "People here work hard" was another comment made. This mid-western work ethic is a strength.
- There is a significant amount of volunteerism, adding to the assets of the community. In addition, Markesan has incredible fund raising capabilities, allowing it to tackle projects that, otherwise, would not come to fruition.
- "Markesan is a safe community." Over and over again, the citizens of Markesan said one of the main reasons they live and raise their families in Markesan was that they felt safe.
- Although not viewed by some people as an asset, the Amish population provides a significant opportunity to assist the town in building its commercial sector.

Infrastructure



- Excellent fire, emergency management, and emergency medical services system and facilities.
- Excellently maintained sewer system with sufficient capacity to accept substantial residential and commercial expansion.
- Safe and adequate water supply.
- Excellent school system and facility.
- Wide range of intergenerational health care services available within and near the community.
- Beautiful and modern library serving the needs not only of Markesan, but the surrounding community.
- New multi-use city hall available to the community for a wide range of uses (i.e., office, day care, meetings).
- Well maintained streets.
- Nice and well maintained park system.
- Established industrial park positioned for expansion.
- A capable and dedicated municipal work force.

Natural

- Little Green Lake and excellent muskie fishing.
- The Grand River.
- Beautiful rolling countryside with picturesque farm settings and productive land.
- Natural recreation activities (i.e., fishing, snowmobiling, hunting, hiking, etc.).

Economic



- Strong and stable employers (e.g., PMI, Robin II, Del Monte, Riverside Health Care, etc.)
- Growing arts community.
- Strong entrepreneurial spirit with emerging businesses (e.g., Triemstra, new downtown businesses).
- Two independent community banks with local decision-making authority.
- Strong agricultural community based on rich soils with progressive farmers supported by the local banking system and Grand River Coop.
- Availability of local jobs.

Other

- Impressive historical Museum that offers significant potential as a key target for tourism. With additional downtown development, this Museum can act as an anchor for bringing in people to also shop and eat in town.
- There has been developed a strong cooperative venture between the city, villages, and townships in the region over the Fire/EMS District. This model can be used to begin collaborating in other areas of business and tourism development.
- There is an availability of a wide range of elderly housing and long term care services. This, in addition to a strong health care system, can allow Markesan to develop as a retirement center if it chooses to.
- Markesan has a strong and varied church community that provides significant support to family and community life.
- Markesan presents itself as a well-maintained community.
- Markesan has relatively low housing costs that can assist if it wishes to attract people to live in the community, whether or not they work here or in surrounding communities.
- Although fewer stores than in the past, Markesan does have resources such as a grocery store, a pharmacy, a gas station, and a food pantry.
- Markesan's location has both advantages and disadvantages. The advantage is that it is central to a number of surrounding communities and is within relatively easy driving distance to several larger communities.

OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Change

Overheard in Markesan: “Nothing around here ever changes ; nothing ever will.”

Observations

This recurrent theme was expressed in almost every forum we attended during our four-day visit to Markesan. We heard from students, business people, elected officials, educators, employees, employers, and retired residents about the lack of change in Markesan. Some simply stated this as a fact of life in Markesan. Others related the benefits of stability. Many expressed their concerns about the lack of change or willingness to change in their community.

Yet, much has changed in Markesan in the last few years. Recent changes include; further consolidation of the school district and a new school, consolidation of the fire district and new fire station, a new and expanded nursing home, a new city hall, a new Post Office and library, several new retailers, and an industrial park.



As pointed out in the ‘Trends’ section, other dramatic changes outside the community are affecting Markesan. Changes in the marketplace – how, where and when people shop. The competitive environment for customers, labor, and industry is also changing. Changing technologies create opportunities and potential competitive advantages and disadvantages for a community like Markesan. The challenges for Markesan are significant because, not only is the number of changes increasing but also, the rate and magnitude of the changes are accelerating. As a result, the potential gains and losses are substantial and growing.

Recommendation

A community’s ability to recognize and respond effectively and proactively to change, rather than simply react to changes, is more crucial today than ever. Recognizing this, we recommend a comprehensive review of the existing systems, formal and informal, for recognizing, analyzing, and planning for change. Further, we recommend that citizens work to create an environment and systems that help identify, anticipate, and plan for changes that may affect the

community. We believe that such actions will help residents take better advantage of the opportunities and minimize the threats that invariably accompany change. It will improve people's ability to proactively respond in a timely manner rather than simply react, and to the extent possible, direct changes that affect the community to the best possible outcome for Markesan.

Resources:

UWEX – Futures scanning	Social Capital
Gary Green’s Visioning stuff	Asset Mapping
Consensus building	Strategic Planning

LOCATION

Introduction

The location of the city has been identified as both a strength and weakness.

Observation

While Markesan’s location is a limiting factor for heavy industry, it is accommodating for light manufacturing and business growth. Overall, the location of Markesan should be considered an asset for community development.

Assets

Being an outlying community, 20-50 miles from other communities which offer a wide range of services, Markesan’s location is a tremendous advantage for the quality of life that everyone has mentioned as a reason for staying here. It is within easy driving distance to Portage, Beaver Dam, Ripen, Berlin, Fond du Lac, Oshkosh or Madison; allowing citizens to access amenities of shopping, recreation, employment, and continuing education in larger communities.

This geographically central location allows flexibility in overall planning and visioning if Markesan desires to develop into a residential community for living a short distance away from larger communities. Accessibility into larger markets may also be suitable for the development of satellite businesses.

Challenges

The location being 20-50 miles away from amenities, and the declining youth population, makes it financially difficult to provide community resources that larger communities offer such as a movie theatre, pool, skating rinks, or youth center activities.

Location puts Markesan in a competitive market for businesses and labor supply with small surrounding communities such as Fox Lake, Randolph, and Princeton as well as the larger communities.

Recommendation:

Develop tourism which capitalizes on Markesan's location. Tourist attractions we noticed in the four days we were here:

- Lakes for fishing and water activities
- Trails for horse, ATV and snowmobile riding
- Hunting
- Amish tour including crafts, bakery, woodworking, shops, etc.
- Local museum and historical society

A potential business development opportunity may be to look at bringing Amish goods into the downtown shops to increase tourism and capitalize on the existing tourism traffic to the Amish Community.

Market the area by development of a vision and using a marketing strategy to promote the area and cross-sell with other businesses in town as well as the region. Marketing materials should support all local business. Markesan needs to tell its story.

Resources

Resources for downtown and tourism sector development are abundant throughout Wisconsin. Markesan could look at its recent tourism assessment, choose priority strategies from that assessment, and work with the UW Extension Center for Community Economic Development to set up implementation strategies. Markesan could also borrow appropriate strategies and ideas from Wisconsin Main Street communities. Many of them publish newsletters that describe in detail how they accomplish many of their strategies.



Finance and Management

Introduction:

The City of Markesan has had tremendous change in its financial situation over the last ten years. The city has gone from a surplus financial condition to substantial public debt. Fire protection services have merged into a community fire district with many assets to manage. The school district has merged, and built a new facility that affects the community. Markesan has also begun the process of extending wastewater treatment and sanitary sewer to serve part of Little Green Lake.

The community of Markesan has numerous infrastructure assets in place for the benefit of the community. These assets include:

- New Fire Department Building and Equipment
- School Capacity
- City Hall
- Water and Wastewater systems
- Parks
- Street System

Infrastructure assets also include

- TIF District
- City staff
- School District staff

Observations

Public investments have added to the development capacity of the community and created opportunities upon which to capitalize. Public debt has created new fiscal challenges for the community. This requires the community to take an active role in managing these assets and planning for the future. The community will need to become more aware of its fiscal and management needs.

Recommendations

Fiscal Management System

Develop a well-understood fiscal management system that is capable of meeting the new fiscal management needs. The community already has many of these financial management tools in place but needs to utilize them to their potential. Automated or computerized financial management tools should be used to develop plans for the

“When the sewer project is completed the farmland around Little Green Lake will be like gold.”

future of the community. When managing public debt, the community should be fiscally planning on a five-year basis. This allows the community to anticipate future trends and challenges and deal with them before they become an emergency. To do this effectively, all decision makers should understand the financial planning process and the documentation

In order to fully utilize this recommendation, the community needs to use the resources available in order to learn the financial planning process. The UW Extension Local Government Center provides many group learning sessions and can provide on site assistance with the community. The community is also a member of many organizations that provide advice and training on financial and personnel management. These organizations are: the League of Wisconsin Municipalities, and the League's Wisconsin Clerks and Treasurers Association both at 608/267-2380, Wisconsin Rural Water Association, the Wisconsin Towns Association at 715/526-3157. The community would also benefit from the resources of the American Water Works Association and the Community Development Society.

Markesan has already utilized one of the most important resources available to a small community — its contacts with other communities in similar situations. We encourage the community to continue this, as it is the easiest method to find out what does and does not work. We also encourage the community to utilize another available resource that has not been fully included in the financial planning process. This resource is its employees that work in the system on a daily basis. These employees have first hand knowledge of what has worked and what is needed in the future. They should be included in capital and financial projection planning for the community.

Group Planning

The greater Markesan community needs to involve all stakeholders in the financial planning process. While the school district, fire district, ambulance district, and city are separate governmental and management entities, they are drawing from the same “well” of assets. This shows a need for the different organizations to work together on financial and capital planning and management. The community as a whole is now managing a public debt that requires the various governmental groups to plan collectively for the progress of the community.

Examples of recommended actions that can address this include having a representative from the school board and fire district board

on the city planning commission, and including a city government representative on the fire district and school board. Representatives from each of these boards should also meet annually to jointly discuss future projections and actions. These recommendations involve greater communication between the various governing bodies in order to promote financial management and prevent working at financial cross-purposes.

Industrial Park

The initial plan can be followed in order to recoup the city's costs involved in developing the industrial park. This involves timelines with TIF financing, which will require active marketing. The TIF financing requires improvements that are to be included in the TIF district to occur within seven (7) years of the start of the TIF district. The city's current marketing efforts and incentives will have to be used aggressively, and not just focus on expansion of local industries. The marketing effort should be used to cast a wide net in developing leads for industrial park development.



Another possibility if the timeline of the TIF cannot be met would be to change the focus of development at that location. This focus change could include multi-family housing and/or single-family housing both of which will generate tax increment. Unless privately owned, a juvenile detention center suggested by some community members, is tax exempt and therefore would not help to retire the TIF debt, although it would generate jobs. The key to this situation is that a focus change cannot take place once industrial development starts. The city needs to take a close look at this and decide on the path to take.

There are many resources that the city can utilize for assistance with this matter. The hiring of a new marketing director was a good first step. Also, working with Kathy Heady of the Department of Commerce to analyze the types of industries that the city wants to develop in the industrial park will help narrow the marketing and incentive package.

Sanitary Sewer Ordinance

The city should evaluate enactment of an ordinance that requires annexation to the city prior to connection to the sanitary sewer system. This will facilitate future development being included in the city tax base. The League of Wisconsin Municipalities can be consulted for wording and application of this ordinance.

Health Care

Introduction:

The Resource Team had the opportunity to meet with many of the local health care providers in one room. This meeting alone was probably of great benefit to the community, for it allowed providers who normally do not meet together to discuss issues of mutual concern and to set the basis for cooperation. These providers included the new physician, two of the local hospitals, management of the Markesan Resident Home, the county health director, and county health and human services. Discussion topics ranged from community health care concerns, reimbursement issues affecting hospital and home care, as well as the needs of special population groups.

Some of the observations and concerns of the group included:

- Although many resources are available to senior citizens and their families, Adult Day Care is not available. Presently, this is not deemed to be a financially viable service.
- Health care jobs are some of the best available in the community in terms of pay and benefits. However, providers are experiencing great difficulty in recruiting qualified workers. All providers said that many of their new recruits need training in such basic skills as communication, personal hygiene, and showing up to work.
- Berlin Hospital has a Women's Center that can be used as a resource to surrounding communities. Unfortunately, they do not have the staff for outreach. Women's issues were raised as a significant concern among a variety of population groups and development of greater access to this service is needed.
- The public health director reported a number of significant health concerns throughout Green Lake County. Her greatest concern was for the youth of the community who are engaging in significant high-risk sexual behavior. Sexually transmitted diseases have increased at an alarming rate in both the number of exposures and in the types of diseases. This needs immediate attention. Of special concern is the high number of students who have had numerous sexual partners, which magnifies the sexually transmitted disease problem. Alcohol and drug abuse also play a part in this problem. Although the situation has improved in recent years, the public health also reported that about seven years ago there were a very high number of teen pregnancies in the Markesan High School.



- The public health director stated that many people live in housing that is not only substandard but is unsafe in the extreme. This is a serious concern.
- Dental service availability is strained and many Medical Assistance and Badger Care patients must travel long distances to find a provider willing to give dental care.
- Home health care services have been significantly affected by the federal Balanced Budget Act and are being severely cut back even in light of increasing demand.
- The migrant population has difficulty accessing primary health care because of the hours they work in the field. The Amish population does use health care services, but there is a concern with reproductive health, as the population does not access prenatal care until much later in the pregnancy.

Observations:

“We have a great hometown atmosphere.”

Markesan has significant health care resources available to it. On the other hand it also has significant challenges in population health issues, particularly among the youth.

Assets:

- Within the city limits are at least two full-time physicians affiliated with local hospitals. The new physician plans to have both evening and weekend hours to help with health care access.
- Within reasonable driving time are three local hospitals that are willing to serve the Markesan area.
- Markesan also has high quality long-term care facilities with varying degrees of independence for seniors in the Markesan and surrounding areas.
- Available to Markesan is an excellent public health department that is willing to cooperate with local providers and schools.

Recommendations:

- At present, health care resources are sufficient. It is, however, recommended that a cooperative effort be developed among the health care providers, county health department, school district and the school liaison, church community, and civic organizations to address some of the priority health issues for the school age population, especially the high risk sexual behavior that many young people are engaged in.
- The preparation of workers for the workforce was a problem mentioned by citizens both in and out of the health care industry. The Chamber of Commerce or other local business forums may

wish to work together to develop a training and mentoring program for new workers that would be useful for employers in either the for-profit or non-profit sectors.

- It is recommended that representatives of Markesan meet with the public health director and discuss the extent to which housing in the local area may be substandard and what options might be available for improving that housing.

Available Resources:

There are major federal and foundation grants available that could assist in a cooperative effort such as that recommended to improve the health of Markesan's youth. Technical assistance for these grants could be provided by the UW Office of Rural Health (Fred Moskol, Director (608)265-3601) and the Division of Community Development at the Department of Commerce (Jane Thomas, Rural Health Specialist (608)267-3837).

"Everybody knows everybody's business but nobody knows

"Everyone wants change but no one wants to change"

"The city needs to be creative on bringing people in."



Declining School Enrollment

Observations

Consolidation and the new school have created a strong asset for Markesan. Enrollments will likely cause serious financial challenges for the school district in the future. When asked, further consolidation was mentioned as a potential solution.

Assets: As mentioned above, the school facility itself is an asset. Parents relocate for better schools. The 100% graduation rate is excellent. The booster club, we were told, can get things done and is very active.

Recommendations

- Work with the school board, but understand that solutions are district wide and intergovernmental. Solutions should involve the entire community.
- Ask the children for their ideas.
- Investigate the possibility of establishing an Amish charter school.
- Many residents leave the Markesan community every day to work elsewhere. There is the opportunity to talk about this asset with coworkers and friends who may potentially relocate their family to Markesan for the great education.
- Work with the Wisconsin School Boards Association and the Wisconsin School District Administrators Association to change the school aid formula. School districts statewide are facing declining enrollment which may produce a strong lobby to amend the formula that currently penalizes schools.
- Consider ways to make the school facility a greater asset to the entire community (i.e. a multi-use facility that is used nights, weekends, and summers) so that all community members will feel that they benefit both directly and indirectly from having it in their community. This may increase support for the school district when enrollments decline and taxes increase.

Also see the recommendations in the issue areas of business development and housing.



Resources

The Wisconsin School Board Association (WSBA) - Ken Cole, Executive Director at 608/257-2622 (The School District Administrator's Association is an umbrella organization of WSBA and can be reached at the same phone number.)



Youth

Introduction:

The youth we talked with had a very positive attitude toward their futures. They appeared to have a strong desire to continue their education and voiced concerns they may not find employment paying a living wage to support their families in the local market. A majority of them also indicated they would like to raise their future families in an area similar to Markesan. Their first response on why they like the area was safety.

Observations:

Youth expressed a desire to be actively involved in the community on several levels, yet seem isolated and separated. There were several issues involved in this observation including:

- Lack of participation in decisions
- Lack of volunteerism opportunities
- Lack of available recreational opportunities
- Many older children had jobs after school or on weekends



We heard there was some concern from local employers about job preparedness regarding high school youth. Concerns with basic living skills, communications, punctuality and hygiene were specifically mentioned.

Before school and after school care for elementary age children and younger appears to be a concern.

The teens want a place to congregate after school and on weekends. Activities mentioned were a pool, skating rink, skateboard area, pool table, ping-pong, shopping video or arcade games, etc. They also indicated that this may be an on and off visit because they also like being mobile and visiting other cities. Interestingly, the high school students we spoke with would be willing to share a facility with younger students.

A concern by the student council was that county law enforcement was targeting the youth when they entered or left town.

Assets:

Markesan has an excellent school system, athletic program and library. The community has a rural small town atmosphere that feels

safe to many of the students. They indicated a willingness to be active in community events and volunteering for projects. Some also liked the natural resources available.

There are available jobs within the area for students wanting to obtain work.

Recommendations:

Create an environment where youth are involved with adults, family and community members in the community planning and decision-making as well as implementation. This may be accomplished through representation on the school board, city council, MMDC, CDA or other organizations.

The curriculum in the schools is not known, if not in place, it is recommended that business programs such Future Business Leaders, DECCA, school-to-work, job mentoring, school newspaper, etc. be introduced. Other opportunities may be to have the students run a small store throughout the school year.

Make the high school gym available for after school and weekend events. Provide opportunities for volunteering with community events such as encouraging young musicians to contribute their time and talent to the Christmas event now being planned.

Consider allowing the youth to paint a mural on the wall of the building next to the library. The building owner told us that he is willing to donate the site and donate a sum of money to the project.

Bring together local and county law enforcement to meet with students on a regular basis to discuss problems and improve relationships.

Business Development

Introduction:

In its initial request for the Community Resource Team to visit Markesan, the City noted its concern with the emptiness, yet full availability of its industrial park. A second request for exploration in the community's "wish list," was an examination of the tourism potential for the community, especially with relation to the downtown business district.

We toured local manufacturing facilities including PMI and Robin II, visited other small manufacturers, retail, and commercial businesses, including Amish. We met with the municipal development corporation, the chamber of commerce, the community development authority, bankers, farmers' cooperative, and discovered some local entrepreneurs.

We see the following assets of the community as strengths to build on for business development:

- A 50+ acre industrial park, ready with sewer and water hook-ups for occupation.
- Other available sites, including a rail spur.
- A central location to eastern Wisconsin business markets, with highway access.
- A small but strong manufacturing sector already in existence.
- A strong infrastructure with remaining capacity which can support growth, including water and wastewater systems, excellent schools, top-rated fire, police and emergency systems, and good access to a wide variety of health care services.
- Two long-standing, independent community banks.
- Attractive, well-written promotional materials for the community and cooperative marketing efforts with surrounding communities.
- Essential retail services for community living.
- Façade renovation grants provided through the Community Development Authority.
- Untapped potential for entrepreneurs, especially local artisans.
- Available retail space in the downtown, as well as a good mix of service and retail of the existing downtown businesses.
- A highly regarded local history museum and restored train depot.
- A safe, picturesque, friendly small community.

Observations

The primary observation we made is that there are many – perhaps too many – organizations trying to effect business growth in all the sectors mentioned above. While this may sometimes be considered an asset, in a community the size of Markesan, it appears to have had the impact of interrupting communication flow, as well as resulted in duplicating efforts, such as in marketing and promotion. Additionally, the narrow focus taken by each of the organizations has neglected the “bigger picture” issues of other systems in the community that will be needed to support future business growth, such as housing availability, and strong business support systems.



We heard a level of frustration expressed as to the “chicken and egg” syndrome, of wanting more business to create jobs in the community, yet needing to develop community systems needed to become attractive to potential newcomers. The current tight labor market magnifies this issue.

A related observation we made is that there is significant business occurring in the community right now, yet the community seemed not to recognize it as positive growth. In a focus to recruit a new business to the industrial park, the community barely mentioned that several local concerns were considering expanding their businesses locally. We discovered this during side conversations. This indicated to us that there was not a shared vision for the community’s business sector. New retail businesses starting up in the downtown were known about “through the grapevine,” but no official coordinated welcome nor, to our knowledge, any local assistance was offered them. At the same time, an available community development grant for façade upgrade had not been utilized.

Markesan participates in the "Green Lake Country" area-wide tourism effort. The community has attractive and informational promotional materials, but no evident targeted marketing strategy of its own. Community attractions and facilities that would support a developing tourism economy have not been fully identified, engaged, or included in an integrated plan. We noted that a potentially large tourism asset is the neighboring Amish settlement.

Recommendations

The Team spent time studying economic and demographic data of the community so that recommendations we made would be offered with a “reality check” of what is feasible and reasonable for Markesan, given the trends listed earlier in this report, as well as the existing array, and absence of, elements required for success in certain strategies.

We suggest the community consider merging the functions of existing

organizations which deal with business development, and commit staff to the new entity. This includes the municipal development corporation, community development authority, and chamber of commerce. We suggest the new entity's leadership and membership should include all public and private stakeholders in the community (including youth), and make coordinated decisions based on the needs of the entire business community. When specialization is needed for retail, tourism, entrepreneurship or industrial development, committees of the new organization could be utilized. We feel that shared decision-making among all the stakeholders will result in shared ownership of the results, and build the capacity of the community to get things done efficiently.

"If we were the town with the Amish shops people would come running to shop."

A shared-leadership organization would then need to develop a comprehensive analysis of the trade area for Markesan, using resources of the UW-Extension Center for Community Economic Development. Using the data from this analysis, the organization would next develop a shared vision and plan for industrial, commercial, retail, and entrepreneurship for the whole community, in order to proactively promote existing, and prospect for new, business. Technical and financial assistance programs for visioning, planning, and implementing the strategies in the community plan are available from the many resources listed throughout this report. Community Resource Teams members are available to assist the community in identifying the resource most appropriate to its needs.



As far as content of such a plan, the Team considered the recurring "chicken and egg" concern, and suggests that a comprehensive development plan be implemented in stages that include a variety of strategies in each phase. A first phase, for instance, could include a downtown development plan, which uses the existing plan done in 1994, augmented with specific current market analysis to identify appropriate business mix, and considering clustering specialty retail to create compatible opportunities for the existing attractions, e.g., the museum. A simultaneous industrial development strategy would need to address the need for housing to support increased population, as elaborated in the housing section of this report.

Borrow, borrow, and borrow. The business and community people of Markesan have no shortage of creative ideas about what their business community could look like. But harnessing those ideas into a workable plan will take some thought and working together. The team recommends visiting other communities that have been successful, to learn more about their strategies and how they implemented them. There are a many sources of information available about other communities' efforts. Team members can help put Markesan leaders in touch with other community leaders to share information.

Housing

Introduction:

While meeting with a diverse group of people within the community, housing issues were raised frequently. There are a number of people living in Markesan but driving to various outlying areas for employment, shopping and other activities verifying the mobility of today's society. Markesan's location is near two state highways, which allows easy access to a number of larger communities in all directions. The rural landscape is an attractive image when arriving into the community. One of the key observations was the attractiveness of the community and its quality of life.

The shortage of housing appears to be in both affordable housing and upscale or executive housing. This may be addressed through home ownership opportunities for single family and condominium and rental income units for all housing types.

Observation:

Affordable and upscale housing are not sufficient for current and potential demand in both the ownership and rental markets. Affordable housing is defined as housing cost available within the prevailing local wage rates. Upscale housing is defined as executive housing.

Broad based housing needs were identified. Specifically they include:

- Affordable housing for home ownership
- Upscale housing for home ownership
- Lack of rental units
- Lack of affordable rental units
- Need for new construction
- Condominiums
- Housing to meet current needs as well as meeting potential future needs.

"We need lodging.
There is no place for
people to stay."

Challenges:

For newcomers relocating into the community, available housing may be difficult to identify. There is land on the edge of town, but no signs indicating its availability.

Markesan consists of an aging population. There are limited opportunities for residents to find available low-maintenance or smaller housing. As a consequence, the existing housing stock is not being made available to the traditional first time homebuyer.

CEO's and executives of corporations in the Markesan area have not found adequate housing available to meet their needs.

Concerns have been noted that some families are living in substandard and unsafe homes. This includes some problems with lead-based paint, electrical and structural issues.

The migrant workforce places a seasonal strain on available rental housing. The one motel in Markesan is occupied during the harvesting season, which limits lodging facilities temporary and/or tourist lodging.

A large number of the Markesan workforce commutes into the city and lives outside the immediate area.

With the fiscal challenges facing the city, there is a need to increase the tax base through affordable housing starts.

Assets:

Many community assets include:

- Infrastructure
- Water and sewer infrastructure capable of growth
- Streets to support residential development
- Fire Department
- EMT system
- School system
- Library
- Strong and varied churches
- Essential resources such as grocery store, pharmacy, gas station, food pantry
- Well maintained homes
- Low housing costs
- Health care resources
- Availability of local jobs
- Historic large homes with carriage housing make this community unique
- Beautiful setting
- Close to lakes and recreation
- Rural, rolling countryside

"I can leave my house unlocked and not worry."

Recommendations:

Local planning and vision will determine whether the community wants to grow as well as how fast growth will occur. Identify and promote building sites in the community. To be successful, there will need to be a variety of sites to meet different tastes and income levels.

Actively contact surrounding landowners and identify availability, cost and terms for residential development (e.g., the land between Little Green Lake and the City).

Contact local real estate professionals, lenders and developers to market the area for residential growth. A real estate office could be encouraged to locate within the city to facilitate this. Outreach must be done for local brokers and agents to encourage growth if housing is to be expanded.

Based on the seasonal influx of migrant workers, a dialogue needs to be established with the local canning company and United Migrant Opportunities Service (UMOS) to determine current and future migrant housing needs. Specific resources for financing farm labor needs are available through agencies such as UMOS, USDA Rural Development and Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA).

Financial institutions may need to look at current funding sources to access nontraditional credit programs to expand single family and multi-family housing. Prevailing local wages influence the real estate activity in the area. In our observation there is an opportunity to expand financing sources to make housing affordable to more families in Markesan. Examples would include low down payment or zero down payment programs, reduced interest rate programs and owner equity programs available through United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and USDA Rural Development and WHEDA.

Maintaining and improving current housing stock may become an issue. Citizens need to be made aware of financial resources available to aid in this goal. Low interest rate and grants are available through the County CDBG program as well as WHEDA, Rural Development and additional programs through local financial institutions.



Amish Neighbors

Introduction

The Amish and the impacts of the Amish community on non-Amish residents was one of the most frequently mentioned issues. The “Amish issue” elicited the most emotional discussion in every venue where the issue arose. The most common concerns raised included: 1) the effect of the Amish community on the local school system; 2) the inflationary effect on land prices due to the “premium” prices paid by Amish for farmland; and 3) the effect of Amish equipment and horses on local roads.

We found individuals who have developed productive relationships with Amish residents. In fact, the interaction is much greater and more positive than the common perception expressed during our meetings.

However, we did not find any formal or informal community-based efforts to establish relationships or dialogues with the Amish community to address these issues, identify other potential problems, or identify and pursue potential opportunities that would benefit both communities.

This is a serious issue. We believe that without positive action, the situation will continue to deteriorate. The potential for serious problems exists.

Recommendations:

An important first step is to identify those local individuals, institutions, and organizations that have established positive relationships with the local Amish community. Building on that foundation, work to establish an ongoing dialogue between the two communities to help address current concerns and identify potential opportunities, problems, and solutions.

Other communities that have established good relationships with their Amish neighbors and/or faced and resolved similar issues represent an excellent resource. Visit these communities and meet with Amish and non-Amish residents and learn from their experiences.

Resources:

Local resources – people who have developed mutual business and social relationships with the Amish, such as the Historical Society and Churches

UWEX – Conflict resolution



Communication

Introduction

Communication is an underlying foundation throughout all community functions and processes. For a community to effectively tackle resource and economic development activities, and to address the sensitive health and social issues facing all communities, communication and broad inclusiveness of community members are essential ingredients.

The illustration below shows how both building relationships through regular communications, and developing shared decision-making processes can promote progress on community issues. Called the "Progress Triangle," the illustration shows *how Topical Issues, Relationships* between the stakeholders, and the *Processes* they use together to make decisions, are all necessary elements of a system that fosters progress. The horizontal line on the diagram illustrates a further perspective: if looked at as an iceberg, the "above the line" topical issues are the most visible to people, but the less visible relationships and processes are the foundation of making progress on those issues.

Observations

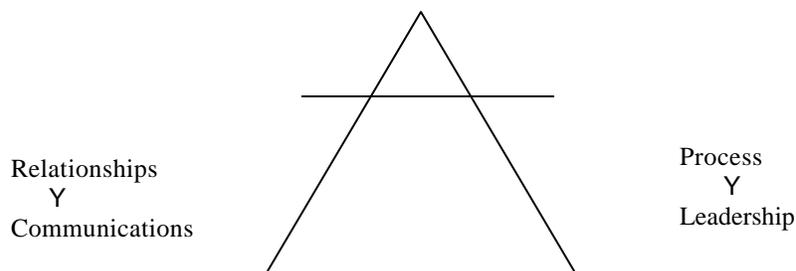
While there is a great deal of informal communication within the Markesan community, lack of formal communications channels may increase resistance to change and result in feelings of distrust among and between stakeholders. The difficulty with relying on informal communication is that everyone hears different information, with different value judgments attached, which counteracts the ability to create a unified community vision.

Recommendations

Formalize communications within and among existing organizations so that each agency and organization is aware of what the others are planning and doing. This could be accomplished through a regularly scheduled joint meeting to share information and strategies, or perhaps a shared regular newsletter where each agency and organization contributes. Consider consolidating those organizations that have similar missions, and who could benefit from increased capacity.

THE PROGRESS TRIANGLE

Topical Issues



Leadership

Observation

There is a “can do” attitude demonstrated in the completion of many major projects such as the museum, the library, city hall, the fire station, the nursing home and the school. At the same time, the leadership is not broadly connected or representative of the community. Some people feel left out. Although this is true of most communities large and small, it is well worth the effort to involve a wide range of local citizens in the decision-making process.

Assets

Markesan currently has active business, civic and community leaders. We observed tremendous potential for leadership in the high school student body and untapped expertise in the professional, agricultural, health care and other fields.

Recommendations

- Hold regularly scheduled joint meetings of related boards, commissions and councils, such as the school board and city council.
- Recruit new members to existing community groups. (Consider providing childcare at meetings to allow parents to become more involved.)
- Provide community recognition of leadership. For example award a key to the city to the most outstanding leader.
- Provide information that is easily accessible and easily understood so that people are well informed and feel comfortable expressing an opinion.
- Provide training to people who are interested in becoming leaders. For example the Wisconsin Rural Leadership Program, or workshops for new officials offered by the League of Wisconsin Municipalities (608/267-2380) and the National Development Council for Economic Development leadership.
- Leaders don't need an idea to base leadership on, but networking outside of your community and brainstorming within the community can be energizing. Take opportunities to go outside of the community to gather success stories that, perhaps, with the right leadership and community input, may benefit Markesan.

Resources

Public Sector Community Leaders can attend professional organization meetings and leadership development opportunities offered by the League of Wisconsin Municipalities (608/267-2380). For example, the League holds a series of regional dinner meetings at which city council members and mayors from the regions sit down and talk with each other. Meetings are held in a number of cities convenient to Markesan - Appleton, Beaver Dam, etc. With its central location, Markesan can choose the meeting most convenient to those attending. The League also includes divisions of the Clerks, Treasurers and Finance Officers and Engineering and Public Works.

The police force may consider the Wisconsin Professional Police Association (608/273-3840) and the Wisconsin Chiefs of Police Association (608/257-181).

Private Sector Community Leaders also have organizations to which they may belong or consider joining that allows them to network - for example the National Federation of Independent Business (608/255-6083), Wisconsin Federation of Cooperatives (608/258-4400) and the Midwest Hardware Association (715/341-7100).



