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# SMALL TOWN SURVIVAL MANUAL



Hamilton's success was documented in the pages of *Missouri Ruralist* (Joe Link, photo).

By Jack McCall  
University Extension  
Northwest Missouri

**MANUAL 133**

 **University  
Extension**  
UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI  
COLUMBIA



## SMALL TOWN

**SURVIVAL MANUAL**

By Jack McCall, University Extension, Northwest Missouri

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# INTRODUCTION

## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK



BY DON BARNETT, INFORMATION SPECIALIST, CENTRAL MISSOURI REGION

You can change the future of your town.  
This little book can help you do it.

But, the book can't do it for you. The critical factor will be *You*. You and others working together will decide the future of your town.

The methods and strategies described here come from my work with small towns in a severely depressed area, North Central Missouri. These are not theories, but rather things that have worked to create jobs and economic activity — in an area that has lost large numbers of manufacturing jobs, is unattractive to new industry, has large numbers of elderly, a faltering farm economy and losses of both people and income to other areas. Many of the ideas and much of the hope in this book came from the people of those small

Using their own resources, people in North Central Missouri are working together to gain control of their futures. Owner Bill Marek (left) and Jim Ramsey stand by a new cold storage addition to the Salisbury Meat Market and Processing plant -- part of Salisbury's recent turnaround. Ramsey, President of the Salisbury Chamber of Commerce, is the Chariton County Clerk.



towns. My confidence that these things do work comes from my experiences with these people.

“We are in charge of our own destiny.” These are the words of a local leader looking back at the many accomplishments of his community. And those are not empty words in many small towns where people are working together gaining control of the future of their towns. They are doing it by using their own resources, their own intelligence and energy to create the future they want for themselves. They have dreamed a dream and are working to make it real.

You can do it too.

The chapters are short. They are really just introductions to the topics. However, they will get you started. If you want more information there are other longer books on each one of these subjects. I repeat, it will be the energy and dedication of people like you who will make a difference – not this book.

It will take a lot of time and a considerable amount of effort to revitalize your community. There are no easy answers, but there are answers. Those answers are in people like you.

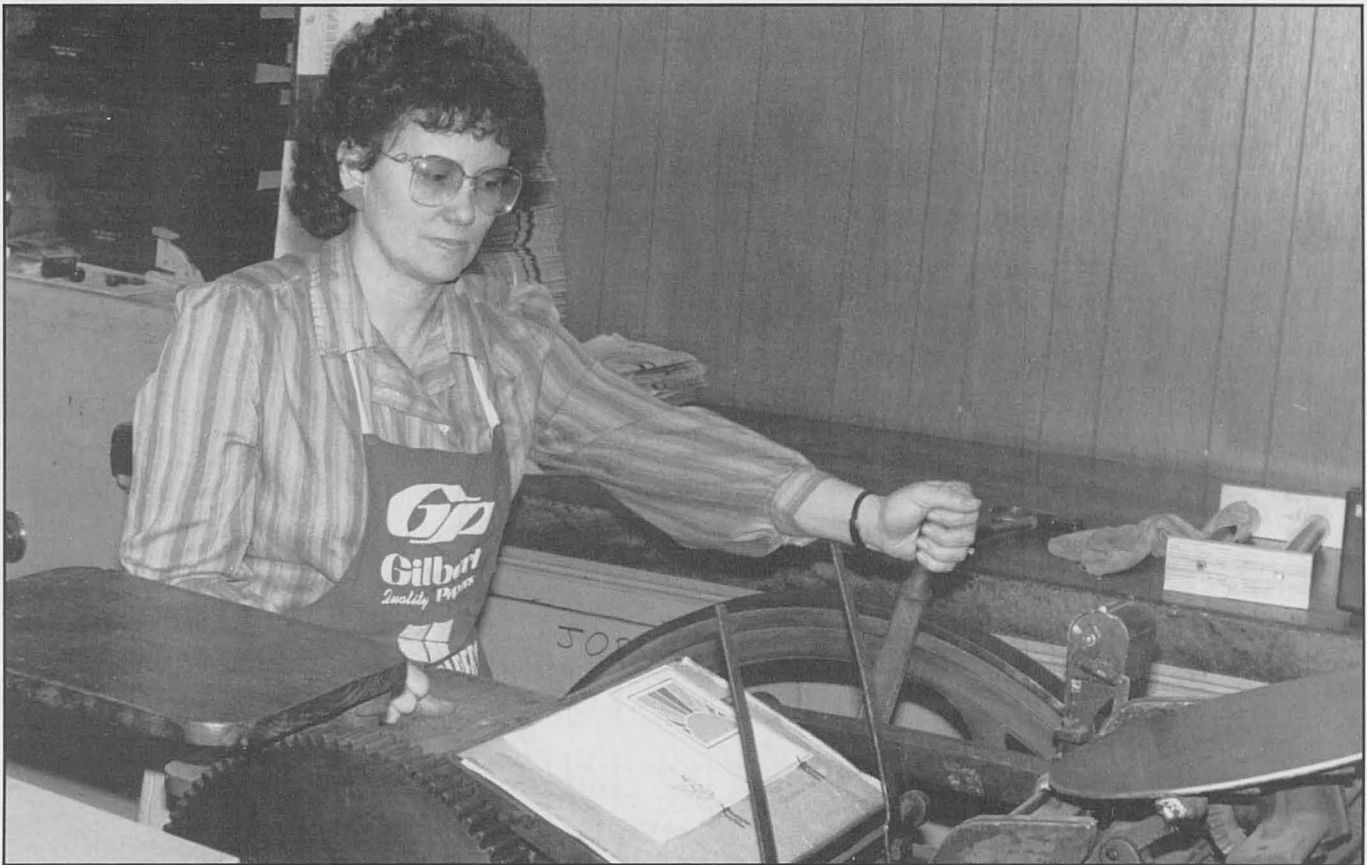
Good Luck.

*Jack McCall  
Community Development Specialist  
Northwest Missouri  
University Extension*



# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IS  
YOU. YOU CAN CHANGE YOUR WORLD.



BY JACK MCCALL, AUTHOR

You can change your community by helping to create economic activity. That's right, *you can do it*. As a matter of fact, it's being done right now in communities across Missouri. Not just by economic developers, but by people just like you. People whose main qualifications are that they believe that the community belongs to them, and they care about what happens in the future.

For a long time we have been taught that a lot of things need experts to do them. They (whoever "they" are) say, "you can't program computers, grow celery, replace the spark plugs on your car, or do economic development — *it takes an expert.*"

Recently "they" have added to the long list of things

Ann Chadwick, the editor of the *Hamilton Advocate*, operates a Greeting Card business, printing the cards on this antique press. This is an example of import-substitution.



that are supposed to be out of our control. Things like the trade deficit or your local economy.

Actually, it's pretty easy to lean back in the ole rockin' chair and feel helpless, to believe that our communities have to take whatever the so-called experts hand to them, or to wait for the man in the blue sweat suit and red cape to come flying in to save us.

However, some people just like you have discovered that they can create jobs and businesses by using their own skills and resources. The result is that they have been able to create jobs for themselves and for their neighbors. They've done it without a big grant or other outside assistance.

What they are doing is gaining control over their present and their future. They are accomplishing this by believing in themselves and in their ability to create economic opportunities in the midst of a rapidly changing world economy.

## HOW CAN YOU DO IT ?

Understanding the changes that have taken place is the key to finding the opportunities.

Too often we try to understand the present by looking at history. We shiver in the cold left by lost jobs and reach down and try to pull the blanket of the past up to cover us.

*The world has changed.*

America used to be the number one manufacturer of mass produced, standardized goods. That meant that we could sell more to other nations than we bought from them. We've lost that position in the world. Now we purchase more than we sell. The reasons are not simple, and it will take a lot more than a "Buy American" campaign to correct the problem.

One of the reasons is that leaders of industry are under a lot of pressure to produce short term profits. Sometimes they find it easier to do this by leveraged buyouts, or by



taking each other over. Other times it is easier to purchase high interest bonds rather than to produce goods. Usually a buyout or takeover means a loss of production and the jobs that go with it.

This happens frequently. When you hear about it, you can almost be sure that jobs are being lost. America is selling off her industrial assets in order to pay dividends. The bottom line is the bottom line.

And it is more than the willingness of workers in other countries to work for less. As the standard of living for workers in places like Korea and Japan is increasing, the standard for American workers is decreasing. Many full time jobs with full time benefits are being converted to part time jobs with no benefits.

Whatever the reasons, *people like you can help your community.*

Not by making people feel guilty if they don't buy American, but by helping to create goods or services for Americans to buy.

For example, the really big purchasers of foreign goods are American Companies. For example one popular US car has an engine made in Japan and its body made in Korea. Take heart though, the windshield wiper motor is made in this country—in a fully robotized factory. The problem consumers sometimes have when they want to “Buy American” is finding something American to buy.

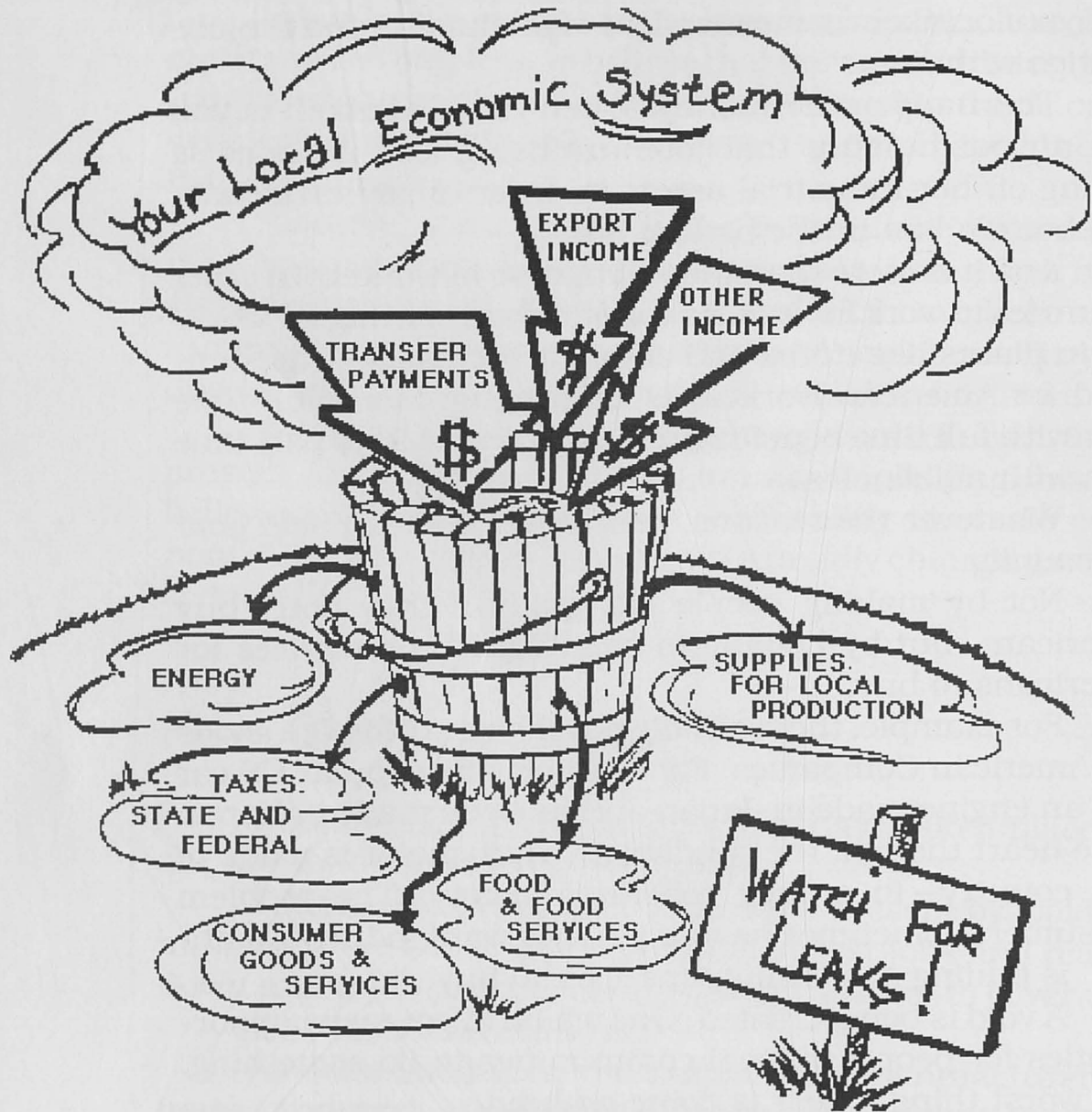
A void is being created. One which offers many opportunities for people in local communities to do something. The worst thing to fear is doing nothing.

## **Economic Development— Community Style**

If you think of your local economy as a bucket you will find that a great deal is poured into the top, but it never overflows because it is leaking out of the bottom. *It is a leaky bucket.* The wealth of your community is creating jobs—



someplace else. This happens when we send money out of the community for the things we bring into it.



## Your Economy as a Leaky Bucket

When you add up all of the economic activity in your community, you will be amazed at the large amount of money in the total. Money comes in from the sale of raw materials, the sale of farm products, from interest and dividends, from the Federal government (in wages and Social Security), and from the state government through

subsidies for schools or state operated institutions. In addition, retailers, wholesalers, bankers, insurance agents and contractors are bringing money in from customers outside of town.

But much of this money doesn't even stop for a coffee break. It leaves town immediately. Merchants have to buy inventory, people shop outside of town, interest is paid to banks in other parts of the country, taxes are paid to the state and federal governments and large amounts of money are shipped out of the community for energy costs.

## **Plugging the Leaks in Your Bucket: A Part of Community Economic Development**

We plug leaks when we decrease the amount of money that flows from our community. When we do that we make that money available to pay community residents for the work they are doing. The strategy is to start doing work at home that we are paying people in other towns to do.

We can never plug up all the leaks in our bucket. However, three major elements of your community's economy are controllable. As we gain control over them we will be plugging leaks in our buckets. We will be putting our money to work creating jobs for people in our own communities. Remember we are talking about things that you can do. The reason we know that you can do it is that it has been done by people like you. As a matter of fact even brain surgeons can do these things.

### **Adding Value**

First, *add value* to products and raw materials.

Most of the raw materials that leave our communities will never be worth less than they are when they get on the bus. People in other places process them, handle them, put labels on them and make profits from them.



A good example of this is the famous Missouri feeder calf. A local farmer sells it for about three hundred dollars. It is hauled, fed and sold: hauled, butchered and sold: hauled, packaged, and sold; and finally hauled home, cooked and eaten. In the process of being fed and hauled and handled and labeled, about one thousand dollars is added to the value of the raw material.

Of course that's not all profit, but at least five people take profit from the product, including the haulers.

There are many examples of raw materials, other than farm products, which are profitable for other people. Can you list some raw materials or products which your community sends away for processing? List these raw materials under the headings "raw materials" and "value added" in the appendix.

## Import Substitution

This is substituting something that is made or grown locally for something that is shipped into your community. This is another way to plug leaks in the bucket. We import goods and services—everything from teapots to teddy bears, and in between, lots of expensive things like electricity and peanut butter. No one wants to do without peanut butter much less electricity. For some things we will always need to depend on others to produce them. However, it may be possible for community members to use less of some expensive imported items.

Other things get imported to our communities because of custom or convenience. A good example is fresh vegetables. They are easily grown along with the crabgrass in the backyard of the average Missouri home. But most of the vegetables found in supermarkets will have 2,000 miles on them by the time they reach the tables of Missourians.

Make a list of things that are imported into your community in the appendix under the headings "imports" and "substitutes."

## Resource Enhancement

This is the third division in our analysis of community economic opportunities.

One of the things we want to look at in this category is *human potential* as an economic resource. The new jobs that come to our communities are often minimum wage, maximum tedium jobs that almost anyone can do. The talents of people get ignored when you are focusing on fast, mass-produced foods or fast-moved, franchised goods. If you are just counting the number of jobs in a community instead of considering the impacts on the social and economic environment of the community, you may be missing opportunities to develop the economies of our communities in meaningful ways.

Human talent is an economic resource. Let's think about ways that we can put these resources to work by making a better use of a product or raw material or by discovering a raw material in something that is being thrown away.

The ability to manage a business is an economic resource. That could be enhanced by networking with other business people or by attending a management short-course. A good example of this is a couple who enhance resources by adding human genius to a common material by making lawn furniture out of material intended for auto tail pipes.

Some things we might throw away can be resources. For example, some communities make fertilizer out of waste products.

Another important aspect of this category of economic development is *efficiency*. This can apply to the way we do business in the community or to the way we use any of our resources.

Can you think of natural or human resources which are in your community which might be enhanced? Write them under "resources" and "enhancements" in the appendix.



The next step is to analyze these lists for economic opportunities.

## Analyzing For Opportunity

### Adding Value

First look at the list we called “raw materials” which are shipped out of your community in their unprocessed state. Remember that people in other places will be processing them, adding work to them and collecting wages and profits for their work. That is called *adding value*. Think about ways that value could be added to the materials on your list. Use the appendix in the back to write down your ideas for “adding value.”

### Import Substitution

Do the same thing with the “imports” list. When we can produce something locally to replace something we buy from someone else, then we keep our money at home. When we keep money at home, it creates jobs. When it leaves town, it creates jobs for some other town. In the back of this publication, write down substitutes for imports.

### Resource Enhancement

Now think of a way “resources” could be “enhanced.” Write ways that resources could be made better or more efficient by adding human talent or by increasing capabilities by encouragement or education.

When you have finished these lists you will have many good ideas and the basis for an action plan for *community economic development*. Using these analytical lists you can set some priorities and begin to plan the ways you will develop your economy.

Remember that the critical factors are not:

- How smart you are,
- How much money you have,
- How big your town is,

but rather,

- If you believe in yourself,
- In how willing you are to try new things,
- And how you work together as a community.

Then, you can change your world. A one hundred percent solution is hard to find, but you can create fifty-two percent solutions that improve your community.



# ORGANIZING FOR SURVIVAL

DEVELOP AN ORGANIZATION — DEVELOP IT'S LEADERS.



A community must believe in itself before it can incorporate change, says Jack McCall. McCall worked with Wendy Bowen, a member of the Second Century organization, to establish that belief in Hamilton.

You can change the future of your community.  
Or you can sit back and allow whatever happens to happen.

You can create your own destiny.

However, the cost is high. It means organizing a group of people who are willing to give of their time and their energy to make things happen in your town.

It means believing in yourself and in your organization.

It means putting aside individual differences to work together for the good of the community.

It means working together to decide what you want for the future and then working together to make it happen

You can do it. People are doing it.

## HOW CAN YOU DO IT?

There are two basic elements in organizing for survival. The first is the development of an organization and the second is the development of leadership.

### Organization

Here are some basics.

1. *Involve everybody.* You will need an organization that represents as many different aspects of your community as you can possibly manage to draw together. Try to involve new people. Don't be afraid to ask people to be involved in the survival of their community.

2. *People care.* Don't assume that people are unwilling to work. Times have changed. Many people are aware of the dangers facing their community. There is a willingness to try to do something. Most people do care about their community. What we call "apathy" is not knowing what to do—or not believing that people can make a difference in their community.

3. *Respond to the it ain't broke chorus.* Some people don't see any reason to change anything. You might remind them of the "boiled frog syndrome." A frog dropped in boiling water will hop out. However a frog placed in a pan of cool water will boil to death if you heat the water slowly enough so that the frog doesn't notice the change in temperature. The frog is insensitive to small changes. Added together slowly these small changes can be fatal. On the other hand many small positive changes can add up to a renewed community.



4. *Ignore the ittleneverwork society.* Don't let the negative people discourage you. They are members of the Ittlneverwork Society. These are the same kind of people who said the airplane wouldn't fly and laughed at the horseless carriage. Cultivate your ability to smile and say, "Let's give it a try."

5. *Work with those who will work.* Don't assume that you have to have a huge group. Surveys indicate that many people don't want to go to meetings but want someone to tell them what needs to be done. One successful community has only 18 people who come to community meetings, but there are more than 200 people out of a population of 1,800 who are working in that town to help it survive.

6. *Be positive.* Think of this effort in positive terms. Great things will happen. You will see attitudes change, you will see people develop. You will be able to look back on your efforts with a real sense of accomplishment. Your community will draw together in ways that you can hardly imagine. After all, you are working together to do a very important job to help your community survive.

7. *This is real.* Don't assume that this is just a stop gap solution which will last until some bureaucrat or industry comes in from the outside to do the real thing. This is the real thing. Studies of communities who are surviving tell us that the most important key to survival is people working together to create a livable town and a growing economy, based on the expansion of local resources. Many towns that have received grants and industrial locations through the years are on the list for extinction.

## What Can We Do?

First, hold a town meeting.

1. Invite each organization in your town to come. Don't ask them to send a representative but ask them all to come. Invite everyone in town. One community had 40 percent of the population show up. Be sure to invite area people too.

Use your local media to publicize the event. Be sure to send the announcement to papers, radio and television stations that serve your town. They may send a reporter to cover your meeting. That will help.

2. Think about what you want to accomplish. There are several things that should happen in your meeting.

- a. *Establish Belief.* People need to believe that they can affect the future and that their work can make a difference. Try to find someone who has been involved in one of these efforts in another community. Invite that person to your meeting, it will help.

- b. *Think About the Future.* Ask people to talk about the kind of community they would like to have five or ten years from now. Have someone write these things down on newsprint. Don't argue over whether or not each idea is a good one. Just write them all down. It doesn't cost much to write it down. What you will be doing is creating a positive image about the future of your town—and a positive attitude toward all contributions. Try to keep the meeting from becoming a gripe session about all the things that are wrong with your community. You can deal with those things later in a Community Needs Assessment. But that's not for the first meeting.



c. *Assign Work.* After you have developed this *positive image of the future*, ask the group to list things that could be done to make the image a reality. Group them into categories and develop Task Forces to get them done. Appoint a chairperson or co-chairs and tell them that their job includes the following:

- To recruit other people in town to be members of the Task Force,
- To meet as a Task Force and prepare short and long term tasks which will move the community toward its *image of the future*. Each Task Force should have one project which can be accomplished immediately,
- To report back to the Community Group about their plans.

It's as simple as that. You just keep doing that over and over through the months. The substance of your monthly community meetings should be to hear these reports and to make comments and suggestions to the task force chairpersons. This will give direction and purpose to your meetings and will give the community a sense of accomplishment. Be sure to report to the community through your local paper.

What we have described here is a functional organization which centers around the people doing work. Don't worry too much about a formal structure. Remember, there are lots of groups who have beautiful constitutions and by-laws and officers with grand titles that never get anything done. You will find that if you are doing things the structure will take care of itself.

Bernard Potts is the owner of Man's Land, a family clothing store and barber shop in Hamilton. Residents consider Potts an effective leader because his enthusiasm has encouraged a strong sense of cooperation within their community.



## Leadership

A leader is someone who wants to do something and is willing to invest time and energy to make something happen in his or her community.

One doesn't have to be rich or hold a position of prestige in the community to be a leader.

However there are several essential qualities that leaders have. All of these things can be learned or acquired. *Leaders are made, not born.* Here are some of those essential qualities:

1. *Vision.* A Leader who has a dream for the future of the community and can focus that dream on concrete "doable" activities and projects will inspire others to be involved.

2. *Enthusiasm.* This is the most important quality of all. It comes from believing in the worthiness of the task of working together in the community and believing in the ability to get things done. A people who project enthusiasm will attract other people to work



with them and will inspire hard work. The opposite of this quality is *obligation* which involves people out of a dull sense of duty.

3. *Positive Attitude*. It's easy to feel bad about a small town. There usually are a surplus of problems to cuss and discuss. The amazing thing is that problems never get solved by complaining about them. Nobody ever built anything by dwelling on how impossible it really is. As a matter of fact, it's a good idea not to talk about problems. Instead, get other people thinking about what this place could be if they worked together. That's called *positive community imaging*.. That will change the future of your town.

4. *Delegation*. One of the most common mistakes community leaders make is in assuming that they are *indispensable*. The easiest job in town ought to be chairperson. That title should mean that you get other people to do the work. That your job is to coordinate. Delegating means that you give another person the opportunity to carry out a task with the full responsibility for success or failure resting with them. If you can learn to do that you will increase your effectiveness as a leader. Eliminate or avoid *shoulder-lookin' over*.

5. *Focus*. A good leader is a person who keeps reminding people of the major purpose of the work. It's easy to get mired down in the details of a project. Let everybody help you set goals and constantly remind members of your group about what they are trying to achieve. Keep that positive community image in front of everyone.

6. *Reward*. Contrary to popular opinion you will not ruin a persons character by praising them. You can create enthusiasm in others by recognizing their work

as leader or member of a group. One of the things that often happens to community groups is that they lose track of how much they have accomplished. It is a good idea to point out how far the group has progressed. You can do this by listing the things you have done and saying "thank you" for work that has been performed.

7. *Self Confidence.* Even If you feel shaky about standing up in front of a group, remember that you as a member of a community have the power to change the future by working together. Most great things are not accomplished by public speaking, but rather by people working together. The job of leader is not one of convincing people that they ought to do things, but rather pointing out to others the possibilities that are before us.

The words to remember are:

- Vision
- Enthusiasm
- Positive Attitude
- Delegation
- Focus
- Reward
- Self Confidence

Those are the qualities of Leadership.



# DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION

## LEARN WHAT THE CUSTOMERS WANT



Wendy Bowen and her partners, Jerry and Terry Cook, bread tenderloins at the Hamilton Locker and resell them as "Missouri's Finest Finger Food Inc." Bowen says marketing has become a top priority.

Not too long ago downtown was the center of life for the small town. It was the place to buy almost everything the family needed and it was the place to hear the latest gossip or to meet old friends. It also provided entertainment, even when it didn't have a "movin' picture show." People would sit in their cars, visit or just "watch the people go by."

Now, many small-town downtowns are just symbols of the despair of small towns. Too often they are marked by empty stores or stores that are used for storage or offices.

Residents may have stopped thinking of them as a shopping area and socializing is accidental and incidental.

Small-town downtown has been replaced as a place to buy things by the metro shopping mall or the regional discount store. The replacement for the small-town downtown as a social and entertainment center has not occurred.

*It doesn't have to be this way.*

You can make your downtown more vital, more alive, a place to do business and have a good time. You can improve business. *It's being done in small towns just like yours.*

You can make your downtown a gathering place, the place to go.

You can't go back to the good old days — but you can make these days better. Like most important things there is no *easy answer*. You can get results if you will work together and try some new things. It's possible for you to develop a parking problem. If that happens you will know that you are doing good work.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO TO REVITALIZE YOUR DOWNTOWN?

- You can increase business by retaining some of the business that is going to metro areas or shopping centers.
- You can increase business by changing the retail trade community to more nearly conform to your customers' wishes.
- You can increase business by lessening competition between local merchants and increasing competition with the shopping malls and direct mail sellers.
- You can increase business by creating a more pleasant place to shop and by giving people a reason for coming downtown.

## HOW DO WE DO IT?

### First, Organize

You will need a good organization. You can look at the chapter on organization for some help in getting started. If you are creating an organization just for the purpose of

dealing with downtown redevelopment you will need to consider these points.

1. Your business sector is probably spread out over the whole town. In a medium size town there are clearly defined strip-shopping areas, shopping centers, and suburban shopping centers or malls. All of these compete with each other and especially with the downtown area. In the typical small town the lines of competition are not so closely drawn. Therefore, you will probably want to invite the entire business and service community to your meeting and talk about revitalizing the whole business community.

2. You should include, if possible, representatives of these groups: Retail Merchants, Service Providers (Insurance, Legal, Medical, and Utilities), Chamber of Commerce, Community Associations, Local Government, Special Interest Groups (Service Clubs), etc.

The ability of your business community to succeed will have an effect on every aspect of life in your community. Don't hesitate to ask a wide variety of people to work to make it better.

## Second, Find Out What's Really Happening in Your Economy

We make a lot of assumptions about our economy that are often based on information that is three or four decades out of date. Radical changes have occurred in the distribution of tax dollars, in investments and in the way people spend money. Groups that we used to think of as being poor are now moderately prosperous. Changes have taken place that have reshaped the economic geography.

Two University of Missouri researchers have given us a useful way of looking at our economies. Curtis Braschler and John Kuehn have developed the Economic Base Study



which can tell us where the money and jobs are located in our communities. If we know where the money is, we can go after it.

They started their study by studying all of the counties of all of the states which touch Missouri. Using Bureau of Economic Analysis figures, they established an average for a typical county. When you look at these figures remember that they are net income, not gross. Net income is the kind of money you can spend. It's the only kind that counts.

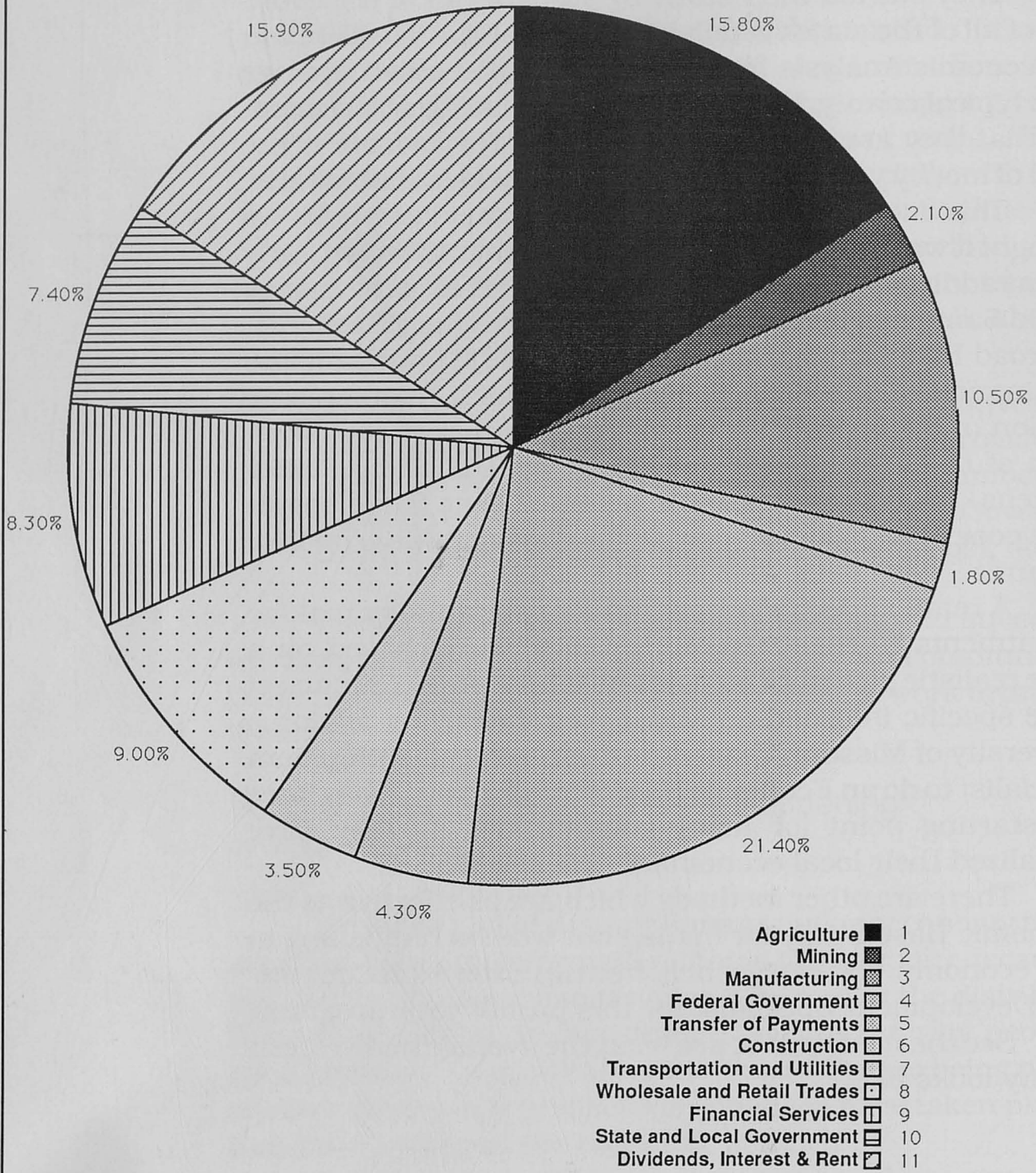
This means that the money may not be where we thought it was. For example: Transfer of Payments is a fairly recent addition to our economic picture. (This is the money Uncle Sam pays out in Social Security, Military Pensions, Railroad Retirement and other programs.) It is usually the dominant economic feature of rural counties. Another large portion of county income is Dividends, Interest and Rent. Both of these categories are largely controlled by Senior Citizens. In the past we have assumed that these people were poor. But they now represent a considerable economic resource.

A retail and service community can profit by making adjustments to their inventories or services, based on a more realistic picture of income and job sources. You can get more specific information about your county by asking a University of Missouri Extension Community Development Specialist to do an Economic Base Study for you. It has been the starting point for many communities as they have revitalized their local economies.

There are other methods which are as effective as the Economic Base Study for finding out what is happening in your economy. You can get help from an Extension Community Development Specialist for this part of your program.

See the next page to see what the average midwestern county looks like.

# Midwestern county profile



## Find Out What the Customers Want

The easiest way to find out what your customers want is to ask them. The process of asking is called "A Marketing Study." You can pay a lot of money to hire someone to do a marketing study or you can ask them yourself. There is nothing mystical, magical or complicated about marketing studies. It is possible to do a marketing study while not wearing a tie.

It involves asking simple questions about why people shop where they do. When you have finished you will have a much better idea about changes you can make to better serve your customers and to make more money.

Sometimes we make assumptions about customers that are also out of date. Small town merchants often see themselves as friendly, loving people who give a lot of service. However, customers may see them as uncaring people, charging high prices, who never have what you want and blame the customer for asking for something they don't have.

One of the changes that has occurred in people's shopping patterns is that the market does not center around merchandise but is focused on the shopping environment and the relationship between the merchant and the customer. In other words the market is people more than it is price or product.

Large discount stores sell an image. The image they project is one that formerly belonged to the mainstreet merchant. It says: First, "We are Friendly," second, "You can buy everything cheaper here" and last, "We have everything you will need." These things may or may not be true; but if it is true in the customers mind, then they are lost to local merchants. When a customer buys that image, then the merchandise sells itself. A good question for small town merchants to ask is, "What is the image of merchants in our town?"



To overcome these advertising outlays requires a lot more than a "shop at home" guilt campaign or an endless stream of complaints about "unfair competition." We need to know what our customers want and do our best to meet these needs and wants.

If you want to design a marketing survey be sure to ask the residents of your community these kinds of questions:

1. Where do they buy a wide variety of items?
2. Why do they purchase them there?
3. What do they think of things like parking, service, store hours, shopping environment and so forth?

The survey doesn't have to be long or complicated. Be sure to ask people for their ages and if possible their employment status.

### Third: Improve the Shopping Environment

The next time you are at "The Mall" notice how much money the mall has spent on the shopping environment. They have expensive fountains, trees, flowers and resting places all designed to make it a pleasant place to be. They know that if you as a customer enjoy coming there that you will associate that pleasant experience with spending money in the stores. Spending money thus becomes recreation.

What does the shopper find in many small towns? You can answer for your town, but in many others the impression is one of depression, disorder and disaster. Weeds growing in the cracks of sidewalks, depressed merchants, dirty stores and streets, and inventories that have grown familiar to customers through the years.

There is a wide range of activities which will create a more desirable shopping environment.

The beginning may be a simple cleanup of streets and sidewalks. This is a good opportunity to involve lots of people in doing something for their community.

Storekeepers might want to consider some new displays of merchandise.

Your organization can decorate the windows of empty stores.

One of the resources you probably have is a good supply of store buildings which were built around the turn of the century. Many of these structures incorporated a great deal of style. In some cases the distinctive features have been covered with more modern materials. You can create an attraction by renovating these old buildings. The idea is to make the shopping areas of your community a place that people feel good about coming to visit.

There are other ways of creating a desirable shopping environment. Whether it is renovation, tree plantings or small parks, the primary thing to remember is that we are trying to make it a pleasant place for customers to be.

## Finally, Promote

One of the reasons for the success of the Mall is their ability and willingness to advertise together. Individual advertising is important but promotion as a shopping sector offers an opportunity for small town merchants to do several important things.

It is an important chance to change the image that residents may have. You can establish yourselves as caring for more than just a profit if you gear promotions to more than just sidewalk sales or getting rid of last year's left over merchandise.

- It is a chance for you to bring people from your community to town.
- Promotions offer an opportunity to bring people from other towns to your town.
- It is a chance to build good will among customers and potential customers.

## What Can You Do?

1. When you plan promotions, think of ways to get people into your shopping area. Focus on people rather than selling merchandise or service.
2. Try to think of activities that will use the physical attributes of your town to provide a pleasant recreational experience for people.
3. Don't try to do everything for everybody all at the same time. Aim your promotional efforts at specific groups.
4. Remember that there is sometimes a delay in the effects of promotions. Sometimes people will return to purchase following a big event.

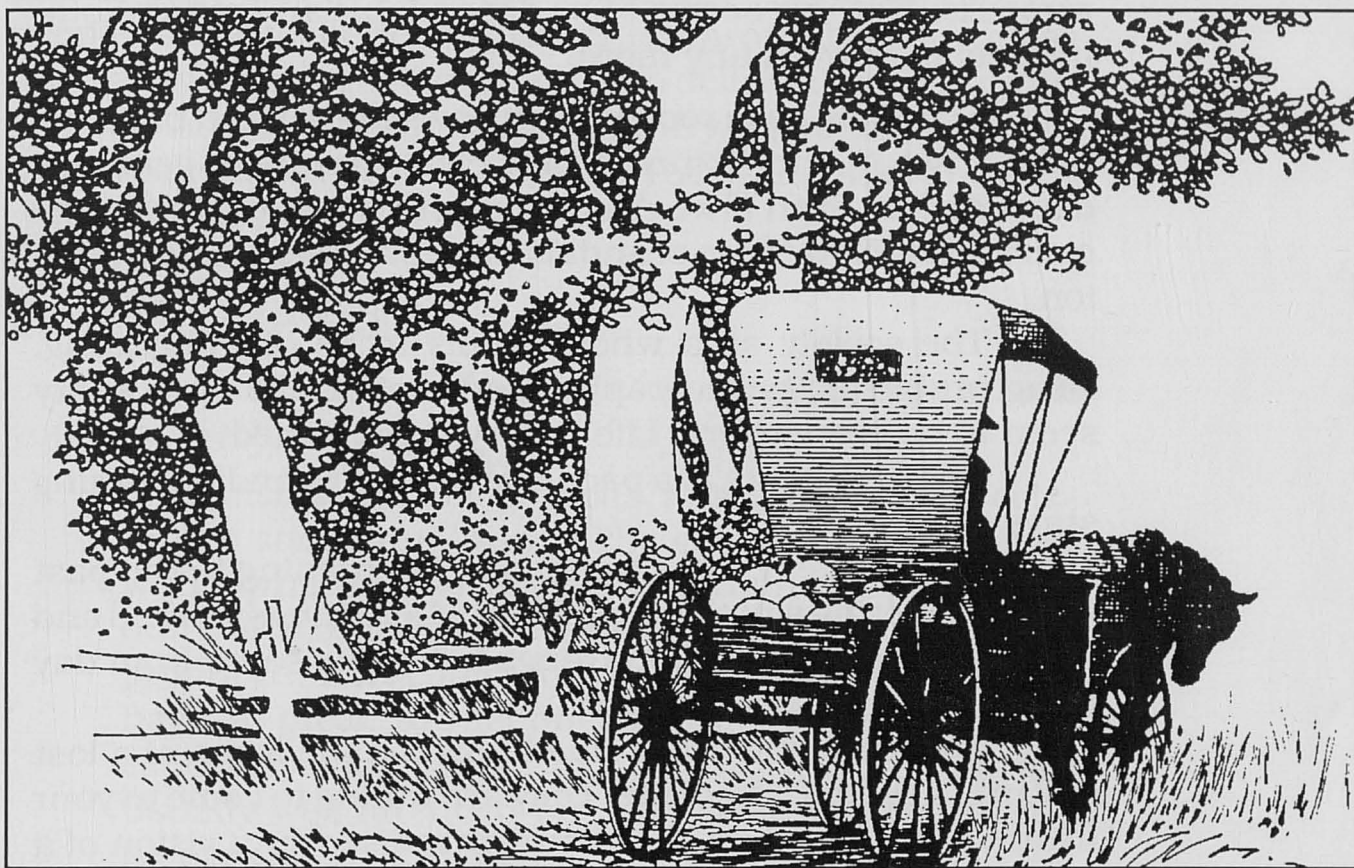
Your business community can be more prosperous. We will never be able to keep people from going to the city on shopping trips. After all, that is recreation. But there is a great deal of business which can and should be done locally.

It will take some work and a great deal of cooperation but your town can increase the attractiveness and profitability of your business community.



# COMMUNITY MARKETING

## ADVERTISE YOUR CULTURAL LANDSCAPE



The town of Jamesport, Missouri, used this picture as part of a promotional effort to market their community. A fuller version of the original poster is printed on the back cover.

*You* can increase the income levels in your community by bringing people to town.

The impact of the money that visitors spend will be felt by many people in your community. The first to notice will be retailers and service providers. However, as those dollars work their way through the system, their impact will grow. The whole community will benefit.

Many small towns have created attractions or have made people aware of existing historical or cultural points of interest. They have been able to attract thousands of people to their communities.

*You can do it too.*

## Here's How It Works

America is in the midst of a love affair with the past. This may be because life today seems very complicated. Forces beyond our control appear to be in control of a lot of things that once were individual decisions. Change is rampant. Nothing seems to be dependable any more. Nothing seems to work any more.

Scandals have rocked both government and big business— two of the elements of society which we generally depended on even if we disagreed with some parts of their operations. Now these scandals have even permeated religion.

The society as a whole seems to be disintegrating. Drug problems, pornography, and a shortage of morality seem to be everywhere. Life is very complicated.

Change occurs at a pace that we can't handle. Nothing stays put.

In the face of this, Americans are turning to the past — remembering simpler days of old when things worked and a person could depend on things being the same from day to day and from year to year.

They remember the small town as the focus of a lost culture, a fading way of life. They are willing to come to your town to try to recover, recapture or rediscover a vision of a simpler, slower time. They remember and believe in the small town as the backbone of America. It makes people feel better to touch the past.

## Cultural Landscaping

When we think of tourists and tourism, we usually think of a family in a heavily laden station wagon going to the Grand Canyon or some other spectacular scenic site. If your town is located near one of these natural wonders, your job is much easier. However, most communities are not blessed by these natural landscapes.

But every town has a "cultural landscape." It consists

of your values, your style of life, the pace of life in your town and some of the old buildings you may live or work in.

The cultural landscape of the small town is attractive to people remembering the good old days and the "small town" itself. You can show people small town life with its slower pace and down home atmosphere. You can provide people with an experience that centers around the openness and safety of the small town. You can delight them with your "home made" celebrations and country way of life. You can show them how it used to be done. They will come, and they will buy these experiences.

## How Do We Do It?

First, let's think of some resources you have which you can develop.

*1. Festivals and Celebrations.* Nearly every town celebrates something during the course of a year. In a world where much of the entertainment is "adult only" or manufactured by professionals, our locally produced, non-commercial community celebrations have a great attraction as family entertainment, especially for people in metro areas. These are usually well attended but they offer an opportunity for expanded participation. That means money in the pocket of your community.

*2. Old Time Skills, Arts and Crafts.* Such skills as shingle-making and blacksmithing probably can be found in your community. It may take some work to find them. But when you show an interest, you may be surprised at the people who will remember something they learned a long time ago. Moreover, skilled people can learn older crafts without too much difficulty. Demonstrating old farm implements often draws a crowd.

Arts and Crafts people are everywhere. They often do



not have an adequate market for their products. If you can provide customers for them, you will be improving the economy of your town and increasing the attractiveness of your events.

*3. Family Living Experiences.* The Bed and Breakfast Home is the most popular example and probably the easiest to create. Some places provide Family Farm Vacations, which allow a family to spend a week or a weekend living on a working farm. Still others are furnishing an extra farm house, putting some animals in the barn and renting it to city families.

*4. Museums and Antique Stores.*

*5. Genealogy Centers.* Many people are highly interested in family history. If you can collect copies of birth records or other genealogical materials in one place, these people will come to your town to look at them.

*6. Recreational Attractions.* Outdoorsmen and women like hunting and fishing, but city people with those interests may need a place to pursue them. Many rural people are making money by providing access to their land. These are attractive to people because they don't know where to go and often don't understand how to approach landowners about using their land. Canoeing or camping might also be on your list.

*7. Historical Sites.* You don't have to have a nationally known site to attract people to it. A restored jail, church, or schoolhouse can be an attraction.

*8. Your Retail Merchants and Service Providers.* As a part of your community's marketing, include your friendly retail and service community, especially if they have developed unique product lines.

## 9. Other Things You Can Think Of.

Make a list of possible resources which you could develop to attract visitors to your town under "possible resources."

You probably have an impressive list of things your town could market. But people will not come unless you let them know about what you've got.

How do we market our resources? There are two options. Together, they spell success.

### Things That Cost Money

*Newspaper or Radio.* Purchasing space or time is a good investment. Besides letting people know about your town, advertising also lets the newspaper or station know about you. This should result in more attention being given to your news releases. You will find the media more cooperative in covering events in your community.

If you are within driving distance of an urban area, you should consider advertising in their media. Suburban newspapers are probably better than the big city dailies. If you are going after people who have money to spend and are likely to come, then spend some time finding out which papers they read and use your dollars there.

Community advertising will be more effective than single attraction ads. This is called Packaging. Let people know that they can have a variety of experiences. Remember that a lot of little things add up to a significant offering. Your strategy should include year-round scheduling of events or attractions.

*Maps, Brochures and Posters.* Have these printed and distribute them as widely as you can. You may be able to get them placed in Visitors Centers, Truck Stops or other service centers in your region. Develop a logo for your community and a slogan. Use these things on all your

advertising. When you do this, remember what we said about people's attraction to the past. Try to avoid phrases like, "Town on the Move" or "Progressive." Save those for industrial recruitment. Make sure that every visitor to your town gets something that tells them what they can do when they come to visit. Concentrate on the "action" rather than what a nice place it is to live and work. Save that for industrial recruitment also.

## Things That Are Free

*Special Events Coverage.* All reporters are always looking for things to tell about. If you have an interesting person, someone with an unusual hobby, or a community event, then let the news people know about it.

There is a potential journalist in almost every community. Designate them as the "Community Reporter" and give them the job of writing news releases. It's a good idea to have a letterhead printed. Be sure that the items are neatly typed and are as short as possible.

## Rules for News Releases

These rules were compiled by asking editors and radio station news directors for suggestions about how to make sure that your release is printed.

1. Type it neatly. Do not submit copy that is handwritten, or has lots of strikeouts.
2. Use short paragraphs.
3. Double space it.
4. Put all of the essential information in the first paragraph. That way if the editor is short on space, your article can be cut without a lot of work.
5. Don't expect the editor to do your work for you. If you submit releases which can be used just as they are, you will be in print more often.



Here is an example of what your news release might look like:

Joanne Brown  
Puttyville Community Assn.  
309 S. Grange St.  
Puttyville MO, 55555  
(555 411-1212)

July 25, 1988

Puttyville Founders Day  
Set for August 28

PUTTYVILLE, MO—A craft show, a carnival and some old-fashioned cooking will be among the highlights when Puttyville host its Founders Day celebration Aug. 28.

“The event is designed to show off the skills and values of small towns. It will offer family-centered entertainment and a chance to sample old-time food and crafts,” said Joanne Brown, Founders Day chairperson.

She said the celebration will begin with a parade at 10:00 a.m.

After the parade, local merchants will sponsor in-store promotions, a flea market, a craft show, and a carnival. The carnival will include homemade rides and swings, as well as horse-drawn attractions.

Another popular Founders Day activity, Brown said, will be the “Lost Arts Show.” Shingle-making and woodcarving will be just some of the features of that event.

From noon until 6:00 p.m., watch and taste “old fashioned, country style cooking” at the city park. “Visitors will be able to eat as much as they want of corn puddin’, roast ham, Cushaw pie, beans and hotuns,” said Elmira Hustton, dinner chairperson.

Other afternoon activities will include old-time games, an ugly dog contest, pony cart races, a dairy show, and Shetland pony rides.

Sunday’s events begin with an old-time church service starting at 1:00 a.m. inside the park. All Saturday’s events, shows, and rides also will be open Sunday afternoon.

###

## Some Other Marketing Tips:

*News Sources.* Develop a mailing list of the news sources in your area. Don’t be timid about sending them off to big city papers. The worst thing that can happen is that it will be discarded. Who knows you may wear them down. You will know that you have won when they send a reporter out

to cover your story. Send a copy to the Advertising Director of the papers that sell you advertising. If they don't use your story, you can ask them what happened the next time you place an ad. Be sure to send releases to magazines that reach your area. A town that is trying to do something is news to many people.

*Word of Mouth.* People who come to your community and have a satisfactory experience are a great source of free advertising. You can help this along by making sure that visitors are treated with hospitality everywhere they visit in your community. Have your business owners and clerks make a special effort to be courteous and enthusiastic about the community and what you are doing. One clerk bad-mouthing the community can undo your hard work.

*You can do it.* Lots of people are. Many communities have increased their income by bringing visitors to town. But you have to work at it. It won't just happen because you have a nice town.

# APPENDIX

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## 'Step Back In Time'

Jamesport, MO.



**University  
Extension**  
UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI  
COLUMBIA

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