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20 Clues to Community Survival: An Annotated List

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20 CLUES TO RURAL COMMUNITY SURVIVAL

An Annotated List

- 1. Evidence of Community Pride** Successful communities are often showplaces of community care and attention, with neatly trimmed yards, public gardens and well kept parks.
- 2. Emphasis on Quality in Business and Community Life** People believe that something worth doing is worth doing right.
- 3. Willingness to Invest in the Future** In addition to the brick-and-mortar investments, all decisions are made with an outlook on the future.
- 4. Participatory Approach to Community Decision Making** Even the most powerful of opinion leaders seem to work toward building consensus.
- 5. Cooperative Community Spirit** The stress is on working together toward a common goal and the focus is on positive results.
- 6. Realistic Appraisal of Future Opportunities** Successful communities have learned how to build on strengths and minimize weaknesses.
- 7. Awareness of Competitive Positioning** Local loyalty is emphasized, but thriving communities who know who their competitors are and position themselves accordingly.
- 8. Knowledge of the Physical Environment** Relative location and available natural resources underscore decision-making.
- 9. Active Economic Development Program** There is an organized, public/private approach to economic development.
- 10. Deliberate Transition of Power to a Younger Generation of Leaders** People under 40 regularly hold key positions in civic and business affairs.
- 11. Celebration of Diversity in Leadership** Women, minorities, youth and newcomers are welcomed into leadership circles where their ideas are treated as opportunities.

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| 12. Strong Belief in and Support for Education | Good schools are the norm and centers of community activity. |
| 13. Problem Solving Approach to Providing Health Care | Health care is considered essential, and smart strategies are in place for diverse methods of delivery. |
| 14. Strong Multi-Generational Family Orientation | The definition of family is broad, and activities include younger as well as older generations. |
| 15. Strong Presence of Traditional Institutions that are Integral to Community Life | Churches, schools and service clubs are strong influences on community development and social activities. |
| 16. Sound and Well Maintained Infrastructure | Leaders work hard to maintain and improve streets, sidewalks, water systems, and sewage facilities. |
| 17. Careful Use of Fiscal Resources | Frugality is a way of life and expenditures are considered investments in the future. |
| 18. Sophisticated Use of Technology Resources | Leaders access information that is beyond the knowledge base available in the community. |
| 19. Willingness to Seek Help from the Outside | People seek outside help for community needs, and many compete for government grants and contracts for economic and social programs. |
| 20. Conviction that, in the Long Run, You Have to Do It Yourself | Thriving rural communities believe their destiny is in their own hands. Making their communities good places is a pro-active assignment, and they willingly accept it. |

The Heartland Center for Leadership Development is an independent, non-profit organization developing local leadership that responds to the challenges of the future.

The 20 clues are taken from the Heartland Center's *Clues to Rural Community Survival*, a landmark study profiling thriving small towns and reservations. The list of vital characteristics provides an "ideal" benchmark against which people can measure their own community. It moves people naturally from theory, to strategy, to action.



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