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## Community Vision is Important to New Residents

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# CORNHUSKER ECONOMICS

May 28, 2008

University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension

Institute of Agriculture & Natural Resources  
Department of Agricultural Economics  
<http://www.agecon.unl.edu/Cornhuskereconomics.html>

## Community Vision is Important to New Residents

Market Report	Yr Ago	4 Wks Ago	5/23/08
<b><u>Livestock and Products,</u></b>			
<b><u>Weekly Average</u></b>			
Nebraska Slaughter Steers, 35-65% Choice, Live Weight.....	\$94.43	\$92.70	\$94.00
Nebraska Feeder Steers, Med. & Large Frame, 550-600 lb.....	126.46	123.56	118.11
Nebraska Feeder Steers, Med. & Large Frame 750-800 lb.....	102.92	105.64	111.26
Choice Boxed Beef, 600-750 lb. Carcass.....	162.09	154.49	156.32
Western Corn Belt Base Hog Price Carcass, Negotiated.....	73.19	71.34	75.72
Feeder Pigs, National Direct 50 lbs, FOB.....	61.66	50.00	41.53
Pork Carcass Cutout, 185 lb. Carcass, 51-52% Lean.....	77.12	70.71	80.90
Slaughter Lambs, Ch. & Pr., Heavy, Woolled, South Dakota, Direct.....	97.50	83.50	102.50
National Carcass Lamb Cutout, FOB.....	243.97	250.92	255.46
<b><u>Crops,</u></b>			
<b><u>Daily Spot Prices</u></b>			
Wheat, No. 1, H.W. Imperial, bu.....	4.60	7.95	7.45
Corn, No. 2, Yellow Omaha, bu.....	3.63	5.49	5.61
Soybeans, No. 1, Yellow Omaha, bu.....	7.51	12.81	12.87
Grain Sorghum, No. 2, Yellow Dorchester, cwt.....	5.63	9.32	9.52
Oats, No. 2, Heavy Minneapolis, MN, bu.....	2.84	3.96	3.96
<b><u>Hay</u></b>			
Alfalfa, Large Square Bales, Good to Premium, RFV 160-185 Northeast Nebraska, ton.....	136.00	*	*
Alfalfa, Large Rounds, Good Platte Valley, ton.....	*	*	77.50
Grass Hay, Large Rounds, Premium Nebraska, ton.....	*	*	*
* No market.			

New residents to the Nebraska Panhandle want to see their communities succeed. To better understand the reasons new residents move to the Panhandle, twelve focus groups were held across the region. The focus groups are part of a University of Nebraska–Lincoln research project funded by a 2006 grant from the United States Department of Agriculture National Research Initiative (USDA-NRI), looking at the characteristics and motivations of new residents in the eleven counties. The research project includes a demographic study, a mail survey to new residents, an iterative three-phase survey process to community development practitioners and a focus group of new residents. For further information about this research project, visit <http://cari.unl.edu/buffalo/>.

All new residents receiving the mail survey had the option to participate in the focus groups. Of the 321 mail survey respondents, 78 individuals participated in 12 focus groups held in six Panhandle communities during the Summer of 2007. The majority of the focus group participants, ranging in age from 21 to 81, moved with their spouse, significant other or family. First time Nebraskans represent 63 percent of the focus group participants, compared to 38 percent of those that answered the mail survey. For more demographic information about the focus groups, see Table 1 (on next page).

Thirteen questions were asked during the focus group interviews, such as: “What attracted you to the community?” and “Is the community what you expected?” The final question during the interview was, “What advice would you give to communities to develop strategies to attract and keep new residents?” As new residents responded to the question they generally acknowledged that job opportunities were essential to attract and retain residents, but only eight percent of the comments were specifically related to employment. As one new resident shared, “it is much more complex planning than simply saying we have jobs.” Fifty-nine percent of the comments were related to marketing, with half of these comments encouraging communities to ‘know who they are’ and create a vision.

A new resident who had a career in marketing stated, “it behooves the cities, the small town cities to really get together as a group and individually say what really are the things that their cities want to market. What are their strong points, what are their

weak points? If we did this, how would that increase our attraction?” Another individual shared, “Let’s get a vision. Let’s try and do it the most economically and best for our community down the road, whether it be a new sewer system, water system, whatever ... all those things are part of a vision...”

Several participants suggested that once a vision is determined, communities need to market to the population that they want to move to the community. As one new resident expressed, “I think the community has to decide what they are going to be. And then work to develop the economic incentives to bring the population that they desire in.” Following the marketing strategy, another new resident stated, “I would figure out what the overall message is. How do they want to position the community? Find out the two or three points that are the most important they want to communicate ... A clear, concise message and figure out where to put it to reach the people you want.” Participants also shared the importance of creating an honest perception of the community in their marketing campaign.

When attracting new residents, one person shared that “the question isn’t how many people...the question is bring in the right people.” Throughout other quotes, individuals shared that it is important to attract people that have a desire to live and also be involved in the community. As one individual shared, “being involved is what you do.” Participants also identified marketing images, as one man from the east coast shared, “A number of years ago, the phrase was coined “ecotourism.” If we can capture what was just being said here, we are talking about eco-residentialism. One of the things that can pull people here is just the climate, the ecology, the outdoors, the slow pace of life all rolled up into one.”

Focus group attendees suggested that if communities are marketing to a certain age group, they need to make sure it has the activities needed to help retain that age group. A single woman in her late 20s from another state shared, “I like to shop ... but those types of things aren’t here. I’m limited to Internet or driving, but I think if I were to get married and have children and if I were to leave here, which I plan to, I would definitely come back here in a heartbeat with a family because this is the type of community that just works well with a family.”

Thirty percent of the comments regarding advice related to welcoming and retaining new residents. New residents expressed an interest in being part of the vision and helping other new residents. One new resident stated, “a lot of newcomers are willing to get involved and do things if given the opportunity.”

The initial findings of the focus group results indicate that new residents believe a community vision is important in attracting new residents. The participants also believe communities should ‘know who you are’ and ‘know who you want’ and then market to those individuals. These initial findings suggest that as communities develop their marketing strategies to attract new residents, they first need to understand themselves. This supports the notion that overall community marketing strategies should seriously consider creating a community “brand” to be most effective. Aspects of community vision could be one of the marketable advantages used in creating a brand image. However, in order to identify those unique community aspects with marketable advantage, research needs to be conducted to ascertain the strengths and weaknesses of the product (community), as well as what consumers (potential new residents) value when considering the product category (location). The community needs to identify what it can offer residents and also what potential residents value or are looking for in a community.

Research team members include: Randolph Cantrell, University of Nebraska Rural Initiative; Cheryl Burkhart-Kriesel and Bruce Johnson, Department of Agricultural Economics; Charlotte Narjes and Rebecca Vogt, Center for Applied Rural Innovation.

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**Table 1. Focus Group Participants - General Demographic Information**

Age Range	Age-Percent Total	Gender		Did the Focus Group Participants Move Alone?			Were Focus Group Participants Originally from the Area?		
		Female	Male	Alone	Spouse or Significant Other	Family	Originally from Other State	Originally from Nebraska	Originally from Region or Community
20-29	19.2	12	3	5	5	5	7	5	3
30-39	24.4	10	9	5	2	12	10	5	4
40-49	15.4	5	7	0	4	8	7	3	2
50-59	23.1	8	10	3	11	4	15	2	1
60-69	14.1	4	7	2	7	2	9	0	2
70-79	2.6	1	1	1	1	0	0	2	0
80-89	1.3	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0
Total		40	38	16	31	31	49	17	12
Percentage		51.3%	48.7%	20.5%	39.7%	39.7%	62.8%	21.8%	15.4%

n = 78 participants