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Focus On Communities

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A Statement
of Direction and Priorities
for Minnesota Extension Service

Community Economic Development



Minnesota Extension Service, University of Minnesota

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Extension Community Economic Development helps Minnesota communities put knowledge to work

Promoting a strong economic base

- small business education
- tourism development education
- strategic economic development planning

Building community strength

- leadership training
- public policy education
- community development education

**Community
Development
Through
Education**



**Economic
Development
Through
Education**

A Message from John Sem

Economics is an important part of community development. But it is not the whole picture. Community development also includes leadership, organization, and quality of life. The goal of Community Economic Development is to provide educational programs that build strength in all these areas.

Minnesota is experiencing rapid and complex changes: dramatic economic shifts, new family structures, complex technology. Many communities face painful transitions caused by forces beyond their control.

But communities can take charge of their future. They can guide change. People can work together to take stock of their strengths, look at a range of possibilities, and take action to achieve their desired future.

Putting Knowledge to Work

As a land grant university, the University of Minnesota has an obligation to serve society. The Minnesota Extension Service is the outreach arm of the University. It offers educational programs to people of all ages throughout the state.

Within Extension, Community Economic Development plans its educational programs to help communities meet these needs:

- strong economic base
- high-quality facilities and services
- community decision-making process
- strong local institutions

The goal is to help communities put knowledge to work.

Our Commitment to You

We promise to listen carefully to hear your needs, to follow trends and anticipate problems.

We pledge to respond promptly to your needs with educational programs based on reliable, up-to-date research.

We seek to coordinate our efforts with other organizations and groups. We want to share resources and eliminate duplication.

You, and your community, are important to us.



John Sem
Program Leader
Community Economic Development

Minnesota Extension Service

■ There are several parts to the Minnesota Extension Service: Agriculture, Home Economics, 4-H Youth Development, Natural Resources, and Community Economic Development.

The **Focus on People** brochure outlines the overall goals for all these areas.

Minnesota Extension Service has a new name and a new direction. Formerly called Agricultural Extension Service, the new name reflects a commitment not only to agriculture, but also to the families, youth, and communities of Minnesota.

Regardless of the name, the purpose is to educate people in a very practical way where they live and work. The new direction is to focus programs and priorities around current critical issues, rather than around geographic location, subject matter, or organizational boundaries.

Things will be done because they **need** doing. There will be increased ability to respond quickly as issues emerge. Team efforts across program areas will produce practical, timely educational programs.

Minnesota Extension Service will continue to concentrate efforts on rural Minnesota. However, the new focus means that non-farm and urban people will also benefit. Extension cannot be "all things to all people." But it seeks to be **some** things to **most** people in Minnesota.

The focus will be on those issues of greatest concern to Minnesotans; issues where Extension has competence; issues where Extension can make a significant contribution.

Central Issues of Extension

■ The Minnesota Extension Service defines its focus in terms of four central issues that affect the lives of state residents. Within each issue, Extension deals with immediate concerns of people in their day-to-day living. It also strives to develop people's leadership abilities and to shape public policy.

All parts of Extension, including Community Economic Development, will focus their resources on these central issues:

I. Community Leadership

In the complex society of tomorrow, there is an increasing need for programs to develop community leadership: participation in government, public decision making, emerging leadership, rural restructuring, and youth as a resource.

II. Environment and Natural Resources

The challenge is to balance natural resource management and economic activity with conservation, productivity, and environmental concerns.

III. Human Development

A rapidly changing social and economic structure calls for programs addressing the needs of people: career and life changes, family resources, communication, housing and energy use, nutrition and health, safety, and vital needs of youth.

IV. Economic Development

Programs will focus on the improvement of the agricultural system, and on other related areas of economic development: forestry, recreation, rural businesses, tourism, and energy production.

Mission of Community Economic Development

Community Economic Development is part of the Minnesota Extension Service. As such, our mission is to provide educational programs that bring lifelong learning to people throughout the state.

Our goal is to help communities learn how to build strength in two ways:

- Internal strength—leadership, public policy, decision making.
- Economic strength—a strong economic base.

Our educational programs are based on research. They are planned in response to people's needs for solutions to community problems and opportunities.





Minnesota Communities

The communities in our state are important to Minnesotans. They are more than just people living close to each other. Communities are the interwoven relationships of individuals, families, economics, education, religion, politics, and government.

Communities are being buffeted by many social and economic forces that are beyond local and state control. Economic growth increasingly depends upon knowledge and capital rather than manual labor and natural resources. Families come in many new forms, life spans are longer, more women are in the labor force, and birthrates are lower. Technology links us to ever-expanding information sources.

These changes offer more possibilities than problems. People can work together to guide change and maintain vitality. Communities can assess their strengths, look at possible futures, and take positive action.

We are committed to working with communities to improve the quality of life for their citizens through education.

Trends Affecting Today's Communities

■ World Economy

Economic success no longer depends only on local and regional markets. We must think about marketing on a national and international scale.

Fundamental changes in the world economic structure directly affect Minnesota. The old success formula of high volume and mass production no longer works. We must add more value into the processing of our natural resource products. We need to be more market oriented, serving the needs of consumers.

■ Market Changes

Today, products and services are designed for specific groups of consumers. For example, Minnesota tourism was once based mainly on fishing. With "market fragmentation," attention is now given to a wide variety of options, including winter sports, bed and breakfasts, and events and festivals.

Another change is the accelerating growth of the information and service industries, compared to manufacturing.

■ Communication

A remote location is no longer a barrier to receiving or sending information. Advances in technology provide instant access: satellite communication, international "800" numbers, and many more.

■ Age Trends

Our population is aging. People are living longer and are more active. Families headed by people over 65 are more concentrated in rural areas. "Baby boomers" are reaching middle age, a time when people often become entrepreneurs. On the other hand, the "baby bust" has already affected schools, and will result in a labor shortage in the future.

■ Population Location

In Minnesota there is a long-term trend toward concentration of people and economic resources in urban areas. Over half the population, 85% of all wholesale sales, and 76% of all manufacturing are in these urban areas.

Community Issues in the Future

As a result of these trends, some of the critical challenges faced by communities in the next decade are:

Promote a strong economic base

- Business start-ups for all ages
- Market niches
- Specialized production
- Higher technology
- Access to communication
- International marketing
- Cooperation among state and local organizations

Maintain community vitality

- Local leadership development
- Decision making by citizens
- Strategic economic development planning
- Strong institutions
- Services and facilities for an aging population

We need new ways of thinking about the future; new ways of involving people in planning and acting to achieve their desired future.

Who We Will Serve in the Future

Our educational programs will be designed for:

- Small businesses
- Family-based businesses
- People who want to start a business, including youth
- Tourism, travel, and recreation industry
- Small- and medium-size communities
- Professionals in economic development fields
- Community leaders and volunteers



Goals

■ Our major goals for Community Economic Development during the next ten years are:

1. Assist communities in maintaining a strong economic base. Our educational programs will focus on strategic economic development planning, tourism and travel development, and small business education.

2. Develop programs to help communities improve the quality of life for their citizens. This includes public policy education and leadership training.
3. Provide research-based information to state and local officials so they can make more informed decisions about public policy.

Strategies

■ Our major strategies for achieving the goals are:

1. Provide information, data, skill building, and technical advice to new and ongoing small businesses, including family-based businesses, businesses in small communities, and part-time businesses for youth and retired people.
2. Maintain a Tourism Center to focus on tourism, travel, and recreation issues and to provide seminars, workshops, and individual help to a major Minnesota industry.
3. Select and train specialized county agents to provide in-depth programs in community economic development.

4. Assist communities with strategic economic development planning, leadership training, and citizen involvement. Help communities help themselves.
5. Continue to assist state and local policy makers by providing research-based information on current public policy issues.
6. Share research-based information on economic development with professional planners and development specialists.

Program Priorities

■ The programs that have high priority for Community Economic Development speak directly to Minnesota individuals and communities as they deal with day-to-day needs and opportunities.

All programs fit within the four central issues described earlier. They involve cooperative efforts of Community Economic Development with all the other areas in the Minnesota Extension Service: Natural Resources, Home Economics, Agriculture, and 4-H Youth Development.

I. Community Leadership

■ Leadership Training

Provide opportunities for youth and adults to learn leadership skills such as communication, negotiation, and conflict resolution.

■ Community Development Education

Help communities learn to involve all citizens in evaluating strengths, looking at possible futures, setting goals and priorities, and taking action to guide change toward a desired future.

II. Environment and Natural Resources

■ Natural Resources and Tourism

Provide education to individuals and communities on the use of Minnesota's natural resources in tourism, travel, and recreation development; stress a balance between economic benefit and environmental concerns.

III. Human Development

■ Public Policy Education

Help communities evaluate different courses of public action: factors affecting supply and demand for public services; impact of tax and spending decisions on local services; interrelationships of local, state, and federal policies; evaluation of local government and the political process.

IV. Economic Development

■ Small Business Education

Teach entrepreneurial skills, including a decision-making process for starting a small business and assessment of risks and technical skills. Develop educational programs for family-based businesses, youth, and mainstreet businesses. Work with small business organizations to deliver quality programming on customer relations, marketing, management, and advertising.

■ Strategic Economic Development Planning

Help communities learn how to form realistic economic development strategies, conduct economic and trade area analyses, and interpret the information. Provide information to help link communities with regional and state assistance programs.

■ Tourism, Travel, and Recreation Development

Provide education, interpret research data, and share information with the rapidly growing tourism, travel, and recreation industry. Educate businesses and communities on ways of developing and marketing tourism and visitor services.



Benefits

■ How do the programs of Community Economic Development benefit you?

For You as a Community Member

- Your local businesses can get information and training to help them stay strong.
- You can learn ways to assess and improve public services.
- Your schools, local government, and other institutions can get help in planning for the future.
- You have people trained to take important leadership roles.

For You in Small Business

- You can learn how to make decisions about starting or maintaining a small business.
- Your family can receive information on family-based businesses.

For You in the Tourism, Travel, and Recreation Industry

- You can learn how to improve your services to the visiting public.
- You can get up-to-date data and information on key tourism issues.
- You can receive help with financial management, marketing, advertising, and festival planning.

The Future

■ The future issues for Minnesota communities are clear: build a strong economic base, maintain institutions and public services, and involve citizens in public policy and leadership. Technology will give us access to a wealth of information. Our challenge is to help people interpret that information and make wise choices.

Extension has a long heritage of involvement in community development. Although our ways of planning for the future need to change, our commitment to you remains the same: a pledge to excellence in education and to helping you improve your life.

Minnesota Communities in the Next Decade

Time: 1989

Place: A family home

Kim, a high school sophomore, is eager to earn money for clothes and school expenses. Her family is struggling to make ends meet.

Kim attends a Youth Entrepreneur Seminar run by Extension. There she assesses her skills and interests and thinks about the needs of her neighbors. As a result, she prepares detailed plans for a pet-sitting business. Kim gets help in setting prices, writing advertising, and organizing a record-keeping system. Suddenly her English and math classes take on more relevance.

Kim is encouraged to share her ideas with her family and involve them in the plans. It opens up new lines of communication, when before there seemed little to talk about.

As Kim's business grows, she gets ongoing help from Extension, including the latest information on pet care and advice on "hiring" other teens to help her. She branches out to "barn sitting" for the farms outside town.

Over the next three years, Kim's business builds up her savings account and a desire to improve her technical skills. She is able to pay for vocational training and later start a pet shop with boarding and grooming facilities. And she continues to rely on Extension for the latest information on marketing and management for small businesses.

Time: 1993

Place: A Minnesota small town

Like many small towns, this one is feeling the effects of economic and social changes. People are worried that the local health clinic and high school will close. There are empty storefronts on main street, and most of the young people seem to be leaving town. No one seems to know quite what to do.

One concerned person calls the Extension specialist in Community Economic Development. He meets with a small group of residents to tell them about community development programs available through Extension. They decide to get the community involved.

A series of town meetings brings out people of all ages to talk about what they want for their town. The Extension specialist helps them visualize several possible futures, and select one to work toward.

Action teams of local residents get leadership training through Extension. They learn how to help their town set priorities, form goals, and involve both young and old in improvement projects.

Residents have a positive new outlook on their community. They feel in charge, able to guide change and build a brighter future.

Time: 1998

Place: Mid-size Minnesota city

A group of local business people sees the need for an updated economic development plan. They contact their Extension office, and meet with a Community Economic Development agent. She helps them form a working team, including elected officials, business owners, and people from local development organizations such as the Regional Development Commission.

Extension provides local economic data and trade area analysis. The agent helps the team analyze this information. Other Extension specialists give technical advice on specialized market niches and the possibility of expanding to national and international markets.

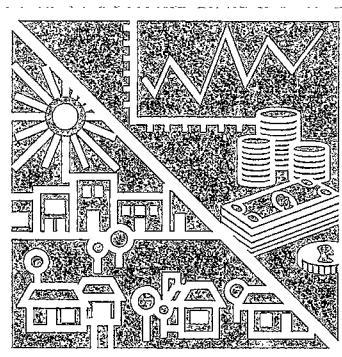
A comprehensive, realistic plan evolves. It includes taking advantage of the community's location and growing conditions by encouraging new businesses that specialize in ornamental trees and plants. Another action is to develop tourism and recreation, with the help of information and advice from the Tourism Center.

The Community Economic Development agent doesn't stop after the initial plan is completed. She helps the community monitor its progress and maintain a long-term development program.

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