

THE WYOMING RURAL DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

The Wyoming Rural Development Council is a collaborative public/private partnership that brings together six partner groups: local/regional government, state government, federal government, tribal government, non-profit organizations and private sector individuals and organizations.

WRDC is governed by a Steering Committee representing the six partner groups. The Steering Committee as well as the Council membership has established the following goals for the WRDC:

- Assist rural communities in visioning and strategic planning
- Serve as a resource for assisting communities in finding and obtaining grants for rural projects
- Serve and be recognized as a neutral forum for identification and resolution of multi-jurisdictional issues
- Promote, through education, the understanding of the needs, values, and contributions of rural communities.

The Council seeks to assist rural Wyoming communities with their needs and development efforts by matching the technical and financial resources of federal, state, and local governments and the private sector with local development efforts.

If you would like more information about the Wyoming Rural Development Council and how you may benefit as a member, contact:

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Wyoming Rural Development Council
2219 Carey Ave.
Cheyenne, WY 82002
307-777-6430
307-777-6593 (fax)
mrand@state.wy.us
www.wyomingrural.org

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Albin Resource Team
February 4-5, 2003

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Marianne Watson	
Dave Shavel	
Fred Shlutt	
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PROCESS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THIS REPORT

The Wyoming Rural Development Council (WRDC) has provided a resource team to assist the town of Albin, Wyoming in evaluating the community's assets and liabilities and in developing suggestions for improving the environment, social and economic future of Albin.

The Town of Albin requested a community assessment from the Wyoming Rural Development Council. Mary Jones, Clerk/Treasurer served as the community contact and took the lead in agenda development, logistics and publicity in town for the assessment. Resource team members were selected to visit, interview citizens and develop a plan of recommended action for the town. The team members were carefully selected based on their fields of expertise that Albin officials indicated would be needed to respond to the problem areas identified.

The Resource Team toured the town and interviewed approximately 50 people over a two-day period from February 4-5, 2003. Each participant was asked to respond to three questions designed to begin communication and discussion and to serve as a basis for developing the action plan. The three questions were:

- ❑ What do you think are the major problems and challenges in Albin?
- ❑ What do you think are the major strengths and assets in Albin?
- ❑ What projects would you like to see completed in two, five ten and twenty years in Albin?

Upon completion of the interviews, the team met to compare notes and share comments following the two days of intense study. The team then agreed that each team member would carefully analyze what was said, synthesize what they heard with their knowledge of programs and resources, prepare their notes and suggestions, and forward these items to be combined into WRDC's final report to Albin.

The oral report was presented to the people of Albin on February 5, 2003 and many of the citizens of Albin who participated in the interviews were in attendance.

Following the oral report, a formal written report was prepared and presented to the Town of Albin.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I commend the leadership in Albin for having the foresight to sponsor a community assessment. You have taken the first and most important step in planning the future of your community – finding out what the citizens like, do not like and what their vision is for your community. The elements are all here for Albin to have a successful future. To become a growing, vibrant community takes only a few people willing to roll up their sleeves and go to work. Once this nucleus begins to exert effort, it will begin to show some successes. Then this nucleus needs to expand to include more and more of the community until the entire community is involved. But the work is not on big jobs; it is on small ones that can be achieved quickly. The big ones come later after Albin has seen the results of the smaller and sees that it can accomplish things.

There is a number of short term, accomplishable recommendations that the review team has provided. The most important thing is to get the entire community involved in trying to find ways to accomplish its goals. A few celebrations at the successful conclusion of an activity which has involved a large number of citizens will lead to a feeling of accomplishment that will carry over into other activities. Look through the short-term suggestions, pick out one that you know what you can do, and get started!

Each of you individually must decide what it is that you want to do what kind of project you want to tackle. There are enough tasks for everyone. Each small step, every accomplishment, no matter how limited, is movement in the right direction toward achieving Albin's goals. It can be done! There is no problem facing Albin that cannot be solved by the people living in the community. It is your choice, your decision, you can do it.

On behalf of the Albin Resource Team, I want to thank the community and our sponsors, the Town of Albin for the warm hospitality shown to us during our stay. The meals were incredible, especially the pie!! We heard over and over in the listening sessions that Albin was filled with warm, caring individuals and we certainly can attest to that! Thank you very much.

We hope you will find great value in this report and remember any team member is available for you to call to clarify information or provide more information and assistance.

Sincerely,

Kathi Starkweather, Team Leader

Albin, Wyoming Resource Team Members
February 4-5, 2003

Kathie Starkweather, Team Leader

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402-437-4098
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COMMUNITY CONTACT:

Mary Jones

Assistant Clerk, Town of Albin
P.O. 188
Albin, WY 82050
(307) 246-3243

Albin, Wyoming Community Assessment Agenda February 4-5, 2003

Tuesday, February 4, 2003

11:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.	Team Orientation	Community Center
11:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.	Tour of the Town	
12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m.	Lunch	Community Center
1:15 p.m. to 2:10 p.m.	Charter School	Community Center
2:20 p.m. to 3:10 p.m.	Banking	Community Center
3:15 p.m. to 4:05 p.m.	Education/Teachers	School lunchroom
4:10 p.m. to 4:45 p.m.	Break/Refreshments	Community Center
4:45 p.m. to 5:35 p.m.	City Government	Community Center
	Emergency Services	
	Law Enforcement	
5:45 p.m.	Supper	Community Center

Wednesday, February 5, 2003

7:30 a.m. to 8:10 a.m.	Breakfast	Community Center
8:15 a.m. to 8:50 a.m.	POSSEE	School
9:00 a.m. to 9:50 a.m.	Retailers	
	Churches	Community Center
10:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.	Break/Snack	Community Center
10:30 a.m. to 11:20 a.m.	Agriculture	Community Center
11:30 a.m. to 12:20 p.m.	Lunch	Community Center
12:20 p.m. to 1:10 p.m.	Senior Citizens	Community Center
1:20 p.m. to 2:10 p.m.	Open Session	Community Center
2:10 p.m. till ?	Team prepares for town meeting	
6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.	Supper/Town Meeting	Community Center

WHAT WE HEARD FROM WHAT WAS SAID

After listening to the citizens of Albin, the Resource Team reviewed what was said and condensed the comments down to a few basic statements that are defined as major themes.

Albin Major Themes

(1) **Communication:**

"Places for information:
Internet access/cell phones
Expand beyond Albin - regional inclusion
Partnership building -- possibility of it

(2) **Economic Development:**

Diversity
Business opportunities
Value-added marketing - agriculture
Retail - increase traffic, hardware store, service industry, telecommuting)
Albin LEADS program

(3) **Housing, Infrastructure and Services:**

Internet connectivity
Clean-up
Available/affordable housing
Senior housing
Assisted living
Nursing home
EMT/volunteer fire department (expanded use of and free service for)
Water/sewer
Zoning

(4) **School:**

- Center of community (positive and negative aspect)
- Provides a high quality education
- History and pride associated with it
- Youth - bright, concerned - value education, involved (POSSE)
- Partnership building (railroad, air force, pig farm, other ag businesses, etc.)
- Provides things for youth and adults (adult voc-ed, ESL, internet education, etc.)
- Health and safe place

(5) **People/Lifestyle:**

- Controlled growth (20+ families)
- Attract young families
- Have skilled members of community right now
- Develop skills
- Lifestyle/environment is valued
- Need to outreach to people (newcomers, Hispanics, etc.)
- Leadership development
- Involve people outside of Albin in decisions

RESOURCE TEAM MEMBER REPORTS

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Introductory Comments:

I would like to thank and commend the Albin community for their hospitality and well-organized community listening sessions. The level of pride and commitment to making this community a success were evident during our stay. You are commended for the work done on the Albin Project as well as the community effort in organizing and collectively working toward the adoption of a charter school. These types of initiatives indicate that Albin is a strong, self-motivated community that has the type of internal drive and commitment that is essential to successful community development. It should be noted that many of the issues identified by the Albin Project were also mirrored in many of the listening sessions.

The community's sense of success and future seems to rest on the outcome of the adoption of the charter school. However, several things should be noted along those lines. First, it was mentioned in several listening sessions that while the school is a central focus of the community, people need to look beyond that and toward the bigger picture of the community as a whole. The school issue certainly is a pressing one and one that the entire community is dealing with; however, it also is a great source of central focus and community impetus toward other opportunities.

Finally, note should be made of the need to look at community and economic development as one very big package. The community is aware that in order to attract more families into Albin, there has to be more housing; in order to attract more families into Albin, there must be job opportunities, etc. Roger Coupal, Community Development Specialist, University of Wyoming, 307-766-5246, may be the best resource available to help you address these issues and decide how to go forward.

Focal Points and Themes:

The assessment identified the following five major themes with sub-themes listed below. My report will focus on the subject areas over which I have knowledge and expertise; other team members have done the same.

(6) **Communication:**

"Places for information:
Internet access/cell phones
Expand beyond Albin - regional inclusion
Partnership building -- possibility of it

(7) **Economic Development:**

Diversity
Business opportunities
Value-added marketing - agriculture
Retail - increase traffic, hardware store, service industry, telecommuting)
Albin LEADS program

(8) **Housing, Infrastructure and Services:**

Internet connectivity
Clean-up
Available/affordable housing
Senior housing
Assisted living
Nursing home
EMT/volunteer fire department (expanded use of and free service for)
Water/sewer
Zoning

(9) **School:**

Center of community (positive and negative aspect)
Provides a high quality education
History and pride associated with it
Youth - bright, concerned - value education, involved (POSSE)
Partnership building (railroad, air force, pig farm, other ag businesses, etc.)
Provides things for youth and adults (adult voc-ed, ESL, internet education, etc.)
Health and safe place

(10) **People/Lifestyle:**

Controlled growth (20+ families)
Attract young families
Have skilled members of community right now
Develop skills
Lifestyle/environment is valued
Need to outreach to people (newcomers, Hispanics, etc.)
Leadership development
Involve people outside of Albin in decisions

General Comments/Recommendations:

(1) During the time spent in Albin, it was apparent that the community is close knit. The concern, however, for inclusiveness was mentioned several times and was evident by the many new faces who appeared at the town hall meeting but were not present during the sessions. When asked, many said they had not known about the listening sessions. It should be noted that this is not a criticism of the way the project was communicated, but rather a suggestion on how to improve and enhance inclusively of everyone as you move forward. In order for Albin to reach the goals it targets, it is essential that the entire community be pulled together and used as a source of strength. The best method to ensure inclusively is to extend a personal invitation. People are much more inclined to participate if they are personally invited; it helps them realize they are a vital part of the community and that their involvement is essential. Other communities have enlisted high school students to do this work, and that has proven successful. In order to make Albin's future successful, it is imperative that those beyond the actual physical Albin boundaries be included, and that all be made feel an integral part of the community and the development effort. Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) is a community development model that has been successfully used in Nebraska, and it is suggested that Albin explore this as an option. ABCD is essentially a tool that identifies the community and residents' assets and then builds upon those assets, filling in the holes to development with outside sources and resources. This model would have several strengths for Albin. It is an opportunity to bring the community together with a focus beyond the school and onto the community as a whole. It has been shown to be an effective method for identifying economic development opportunities. It has also shown to be an effective way to connect people and get everyone involved and included, which are issues we heard several times during our assessment. In addition, it is an opportunity to identify some of the strengths and assets that are already present within the community. Finding these strengths and resources may present an answer to some of the identified issues. For example, in one listening session the need for medical services was identified. It was brought to the group's attention that there was a nurse practitioner in the community who might be able to meet some of these needs. Asset Based Community Development is a good foundation for economic development.

Contacts:

Greg Wyndham
Area Coordinator, Southeastern RC&D
302A 15th Street
Wheatland, WY 82201
(307) 322-2187
greg.wyndham@wy.usda.gov

George Cleek
Assistant State Conservationist for Programs
USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service
100 East B Street
Casper, WY 82601

(307) 261-6457

george.cleek@wy.usda.gov

The Southeastern RC&D (Resource Conservation and Development) will soon be creating their five-year plan to address local priorities; Albin is served by this RC&D. The RC&D addresses such issues as land management, water management, economic development and community development. It is recommended that your community contact the RC&D Coordinator in order to discuss which items from the assessment might be brought forward and incorporated into this plan.

Contact:

Greg Wyndham
Area Coordinator, Southeastern RC&D
302A 15th Street
Wheatland, WY 82201
(307) 322-2187
greg.wyndham@wy.usda.gov

Economic Development.

There was much discussion about the need to attract new businesses to Albin. There was also discussion surrounding agriculture's role in the changing economic base, and some attention given to tourism. There are several resources listed below (along with those mentioned in team members' reports) that can be used for further exploration.

Contacts:

Wyoming Small Business Development Center
University of Wyoming
PO Box 3922
Laramie, WY 82071-3922
(307) 766-3505
e-mail: ddw@uwyo.edu or lharison@uwyo.edu
<http://www.uwyo.edu/sbdc>

Wyoming Business Council
214 West 15th
Cheyenne, WY 82002
(307) 777-2800
Toll free 1-800-262-3425
www.wyomingbusiness.org

Wyoming Community Network (for on-line searchable resource guides)
(307) 766-2107
www.wyomingcommunitynetwork.com

Community Development Block Grant Program
Steve Achter

Wyoming Business Council
(307) 777-22811
www.wyomingbusiness.org

North Central Initiative for Small Farm Productivity
Ken Wurdeman - Initiative Coordinator
University of Nebraska - Lincoln
58 Filley Hall
Lincoln, NE 68583
Kwurdeman2@unl.edu

Wyoming Department of Workforce Services
122 West 25th Street
Herschler Bldg, 2E
Cheyenne, WY 82002
(307) 777-8650
<http://dwsweb.state.wy.us/>

Discussion was held on the creation of an Albin LEADS program. A contact to make in that regard is:

Jack Crews, President
Cheyenne LEADS
1720 Carey, Suite 401
PO Box 1045
Cheyenne, WY 82003
(307) 638-6000
or 1-800-225-0742

In addition to the above references there are resources specific to youth that would certainly benefit Albin.

Contacts:

Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation
(816) 932-1000
<http://www.emkf.org>

This organization engages in operating programs and targets grant making in entrepreneurial leadership and youth development.

National Youth Employment Coalition
(202) 659-1064
<http://www.nyec.org/>

Entrepreneur Program (geared to youth)
Fred Schlutt
(307) 766-3430

Communication.

The issue of Internet connectivity has been addressed in the other reports, and resources identified.

It should be noted that the overall issue of communication is central to the success of community and economic development of Albin. This was addressed under the "General Comments/Recommendations" section; however, other issues were brought up that need to be identified in this section. As the community moves forward, it is important to establish some inclusive means of communicating what is occurring in order to maintain involvement in the effort. Questions need to be asked and answered and a method established that ensures a good and inclusive communication system. It was suggested, as one piece of the overall communication issue that places for information be identified, established, and communicated. People make assumptions when sharing information that if it is communicated in one way one time, it will be successful. For example, if one notice appears in the newspaper, the work has been accomplished and successful. Perhaps viewing it in a bigger context of how successful ad campaigns are run for different products might be helpful. People do not buy a particular brand of soft drink because it was advertised one time in the newspaper; it takes a lot of work, strategy and effort to ensure successful communication, and that needs to be done as you move forward. One resource to explore might be connecting with students in LCCC's communications classes, and partnering with the high school students.

Contact:

LARAMIE COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE
1400 E COLLEGE DR
CHEYENNE, WY 82007 General information
(307) 778-5222

It should also be noted under this section that the communities that are most successful with development - both economic and community, also have connections outside the community. This need was identified under a discussion that surrounded partnerships. Partnership development is an area that needs to be explored and strengthened in order to ensure the success of Albin's future.

Contact:

Wyoming Business Council
214 West 15th
Cheyenne, WY 82002
(307) 777-2800
Toll free 1-800-262-3425
www.wyomingbusiness.org

People/Lifestyle.

The people in this community are extremely caring and dedicated. That was obvious in even the short time spent in Albin doing the assessment. The attitude shows up in the knowledge that the community supports its youth's endeavors and is concerned about its

aging population. It was particularly obvious in the comments made in the Albin Project that change and growth are necessary in order to survive, and there is a need for the "...community as a whole...to embrace those who come."

It is recommended that in light of those comments, that diversity be addressed. There is a one-day program called Challenge Days that may be helpful as you move forward. The program has shown to be successful in discussion of and creation of building blocks to improve relations among a diverse community. The program was developed with youth as the target audience; however, it is recommended that it be modified and adopted for an adult audience.

Contacts:

Ilene Morford-Raba or Bonnie Lane
307-358-2942 or 307-358-2940

Development of a comprehensive and/or strategic plan for the community's future is important as well as a vision for what you want Albin to be. This will allow the community to address some of the top issues and give you a focus to work toward. An outside facilitator might be helpful in this regard. The Wyoming Rural Development Council has these types of no-cost connections that you might consider exploring.

Contacts:

Mary Randolph
Wyoming Community Network Director
(307) 766-2107
e-mail: mrando@state.wy.us
website: www.wyomingcommunitynetwork.com

Mary Randolph
WRDC
2219 Carey Avenue
Cheyenne, WY 82009
(307) 777-6430
mrando@state.wy.us

The issue of youth leaving because of lack of farming opportunities came up in several sessions. The Natural Resources Conservation Service has beginning farmer, new farmer, and limited resource farmer/producer programs under the new Farm Bill.

Contact:

Steve Kadas, District Conservationist
11221 East Hwy 30
Cheyenne, WY 82009
(307) 77202314
steve.kadas@wy.usda.gov

Youth involvement in perhaps a more prominent way would be helpful to the community. The students with whom we met were outstanding young citizens who care a great deal for and have a great amount of pride in their community. They are wonderful resources and should be involved in more formal ways. You might consider having the students select someone to be part of the leadership team of Albin or creating a Youth Advisory Board that would not only groom youth leaders but also integrate the youth into the community as decision makers. Cheyenne and Casper have both done this successfully.

Contacts:

Pam Harrold
Cheyenne
(307) 778-1403
Nancy Pawlowski
Casper
(307) 234-5311

Finally, a comment about the need for a grocery store. There was much discussion surrounding this subject, and in fact it came up at almost every listening session. A way to address the need in the community might be through a cooperative effort. In the appendix, I am attaching an article from the Wall Street Journal on a very similar situation that occurred in Arthur, Nebraska, and how that need was met. It is suggested that contact be made with the women mentioned.

Housing, Infrastructure and Services.

Many of the issues that fell under this heading were addressed in the other reports. There were, however, the issues of water, sewer and natural gas that some of the following resources might be able to help address.

Contacts:

Greg Wyndham
Area Coordinator, Southeastern RC&D
302A 16th Street
Wheatland, WY 82201
(307) 322-2187
greg.wyndham@wy.usda.gov

Pam Wilson, Director*
Rensselaerville Institute
206 New Bern Place
Raleigh, NC 27601
[Pwilson@Rinstitute.org](mailto:pwilson@Rinstitute.org)
Web site: www.Rinstitute.org

*The Rensselaerville Institute has done much work in small rural communities, particularly in Texas. It is recommended that contact be made for further information; there may be much they can do in Albin.

Marianne Watson

USDA Rural Development

1441 East M St.

Torrington, WY 82240

(307)532-4880, ext. 4

FAX 307-532-5783

marianne.watson@wy.usda.gov

I would like to thank the people of Albin for their hospitality and participation during our recent visit. It is evident the community is committed to doing something to stimulate growth and saving the school and is to be commended for taking the first step in forming the Albin Project. It is apparent you have already started in the right direction in forming groups to work with some of the issues identified in the Albin Project. We heard some of these same issues in our listening sessions. This report is organized around some of the major themes identified by the resource team and hopefully will provide some additional resources.

HOUSING, INFRASTRUCTURE & SERVICES

Challenge: We heard there is a need for available affordable housing and Senior Housing.

Solution/Contact:

The need for housing is related to new people moving into Albin so it's a matter of having the infrastructure in place to support a number of new houses constructed or manufactured homes brought in. Planning or zoning for different types of housing also comes into play. The Wyoming Community Development Authority (WCDA) is the State Housing Authority. They have a number of programs including the HOME Investment Partnership Program, Community Development Block Grant Program and Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program for subdivision development is a subsidy is passed on to the Homebuyer. These would be programs to check into and ready to implement to help promote the community to new businesses interested in coming into Albin.

Contact:

Cheryl Gillum
Housing Programs Director
WCDA
155 North Beech St.
Casper, Wy 82602
307-265-0603

SBA has a program for Builders to finance construction of homes.

Contact:

SBA
Dave Denke
100 East B Street
Casper, WY 82601
307-261-6507

USDA/Rural Development offers several programs to assist the very low, low, and moderate income families to purchase an existing home, build a new home, or repair an existing home. 1% loans are available to assist very low-income applicants to make repairs to the home they own. Grants are available to homeowners over 62 years of age in the very-low income category to remove health and safety hazards.

Contact:

USDA/Rural Development
Bill Garrett
Rural Development Manager
1441 East M St., Suite A
Torrington, WY 82240
307-532-4880, ext. 4

The need for affordable senior housing was mentioned in several sessions. It was mentioned there is a vacant four unit complex in the community but it is not affordable for seniors. This concern was brought back to the Rural Development office and will be addressed with the Cheyenne Housing Authority as to possible options.

Challenge: Internet Connectivity was mentioned. There is a need to bring services out into the more rural areas.

Solution/Contact:

A contact for bringing Broadband Services into the rural areas is:

Kim Jacobs with the Rural Utilities Services
406-788-7413 or 1-800-383-7353
email kjacobs@rus.usda.gov

Challenge: Clean up of the town was brought up at various sessions.

Solution/Contact:

Set up a Clean-up/Spruce Up Day for the entire community. Get the youth involved either through school or organizations such as 4-H groups. Form teams with a team leader for different categories i.e. tree planting, planting flowers, vacant lot or house lot needing cleaned, painting of buildings or houses, or any seniors who may need some help with their property. Have a potluck or supper or picnic at the end of the day to celebrate working together.

Trees are available from USDA Natural Resource Conservation District in Cheyenne.

The State of Wyoming Forestry Division has a cost share grant program for planting trees.

Contact:

Mark Hughes
State Forestry Division
1100 W. 22nd St.
Cheyenne, WY 82002

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Challenge: Attracting new businesses to the area, bringing jobs into the community, attracting tourists, decline in farming are some of the concerns we heard.

Solution/Contact:

The community must be willing to support growth in population if it expects to see growth in services and retail. You may have to concentrate more on business creation through entrepreneurship, including youth, for Internet based businesses. A resource for youth is Rural Entrepreneurship Through Action Learning, National REAL Director, Rick Larson, 115 Market Street, Suite 320 Durham, ND 27701 (919) 688-7325. Another contact is:

Wyoming Small Business Development Center
Arlene Soto
1400 East College Drive
Cheyenne, WY 82007-3298
1-800-348-5208

Also for Women currently in business, or interested in starting their own business contact:

Wyoming Women's Business Center
P.O. Box 3661
Laramie, WY
1-888-524-1947

Challenge: Since agriculture is a large part of the economy in Albin, you may want to look at diversification.

Solution/Contact:

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has programs to develop wildlife areas and promote hunting as a business. There is the Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program (WHIP) and the Wetland Reserve Program (WRP). Some communities have a Two Shot Pheasant Hunt weekend or Goose Hunt weekend on areas developed through these programs, which brings hunters in for the weekend. For information on these programs contact:

NRCS
Cheyenne Service Center
11221 US Hwy 30
Cheyenne, WY
307-772-2314

Another contact for looking at diversification is :

Greg Wyndham
Southeast Wyoming Resource Conservation & Development Coordinator
302B 16th
Wheatland, WY
307-322-2187

A program available through USDA/Rural Development is the Value-Added Agricultural Product Development Grant. This is designed to help farmers and ranchers expand their customer base on new and emerging agriculture markets. The funds are to finance a portion of marketing studies, feasibility studies and in some cases working capital, for producers to determine if it is economically feasible to add value to an agriculture product.

Contact: USDA/Rural Development
Janice Stroud
100 E. B Street, RM 1005
Casper, WY 82601
307-261-6318

Other Resources include:

Wyoming Business Council
Tom Johnson
Southeast Regional Director
1400 East College Drive
Cheyenne, WY 82007
(307) 635-7735

UW
Roger Coupal
Community Development Specialist
P.O. Box 3354
Laramie, WY 82071
307-766-5246

Information booklet on State Grant Programs
307-777-6338 or 307-777-5453

David Shavel

Wyoming Department of Health
2424 Pioneer Ave., #306
Cheyenne, WY 82001
(307) 777-3357
E-mail: dshave@state.wy.us

Closing the Albin School: Support for Charter School Initiative

The community has made great strides to organize an effort to address the school district's decision to close down the Albin School. The effort to create a charter school has involved students, parents and administration.

It appears that they have not contacted several potential PARTNERS that have a stake in a strong, vital Albin Community. Specifically, the following organizations can be contacted to demonstrate their support for keeping a thriving school in Albin:

- Pig Farm Management – the existing pig farms are owned by companies based out of Arizona and California. Many of the employees live and utilize services provided by the Albin Community. To our knowledge they had not been contacted to demonstrate their support for Albin.

- U.S. Air Force – the Albin Community provides EMT and other services to Air Force personnel. To our knowledge they had not been contacted to demonstrate their support for Albin.

- UPRR (Union Pacific Railroad) – the Albin Community provides EMT and other services to their personnel. In addition, many of the UPRR employees live in the Albin area. To our knowledge they had not been contacted to demonstrate their support for Albin.

- Farming/Ranching Contractors – members of the Albin ranching and farming community provides services and/or are customers of suppliers, producers. These commercial interests all have a stake in maintaining a thriving Albin Community. To our knowledge they had not been contacted to demonstrate their support for Albin.

- Others: Sheriff's Dept., Fire District, Legislators etc.

Contact:

Pig Farm Management

U.S. Air Force

Union Pacific Railroad

Ranching/Farming Suppliers & Contractors, Workforce Development: Expanding Educational Opportunities in Albin.

One of the issues crucial to expanding the economic base of the Albin Community is to promote the ability of the local workforce to provide employment skills that would support business investment and expansion in the Albin area. This effort would entail providing a host of educational opportunities both to Adults and Youth in Albin. Specifically, the types of educational opportunities include:

- Vocational Education – currently some VOC ED classes are provided through the school – they can be provided to the community at-large

- ESL Classes – classes to students and adults in English As A Second Language could be utilized for the expanding Spanish speaking population.

- Internet-based Education – with the availability of T1 and DSL connectivity at the school the community has the ability to offer a myriad of internet-based training and educational opportunities.

These efforts can enhance the need for a local school as these educational opportunities could be provided through the school.

Also, the effort can include the community center located near the school.

Contacts:

Wyoming Department of Workforce Services
122 W. 25th Street
Herschler Bldg, 2E
Cheyenne, WY 82002
307-777-8650
<http://dwsweb.state.wy.us>

Wyoming Business Council
214 West 15th Street
Cheyenne, WY 82002
307-777-2800
www.wyomingbusiness.org

Wyoming Department of
Education
2300 Capitol Ave
Hathaway Bldg.
Cheyenne, WY 82002
307-777-7168
www.k12wy.us

Support for Youth: Building on an Existing Asset

A key strength of the community is the community youth. Through a meeting with the POSSE group at the High School and through other anecdotal information, the youth constitute a key element of the community. Several opportunities exist for the Albin youth to receive training, receive technical assistance and “get connected” with other youth in Wyoming including:

- 1) WCCHE – Wyoming Community Coalition for Health Education
- 2) Substance Abuse Division – Meaning Youth Involvement Initiative

Contacts:

WCCHE – Bronwen Anderson
307-687-0647
branderson@ccsd.k12.wy.us

WDH – Substance Abuse Division
Laura Dalles:
307-777-
ldalle@state.wy.us

Economic Expansion: Increasing Traffic Through Town

One of the key needs to promote the economic development of Albin was to increase the amount of traffic through town that could shop at local Albin retailers. One “oddball” idea that came up to increase the amount of traffic through town was to create a “TOURIST LOOP” that would route traffic headed to/from Casper/Nebraska off of I-25 & I-80. The “TOURIST LOOP” could promote some regional historical / human-interest reason for vacation/exploring traffic to pass through town. This effort would need to be coordinated with other local towns along the “ROUTE”.

Contact:

Wyoming Business Council
214 West 15th Street
Cheyenne, WY 82002
307-777-2800
www.wyomingbusiness.org

Fred Schlutt

University of Wyoming
PO Box 3354
Laramie, WY 82071
307-766-3430
e-mail: f00tb1ll@uwyo.edu

Housing, Infrastructure & Services

Challenge: Lack of housing for new families.

Solution: A chicken or egg situation; Do you build housing and they will come or When they come, we will build. I would suggest that a housing issue be tied very closely with any economic development and that the planning of a housing development be made in conjunction with groups working on bringing in additional businesses.

Economic Development

Challenge: Diversify the local economy by bringing in more businesses.

Solution: Since a fiber optics line is readily available to the community, build on this asset. Some have indicated that Sierra Trading Post is looking to outsource their call center work. This must be checked out not talked about. Another option related to outsourcing is StarTek headquartered in Denver, Colorado. They could possibly be looking to diversify their business to subcontract with a business like Sierra Trading Post.

The Wyoming Business Council is in operation to help communities and businesses develop and create new business.

Contact: Sierra Trading Post

StarTek, Inc.
100 Garfield Street
Denver, Colorado 80206
(303) 361-6000

Wyoming Business Council
214 West 15th Street
Cheyenne, WY 82002
Business and Industry
Den Costantino
Director
307-777-2842

Wyoming Small Business Development Center (WSBDC0

Diane Wolverton
State Director
P.O. Box 3922
Education Annex
University of Wyoming
Laramie, WY 82071-3922
307-766-3505

Challenge: The need for a local grocery/hardware store

Solution: Formation of a local cooperative or community grocery/hardware store. This will require the cooperation of everyone in the community to establish and manage. If this is truly an issue in the Albin area, then all members of the community must support the store.

Challenge: Value-added marketing of agriculture products.

Solution: In years past, wheat was sold as a value-added product. The Wyoming Business Council's Agribusiness Division should be able to help identify more product opportunities.

Contact: Wyoming Business Council
214 West 15th Street
Cheyenne, WY 82002
Bill Bunce
Agribusiness Director
307-237-4692

Challenge: The development of an Albin LEADS program

Solution: I would contact Cindy Garretson-Weibel, of the Wyoming Business Council who leads the Wyoming leadership development program. She could help develop a smaller version.

Contact: Wyoming Business Council
214 West 15th Street
Cheyenne, WY 82002
Cindy Garretson-Weibel
Education/Diversification Programs
307-777-6589

Communication

Challenge: Poor cellular phone service due to low service population and the proximity to the Nebraska state line.

Solution: Poor cellular phone service is not unusual in Wyoming. It is important to contact the local cell phone providers to see if there is a solution, such as placing a tower/dish closer to town. I would also suggest that the Public Utilities Commission be contacted to see if they could help intervene, not only with the providers but also with Utilities Commission in Nebraska.

Contact: Local cellular phone providers

Wyoming Public Services Commission
Hansen Building Suite 300
2515 Warren Avenue
Cheyenne, WY 82002
(307) 777-7427

People/Lifestyle

Challenge: There are a number of issues identified that fall into this category that need to be addressed:

- Utilizing the community center better
- Town deteriorating
- Having more emergency volunteers
- Banks won't lend money for new housing
- Lack of involvement of County Commissioners
- Culture of "your from here but not one of us"
- Lack of opportunities for younger families
- Local communications
- Keeping community cleaner
- Upgrade water and sewer systems

Solution: It seems obvious that the community has come together on the school issue. All the issues listed above can be addressed in exactly the same way by the community working together to solve community issues. I would suggest that each issue be addressed by the entire community with several community forums, much like the way this assessment was conducted.

School

Challenge: Without question the overriding issue in the Albin community is keeping the school open. The idea of creating a Charter School is an excellent idea, but it will not be an easy journey to convert a whole school to a Charter School. The community should not assume that their elected or Department of Education officials are clear on why the school is suggested to be closed.

Solution: Keeping the school open is a matter of consistent communication. Make sure elected officials and the Wyoming Department of Education and Wyoming Board of

Education understands that the Albin School part of the district is operating at or near a balanced budget. Inform everyone with factual information.

Regarding the Charter School, I would assume that by the time this report is presented that the School District Board has voted. The next step is to educate the Wyoming Board of Education on the issues. Do not assume folks understand the issue and make sure they have factual information.

Do a careful evaluation on the students who would be faced with going to school in Pine Bluffs. How many would actually attend? How many would become home schooled? How many would transfer to other school districts, such as Southeast? How many families would simply leave the school district? How many students would actually go to school in Pine Bluffs?

Contact: Elected officials, Wyoming Department of Education officials, and the Wyoming Board of Education members.

WHAT WAS SAID IN THE INTERVIEWS

The Resource Team spent 2 days interviewing local residents to hear what they had to say. Those being interviewed were directed to answer three questions:

What are the major problems and challenges in your community?

What are the major strengths and assets of your community?

What projects would you like to see implemented in your community in the next two, five, ten or twenty years?

We have listed below, without comment, what we heard from those who volunteered to be interviewed.

1. What are the major problems and challenges in your community?

- Trying to keep our schools open
- Ditto
- Ditto
- What will happen if the school doesn't stay open
- Ditto
- Ditto
- Ditto
- Ditto
- More kids and families in here
- Keep the businesses open
- More rain
- Housing – if more people then we will need more housing
- Drought
- Ag economy
- Ditto housing for new families
- Parallel state of Wyoming: diversify our economy
- Housing
- Private land that could be used to address the housing (strength)
- Utilizing the community center more
- Keeping people we do have – young families
- Ditto – keeping families – economic diversity
- Could become a bedroom community to Cheyenne (challenge & strength)
- Poor cell phone service
- Town is deteriorating – no drive to keep the infrastructure up
- Don't have broadband to build cottage industries
- Three towns in one school district – how do we survive when we are the smallest town - the school district votes (5 votes) against us
- Keeping enough volunteers for ambulance and fire district – training and equipment

- School problem – decision will decide which way things will go
- Lack of economic diversity
- Lack of job opportunities
- If school closes, teachers will have no jobs
- If school closes we will be in a world of hurt
- Lack of skilled labor force
- Lack of housing – lack of affordable housing
- Kids don't stay in Albin because of lack of opportunities
- Closing school will split community and we will have huge increase in home schooling
- School closing
- Community is aging – not many young families
- Not a lot of economic opportunity
- Not many job opportunities
- If school get cut out, economic opportunities are lost for rural communities
- Small town and people are set in their ways
- People are not open to change
- Older community and difficult to get young folks into ambulance and emergency services
- Lack of housing
- Size – we're so small – lack of funding for education
- Ditto
- Lack of economic development in the area – we are primarily an agricultural development
- Small size – not a lot of new people
- Ditto
- Economy more people are leaving than coming in
- Lack of academic opportunity – small school education
- People are moving away and not coming back
- Lot more expensive to fund per person
- Grandparents, parents, some kids stay – but there is not a lot of opportunity – farming is not a real profitable occupation
- If you want something to get better then you will have to give something up – balance between the small town life and growth people may have to give up some of the small town life
- Agricultural situation – young couples coming back to the community there is no future – they are not likely to come back
- Ditto – hard for young people to make the investment to get started in agriculture
- No businesses in town – we need convenience – we need more retail in town
- I'm concerned because I have some property – I don't know what is going to happen to it

- We only have half business – businesses are only open short hours – people don't know when a business will be open
- Housing – there is no housing for young families to move into if they want to come back
- A family farm cannot support three or more children to move back with their family
- School is the heart of the community – but it has become the heart of the culture – maybe too much of the influence – too controlling
- Communication – not everybody chooses to be computer literate or to subscribe to papers – how do people get information about things - people get information about the community from the post office, beauty parlor - the phone tree is really the best way to get the word out – we don't have a local newspaper
- School has become a controlling force – they don't accommodate parents who work outside of the community – if I work in Cheyenne I cannot make a 3:00 ball game
- This is no longer an agricultural community – people commute to other places – how do they get involved when they work elsewhere –we need to accommodate them
- The business community can no longer be a typical retail – we need other business: internet, international trade, production of things that are sold elsewhere – we need to market the things we do have
- I don't really know everybody – the community tends to be insulate – they are not always welcoming to people who are not their own
- The two Baptist churches are not controlling but they need to be involved
- We are all getting too old
- We need to do more things with the community to raise our visibility of who we are – we are more than the 120 people but there are around (guessing) 1100 population that lives in the school
- People will attend church in Cheyenne – so they can spend the day in Cheyenne do their shopping and other activities – so they may not attend the Albin churches
- If you rent or lease agricultural lands the profit margins are so small it is not profitable
- The community center is not open convenient hours
- Need for clean up ex. Trailers that are messy need to be organized
- Real estate in Albin is very expensive – the land prices are the same as Cheyenne
- Keeping our kids here – there are fewer job opportunities – bigger farms means no jobs for the kids – the school and pig farms are the only employer in town
- As goes agriculture so goes Albin, the drought hasn't helped Albin – if in the future the town is to grow – it must be agriculture – but now right now
- Ditto
- Ditto
- Ditto
- Sometimes we get tunnel vision – there are opportunities that we don't always see
- Need to be looking at diversifying out of agriculture –to even out the ups and downs & weather

- The farmland is right on the margin – not the greatest for growth
- People who want to live here – there is no nice place for people to move to even if they wanted to seek this environment
- Issues: challenges with growth of agriculture: dust, smell - people that move in (city folks) do not want those things
- Balance between agricultural and non-agricultural culture. Conflict re: schedules agriculture and non-agriculture schedules – farmers can make a 4:00 game but not necessarily those who work in Cheyenne
- In an agricultural community there is a limitation on the time that people (farmers) have to spend on new project – time is a key issue – a grant application due in July is not easy for farmers and ranchers to participate in
- Thinking about putting trailer court across street in town – they type of housing needs to be controlled.
- Keeping the school
- Problem – old cars, clean up town – the appearance seems to be deteriorating
- Ditto
- Decline in farming – what do we do when we lose the financial base –
- How do families who have been given a farm from the parents – what do they do
- Not enough things for young people to do – to keep them out of trouble
- Drought
- Internet access in a rural area is a problem – makes it difficult to telecommute
- Young people who want to come back don't always have steady jobs to come back to – even with a college education – the drought makes the farming opportunities less
- Apartment units are vacant – why??
- Who is taking care of shoveling sidewalks for the elderly – how can we provide better services
- Sometimes leadership can stagnate – we may need new blood on the town council – people outside of town can't run for local office
- Since we have a lot of older people – whose families have homesteaded – we may not always be open to new things – we need to find a way to change – there may be resistance to change
- Need to take care of land to upgrade properties to keep the land values high
- We cover over 100 miles of highway 500 square miles – over 50% of our medical and fire services are provided for people that are not residents of this area – we need to have people located in all areas so we can be sure to provide sufficient coverage – with growth it will mean more demand on these services

2. What are the major strengths and assets in your community?

- Strong church base
- School is the hub of the community
- A few businesses left – the community tries to support them
- Ditto all three

- Need to support businesses we do have
- Rural area – great for families and kids quality of life supports communities
- Families promote tradition to do well – lifestyle promotes people moving back here
- People and their willingness to work together to solve problems
- We are a community of parents and grand parents- there are a lot of people to look after my kids – can turn to people to provide support (asthmatic child)
- Three members here are on board for charter school – they are committed
- We have always felt very welcomed here in Albin
- I would feel very comfortable with anybody taking care of my kids
- Good post office and postmaster
- Good teaching staff and local administration
- Heritage of the community – going back to the roots
- Ditto – but I'm not from the community (17 years)
- Pig plants – there has been some controversy about them – but some of our best people used to work for the pig plant and quit but they have stayed
- Resourcefulness – commitment to make the most of what we have
- Diversity of people – resources – people can do a lot of different things
- Ditto
- Ditto
- Ditto
- Small community and everyone pulls together in a crisis
- Close neighbors are a strength and a problem – the whole little town syndrome
- Community supporting issues and projects
- Town people support everything that goes on
- Everyone supports fund raisers
- People are supportive
- Good organizations – killer drama club!
- People – strong values and morals
- Strong families
- Sense of family in community – take care of each other
- Generosity of people
- People are willing to step up and volunteer
- Education for our kids
- Traditionalism
- Volunteer service, people wear many hats
- People are a strength – help each other out
- Community support when there is a crisis
- Community is unified
- Ditto
- Ditto
- It's a very caring community – people have come together, bonded
- In the small community people care a lot about each other
- Ditto

- A lot of parental involvement – the whole gym is filled at a basketball game –
- Fundraisers are supported by families
- Kids are responsible – active citizens
- Benefits of a k-12 school – the older kids are mentors and role models for the younger kids- this is a strength of small schools
- Ditto
- School is the heart of the community – community is based around the school – if the school is gone what is going to be left
- The community center is important to provide a spot for activities – primarily for the younger kids
- Safety- we don't have to worry about being threatened by knives, guns, drugs
- Everybody has a chance to get involved –we don't have to worry about peer pressure to do negative things
- Can focus on education when we are not worried about what is going to happen at lunch or after school
- People move into Albin because of the education – people care about doing their best
- They can take college classes from LCCC or on line
- Activities: sports volleyball, track, basketball, FFA, FLAA, 4-h, honor society, and many more activities – here you can be on as many activities as you want
- POSSE – they have many community meetings around the charter school, they have tried to talk to legislators, other schools, they have a website:
www.geocities.com/wyoming_posse
- School has highest WYCAS scores in the state
- When people get together we have a great time
- The schools are a wonderful place –we don't have a lot of the problems that other bigger schools have
- Have a lot of highly opinionated and skilled people that live in the community – we have never done a real assessment of the resources that exist in the community
- The school, churches are a real strength
- The community center is a strength – but it is not open at convenient times
- Roots in the community is a strength – people have histories
- Church and extended church family
- “Mom's in touch” group set up to pray for school and community – meets on a weekly basis
- Strong Christian community with associated values and morals – we can sing religious songs for Christmas – it is not an issue
- There is no fear for the safety of our kids – I feel safe in town at night – I feel safe with my kids going to visit the neighbors
- We need more of the good people that live here
- There used to be a lot of volunteerism – but less of that now
- This community is not easy to get into but it is accepting – it helps to have family here – there is an established circle of activities
- Communication is important – we need to connect people to make

- For a charter school meeting we had over 100 people and over 60% were alumni – people are committed to
- People who work in Cheyenne can pick up things and save the trip
- If school closes early – people working can call someone to ask if their children can stay with them
- Hospitality is great
- We don't lock our house – if somebody needs to use a phone and we are not home they can use our phone – people will lend others their vehicles
- Someone asked “which of those kids (at the ball game) are your kids?” “They are all my kids” a real sense of belonging
- There is access to fiber and to DSL
- A real sense of community people
- Strong sense of family
- People are starting to come back to town
- People look after each other
- There is home schooling and charter school – because people want to live here
- There are a lot of good people here who want to contribute – who will contribute
- We did have an abundance of water
- The kids are great – they all keep busy
- We have a large pool of people here who we have not tapped into
- The hay and wheat are high quality – can receive a premium price – some kind of brand ID that says it's the best around
- Senior Center – WONDERFUL COOK!!!!
- School
- “Town Man” keeps streets graded and garbage picked up
- Community center
- Cooperative community where people support not only school – but everything
- Tradition of families handing down what they want their young to have
- Good community where neighbors look after neighbors
- Opportunities for youth through school associated activities, i.e., FFCCLA, FFA, etc.
- Beauty parlor
- People themselves are very supportive of one another –
- The community supports the school students and their projects – the community will provide money for the high school project
- It doesn't matter what church you go to people will support each other
- I've always felt accepted – the people with roots and heritage here provide a foundation for connections and services to be provided in the community
- We have felt very accepted in town – opportunities for involvement are many
- People are willing to sacrifice – people are generous with their resources
- People volunteer to do things: ambulance, fire department
- Strong program to keep kids out of trouble - give kids a sense of acceptance
- School wise I see a strength in the schools ability to support kids wherever they are at – sports, academics

- Teachers really take on a role of caretakers to support those kids who are failing academically – kids will not slip through the cracks
- Youth are given skills that allows them to achieve
- Ambulance, fire department are very responsive – many people came in response to an emergency – very quickly
- We do have a doctor in town – he came when we needed him

3. What projects would you like to see implemented in your community in the next 2, 5, 10 or 20 years

- Charter school – right now
- Ditto
- School board make decisions in our favor
- School board ought to keep schools not run them out
- More people move in – use the land available
- Upgrade water system – but ready for growth
- Replace 7 year old high school building
- Charter school
- Water – in 18 months completed – new wells, mains
- Youth things here at the center – things for kids to do – to keep from getting into trouble
- Long term 20 years: kids will want to stay in the community a viable community – they will want to stay – restaurant
- Be able to serve seasonal cutters, migrant working
- More people will want to stay in the community
- Marketing plan to let people know what we have here
- Short term: we do have infrastructure (land) let's expand
- Lets not crowd people (trailers) into a small area
- Buffet or a snack place for kids to gather in the evening
- No place for families to eat in the evening
- Café is an ASSET
- Need to change the banking so people will lend money out here in the rural area
- Financing opportunities for new investments in real estate for building housing and ranching (challenge)
- Small meat plant in the area – a mobile meat plant
- The charter school will draw people in
- Housing – sooner rather than later
- Good school system = local control, teacher for every grade, more parent involvement, teaching heritage and roots,
- County commissioners can get more involved – county commissioners are Cheyenne based

- Need small business we can operate from here
- Active school 2 years from now and 20 years from now
- Need more business
- Economic opportunities
- More retail business
- Competition in business
- Childcare services
- Youth services
- More for senior citizens
- More places for kids to go
- Educational system K-12 (long term)
- Retail businesses
- See community grow – more people, more business
- People
- Change on our terms (Albin Project)
- Need jobs, people and housing
- Grocery store
- Hardware store
- Sundries
- Auto “fix it” place expand
- Have Dr. in town open shop
- Pig Farm needs to get involved in the community
- Pig Farm “people” become involved in the community
- People from this community hired on to Pig Farm
- Dances for youth
- Places for youth to hang up
- Ditto
- School is thriving
- More people
- Good job opportunities – diversifying from the farming and ranching
- Better jobs - they will be studying: engineering, business administration, pharmacy school
- Grocery store and other stores, McDonalds or more places to eat or a pharmacy
- Albin would be a good place to raise kids
- We need a reason for people to come off the highway – a scenic route – we need some reason for people to come here
- “Next Level” a cooperative for business planning
- A bed and breakfast for people that are passing through
- If we want people to visit we need to have place for them to stay
- I’d like to see the town with several business – restaurants retail – like it once was
- More young people coming back to the area
- Cleaned up a little bit
- I’m kind of the old school – now there isn’t anybody to call if you need help
- Kid playground equipment would be great – lets use the land that’s available

- Residential places – more housing
- Zoning that has to do with keeping things orderly (e.g. trailer parks)
- Older folks who need assisted living go to other places – Kimball, Pine Bluffs – we need to do something to keep them here
- More jobs here – need to look at non-traditional – call centers – items that are achievable but someone needs to be behind them
- I will shop locally if I have the option and I can get the services I want otherwise I will shop in other places ex: if I need my car repaired I can't get it done
- We have senior housing but nobody lives in it because it is too expensive
- There is land / housing available but we couldn't buy it
- There is no bank in town – need \$8 million in deposits to make it work
- To create land for homes sites – sell out the corners on your irrigated circles
- Water is an issue for housing – there isn't always water available that will support farming and residential use – we are in groundwater control area
- Senior housing – there is a need for both regular and assisted living – Cheyenne housing authority isn't clear what they want to with it – it is too expensive and/or the eligibility requirements are too high (you need to have NO income)
- Cheyenne and Scottsbluff can provide assisted living services
- The school is small enough to address the ESL issues of the Hispanic community
- To bring in an industry – you would need to train the business work force and also provide housing – some of the locals would give up their commuting jobs into Cheyenne
- Call center for – Sierra Trading Post – establishing the facilities – they won't be high paying jobs but it will save people from commuting into Cheyenne
- The school is providing vocational technical skills – is it possible to provide some of those classes at night to train folks in those vocational skills
- Grocery store, car repair, restaurant
- Accessibility for people to move here
- Opportunity for people to buy small acreage – people will pay high prices for the land if it was available – like the corner of a circle – space for people to put up a barn and have a horse (for people from the city who want to get back to their roots)
- If we have our charter school we can get back to our basic education – in a small town this is a real asset
- Ditto
- School will here –
- More housing built west of town there would be 20 new families and jobs for the new families –
- Some kind of processing plant – need for custom kill and federally inspected products – vertical integration from what is here the pig and farm products
- Rain (sooner rather than later)
- There is land for sale – but we are in competition for towns north and south that have a grocery store, movie house – the big question is what is the type of economic development that will be appropriate for Albin – there needs to be some structure that will draw those folks that want to live here –

- Burns is building a new housing area –they don’t have the amenities but they are only 20 miles from amenities in Cheyenne
- There are enough people in the community that want to make a difference – we need to just choose / prioritize what we put our efforts into
- Chicken and egg: we don’t have enough people to support businesses – but we don’t have the jobs to support the people
- Would like to see more people in the community
- We have some telecommunications - we can diversify the business
- Need some type of “zoning” that balances between agriculture and the housing and environment that non-farmers want to have in their town – a compromise we want both agriculture and non-agriculture to co-exist
- Communications is key – we need high speed internet access – cell phone service is awful
- The bank does provide lending for housing
- What works in rural America: Rural electricity - how do you build on these type of successes? We need to develop access to information and communication – for example: there are not appropriate agreements between Nebraska cellular and Verizon – to ensure that we get good services here in the rural area. We need to work with the regulators to ensure that we get access to the services
- Its an economic decision to bring the communication services to the rural communities
- More businesses
- Keep the businesses they have, but full time businesses
- Co-op store that accommodates everybody
- Keep it like it is – grow a “little”
- School
- Businesses
- Industry – small employment - not big corporate companies – offering a range of jobs to support a diverse range of employment – to employ 25 people
- It’s a chicken and egg – how to get more people and get more industry – what comes first – both
- Ditto – bring the industry before the population grows – lets employ the people that live here – when people see a thriving community they will move here
- Develop Albin as a bedroom community – we need to contact employers to invest in Albin
- Keep the school!!!
- Streets paved
- Medical services
- Housing market improved and more creative – we have apartment units vacant – why??
- Need full-time grocery store – open more often – so we don’t go shopping in other communities
- Doctor needs facilities
- Clean up the town – get rid of the garbage – do something with the mobile homes
- Let people outside of the city limits to run for office - to broaden the leadership

- If you build it they will come: the community center has added value to the town
- If you build new housing (near the community center) they will move into the new housing
- Tug of war – chicken and the egg – how do you get new people and new businesses here at the same time
- Upgrade water and septic systems so that when industry arrives we have the infrastructure in place – catch 22 you need the promises from industry before you can build the infrastructure
- If we want people to stop by and visit in town we need to have the restaurant

APPENDIX

Will a Grocery Store Save This Small Town?

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ARTHUR, Neb. -- This windy little outpost, halfway between two other obscure outposts, has almost everything a person could want from a small town. It's got an old jail with wooden bars, a church constructed of straw bales, several houses built from sod, a state-champion six-man football squad, a saddle shop, a saloon, and a gas station where men in cowboy hats sip coffee and play cards every morning. Whatever else they lacked -- a doctor, a lawyer, a barbershop -- Arthur residents figured they could just as well live without. But when the town's grocery store closed three years ago, the loss made some people wonder: Just how much smaller could a small town get? Driving 40 Minutes for Milk

"It was bad enough when we lost the cafe," says rancher Randy Bowland, referring to Arthur's only restaurant, which closed about five years ago. "Now you had to drive 40 minutes for milk, or else you just did without."

The loss of the grocery store was more than an inconvenience. Arthur County's population had already shrunk to about 460, from a peak of about 2,000 or so in the first part of the century. Population in the town itself numbered only 128 by the latest count. Without a grocery, residents worried, the population would slide even more quickly. Some elderly people, forced to rely on neighbors to bring them food, were thinking about moving. Also, the school system had been having a tough time attracting new employees. Earlier this year, several candidates for high-school superintendent turned down the job because their wives didn't want to live in a town that lacked a supermarket. "I wasn't married at the time," says Duane E. Synoground, who eventually took the job. If the population continued to fall, Arthur might be forced to close its high school and two elementary schools, scattering its 80 students to the slightly bigger towns of Ogallala and Hyannis. Dozens of families would probably move. Already, some out-of-towners were suggesting that the county be cleared of humans and turned into a habitat for buffalo.

That's when Joy Marshall hit on an idea. A few years earlier, Mrs. Marshall, 43 years old, had taken a class on entrepreneurial business at the University of Nebraska in Broken Bow, and had started her own meeting-planning company. "If you can't find a job, you need to create one," she often preached to her three children. Meanwhile, her husband quit his job as a ranch manager and started a fence-building company, and her kids started mowing lawns.

If Arthur built a new store, she figured, people would come. Mrs. Marshall quickly enlisted the help of her friend Virginia Sizer, who had also taken the entrepreneurship class and who owned a local tree farm. The two women decided that Arthur's greatest untapped economic asset was its high school. Never mind that it had only 29 students. For Arthur, this was a gigantic pool of talent.

"There are so many kids out there who are doers," says Mrs. Marshall.

In the fall of 1998, Mrs. Marshall and Mrs. Sizer won a \$22,500 state grant to set up an extracurricular program in entrepreneurial business at various schools in the region. For the class held at Arthur County high school, one of the first assignments was this: conduct a market survey to discover just how badly the community wanted a store. The eight students in the program, who included Mrs. Marshall's then-eighth-grader, Amy, immediately took to the phones.

As part of their survey, the students asked Arthur residents to collect their grocery receipts, which revealed where they were shopping, what they were buying, and how often. It turned out most local citizens were driving about 40 miles to the Sixth Street Food Store in Ogallala and were spending an average of \$100 a trip. "We learned that people waited as long as possible, then they bought a ton," says 15-year-old freshman Sabrina Sample.

The survey also showed that consumers would be more inclined to shop in Arthur if they felt they were helping students learn about business. At the same time, they said low prices were important. In fact, the old Arthur Grocery went out of business, in large part, because it couldn't match the prices offered in the surrounding towns. "I never did blame anybody," says Bill Simpson, who owned the store and also serves as county sheriff. "They wanted to save a dollar."

The students and their advisers began to shape their plan. To build loyalty, they would make the store a co-op, selling shares to local residents, thus returning any profits to the customers. (The shares haven't yet been priced.) To keep down costs, they would have to circumvent the big food distributors, which charged high rates for the long drive to Arthur. So Mrs. Sizer approached Steve and Debbie Clarke, owners of Dredla's Grocery in Hyannis, 30 miles away, and asked if they would supply groceries. Volunteers from Arthur would pick up food for the store twice a week. The Clarks would be paid 3% above cost, enough to handle the packing and unpacking performed by their staff. Why would Dredla's Grocery help the competition? "Mostly being a good neighbor," Mr. Clarke says.

Meanwhile, the students rented an old house made of railroad ties. It was not prime real estate, sitting as it does several hundred feet from most of Arthur's other shops. But at \$200 a month, the price was right. The telephone company agreed to install its lines at no charge. The power company provided 1,000 free kilowatt hours a month for six months. The county gave a load of gravel for the driveway.

Patricia Steel, a 16-year-old sophomore, discovered she had a gift for soliciting contributions. Last spring, when she heard that the old Wal-Mart in North Platte was being demolished and replaced by an ever bigger Wal-Mart, she phoned the store manager and asked if she could have some of their old supplies. She wound up getting four shopping carts -- though the store would only have room enough for three -- and dozens of shelves.

Two months ago, the entire school was excused from class one day to set up the shelves and paint the outside of the store white with green trim. They decided to call it the Wolf Den Market in honor of the high school's wolf mascot. The art class made a red, white and blue sign for the entrance to the driveway.

On Nov. 15, Wolf Den opened for business. Balloon Express, a profitable little business run by the third- and fourth-graders in Arthur -- the brainchild of a teacher who was also advised by Joy Marshall -- provided the decorations at the grand opening.

The store has three aisles -- essentially, the tiny house's former garage, bedroom and living room. It carries all the basics, including bread, canned goods and a small assortment of fresh fruits and vegetables. There's not all that much snack food, mostly because the students didn't want to give the impression they were merely creating a convenience store. The selection of toothpaste one recent day consisted of only two tubes, both of them Crest. There is a refrigerator. But there's no intercom, no price scanner, and no freezer, though Patricia Steel and her cohorts are working on that. The Wolf Den does offer certain services not found in bigger stores. Rita Bowland, the store's first and only full-time employee, keeps a bunch of envelopes beneath the register with customers' names on them. Ranchers, who don't often carry cash, can leave \$5 or \$10 in one of the envelopes and draw against it later. When mothers with infants come in, Mrs. Bowland sometimes minds them.

On a recent Saturday afternoon, the store was crowded with as many as six customers at a time. Most lingered to gossip, and all seemed to be on a first-name basis with the staff. "Did you get some half-and-half in, Rita?" asks Maxine Kramer, a customer who visits the store two or three times a week. Mrs. Bowland says she just did -- having ordered precisely one carton.

"It's awful nice to know we can get our stuff up here," Mrs. Kramer says, handing over the 77 cents for her purchase.

On its first full day of business, the Wolf Den sold out of milk. Everyone agreed that was a good sign. Now the store has sales of more than \$1,000 a week. And expectations are high. "People have stockpiled for so long," says Mrs. Bowland, "we have to wait for the pantries to get empty."

Meanwhile, one family in town has rented a wall within the store to set up its own video-rental business. And Travis Marshall, Joy's 13-year-old son, is researching the feasibility of opening a pizza parlor on the site.

No one is willing to go out on a limb and say this little shop will rescue Arthur County. But everyone agrees it's a start.

And what's happened to the store in Ogallala where most Arthur residents used to shop? Kenneth Ridinger, director of the Sixth Street Food Store, says he hasn't noticed a drop in sales. And even if he did, he would still wish the Wolf Den luck. That's because he can empathize with the folks in Arthur. He lives in Brule, which has a population of 200 and no grocery store.