

New Rural Residents in the Midwest: A Closer Look at Recruitment

a proposed decision-making model that new rural residents use in the migration process

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NRI Grant Funded Research



USDA-National Research Initiative Grant

- ❑ Conducted U. S. Census Research
- ❑ Surveyed over 300 new Panhandle residents about their decision to move
- ❑ Conducted 12 focus group sessions
 - 78 new residents participated
- ❑ Implemented an on-line 3 step survey for community developers in Nebraska
 - 1st – 60; 2nd and 3rd = 30 participants

Research Team

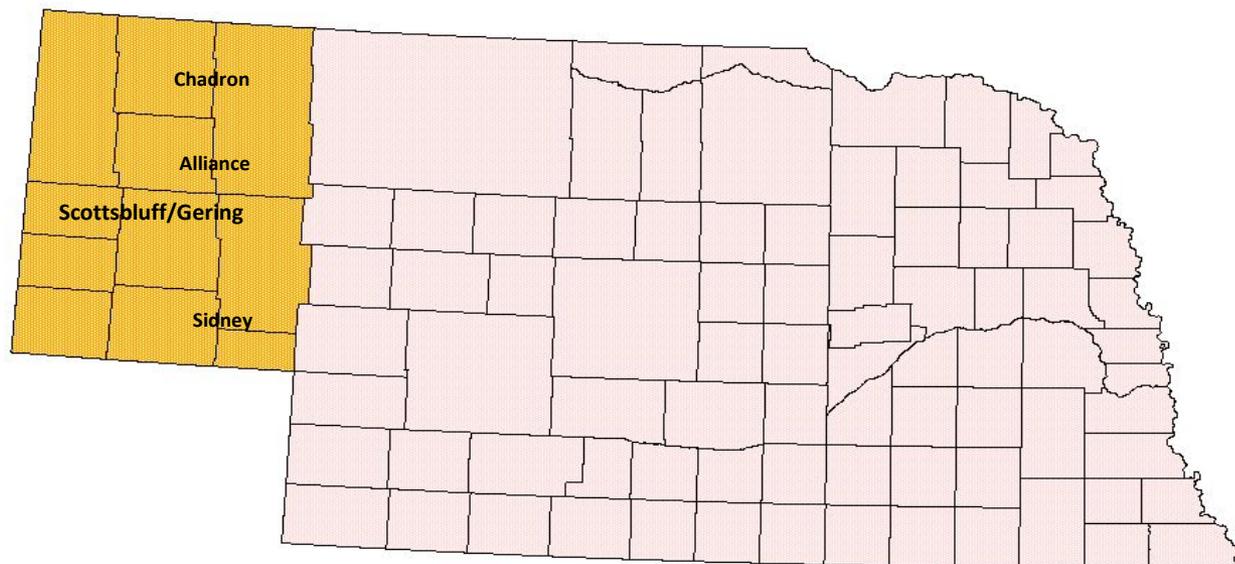
- ❑ Dr. Cheryl Burkhart-Kriesel
- ❑ Dr. Randy Cantrell
- ❑ Dr. Bruce Johnson
- ❑ Charlotte Narjes
- ❑ Rebecca Vogt

Focused on Three Questions

- ❑ Who are the new residents?
- ❑ Why did they move here?
- ❑ Are they likely to stay?



Nebraska's Panhandle Counties



One in every eight residents of Nebraska's 11 western county region had arrived there from another state or country during the previous five years

Net out-migration in 1990's = 0.7%

Yet, in-migration = 10,500 people to the Panhandle

Who are the New Residents?

□ Younger than general Panhandle population

- Average age = 46 yrs
- *41% between ages 20-40 compared to only 23% of region's population*

□ Higher incomes than the general population

- *48% above \$50,000 vs. 28%*

□ Higher education level

- *40% reporting at least B.S. vs. 18%*



Newcomers bring important occupational skills



- ❑ Professional and related occupation skills (44%)
- ❑ Management, business and financial operations skills (41%).
- ❑ Sales and related skills (28%)
- ❑ Office and administrative support skills (24%)
- ❑ Agriculture skills (23%)
- ❑ Owned a business, farm or ranch in their previous community (21%)

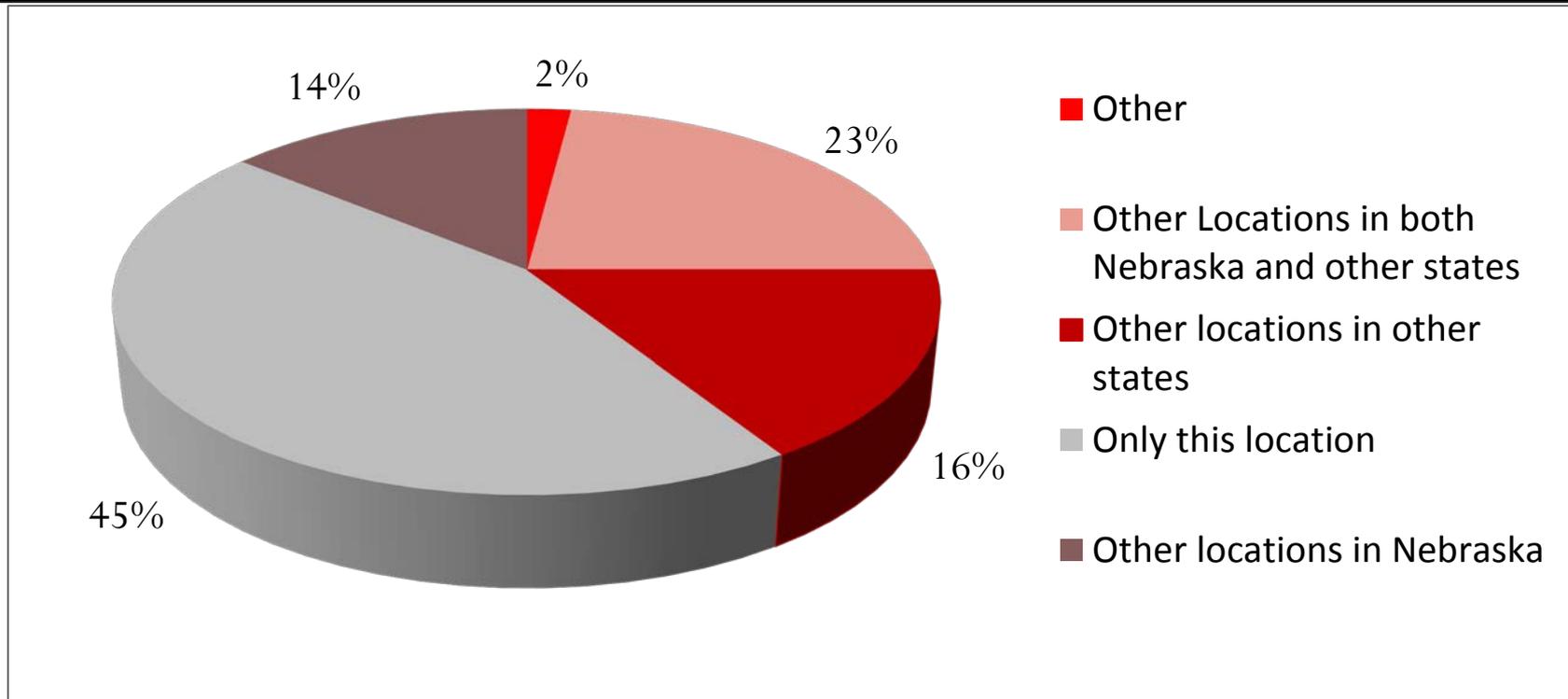
Most newcomers arrive with families

- ❑ 67% moved with a spouse or family
- ❑ 25% moved alone
- ❑ 37% brought children with them

(a higher percentage of households with children than is found in the region on average 32.8%).



New Residents Consider Other Locations – They Shop Around



**We spent 6 months looking at different communities ...
50% job, 25% community, 25% schools"**

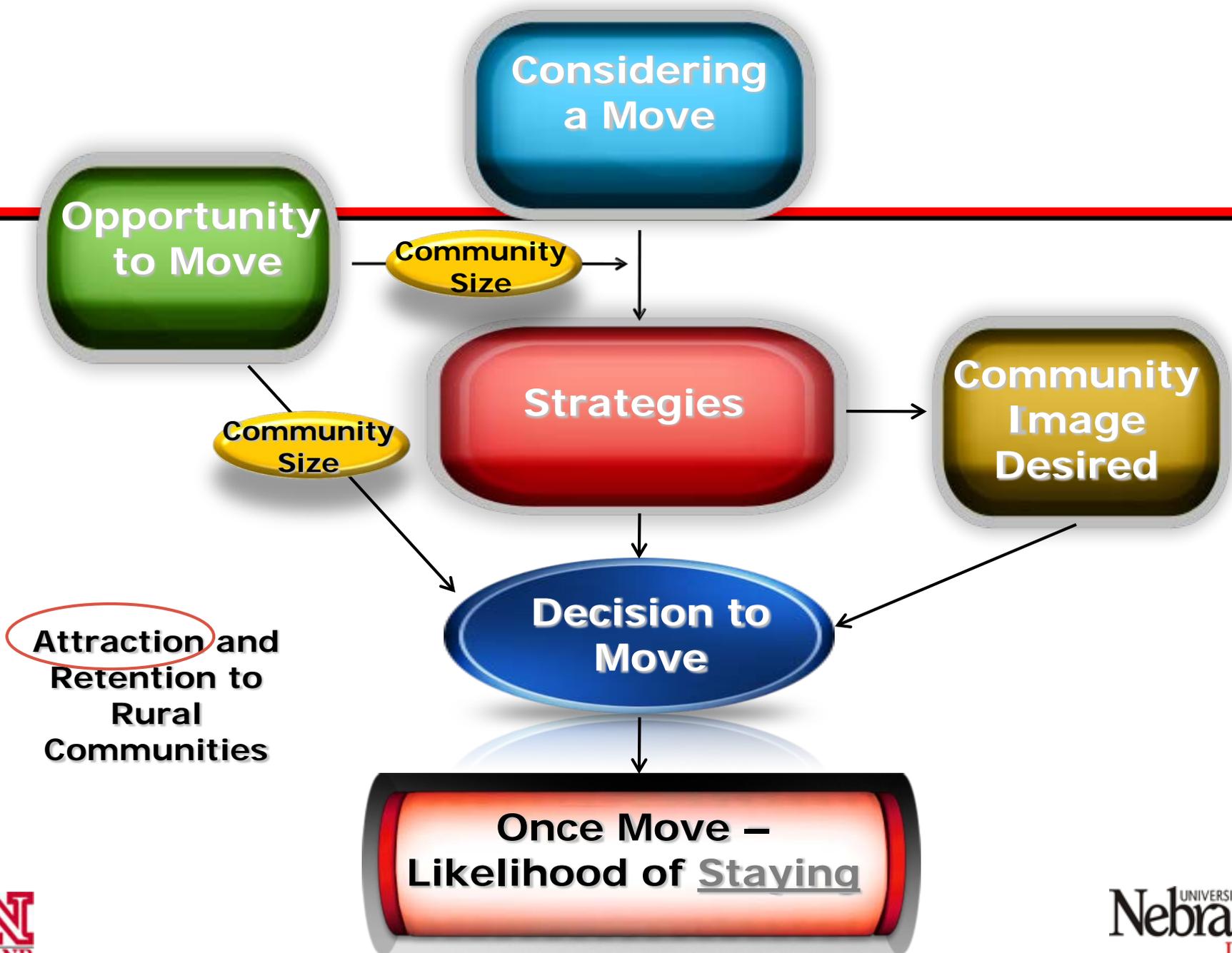
Research Questions

What motivated the new residents to move to the Nebraska Panhandle?

To what extent are residents satisfied that their new communities meet their expectations and provide a welcoming environment?

Methodology

- ❑ Sampling Procedure – 11 counties, postcards returned initial mail survey, focus groups determined by size.
- ❑ Sample – 78 participants, 12 focus groups, Ages 21-81, 61% first time residents and 24 states represented
- ❑ Data Collection – Followed Krueger’s Framework
- ❑ Data Analysis – Charsm’s Constructivist Grounded Theory. Used AtlasTI – close to data, in vivo and concept. Comparison and interpretation. Biases limited – debriefing, intercoder agreement, memberchecking.
- ❑ Theories used in discussion – migration, community interaction, social capital



Attraction and Retention to Rural Communities

Considering a Move

- ❑ Life Cycle Changes
- ❑ Healthier Quality of Life
- ❑ Being Pushed Away

“I think it was climate and ... health reasons.”

“I put 40,000 miles on a car in one year because I had three kids involved, and my husband worked ... our lifestyle was not, it wasn't family.”

“I am retired.”

Opportunity to Move

- A Job Opportunity (47.4%)
- Family (17.9%)
- Location – *including ability to purchase property, climate, region* (34.6%)

Focus Group Participants - General Demographic Information by Location

Pop Size

Community

Job

Family

Moved To

Opportunity

Friend

Location

Farm or Ranch (9)

11%

89%

< 3,500 (20)

50%

5%

45%

> 5,000 (27)

67%

26%

7%

> 10,000 (22)

36%

27%

36%

Total Sample

47%

18%

35%

Note: Gering/Scottsbluff is only area over 10,000. There are not any communities in Panhandle in the 3,500-5,000 population range.

Strategies to Learn About Community

Strategies to learn about communities:

- Family/Friend Connections
- Previously Lived
- Internet
- Visiting Community

Advice - Market Community – Know Who You Are, Know Who You Want

New Residents Looked Around

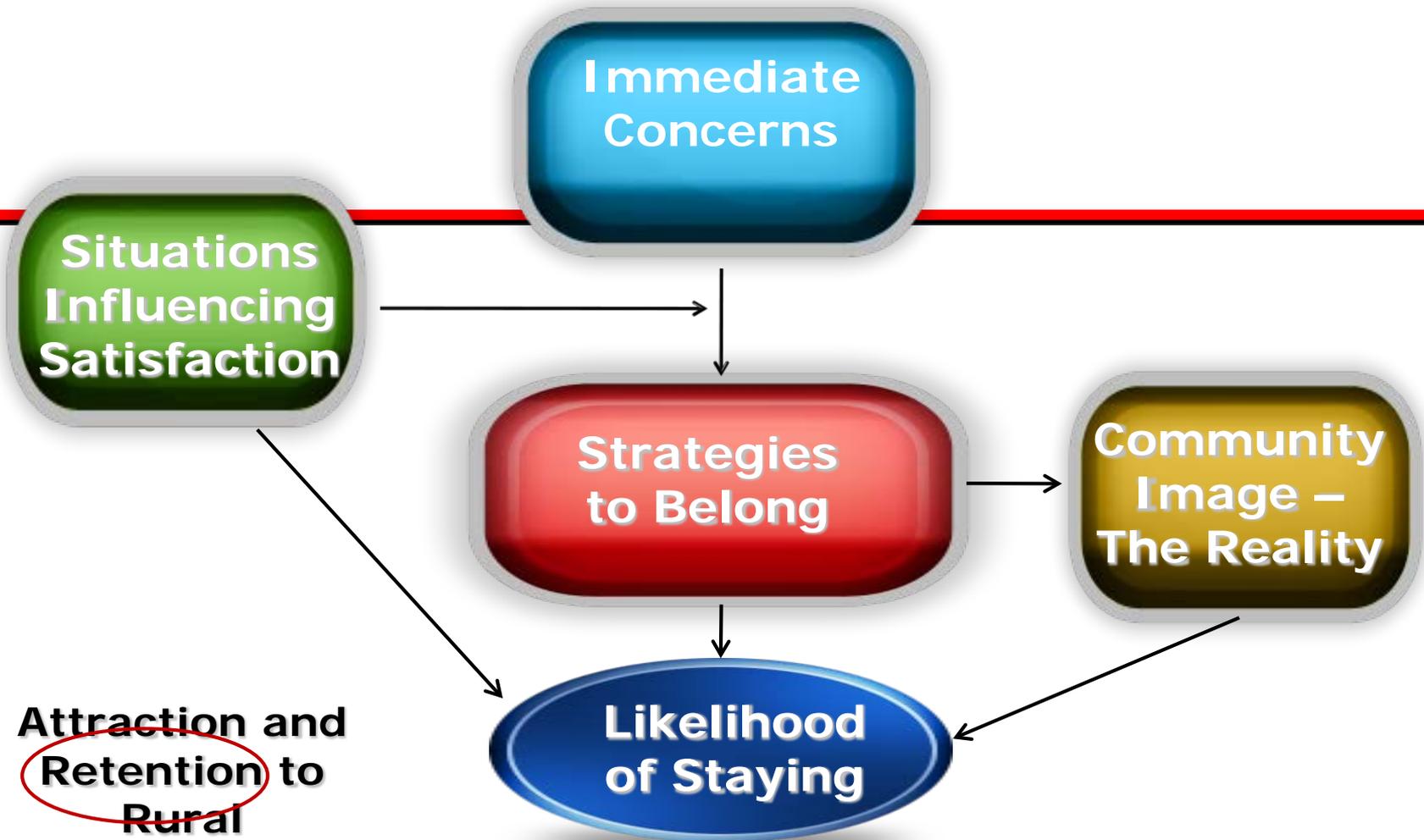
- “We spent about six months looking at different communities all throughout the Midwest ... we were in the position of being able to move where we wanted to, to the job we wanted to ... we developed a little formula that it was 50% job for me ... 25% community, 25% school. [This] ... was the first place where all the pieces of the pie seemed to be right.”

Know Who You Want

- ❑ “It behooves the cities, the small town cities to really get together as a group and individually say what really are the things that their cities want to market. What are their strong points, what are their weak points? If we did this, how would that increase our attraction.”
- ❑ “A number of years ago, the phrase was coined ‘ecotourism’. .. we are talking about eco-residentialism. One of the things that can pull people here is just the climate, the ecology, the outdoors, the slow pace of life all rolled up into one.”

Community Image Desired

- Safe
- Family Oriented
- Faith Oriented
- Small Town Atmosphere
- Free of Congestion
- Proximity to Family



Attraction and Retention to Rural Communities

Immediate Concerns

- Job Opportunities
- Housing
- Services
- Getting Connected

Situations Influencing Satisfaction

- Positive People Experiences
- Transitioning to the Community
- Services Available
- Housing Availability and Affordability
- Job Opportunities
- Information Sharing
- Small Business Struggles
- Socio-Economic Issues

Transitioning to the Community

- “Whenever I said that I had just moved here – somebody would say “Why?” ... Don’t you know what is going on over there where you have to wait.”
- “I almost feel like people are friendly to you to the point of being cordial.”
- “It’s hard as a new resident to really get to know people.”
- “It’s a lot more conservative than I thought.”
- “More laid back than I am used too.”

Strategies to Belong

Strategies to Belong to a Community:

- Welcome Programs
- Local News Media
- Getting Involved

Advice – Community Vision, Comprehensive Welcome Programs, Open-Minded Attitude, Career Opportunities

Community Vision

- 75% of the new residents indicated a clear positive community vision for the future was important
- 86% would like to see an open minded attitude towards new resident ideas.

Open-Minded Attitude

“To listen ... things could grow out of conversation ... I don’t know what the conversation would be like if it were [the community] that listens to itself, not just newcomers ... it might discover there’s more desire for change.”

Community Image – the Reality

- Safe
- Family Oriented
- Faith Oriented
- Small Town Atmosphere
- Free of Congestion
- Proximity to Family

The intervening conditions appear to influence whether a person plans to remain or move from the community.

Basic Conclusions

Individuals moving to varying community sizes are motivated by different factors. *Many identified one of DeJung's 11 life cycle changes. Agree with Barcus noneconomic reasons to move.*

The context of the community is a factor in deciding to move to a rural community and to remain in the community. *"If development ends with jobs and income, it ends (Kaufman, 1985). McGranahan & Beale (2002) identify Panhandle Region as Tier 2 region.*

Basic Conclusions

Community vision influences individuals to move to the community. In addition, the visioning process builds social capital when existing and new residents are part of the process. Castle (2003), Emery et.al. (2007), Wilkinson (1991)

Engaging new residents in the community through involvement increases social capital. Keddy (2001), McDonough and Vachta (2005)



Basic Conclusions

Comprehensive welcoming programs that create social interaction identify ways to become involved and provide information that can influence new resident's ability to transition to their new communities. New residents that are not connected with their new community may look for alternative locations to move. Ruback (2004), Brown (2002) historical perspective, Furuesh (1998) satisfaction is not guaranteed.

For more information

<http://cari.unl.edu/buffalo>

<http://websitesforgrowth.com>

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