

# ***Marketing Rural Communities: Converting Business Models Into Community Practice***

Presented at the National Association of Community  
Development Extension Professionals Annual Conference  
March 9, 2011

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# Review....

**USDA NRI/NIFA Rural Development Grant – 2008-2012**

***Can we use business marketing principles to better market rural communities?***

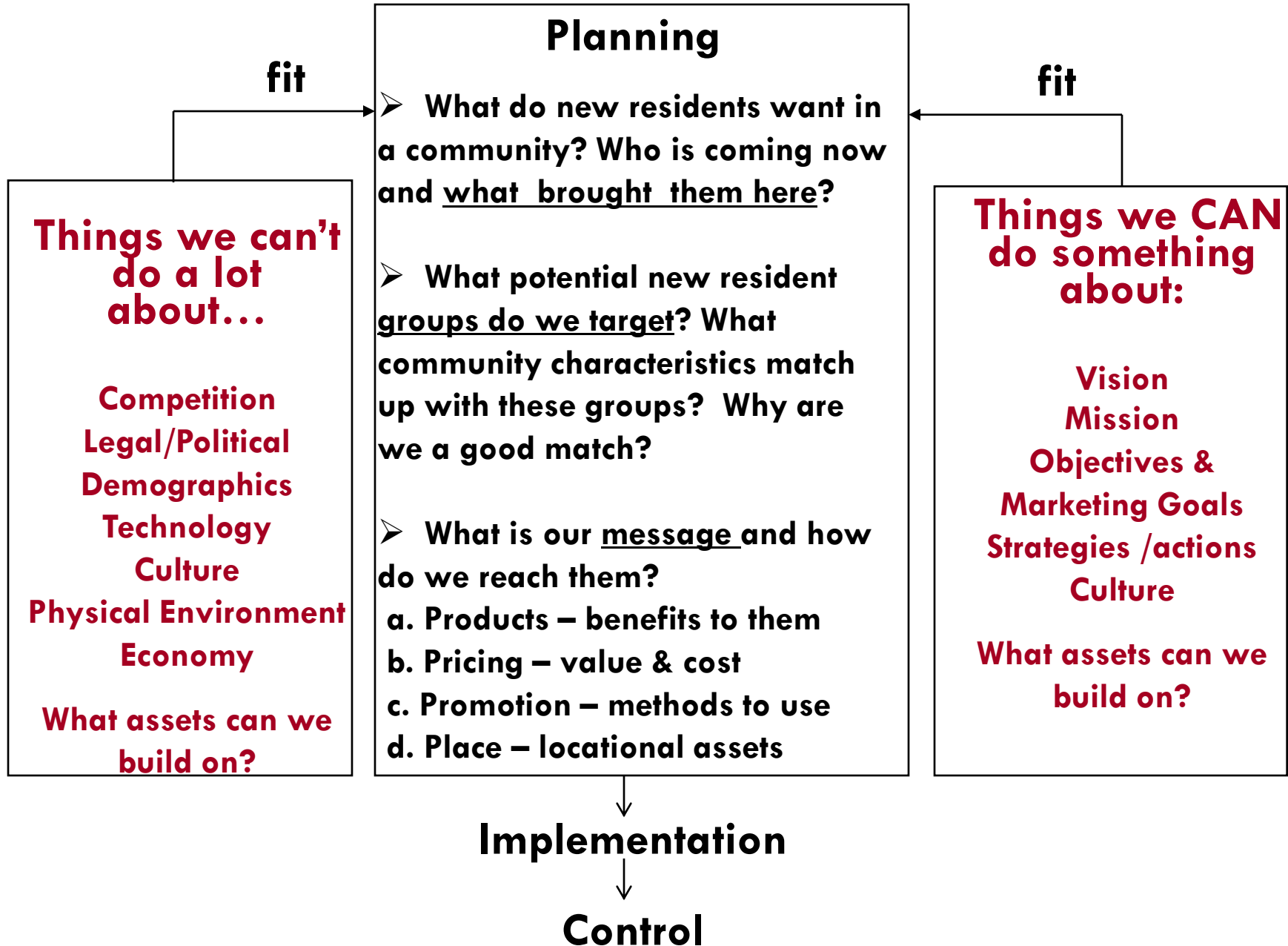
**North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska**

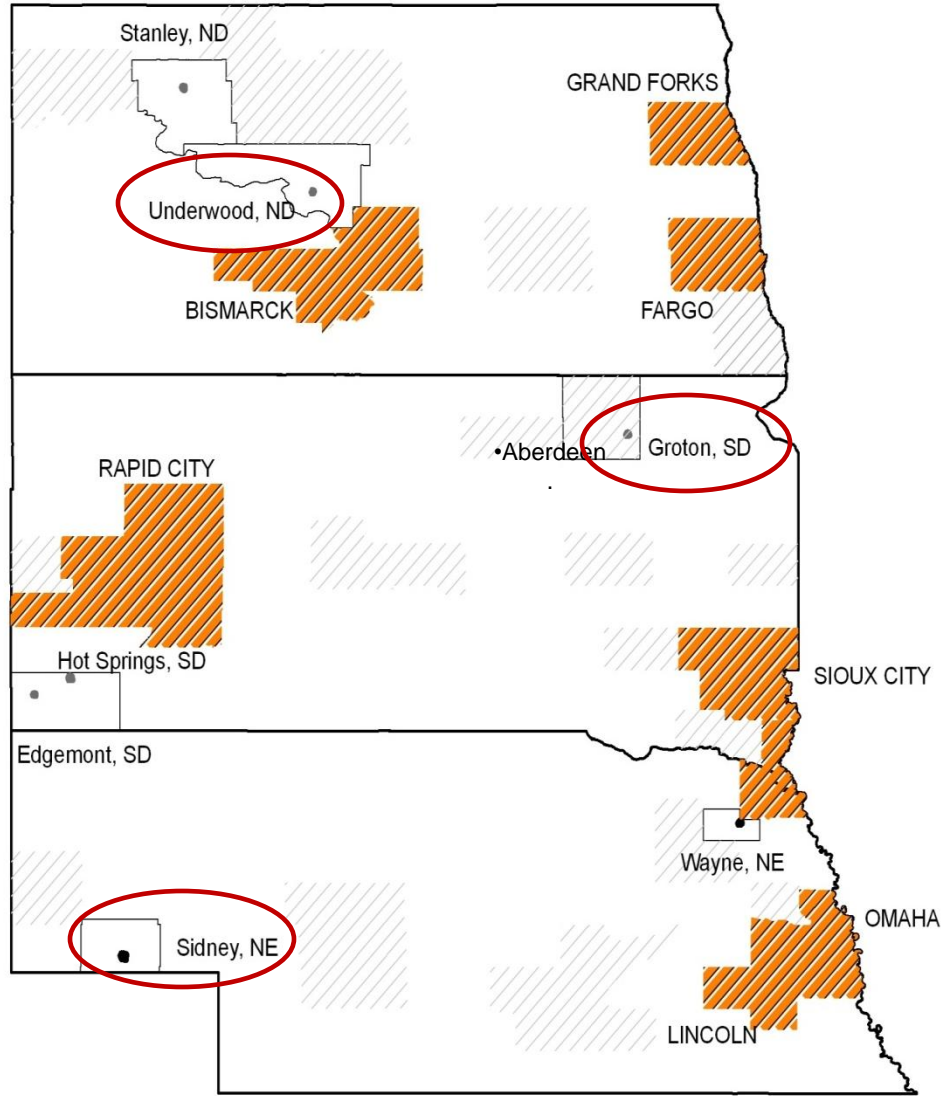
## **Research Components:**

- Household surveys of new residents
- Labor vacancy surveys
- Consumer focus groups (face-to-face) and online survey

***So how are communities using the information?***

# MARKETING PLAN





# Underwood, North Dakota

- Population 750
- 50 miles to Bismarck and Minot
- Energy mecca



# Underwood Vision

“Underwood is a growing community, attractive to all who want to be part of a compassionate, caring and accepting place. We provide recreation and service for those who want to grow, prosper and retire in a place they can call home.

Underwood public school is the pride of the community. It provides world-class education and activities in a dynamic learning environment for youth and adults.

We are a diverse and vibrant business community that excels in quality and service from the perfect T-Bone steak to the best medical care. Resident and visitors alike can find it all in Underwood.

Our beautiful city has a proud history and a promising future.”

# Underwood Bucks the Odds

2008

Today



# Renovated Main Street Businesses

2008



Today





# T-Bone Anyone

**2008**



**Today**



# Not Just a Face Lift



# Underwood in the News

# What They Learned

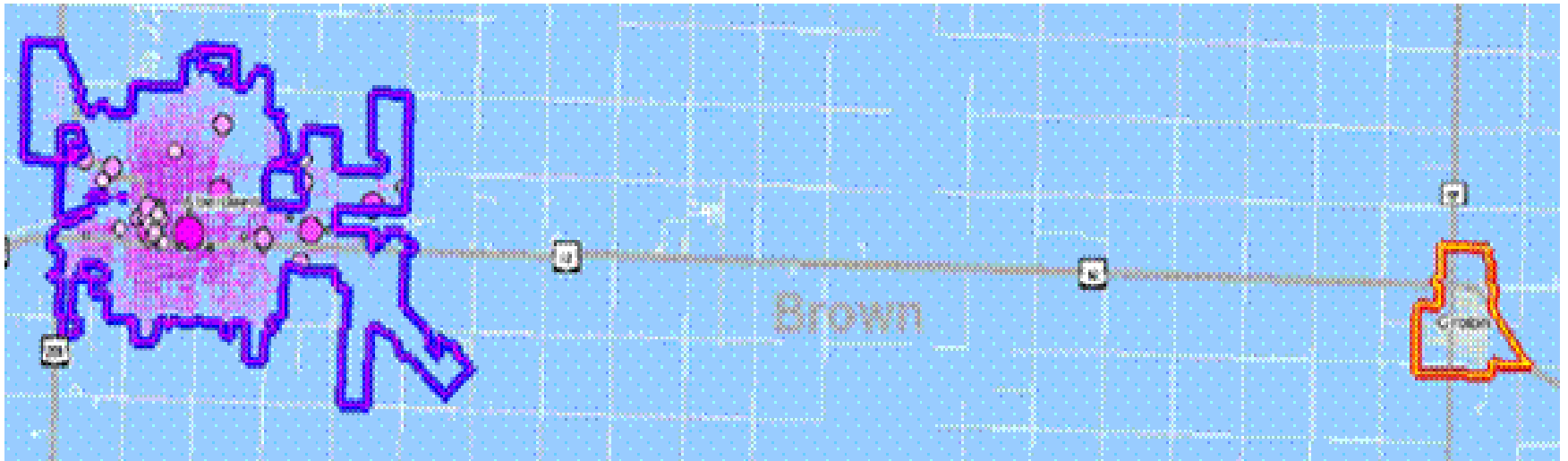
## Market:

- Family Friendly
- Affordable housing
- Lower cost of living
- Low taxes
- No traffic



- Population - 1,356
- Within 20 miles of Aberdeen
- Strong family ties to community

**Of the 490 workers who live in Groton,  
246 (50 %) are employed in Aberdeen**



**Aberdeen (approx. 25,000 population) has 53  
people employed in Groton**

# Groton, SD: Industry in 2006

- Total number of establishments = **79 entities**.
- Total number of employees in **Groton** = **471 people**.

	<b>Number of Establishments by Employment-size class</b>				
Total Estabs	1 – 4	5 – 9	10 – 19	20 – 49	50-99
79	49	16	8	5	1

# What They *Learned*

## Market:

- Opportunity to be closer to relatives
- An environment for raising children
- Quality school system
- Quality time with family/simpler pace of life
- Less congestion



# Local discussion based on research

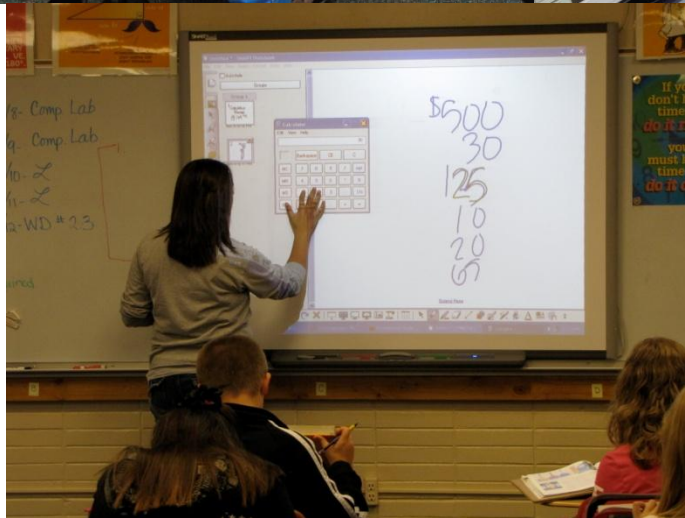
- *For example, why do you think newly hired professionals tend to leave Groton after one year?*
  - ✓ Informed discussion
  - ✓ Can pull in several research components
  - ✓ Issues that might have been buried





**Cabela's**

- Population - 6,282
- 200 miles from Denver, located on I-80
- Home of a national retail headquarters: 1,300 workers in Sidney - 400 more expected





# What They *Learned*

## Market:

- Higher paying job opportunities
- A job more in line with my skills
- Opportunity to spend more quality time with family/simpler pace of life
- Safe place to live
- Less congested place

# Next Steps...

- Work closely with community councils
  - Input from the online and local focus groups
  - What are the priorities? First steps?
  - What can they realistically do?
  - Who needs to be involved?
  - What resources are needed?

# Next Steps...

As a research team...

- ✓ Document process and share tools used (case study)
- ✓ Develop materials – Extension & non-Extension audience
- ✓ Possible eXtension contribution, publications, etc.



# What WE Learned

- Timing is everything
  - Regular team meetings
  - Keep the momentum
  - Working as a group of 6 was not easy
- Community steering group make-up important
- Partnership (internal and external) critical
- Time and money, a special challenge for smaller communities
- Real give and take in a truly integrated res-ext project

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