

Ortonville EDA Work Group

Strategic Planning Session - Summary

PREPARED BY

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Helping Communities Prosper

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Summary of Strategic Planning Session held on

September 15th, 2010 ■ 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. ■ Ortonville Media Center

EDA WORKGROUP MEMBERS PRESENT

Angela Doren

Elsie Perrine

Deb Larson

LaValle Berkner

Burt Nypen

Craig Randleman

Don Sherman

Joan Hasslen

Becky Parker

Vicki Oakes

Katie Hedge

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Executive Summary

The UMVRDC was asked to facilitate a strategic planning meeting to brainstorm strategies to help the EDA Work Group accomplish previously identified projects. During the meeting it became clear that the group wanted to implement the Sense of Community/Lifestyles Section in the Ortonville Independent to achieve an overarching goal of Community Communication & Outreach. As a result of the direction of the meeting we have summarized group discussions, potential strategies, and complementary ideas for communication and outreach.

Meeting Notes

Facilitators began by asking why the group had chosen the list of projects below, starting specifically with the Business & Community Survey. The responses grew to incorporate why some of the other projects were chosen and some of the responses pertained to more than one project.

Projects Previously Identified by EDA Work Group:

1. Housing Information – collect and post on the Ortonville Website
2. Odd Fellow Building –Stabilize the building/rehabilitation and identify a purpose for the building.
3. Lifestyles Section
4. Survey the community and businesses

Listed below are the group responses on why the projects listed above were chosen and what the group would like to see as a result of these projects:

- To ask for input on EDA priorities (Both Residents and Businesses opinions)
 - Specifically the Odd Fellows building and whether or not it should be saved
 - Suggested methods to obtain opinions: Newspaper ads, door-to-door, work groups, newsletters, surveys, reaching out to seniors
- To get feedback from main street businesses
 - What are current business needs, what other businesses could complement existing businesses or fulfill main street needs
 - What are their ideas for main street
- The group commented that the biggest hurdle to overcome was creating community support
- To develop relationships and networks and support for community initiatives and ideas
- To show business appreciation
- To promote tourism, letting residents and visitors know what Ortonville has to offer

Key Themes

- Community Feedback – feedback on community issues, EDA priorities, main street projects
- Engaging Business Owners – specifically along Main street
- Finishing the story – providing follow-up information about community questions/concerns
- Relationships – Currently there are numerous groups working independently; these groups could build connections so that everyone can work together and achieve greater outcomes
- Promotion of what Ortonville has to offer – Tourism/Weekend Residents

The initial conversation led to group consensus that a Sense of Community Inter-Action Plan is needed. Goals within the plan would focus on communication and outreach to both the community (meaning: permanent residents, weekend residents, tourists) and businesses (business owners and employees) with a focus on Main street. Strategies that related to residents, tourism, Main street, and the general businesses community were discussed.

The group focused on the development of Sense of Community Section (SoCS) in the Ortonville Independent as a high priority project and the first step toward increased communication, feedback and outreach to the Ortonville community.

Next Steps for the Sense of Community Section

- Develop a “look” for the newspaper section (size/format/layout/fonts/pictures/etc.)
- Identify lifestyle categories (Government, Housing, EDA Priorities)
- Develop a list of potential topics, organizations, individuals and businesses that could contribute
- Develop an article submission process/schedule

Possible organizations that could contribute to the Sense of Community Section in the Ortonville Independent:

Seniors Clubs	Home Right
City Council / Planning Boards	Kiwanis
Citizens for Big Stone Lake	Arts Groups
Foods Groups	Writers Groups
Ortonville Alumni	Heritage Preservation Group
Early Childhood Initiative	School Board / Youth Boards

Recommendations & Ideas

Sense of Community Section

1. In “Sense of Community” Section, put a spotlight on businesses highlighting who they are (workers, owners) and tell THEIR story.
2. Collaborate with the High School and have a “Youth Section” that speaks to teen issues or relevant, timely topics. Could partner with Key Club, Student Council, 4-H, etc.
3. Start and encourage a weekly/monthly activities, maybe try one for businesses and one for residents to engage the community (for residents try Leaf Blowing/Raking, Cleaning Gutters) for businesses have an update your storefront week then interview businesses on what they did and show pictures in the Sense of Community Section!
4. Set some benchmarks so you can evaluate the impact of this tool
5. Every month add a reflective “how are we doing discussion” to the agenda.

General Communication & Outreach

1. Have a community event to highlight what the EDA Workgroups have already completed and what they hope to do in the future.
2. Consider creating neighborhood groups and start building relationships through Block Parties/National Night Outs (businesses could also start some “community night out” events to promote Main street as well)
3. Continue to reach out to the community using multiple communication mediums including the newspaper, radio and website/social media and in-person meetings! At every event take the opportunity to get feedback by asking one or two questions of attendees (What did you like best? What could be done better?).
4. Consider applying for a Minnesota Design Team visit to create additional strategies to improve main street and accomplish existing priority projects. www.minnesotadesignteam.org
5. Move forward on developing a “Sense of Community Inter-Action Plan” for Ortonville – using the Communication & Outreach Poster that describes your ideas. The group could update existing marketing strategies or develop new ones within the Inter-Action Plan.