New Resident Recruitment and Retention in Rural Communities: The Lifeblood of Rural Schools

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Wisconsin Rural Schools Alliance
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We will share...

✓ Insights into rural new resident recruitment and retention
✓ Techniques to help market rural communities
✓ An in-depth look at how one Wisconsin community leveraged their assets
Why the fuss about rural new residents?
Median Age of Population by County: 1950

Median Age of Population by County: 2007

Numeric Change in Population by County: 1950 to 2007

Percent Change in Population by County: 1950 to 2007

Depopulation of the rural Great Plains
Lifestyle Amenities are Key.

Late boomers born from 1960 to 1964
Gen X born from 1965 to 1969
Gen X born from 1970 to 1974


The Fundamental Question
Do People Follow Jobs or Do Jobs Follow People?

Access to life-style amenities
Recreation
Quality education
Health care
Housing

Thousands

Population in Rural Counties of Tenth Federal Reserve District

Source: Henderson (2009)

Percent of Total Population
In 2007:

• Analyzed U.S. Census research
• Surveyed over 300 new Panhandle residents
• Conducted 12 focus groups
• Implemented an on-line 3 step survey - community developers in NE
New residents are returning –
Some are true newcomers

About one-third of new residents (26% of spouses) had previously resided in the Panhandle county to which they moved.

Half (50%) of new residents moved in part to be nearer to friends and relatives.

☑️ Half of the new residents did not move to be near family
☑️ About 2/3 did not have previous residential experience

These are true newcomers!
Where do people find relocation information?

- Family
- Internet
- Employer or co-workers
- Friends and acquaintances
- Current community resident
- Recruitment info from employer
- TV, magazines, newspapers
- Travel or vacation in new location
- Attended school or college there
- Other
- Recruitment information from community
- Recruitment info from high school
# Why do people move to the region?

% of Respondents indicating **Important** or **Very Important**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Simpler pace of life</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less congested place</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closer to relatives</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower cost of housing</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower cost of living</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher paying job</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desirable natural environment</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safer place to live</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job that better fits skills</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community that shares values</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better place for kids</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closer to friends</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower taxes</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
61% - majority of newcomers are from metro areas...

- quality of life considerations associated with an image of rural living was a primary motivation in their decision to move (60% + of metro newcomers)
Attracting newcomers ≠ Keeping them

Likelihood of Living in Community Five Years from Now

- Probably will: 41%
- Definitely will: 19%
- Don’t know: 22%
- Probably not: 12%
- Definitely not: 6%

Most likely to move away?
... the best educated and those with professional occupations
“Feeling of Belonging” is important!

Likelihood of Living in Community Five Years from Now by Feeling of Belonging in Community*

- Definitely/probably will stay
- Don't know
- Definitely or probably won't stay

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Excellent: 86%
- Definitely/probably will stay: 7%
- Don't know: 7%
- Definitely or probably won't stay: 86%

Good: 68%
- Definitely/probably will stay: 20%
- Don't know: 12%
- Definitely or probably won't stay: 68%

Fair: 46%
- Definitely/probably will stay: 27%
- Don't know: 26%
- Definitely or probably won't stay: 46%

Poor: 16%
- Definitely/probably will stay: 44%
- Don't know: 40%
- Definitely or probably won't stay: 16%
## Interviews: What would influence recruitment?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tactics to <strong>Attract</strong> New Residents</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>N=78</strong></td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>To a Great Extent</th>
<th>To a Moderate Extent</th>
<th>To a Slight Extent</th>
<th>Not at All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Letter from high school alumni/class member encouraging you to move back</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
<td>70.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offered a free residential lot</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
<td>34.6%</td>
<td>21.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertisements promoting the area</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
<td>29.9%</td>
<td>40.3%</td>
<td>22.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personally visited with a representative of the community</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
<td>42.9%</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>View a community web site that showcases the area</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>21.8%</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruited actively by the community</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
<td>27.6%</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
</tr>
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Interviews: What would influence retention?

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</thead>
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<td>Opportunities for leadership development</td>
<td>19.7%</td>
<td>40.8%</td>
<td>30.3%</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear, positive community vision</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>35.1%</td>
<td>22.1%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual job and career enhancement</td>
<td>57.1%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open-minded community attitude toward new residents/ new ideas</td>
<td>62.8%</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusions:

The community is a “product” to newcomers
- there is a need to sell or market it

Recruitment partnership: employers + community
- lines between economic & community development are blurred

The Internet – a very important recruitment tool
- especially for better educated, more highly skilled individuals
Urbanites may need help in understanding “rural”
   - communication needs to be accurate

A comprehensive recruitment program should include retention tactics
   - people want to feel they belong and are valued

Multiple recruitment methods and personal contacts make a difference

Retention – perceived acceptance & community vision make a difference
Any quick questions ?
Urbanites may need help in understanding “rural”

- communication needs to be accurate
- communities don’t market themselves well
- people use the web as a relocation filter

*Is there a way to help communities better tell their story?*
USDA Funded Research - 2008-2012

- Three states
- New resident household survey
- Labor vacancy survey
- Focus group interview – images
  - Online version with potential new residents
Images are critical in marketing...
Please tell us about your impression of the community portrayed in the picture?
Another way to understand images...

*Describe this phrase in a picture:*

- Quality Time With Family
- Less Congested Place to Live
- Job Opportunities
- Simpler Pace of Life
Please rate how well you agree that the picture above represents the community characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither disagree or agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Simpler Pace of Life</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Quality Time with Family</td>
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<tr>
<td>Environment for Raising Children</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Available Outdoor Recreational Activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Safe Place to Live</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Place that you Might Like to Visit</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Place that You Might Like to Live</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other - Explain</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
Quality Time with Family

Pictures that effectively depicted quality time with family showed family activities (families doing things together) or community amenities for family outings.

“I think pictures of families in parks having a picnic. Pictures of families in small town events like parades, county fairs, outside dances, etc.”

“Family outings, on the lake, park, bowling, church, golf, birthdays and weddings”

“Family picnics with parents interacting with children; family sport outings - biking, fishing, walking, frisbee tossing, sitting on the front porch together.”
Less Congested Place to Live

Pictures that effectively depicted less congested place to live showed main streets of communities (with minimal traffic or congestion) or outdoor scenery - panoramic

“A street in the town that show Main Street with the businesses and that it is comfortably full, showing ample spots for other cars to pull in and shop or eat.”
“Longer panned shot of a main street or street along park that has very few cars and people walking or biking instead.”
“Open spaces. Not many people or vehicles.”
Job Opportunities

Neither of these pictures was effective at depicting job opportunities.

“Show a variety of jobs that are in the manufacturing, high tech, or oil and gas fields”

- Images of workplaces not just people
- Diversity of employment options and ranges of occupations
- Residential neighborhoods that demonstrate that good jobs are available, economic prosperity
- How to depict “jobs in line with my skills” depends on the individual?
Simpler Pace of Life

Pictures that effectively depicted simpler pace of life showed scenery and time for family and friends – broad definition

“The biking trails, parks, and low density neighborhoods”
“Smaller community. Opportunities for outdoor activities. Less concrete.”
“A community lunch, picnic, pot luck.”
“Happy community members gathering and talking amongst each other after church.”
Image Advice for Attracting New Workers and Residents

✓ Illustrate diversity of employment opportunities (agriculture, blue collar, education, professional, health care, etc.)

✓ Available services and amenities such as schools, recreation facilities, health care, a range of available housing

✓ Illustrate multi-generational and inter-generational interaction

✓ Capture local flavor, landscape and surrounding area
Image Advice for Attracting New Workers and Residents

✓ Must be authentic!

✓ Use images that people can relate to like grocery shopping, kids walking to parks, dad mowing the yard

✓ Age, gender and ethnic diversity are noticed (include Dad)

✓ Photo captions guide the viewer to the desired meaning
Pictures might say a thousand words, but not necessarily the same thousand words to everyone.
Any quick questions?
Location Map

The Gogebic Range

- Iron and Gogebic Counties
- Metropolitan Statistical Area County
- Micropolitan Statistical Area County
- State Border

Scale: 0 25 50 75 100 Miles

Iron Co., WI
Gogebic Co., MI
Gogebic Range Population Trends

Source: U.S. Census Bureau
Age Groups – 2006

Source: U.S. Census Bureau
Age Groups – Projected (Iron County)

Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration
Top Factors

For those wanting to live in...

Downtowns

1. Walkable Streets
2. Gathering Places
3. Many Jobs
4. Diversity
5. Different Lifestyles
6. Shops/Businesses
7. Arts/Culture

Source: Michigan Cool Cities Survey, 2004
Preferred Community

Near Downtown – Medium City  55%
Near Downtown – Large City  53%
Suburbs – Large City  51%
Suburbs – Medium City  49%
Downtown – Medium City  47%
Downtown – Large City  38%
Small Town  38%
Rural Area  36%

Source: Michigan Cool Cities Survey, 2004
# Top Factors

For those wanting to live in...

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<td>3. Affordable</td>
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<td>4. Diversity</td>
<td>4. Place for Family</td>
</tr>
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<td>5. Different Lifestyles</td>
<td>5. Good Schools</td>
</tr>
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<td>7. Arts/Culture</td>
<td>7. Low Traffic</td>
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Source: Michigan Cool Cities Survey, 2004
Top Ten Factors

Michigan Cool Cities
1. Scenic Beauty
2. Safe Streets
3. Affordable
4. Place to Raise Family
5. Good Schools
6. Sense of Community
7. Low Traffic
8. Concern for Environment
9. Close to Friends/Family
10. Walkable Streets

Source: Michigan Cool Cities Survey, 2004 (for those who want to live in a small town or rural area)
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Source: Michigan Cool Cities Survey, 2004 (for those who want to live in a small town or rural area)

Source: Gogebic Range Survey, 2008 (among young professionals)
Top Ten Factors

**Michigan Cool Cities**
1. Scenic Beauty
2. Safe Streets
3. Affordable
4. Place to Raise Family
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**Gogebic Range**
1. Safe Streets
2. Place to Raise Family
3. Affordable
4. Good Schools
5. Scenic Beauty
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## Top Five Factors

<table>
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<td>Good Schools</td>
<td>Jobs</td>
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Source: Gogebic Range Survey, 2008 (among young professionals)
Gogebic Range Next Generation Initiative
Working to Retain and Attract Young People on the Gogebic Range
• Attract Young Workers by Strengthening Our Niche

• Attract Young Workers by Promoting Our Strengths

• Retain Young Workers by Building Social Capital

• Retain Students by Better Connecting them to the Community
Attract Young Workers by Strengthening Our Niche

Attract Young Workers by Promoting Our Strengths

Retain Young Workers by Building Social Capital

Retain Students by Better Connecting them to the Community
"Nature-based outdoor recreation niche"
Resolutions of Support

Iron County Board of Supervisors
Iron County Forestry and Parks Committee
Iron County Resource Development Association, Inc.
City of Hurley
Hurley Area Chamber of Commerce
Hurley School District
City of Montreal
Town of Kimball
Gogebic County Board of Commissioners
Gogebic County Economic Development Commission
Ironwood City Commission
Ironwood Parks and Recreation Committee
Ironwood Area Chamber of Commerce
Ironwood Area School District
Ironwood Charter Township
Erwin Township
City of Bessemer
Bessemer Downtown Development Authority
Bessemer Chamber of Commerce
Bessemer Area School District

Bessemer Township
City of Wakefield
Wakefield Planning Commission
Wakefield Chamber of Commerce
Wakefield-Marenisco School District
Wakefield Township
Marenisco Township Board
Grand View Health System
Gogebic Community College
Western Upper Peninsula Convention and Visitors Bureau
Ni-Miikanaake Chapter of the North Country Trail Association
Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment (letter of support)
Upper Peninsula Travel and Recreation Association
U.S. Forest Service (letter of support)
International Mountain Biking Association (letter of support)
Results to Date

• State of Michigan Allocated $500,000 for Acquisition of Trail Route
• Cities of Ironwood and Bessemer Each Obtained $300,000 Grants to Develop Trailheads
• City of Ironwood Currently Applying for Grant to Pave Trail
• Cities of Hurley and Ironwood Collaborating on Riverside Trail Project
• Attract Young Workers by Strengthening Our Niche

• **Attract Young Workers by Promoting Our Strengths**

• Retain Young Workers by Building Social Capital

• Retain Students by Better Connecting them to the Community
“Nature-based outdoor recreation niche”
Safe
Schools
Friends/Family
Env Concern
Sense of Community
Affordable
Walkable
Low Traffic
Raise Family

"Core Community Factors"

Negative Perception  Positive Perception
Top Ten Factors

Michigan Cool Cities
1. Scenic Beauty
2. Safe Streets
3. Affordable
4. Place to Raise Family
5. Good Schools
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Source: Michigan Cool Cities Survey, 2004 (for those who want to live in a small town or rural area)
“Beautiful Northwoods Adventure”
Website
“Beautiful Northwoods Adventure” Web-site

Home Page
Scenic Beauty Page
Adventure Sports Page
Quality of Life Page
Social Networking Page
Economy and Jobs Page
Contact Page
What's with the Fe?
If you didn't sleep through chemistry class, you'll remember that Fe stands for Ferrous, or Iron, in the periodic table. Fe is our history and our culture and the reason we are here.
Live liFe is our future!
“Beautiful Northwoods Adventure” Web-site

Home Page – “Live LiFe “
Scenic Beauty Page – “Feel the Beauty”
Adventure Sports Page – “Feed Your Hunger”
Quality of Life Page – “SaFe Places”
Social Networking Page – “Fellowship”
Economy and Jobs Page – “Fear Not”
Contact Page – “Catch the Fever”

www.felivelife.com
“Most Creative”
“Furthest Distance”
PAST SIN: EXTREME DIETING CAN INCREASE YOUR RISK OF GALLSTONES AND WEaken IMMUNE SYSTEM
• Attract Young Workers by Strengthening Our Niche
• Attract Young Workers by Promoting Our Strengths
• **Retain Young Workers by Building Social Capital**
• Retain Students by Better Connecting them to the Community
“Perceived” Factors

Natives
- Scenic Beauty
- Four Seasons
- **Friends/Family**
- Affordable
- Raise Family
- Safe
- Small Businesses
- Walkable Streets
- Beaches/Waterfront
- Adventure Sports
- Little Traffic
- Good Schools
- Sense of Community
- Concern for Environment

Boomerangers
- Scenic Beauty
- **Friends/Family**
- Safe
- Four Seasons
- Affordable
- Raise Family
- Adventure Sports
- Beaches/Waterfront
- Little Traffic
- Walkable Streets
- Small Businesses
- Sense of Community
- Good Schools
- Trails/Parks
- Low Taxes

Transplants
- Scenic Beauty
- Adventure Sports
- Four Seasons
- Little Traffic
- Affordable
- Raise Family
- Safe
- Beaches/Waterfront
- Trails/Parks
- Sense of Community
- Small Businesses
- Good Schools
- Walkable Streets
- Concern for Env
- Gaming

Source: Gogebic Range Survey, 2008 (among young professionals)
• Attract Young Workers by Strengthening Our Niche
• Attract Young Workers by Promoting Our Strengths
• Retain Young Workers by Building Social Capital
• Retain Students by Better Connecting them to the Community
Percent Planning to Live on the Gogebic Range

- Adult Natives: 90%
- High School Students: 30%
- College Students: 10%
Broken Boomerangs vs/ The Javelins
# Top Five Factors

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Source: Gogebic Range Survey, 2008 (among young professionals)
Any quick questions?
Population in Rural Counties of Tenth Federal Reserve District

Thousands

- Late boomers born from 1960 to 1964
- Gen X born from 1965 to 1969
- Gen X born from 1970 to 1974

Source: Henderson (2009)
Lifestyle Amenities are Key

Access to life-style amenities:
- Recreation
- Quality education
- Health care
- Housing

Take Away’s...

✓ Can’t take new residents for granted
✓ Community assets are all around us
✓ Jobs are important but so are amenities!
✓ Are we showcasing what is important?
✓ Are we helping potential new residents:
  ✓ to connect with their passions?
  ✓ to feel like they belong?
For More Information:

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