

Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry

# ***NEWS UPDATE***

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## **Twenty Keys To Community Survival**

A recent issue of *VISIONS* magazine, published by the non-profit Heartland Center for Leadership Development, lists 20 “clues to community survival” that were compiled following a case study of several Plains communities that were thriving against all odds in the midst of the 1980s farm crisis. The study of these successful small towns “offer positive examples and proof that the knowledge, skills and attitudes for community building are at work in many places,” according to the *VISIONS* article. The list is not a recipe, nor does it represent the checklist for a perfect small town, say the authors of the study. However, the compilation serves as a useful tool for starting the conversation about community improvement and goal setting.

### **CLUES TO COMMUNITY SURVIVAL**

- 1.) Evidence of Community Pride** (“Successful communities are often showplaces of care, attention, history and heritage,” the study says.)
- 2.) Emphasis on Quality in Business & Community Life**
- 3.) Willingness to Invest in the Future** (“In addition to the brick-and-mortar investments, all decisions are made with an outlook on the future.”)
- 4.) Participatory Approach to Community Decision Making** (“Even the most powerful opinion leaders seem to work toward building consensus.”)
- 5.) Cooperative Community Spirit**
- 6.) Realistic Appraisal of Future Opportunities** (“Successful communities have learned how to build on strengths and minimize weaknesses.”)

- 7.) Awareness of Competitive Positioning** ("Thriving communities know who their local competitors are and position themselves accordingly.")
- 8.) Active Economic Development Program** ("There is an organized, public/private approach to economic development.")
- 9.) Knowledge of the Physical Environment** ("Relative location and available natural resources underscore decision-making.")
- 10.) Deliberate Transition of Power to a Younger Generation of Leaders** ("People under 40 regularly hold key positions in civic and business affairs in strong communities.")
- 11.) Celebration of Diversity in Leadership** ("Women, young people, and newcomers are elected officials, business leaders, and entrepreneurial developers.")
- 12.) Strong Belief in and Support for Education**
- 13.) Problem-Solving Approach to Providing Health Care and Housing Older Residents**
- 14.) Strong Multi-Generational Family Orientation** ("The definition of family is broad, and activities include younger as well as older generations.")
- 15.) Strong Presence of Traditional Institutions that are Integral to Community Life** ("Churches, schools and service clubs are strong influences on the social network.")
- 16.) Sound and Well-Maintained Infrastructure** ("Leaders work to maintain streets, Main Street buildings, water systems and sewage facilities.")
- 17.) Careful Use of Fiscal Resources**
- 18.) Sophisticated Use of Technology Resources**
- 19.) Willingness to Seek Help from the Outside** ("People seek outside help for community needs, and many compete for government grants and contracts for projects and services.")
- 20.) Conviction That, in the Long Run, You Must Do It Yourself** ("Thriving communities believe their destiny is in their own hands.")

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