Engaging citizens to create viable communities

Columbia Imagined: The plan for how we live and grow, an aggressive public engagement process for the City of Columbia, has included 1,500 participants and generated more than 360 goals to guide the community when considering future development options. Residents have participated in community forums, completed surveys and used social media.

Brunswick’s community development planning led to four new business starts and revitalization and funding of downtown improvements. The community now has a general sense of moving forward and working together, and a feeling of accomplishment and hope.

Crawford County used Community Issues Management (CIM) to engage citizens with GIS and Web-based technology to explore its food desert status, map community gardens in the region and promote healthier eating and exercise options.

Programs that encourage citizens to participate in planning have focused on health, healthy lifestyles, community betterment and development of community master plans. More than 80 percent of participants involved in participatory community planning events facilitated by extension reported feeling they had an increased voice and opportunity to participate in their community.

In implementing their plans, Hillsboro and Monticello First Historic Preservation have combined forces to apply for Missouri tax credits to create a Historic Village where the Governor Fletcher house is located. Hillsboro generated more than $1 million in revenue for widening, resurfacing and striping the streets in the core area of town. In addition they were able to plant trees, install decorative street lights and build planters and benches.

Herculaneum reported these latest accomplishments as part of the plan facilitated by extension: A $7 million bridge, opening in August, will divert Doe Run lead mine trucks away from the center of residential area; a new high school has been built; new, improved and additional storm warning sirens have been installed; Herculaneum Today and Tomorrow is investigating the establishment of a Healthy Community Program for the residents; new renovations are planned for the upcoming year; and the city has committed to building an all-inclusive playground and to working with Trailnet to develop a community plan that provides active walking and biking options.

For more information on any of the programs listed above, please contact your local extension office, Mary Simon Leuci (leucim@missouri.edu, 573-882-2937), or visit the University of Missouri Extension website at http://extension.missouri.edu/.

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