



Small Community Forums 2017 Summary Report

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About the Forums

Small communities have unique issues and needs that are often very different from those of larger communities. These annual forums were intended to bring together those serving and working in and with communities of populations less than 1,500 to learn from each other through case studies and roundtable discussion groups. The 2017 forums reflect a broadening of scope over prior-year events, which focused mostly on downtowns. Thus, the title changed to “Small Community Forums.” Everyone who cares about the future of small town Wisconsin were invited to attend these annual events. Communities were encouraged to share their accomplishments, ask questions about successes and challenges in other communities learn about new opportunities, and explore great ideas.

Who was Invited:

Community leaders, elected officials, volunteers, business leaders, educators, economic development professionals, planners and others interested in small community issues. A listing of participants at each of the four 2017 forums is presented in the exhibits of this report.

Locations of 2017 Forums:

Four geographically diverse sites were chosen as locations for the 2017 forums. Local leaders hosted events and arranged for facilities and meeting support. The following map illustrates the selected locations:

- August 24, 2017—Wabeno
- August 29, 2017—Gays Mills
- September 13, 2017—Cambridge
- September 20, 2017—Cumberland

While the 2017 forums represent a joint effort of six partner organizations, this year’s lead came from the USDA Rural Development represented by Carol Wetuski. Other partner organization representatives included Gail Sumi of the League of Wisconsin Municipalities; Anne Katz of Arts Wisconsin and Wisconsin Downtown Action Council; Rick Rolfsmeyer of Wisconsin Rural Partners; Bill Ryan of the University of Wisconsin-Extension, and Errin Welty of the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation.



Agenda at Each Forum

Each of the forums followed a similar agenda as presented below. The events all began with local case studies that provided a story on an important community development issue. These case studies provided a foundation for the roundtable discussions that followed.

Community members presented case studies on past and current business and civic engagement programs. These presentations touched on local issues, personalities, politics, challenges, and successes. The following examples illustrate the diversity of talent and projects presented in the four host communities.

- Wabeno - Art and Music Festival that has strengthened the community as a destination.
- Gays Mills – Driftless Area Art Festival and local food opportunities.
- Cambridge – Rowe Pottery, its history and contributions to the community.
- Cumberland – City staff and their culture of family, cleaning up waterways, and local school that interacts with the larger community.

Small Community Forum



Illustration by SMA Design Group

Agenda

11:30	Registration Opens
12:00	Lunch and Networking
12:30	Opening Remarks and Welcome <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Small Group Card Activity
1:00	Community Case Studies <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Small Group Card Activity
2:00	Community Activity - Digital Footprint
2:15	Networking Break
2:30	Roundtable Sessions - 2 Forty-five Minute Sessions <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Small Group Card Activity (two times)
<p>Roundtable Topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Businesses/Entrepreneurs - Attracting and Retaining- Connecting Community and School - Engaging Youth- Resident Engagement- Marketing Your Community	
4:15-4:30	Closing Remarks

Potential Impacts Resulting from Roundtable Discussions

For 2017, we asked participants to identify what they might take back and apply in their home community. These questions were asked to estimate possible impacts. The questions asked by the facilitator of each group are listed below. Responses from each workgroup are presented by community, later in this section.



Roundtable Facilitator Questions

Retaining and attracting businesses and entrepreneurs:

This Roundtable session explores best practices for supporting existing businesses, and attracting new businesses to your community. Both informal and formal approaches are discussed. Simple discussion questions included:

- Does your community provide existing businesses with help to keep them in town and profitable?
- Are there procedures in place to bring new businesses into the community?
- If a business was looking to open in your community, would they know who to call?
- Call to action: What is one thing your community could do/do better to support entrepreneurs?

Connecting community and schools through youth engagement

Approximately 77% of school districts in Wisconsin are rural, but only 42% of Wisconsin students reside in these rural districts. These schools face declining enrollment, growing poverty, staff shortages, insufficient broadband, higher transportation costs, and an increased

number of English language learners (ELL). Overall small schools in rural areas have less economy of scale, making technology and infrastructure investments more expensive.

- What are the biggest issues facing your school district? Your community?
- What are some ways that your schools have engaged students in addressing these issues?
- Call to action: What can your community could do to engage youth in planning for the future?

Engaging residents in your community

While many of our small communities' look and feel stable and unchanged, demographic data proves otherwise. In fact, most communities are experiencing churning in their population. That is, people are moving in and moving out on a continuous basis. Recognizing this turnover:

- What are the issues that could bring people together and lead to constructive dialogue?
- What can we do to encourage more civic engagement of both new and existing residents?
- What are the avenues for residents to get involved? What about those that commute elsewhere?
- Call to action: What is one thing your community could do/do better to welcome new residents and involve them in the community?

Marketing your community

The goal of community marketing is to make villages, towns or cities competitive and enable their stakeholders to thrive. We market our communities for a number reasons including supporting our businesses, and attracting new residents. Central to good marketing is developing a brand that builds on genuine assets of the community.

- What makes your community so special?
- What is the purpose of marketing your community and what could you achieve by doing so.
- Call to action: What is one thing your community could do/do better to market your community to a specific/target population?

Roundtable discussion points from each of the groups is summarized on the following pages.

Wabeno: Small-group roundtables-name one idea you would like to try in your community

Group 1

- Village of Wrightstown – integrate music, arts, increased recreation space.
- Identify pockets in the town to upgrade the infrastructure, to support local businesses.
- Kids fishing contest
- Dog park

Group 2

- How leadership at local level can impact new projects.
- Launching an entrepreneur program targeted at “Creativepreneurs” * Grow a Creative Biz”.
- AmeriCorps grants.
- Get NCCC for project.
- Promote our existing trail and Riverwalk/wildlife viewing pier as accessible (!!) → attract new users.

Group 3

- Nature trail
- Private foundation grants

Group 4

- 1-mile trail loop with 3 levels of exercise activities at multiple stations: 1) youth, 2) warrior, 3) elderly/senior. Use Americorps to build.
- Arboretum trail throughout the Village Park.
- Take advantage of a dominant natural resource, the river, in Wrightstown’s case.

Group 5

- walking trail that connects to the Riverfront
- more handicap accessible piers and docks by boat landings
- more flowers
- walking trail by our River, a boardwalk

Group 6

- private foundations
- create a destination
- rustic Road
- research AmeriCorps NCCC for projects-workforce for park expansion and walkway.
- Meet a need

**Wabeno: Small-group roundtable discussion –
What idea stuck the most to you?**

Group 1

- School connection – engage community in interaction with all community member (youth, transplant, local government).
- Resource and business development guide for new business (check list).
- A town needs at least one restaurant with a celebrity chef! Brings in young, middle-aged and corporate dinners.
- (Marketing) Promote your community honestly. Continue to engage our kids in community.

Group 2

- Take students and parents on biz tours
- Promote local neighborhood programming
- The many resources that are available can be helpful to communities that don't know about them.

Group 3

- Hub zone
- SBA has many resources to help examine business potential

Group 4

- SBA is good hub for starting business financing search.
- Add a yoga on paddle boards class at MaxSells on the lake with wine and cheese after.
- Location between but outside of metro areas.
- Increase population.
- Residential community.

Group 5

- What makes our community so special: River frontage, location near Metro areas, take advantage of nature, attracting businesses, lots of new homes going up. What is the purpose of marketing communities better? What could be achieved depends on your base of residents and businesses.
- Provide important community information
- Call to action: what is the one thing your community could do better to market your community to a specific target. Bring in young people as in DePere, Kaukanah and Appleton, to a developed downtown riverfront restaurants etc.
- Key visit is a means to fund a business with individuals lending \$15 each. Once 25 people contribute, it goes national.
- Seek the voice of the customer, the younger person you hope to attract.

Gays Mills: Small-group case studies-name one idea you would like to try in your community

Group 1

- Art festival.
- Promote the community strengths.
- County marching band.
- Using our river to a better advantage.
- Digital/website/info.
- Retirement packets. Promotors' amenities.

Group 2

- Promote village? Bigger trail network.
- We would like to add another festival type event centered on the downtown area.
- Open ATV/UTV routes throughout Grant County – tourism.
- Restore Gays Mills Dam Museum – hydroelectric power.

Group 3

- Bring in businesses.
- Forming a large volunteer org with people to pull from for events/activities/support and FUN!
- Volunteers – finding young families to help and bring their young kids in to help.
- University campus.
- Ice cream specialty candy shop, online candy shop too.

Group 4

- Community dinner put on by joint non-profit groups.
- Better connections between bike trails and business opportunities.
- Clean up downtown.

Group 5

- Have an open house of civic organizations as a membership recruitment drive.
- Creative lighting on buildings downtown.
- Trail from downtown to our historic site.
- Collaborating of cities and villages in county.

Group 6

- Collaborative events with neighboring communities. Share assets and people.
- Expanding the youth activities
- Art festival collaboration is an example that all communities should follow to create economic impact and draw attention to the community/region.
- Expand country-western concerts to monthly. Build an outdoor shelter adjacent to hall for outside concerts.

Gays Mills Small-group roundtables

Group 1

- Use historic tax credits to rehab buildings.
- Need for small community housing.
- Youth are not as invested in the system as it is.
- A pop up business event for downtown.
- Try to involve students in community.
- Diversity in community and counties for marketing.

Group 2

- Residents welcoming packet
- Thinking of joint event with other communities.
- Encourage student involvement in volunteerism.
- A welcoming pamphlet or letter to new residents to encourage an interest in community.
- Need for housing in villages and cities and rural areas. Also the tools to make smart decisions.
- Welcome wagon.

Group 3

- Communities are rich when they are united. Community/unity/rich. It's not about the money!
- Business entrepreneurship. Need better ways to recruit new entrepreneurs. Need better way for business succession.
- Pop up store. Attend pop up conference.
- Business succession plans.
- Vacant building tax.
- One takeaway: A village can save itself, if it will act!
- Have both youth join in on city board meetings and school board meetings.
- Getting kids involved into more programs and visiting government.

Group 4

- Need welcome wagon.
- Value of unique historic stories (no matter how old).
- SBA was well informed on question. I had a feel they try very hard to help out.
- Everyone large or small town has same problem.

Group 5

- SBA programs – walking tours. Pop-up store front program. Save the old buildings!

Group 6

- Convince the legislature to provide incentives for villages to merge or share services.
- Empty storefronts - Keva Zip -- walking tour of empty buildings.
- Find and train veterans for wedding planning. Training via Gays Mills community kitchen.
- Youth representation on school board and village board.
- Welcome to new people – welcome wagon. Invite and bring new people to a group.
- Welcome new people – work with schools and employers.

Cambridge: Engaging Residents in Your Community.

What are issues that could bring people together?

Dog park – community use. Future of Police Dept. – emergency SOS. Residents too busy to get involved. Future development. Citizen input. New construction. Community branding. Changing perception for success. Communication between government and citizens. 80/20 rule. Rental rules greater than 30 days – no WRBO – no Airbnb. Lack of input at most meetings. Redevelop the park – public space. Gathering space – community events. Explaining budget to public.

What are venues for residents to get involved?

Social media. Annual economic development update. Arts council. Newsletter. Hot button issues on agendas. Public meetings – gathering input. Opiate issues – are abusive populations left out? History and liability gets in the way of progress. Electronic surveys and xxx? Mail surveys. Use a variety of methods. Leaf issue door-to-door.

What can we do to encourage more civic engagement in the community?

Always answer “why?” Informal gathers – sporting events, etc. Annual community events. Host event. Farmers market – civic booth. Highlighting unseen efforts. Food incentives to participate. Going to where people are – show off. Positive return on engagement investment. Neighborhood meetings. Open government. Listening sessions. Community café / pot luck. Friendly and informative board meeting. Interactive websites. Community survey.

What is one thing your community could do to welcome new residents?

Welcome package. Dinner with group of residents. Accessible website. Keep it positive. Welcome wagon. Info on civic government. Utility bill as conduit. City website new resident button. Simple one page.

Cambridge: Small Group Case Studies-name one idea you would like to try in your community

Group 1

- Create a bike station, air, wash, tools, shower.
- Restoration of old buildings.
- Pay myself.
- Arts council / special events.
- Arts council / entrepreneur café.
- Destination marketing, making it an experience to visit your community.
- Monthly entrepreneur café. Create a destination experience. Gala = fundraiser. Community development fund.
- Small / local business networking.

Group 2

- Need to have an entrepreneurial forum (entr. Café, etc)
- Entrepreneur café – a place to come together and share needs, success, etc.
- Walking tour. Earth, clay fire.

Group 3

- Grants/funds for new entrepreneurs to inspire, support, and motivate.
- Calling volunteers “grassroots staff” to heighten understanding of the crucial role some types of volunteers play in making things happen. Recognizing that.
- Green space – Parks.
- Buy buildings and find funding.
- How to create an experience for community members and visitors alike.
- Community funding org.
- Better coordination with the Chamber.
- Experiences! (what needs to replace traditional retail).
- “Experiential community”.

Group 4

- Business that offers an experience not just another place to shop.
- Re-utilizing spaces for new uses. Consolidating.

- Developing a unified voice/direction.
- A festival – Identity.
- Develop a business bootcamp and/or Entrepreneurs Club.
- Destination bootcamp. Fund for new businesses and entrepreneurs. “Looking for Artisans” card. Better visitor and activity guide booklet.
- One idea for Cambridge: Explore setting up a community development fund. Also what businesses in town could be experiential similar to Rowe Pottery.

Group 5

- Entrepreneur café.
- Arts/restaurants. Revolving loan fund.
- Destination marketing. Darien’s niche. Support development/redevelopment. Festivals/events.
- Create arts events for community to bring people into community to see what we have to offer.
- LINC/SBA lender match (online)—matches lenders with small businesses—in WI in 2016, SBA lenders made 532 loans to startups in WI. What is your unique value proposition.
- What kind of things might draw people to your community. Community development fund?

Group 6

- Engage residents/businesses.
- Entrepreneur café.
- Development funding. Private funding.
- Create a more destination district area.
- Visioning/development council that is energized.

Cambridge: Small Group Roundtables

Group 1

- Schools – youth engagement.
- Community café.
- Invite student to be on the Chamber.
- Work with teachers and faith-based organizations / leaders to help organize kids to serve in community.
- Faith-based organizations to get volunteers.
- Create fond memories for kids.
- Volunteer opportunities.
- Kids as resource and connect with seniors.
- People are over-subscribed. Sign up genius is a great resource to focus opportunities.

Group 2

- No one spoke about crowdfunding? Everyone esp. customers can invest now!
- Marketing-vision and define community.
- Annual economic development presentation and dinner.

Group 3

- Welcome dinner.
- Utilize high school students for social media marketing. Taking pictures, videos.
- Business retention: Other sources of funding for small businesses.
- Have artist do rendition of revamped downtown of possible businesses.
- Social media.
- Business roundtable: Loans for women are easier than I thought.
- Community engagement. Informal settings.

Group 4

- Using monthly community café to make community announcements. Welcome new community members (and businesses?).
- Accessible website.
- Interesting to see similar problems with business retention and attracting business.
- Need to refresh the local political and/or leadership at all times.

- Listening group for “safe” sharing and discussion of concerns.
- Welcome Wagon – create something to distribute to new residents.
- Mobile device-friendly website.
- SBA has resources to help small businesses and sometimes policy is more detrimental than education!
- Keep pushing buttons.
- Engaging residents. Newsletter to new residents. Different ways of engaging people in surveys.
- Resident engagement. 20% of people do 80% of the work.
- Good ole boys club needs to go!

Group 5

- Have high school students do commercials and put them on YouTube.
- Have a business/gov./utility/resident/civic group collaboration.
- Golf carts. High schoolers video.
- Flyers around town.
- Effective use of technology to market to and about rural communities.
- What can we learn from the local studies.
- Creating a pamphlet for recreational and tourism info in Marshall. Social media.
- Create newsletter. Hootsuite. Branding the covers school, shopping, industrial, residential, library.
- Ideas for ways to brand our city and specific things that have been successful.
- Facebook “live” boost.
- Engage students with marketing activities.
- Develop a map of where parking spaces are in the downtown.
- Need to find our identity.

Group 6

- Business /econ dev, SBA . gov. Microloan.
- Many small towns are located on or near major highways. How do we get people to slow down and spend time / \$ locally?
- Branding village as a gateway to Wisconsin.
- Ideas of what to do to promote business: WHEDA, UW-Extension, Local businesses.

Cumberland: Small Group Case Studies-name one idea you would like to try in your community

Group 1

- Be future focused – what can we do better?
- School board and village community all work together.
- Problem solving. Get the right people at the table – doers not just talkers.
- Cooperation is the key to making projects work.
- School needs that Lake District could assist. Other lake related the city could use the district to champion.
- Boat access to the downtown of Cumberland.
- Having “doers” at the table rather than “talkers” to make things happen in the community.
- The need for a regional working team.

Group 2

- Liked the way Cumberland looked far into the future with economic development example – rec center.
- Youth apprenticeship program at school.
- Keep small town identity partnership in the community. Look at what is needed now and in future.
- Need better partnering with school district.
- Leadership is the most significant for Lake District projects.
- Collaboration between multiple jurisdictions (school, village, etc.) on projects to keep moving forward.
- Need leaders who will make hard decisions.

Group 3

- Share information. Partnership is key. Partnerships are valued.
- Everyone needs to work together to get tasks accomplished.
- Multi-use properties.

Group 4

- Focused future! Forward thinking growth potential.
- Networking is critical. A lot of legacy leadership in small community.
- Communication is the key – between city entities, school, organizations and city. City openness if key.
- Relationships – Inter connectivity. Interdependence city – school – lake – county – business groups.
- Suggestions for recruiting employees.
- Generations of family. New downtown access by boat. Donation to school. 1K students ? open.

Group 5

- Partnerships are key for building strong communities.
- Pickleball – tennis courts – multi-generation
- What comes up when you google your town? And Link with SCORE for technical expertise.
- School district and city/village government working together.

Group 6

- Encouraging cooperation between a variety of entities to benefit a community as a whole!
- How to get local civic groups to sit down together and work toward common goals.
- Figure out a way to tie waterway traffic to downtown.
- Getting business in community. There are lots of talkers – get the doers at the table.

Cumberland: Roundtable Breakout 1- Aha moment

Group 1

- More young people on committees – they might move to something bigger. Get out in the community.
- Get younger residents to be on a committee that may lead to more involved commitment
- Facade programs can change the way your community looks and will assist with marketing.
- Sounds like the surrounding communities want/need MFH.
- Community involvement (word of mouth).
- Have an open house night to show your industry/retail to residents and visitors.

Group 2

- Make a clear “How to start a business” on city website.
- The public does not want to get involved. No easy answers.
- To involve your diverse aspects of your community to join boards/committees.
- Importance of personal relationships to engage people in their community.

Group 3

- Community must be active recruiters.
- Find a champion!
- Awareness of resources/training.
- Build a splash pad in our community.

Group 4

- Promote business successes.
- Communications All Groups. Chamber – Village.
- Get people involved. Open up your city.
- What assistance can be brought in to assist startups and expansion?
- Get a Dave Armstrong!
- Chambers are event chambers or business chambers.

Group 5

- Working with school
- Communication
- Has a Fire District as well as a Lake District.
- Communities can get a lot done with self-funding when possible.
- Be Future focused – progressive
- Get townships involved
- Make the hard, right decisions.

Group 6

- Look into changing façade loan program from 2% interest to 0% interest.
- Emphasize entrepreneurship/workforce development with young people and school districts.
- Planning to identify a goal.
- Open house for businesses. Contact Ladysmith RE: Municipal Court.
- Is our Chamber and Event Chamber or a Business Chamber.

Cumberland: Roundtable Breakout 2– Aha moment

Group 1

- Engage/encourage and require young people on boards under age 30.
- Having limited short-term commitment to boards.
- Social media is huge. Photos, Instagram moments, live here, work here.
- Marketing – putting hastags on your community in locations where people often take photos for social media. Such as #cumberland.
- Personally invite people to serve.

Group 2

- Work with schools and church and communities to develop registry for community members to sign up for work they need done and kids can sign up for jobs.
- Work with youth groups. Be open to new ideas.
- Someone needs to champion the issue – run with it!
- Networking and sharing of ideas.
- Have adequate and appropriate housing.
- Importance of single point of contact in a community for potential entrepreneurs.

Group 3

- Build the experience and share it.
- Business and government don't always communicate well.
- We're more similar than different. Old/young, engaged/non-engaged, etc.
- Mentor programs to break cycle and teach kids about volunteerism.

Group 4

- Feeder markets can vary, even within a county or region.
- How do you get kids to work.
- Use social media to promote! Promote! Promote! It takes money to make money.

Group 5

- Avenues for residents to get involved = include office staff and school children when looking for volunteers and offer short timeframes like 10 per shift.
- Connections students = volunteer = work opportunity requires trust and coordination.
- People get activated when there's pain (\$\$) or gain.
- Ways to market our community.

Group 6

- What do I need to do if I want to open a business in your community?
- Work with our business people.
- Have businesses be ready to respond with a list of great attributes for the community. Promote ourselves!
- Learned about SCORE services and connect communities.
- Make visitors realize why your town is a great place to live and work – draw visitors in to stay.

Evaluation of 2017 Forums

To evaluate what participants thought about these forums, participants were asked to fill out a survey, rating on a 1 (dissatisfied) to 5 (satisfied) scale their satisfaction with various components of the forum. The surveys were collected at the end of the forums. The survey remained largely anonymous, although some participants identified themselves in order to be contacted after the forum. The results of the survey are the following two pages.

Survey Limitations

The survey had its limitations. Participation among the sites was relatively low compared to the attendance at each site of between 30 and 60.

Ratings

The great majority of scores were very positive. Between 80% and 100% of those responding were either very satisfied or satisfied with the event and its individual components. There were quite a few more “very satisfied” than “satisfied” responses. The opening networking time followed by the case studies were generally well received. Only a couple of respondents were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with program elements.

Recurring Comments and Suggestions for Future Forums

- Forum provides great opportunity for networking and idea sharing
- Comfortable seating provides for a better participant experience
- Utilize a sound System (microphone) so participants can hear the speakers clearly
- Provide information on grant writing resources and funding strategies
- Discuss how to engage with younger generations
- Look for opportunities to partner with local organizations (ex: chamber of commerce)

SMALL COMMUNITY FORUMS

Your input into these forums is very important to us. We ask that you please take the time to complete the following survey. Information from this survey is used to make improvements to future forums.

LOCATION: _____

	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	
Lunch and Networking	1	2	3	4	5	
Community Case Study	1	2	3	4	5	
Community Activity - Digital Footprint	1	2	3	4	5	
Roundtables:						
Businesses/Entrepreneurs	1	2	3	4	5	NA
Connecting Community and School	1	2	3	4	5	NA
Resident Engagement	1	2	3	4	5	NA
Marketing Your Community	1	2	3	4	5	NA
Resources	1	2	3	4	5	

Comments

Suggestion for Future Forum and Roundtable Topics

What are the 2 biggest challenges in your community:

Please provide your contact information if you would like someone from the forums to follow up with you.

Name _____ Email _____ Phone _____

Wabeno	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	N/A	Total	of Respondents, % Satisfied or Very Satisfied
Lunch and Networking			1	2	6	0	9	89%
Community Case Study				5	4	0	9	100%
Community Activity - Digital Footprint			3	4	2	0	9	67%
Business/Entrepreneurs			1	2	5	1	9	88%
Connecting Community and School					4	5	9	100%
Resident Engagement					2	7	9	100%
Marketing Your Community				1	4	4	9	100%
Resources				2	2	5	9	100%
Gays Mills	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	N/A	Total	of Respondents, % Satisfied or Very Satisfied
Lunch and Networking	1		1	5	6	2	15	85%
Community Case Study	1		2	8	4		15	80%
Community Activity - Digital Footprint	1		4	7	2	1	15	64%
Business/Entrepreneurs				4	2	9	15	100%
Connecting Community and School			1	3	3	8	15	86%
Resident Engagement	1			3	6	5	15	90%
Marketing Your Community	1			5	3	6	15	89%
Resources	1		2	1	3	8	15	57%
<i>Note: All very dissatisfied answers came from one respondent, who offered positive comments. Most likely respondent didn't read instructions correctly.</i>								
Cambridge	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	N/A	Total	of Respondents, % Satisfied or Very Satisfied
Lunch and Networking	1	1	2	8	9	1	22	81%
Community Case Study	1			5	16		22	95%
Community Activity - Digital Footprint	1			7	5	9	22	92%
Business/Entrepreneurs	1	2		1	4	14	22	63%
Connecting Community and School				3	5	14	22	100%
Resident Engagement	1			2	9	10	22	92%
Marketing Your Community				3	12	7	22	100%
Resources			1	3	6	12	22	90%
<i>Note: One participant (Roger Schmidt) answered very dissatisfied to all five of his questions, but comments did not seem negative. Also left an illegible word in his suggestions.</i>								
<i>Note: One participant (Bob Ginsoft) circled both a 3 and a 5 in his business/entrepreneur in his answer. Therefore, he is marked as a 4.</i>								
Cumberland	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	N/A	Total	of Respondents, % Satisfied or Very Satisfied
Lunch and Networking				1	8		17	94%
Community Case Study	0.5		2	5.5	8	1	17	84%
Community Activity - Digital Footprint	1	1	2	4	5	4	17	69%
Business/Entrepreneurs		1		2	10	4	17	92%
Connecting Community and School					4	13	17	100%
Resident Engagement		1	2	2	6	6	17	73%
Marketing Your Community				2	6	9	17	100%
Resources			1	4	3	9	17	88%
<i>NOTE: One respondent circled satisfied and very satisfied in the community case study. .5 was added to both categories as a result.</i>								
<i>NOTE: One respondent circled both very satisfied and very dissatisfied in the community case study. .5 was added to each.</i>								
Total All Forums	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	N/A	Total	of Respondents, % Satisfied or Very Satisfied
Lunch and Networking	2	1	5	23	29	3	63	87%
Community Case Study	2.5	0	4	23.5	32	1	63	90%
Community Activity - Digital Footprint	3	1	9	22	14	14	63	73%
Business/Entrepreneurs	1	3	1	9	21	28	63	86%
Connecting Community and School	0	0	1	6	16	40	63	96%
Resident Engagement	2	1	2	7	23	28	63	86%
Marketing Your Community	1	0	0	11	25	26	63	97%
Resources	1	0	4	10	14	34	63	83%

Wabeno Evaluation

Comments

- Need more comfortable seating! Otherwise great!
- Love these events each year.
- Marketing – make sure people focus on positive!
- Worthwhile event.
- Helpful with knowing programs for funding available for communities to provide businesses who meet job creation.
- Very hard to hear – why no microphone? Very uncomfortable seating – cafeteria tables are brutal!
- Seating in gym was bad for adult butts! Lack of p.a. system was big problem. Couldn't hear speakers.
- Great Conference! Lots of good ideas.

Suggestion for Future Forum and Roundtable Topics

- Need more comfortable seating! Otherwise great!
- Turn off large fan and use microphone. Hard to hear speaker and anyone asking a question.

- Purchase portable PA system.
- Bring a projector screen and a portably sound system. Limit the “sit and get” to no more than 30 minutes.
- Small retail failures need to be addressed.
- Social media ideas.

What are the two biggest challenges in your community:

- Not all want to see progress. Lack of fine dining- which would be a nice attraction.
- No industry which means no youth. Lack of town support.
- Interest in making a better place to live. Getting volunteers.
- Lack of broadband – attracting young families.
- Interdependence of business growth, job growth, residential growth.
- Need more residents/entrepreneurs to start businesses (they need expertise or dollars). Mid- priced housing and rentals

Gays Mills Evaluation

Comments

- More ideas to get help for community funding – events or projects.
- Good forum, Carol was awesome!!
- Great job planning committee.
- Very informative, lots of good ideas, like the roundtables.
- Great day! More non-profit ideas, more solutions/thoughts to present at round table?
- Glad to be invited – thank you!
- Great for networking – got lots of helpful info and phone ads.
- Enjoyable, educational.
- Thank you.

Suggestions

- Housing, daycare
- Downtown design
- Phosphorus

- Fundraising/non-profit assistance, grants available
- Housing – Lodging
- Working with youth to develop community
- Small community housing needs

Two Biggest Challenges

- Funding and volunteers
- Daycare, empty storefronts
- Phosphorus, business growth
- Volunteerism
- Lack of vision of leaders, community division
- Declining populations and work opportunities
- Divisions continuing post flood-recovery
- Marketing, housing
- Money, getting people involved
- Housing and infrastructure
- Labor pool, housing, declining enrollment

Cambridge Evaluation

Comments

- Interesting ideas, good way to chat.
- Great networking – smart minds – considered thoughts with strong community ties.
- Business/Entrepreneurs – session was consumed by a few communities.
- Awesome thank you!
- I think this was great and will attend whenever able!
- Too noisy in The Keystone Grill, pull us apart into separate rooms.
- Great resources and connections – thank you for providing this!
- Would like to attend more like this.
- Thank you! The chance to connect is vital.
- Great session!
- Business/Entrepreneurs – no content provided. Marketing – very practical
- Really appreciate the encouragement from the group leaders, and the new ideas from other participants.
- Nice to hear from other communities and exchange ideas.
- It would have been nice had the Chamber of Commerce be involved with this from the beginning.
- Learned a lot.
- More time for roundtables, felt rushed, have attendees have questions ready.
- Lunch and networking – food was good, not enough. Very interesting program – really enjoyed the case/studies and marketing your community session.

Suggestions for Future Forums

- Better room acoustics ... difficult to hear.
- Resources roundtable – Would be helpful to know the different resources available.
- It was perfect. A little hard to hear.
- (TIF) success and failures
- How to access public space/woes of commons or public land.

- Because you bring representatives from Downtown Action Council, WEDC, etc. – give them 3 minutes to highlight their resources.
- How to reach rural businesses/residents to share info, services, etc.?
- Collaboration between Chambers and government.
- Nice job. Would like to hear more about how the planning committee organizations can help beyond this. As an example, Bob mentioned the downtown summit.
- Grants and grant writing, figure out a way to video these meetings.
- Budgeting with (illegible) caps.
- Technology and your rural community.
- Successful community marketing strategies, similar to the case study presentation.
- Engaging youth and millennials

Two Biggest Challenges

- Youth involvement, money
- Keeping things positive and open to change, getting the word out
- Resident engagement and communication
- Growth in development, business retention
- Roads (lack of funding for local maintenance) and neglect from state on primary state road 188
- Empty storefronts and unengaged business
- Unity, attracting new businesses
- Marketing our community, attracting business.
- Attracting entrepreneurs – funding to keep the key organizations like a chamber active enough to meet demands and keep people ware of opportunities which exist.
- Bringing the community “village and town” together, keeping local businesses
- Budgeting and police
- Getting people to stop, create a cohesiveness with business/community etc.
- Empty storefronts in downtown, getting new students involved in our community
- ½ of population is seasonal

Cumberland Evaluation

Comments

- Very hard to hear in groups.
- Distracted by noise from surrounding groups
- Difficult to hear at Bus/Entrepreneurs Roundtable
- Marketing Your Community went real well – many good ideas.
- Groups' roundtable directions were confusing.
- Very good – thanks
- I didn't know what to expect today, but I found that it was valuable and the discussions provided a lot to help our community to make further progress in the future.
- Thank you.
- The contacts/networking are as invaluable as the ideas.

Suggestion for Future Forum and Roundtable Topics

- Venue where you can hear!
- Please provide note paper to write on
- Venue acoustics
- Have groups separated further as noise makes it difficult to hear.
- Get rid of your post-it notes
- How to finance housing etc.
- "Generations" type training/discussion.
- Roundtables could use more structured ideas from agencies either before or after discussion.

What are the two biggest challenges in your community:

- Workforce; workforce development
- Housing; summer help
- Lack of grocery store; deteriorating buildings
- Housing and housing
- Engaging and retaining young people
- Workforce development
- Poverty; housing
- Involvement/cooperation and growth

Biggest Challenges Facing Your Community



Additional Resources

Anne Katz of Arts Wisconsin assembled follow-up information for participants and their community, including links to the organizations involved in the Forums.

Partner host organizations

- League of Wisconsin Municipalities www.lwm-info.org
- Wisconsin Downtown Action Council (WDAC) www.wisconsin-downtown.org
- USDA Rural Development www.rd.usda.gov/wi
- UW Extension Center for Community & Economic Development www.cced.ces.uwex.edu/downtown-revitalization/
- Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation www.wedc.org
- Wisconsin Rural Partners www.wirural.org

Resource organizations and opportunities

- [AmeriCorps grants](#): awarded to eligible organizations proposing to engage AmeriCorps members in evidence-based or informed interventions to strengthen communities.
- Arts Wisconsin – advocacy, service and development for the arts, arts education, and creative economy www.artswisconsin.org
- Local Government Institute www.localgovinstitute.org
- Small Business Administration (SBA) www.sba.gov
- Small Business Development Centers www.wisconsinsbdc.org
- Wisconsin Department of Tourism www.travelwisconsin.com
- WHEDA www.wheda.com
- Wisconsin DNR www.dnr.wi.gov
- Wisconsin Women’s Business Initiative Corporation www.wwbic.com

Conferences

- [YP \(Young Professionals\) Summit](#), Milwaukee, October 16, 2017
- [League of Wisconsin Municipalities’ Annual Conference](#), Appleton, October 18-20, 2017
- [Wisconsin Downtown Action Council’s Downtown Summit](#), Sheboygan, Oct 25-26, 2017
- [Arts Day](#), Madison, March 21, 2018

Resources, readings, and inspiration:

- Small Business Survival www.smallbizsurvival.com/
- Housing Assistance Council www.ruralhome.org
- Art of the Rural www.artoftherural.org
- *How small towns and cities can use local assets to rebuild their economies*, EPA, 2015
- *101 small ways you can improve your city*, *Curbed*, 9/22/16

Exhibit - Brochure

REGISTRATION FORM

Registration Fee is \$20.00 per person.
Lunch is included in registration.
Space is limited so register early.

Register online at:
<http://wisconsinowntown.org/small-town-forum>
OR

Please complete the following:

Name: _____
Community: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ State __ Zip _____
Daytime phone: _____
Email: _____

I will attend at this location:

___ Wabeno, Thursday, August 24, 2017
___ Gays Mills, Tuesday, August 29, 2017
___ Cambridge, Wednesday, September 13, 2017
___ Cumberland, Wednesday, September 20, 2017

Mail form and check to:

Milwaukee Downtown
c/o Beth Weirick
600 East Wells Street
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Make check payable to:

Wisconsin Downtown Action Council

About the Small Community Forums
Small communities have unique issues and needs that are often very different from those of larger communities. These regional forums are designed to bring together people involved and interested in promoting, enhancing and preserving Wisconsin's small communities. If you live in, work in, or help shape communities with populations of 2,500 or fewer, attend a session near you to learn through case studies, roundtables and discussion groups. Come with examples of local and regional success stories as well as challenges, and be prepared to share with and learn from colleagues and friends. Everyone in the community and region is invited!

Who should attend?

Community leaders, elected officials, volunteers, business leaders, educators, local and regional economic development, civic, and planning organizations.

Find information on the sponsors at:

League of Wisconsin Municipalities
<http://www.lwm-info.org/>

University of Wisconsin - Extension -
ccd.ces.uwex.edu

United States Department of Agriculture
www.rd.usda.gov/wi

Wisconsin Downtown Action Council -
www.wisconsinowntown.org

Wisconsin Economic Development Corp -
www.mwisconsin.com

Wisconsin Rural Partners -
www.wirural.org

Small Community Forums



Four Regional Workshops

August 24, 2017—Wabeno

August 29, 2017—Gays Mills

September 13, 2017—Cambridge

September 20, 2017—Cumberland

Improving the vitality and economic health of Wisconsin's small communities

LOCATIONS



Wabeno

August 24, 2017
Wabeno Elementary School
4346 Mill Lake, Wabeno, WI

Gays Mills

August 29, 2017
Gays Mills Village Hall
16381 State Highway 131, Gays Mills, WI

Cambridge

September 13, 2017
Keystone Grill
206 West Main Street, Cambridge, WI

Cumberland

September 20, 2017
Nezzy's Sports Bar and Grill
1345 2nd Avenue, Cumberland, WI

AGENDA

12:00 pm—4:30pm

- 11:30—Registration
- 12:00—Lunch and Networking
- 12:30—Welcome and Introductions
- 1:00—Community Case Studies
- 2:00—Community Activity—Digital Footprint
- 2:15—Break and Visit Resources
- 2:30—Roundtable Sessions (2 sessions, repeated)
 - Businesses/Entrepreneurs—Attracting and Retaining
 - Connecting Community and Schools
 - Resident Engagement
 - Marketing Your Community
- 4:15—Wrap up and Closing Comments

(From time to time Sponsors of Small Community Forums uses photographs of forum events in its promotional materials. Unless this permission is revoked in writing to one of the sponsors, by virtue of their attendance all conference visitors agree to the use of their likeness in such materials.)

PRESENTED BY:



Exhibit - Sample Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Rick Rolfsmeyer, [rickyr@wirural.org](mailto:ricky@wirural.org)

July 5, 2017

SMALL COMMUNITY FORUMS COMING UP IN CAMBRIDGE, CUMBERLAND, WABENO, AND WAUZEKA

*Sessions provide participants opportunity to network, share best practices
and identify strategies for small town success.*

Register at www.wisconsinowntown.org/small-town-forum

More than half of Wisconsin's municipalities are communities of fewer than 2,500 residents. Despite their large number, these small communities represent a wide variety of geographic and economic areas within the state. Because of their small size, these municipalities have unique issues and needs that are often very different from those of larger communities.

Now in their seventh year, the **Small Community Forums**, to be held in four locations around the state in August and September, allow representatives of these communities to come together, network, share best practices and identify strategies to address shared concerns. Additionally, representatives from many state and regional resource partners will be on hand to connect with attendees and provide guidance on specific concerns introduced during the sessions.

The Forums are open to anyone interested in small towns, including those involved in quality of life issues, business, government, education, civic and community development. Civic leaders, elected officials, volunteers, business leaders, educators, and local and regional economic development, civic, and planning *are encouraged to participate. These convenings are about sharing ideas, learning and networking for people who care about the future of rural Wisconsin.*

Matt Trotter, a recent Forum participant and small business owner in Princeton, had this to say about the forums: "As a small business owner, finding ways to help our community thrive and grow is important from a personal and professional standpoint. Being able to network and gather creative ideas and best practices from others in similar situations is a really valuable experience. I always come away from the small town forums refreshed and reenergized." ***Forum dates and locations (subject to change)***

- **Wabeno** – Thursday, August 24, at the Wabeno Elementary School, 4346 Mill Lane
- **Cambridge** – Wednesday, September 13, location TBA
- **Cumberland** – Wednesday, September 20, location TBA
- **Gays Mills**– date/location TBA.

Each Forum takes place from noon to 4:30 p.m. on the date listed. Registration at each site opens at 11:30 a.m. The registration fee is \$20 and includes lunch. Register at www.wisconsinowntown.org/small-town-forum.

The 2017 Small Town Forums are made possible through a coalition of statewide agencies and organizations involved in rural community development: Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation, Wisconsin Downtown Action Council, Wisconsin Rural Partners, UW-Extension Center for Community and Economic Development, League of Wisconsin Municipalities, and U.S. Department of Agriculture-Rural Development. For more information, contact Rick Rolfsmeyer at Wisconsin Rural Partners, [rickyr@wirural.org](mailto:ricky@wirural.org).

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Gays Mills 8/29/2017

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Cumberland

8/29/2017

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