Resident Recruitment, Welcoming and Retention Strategies

Neil Linscheid & DeeDee LeMier
Resident Recruitment and Welcoming Strategy

Understand
How will you learn about the experience of becoming a newcomer in your community?

Market
How will you get the message that your community has opportunities out there?

Recruit
How will you help potential residents choose your community?

Engage
How will your community engage newcomers?

Welcome
How will your community welcome newcomers?

Manage Leaving
How will your community connect with people that leave?

Belonging
How will your community cultivate a sense of belonging for residents?
Some Options

Focus Groups
Focus groups with newcomers can be a great way to learn about why people chose your community, how welcoming the community has been, and what could be improved.

Interviews
Interviews with newcomers can help you understand their journey to becoming a new resident in your community. Interviews are a chance to get deeper into one story.

Survey
If you can get a survey to newcomer, do it. Often this can be challenging because we don’t have contact information. It’s not impossible to do a survey, but it does take significant effort.

Events
Hold an annual event for newcomers in the community. Serve a meal. Invite newcomers, local leaders, and businesses to introduce themselves.

Understand
How will you learn about the experience of becoming a newcomer in your community?
2000-2010, Percent Cohort Change

-40% -30% -20% -10% 0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50%

Rural Recreational County

-31.1% 20-24

-8.8% 25-29

55-59 7.3%
50-54 7.5%
45-49 15.0%
40-44 19.7%
35-39 31.3%
30-34 38.6%
15-19 1.6%
10-14 26.7%
Nebraska Buffalo Commons Research
2012

Workforce Movers
University of Minnesota,
2004, 2012, 2019

Montana Movers Study, 2021
Newcomers: Who?

- 31% moved primarily for a job
- 25% lived there previously
- 91% have some college or bachelor’s
- 75% household incomes over $50k
- 47% have children in household
- 14% telecommute!

Source: 2020 University of Minnesota Extension Center for Community Vitality. Rural workforce movers study. Funded by the U. S. Department of Agriculture.
# Newcomers: Who?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MN</th>
<th>MT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moved primarily for a job</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lived in the community before</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>34%*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have children in household</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household income &gt;$50k</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>78%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2020 University of Minnesota Extension Center for Community Vitality. Rural workforce movers study. Funded by the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

2021 Montana State University Extension Movers Study.

14% telecommute (pre-pandemic!)*

*Social housing supply?
Newcomers: Why?

- Simpler pace of life
- Safety and Security
- Low Housing Cost
What are you doing to better understand newcomers in your community
Resident Recruitment Efforts In Minnesota
MARCH 26, 2021

She opened her business in a town with all that life has to offer.

by Rick Schara, Live Wide Open

It’s February of 2021. I continue to search for new business owners in our Live Wide Open region. Entrepreneurism is growing and small towns surely benefit.

I read that Michaela Wulf, who grew up in the Twin Cities, just opened a massage therapy studio in downtown Fergus Falls. Perfect! I reach out and arrange to stop by.

Downtowns need street level businesses. Not only is Better Hands Massage Therapy’s storefront a great addition to the retail and service mix; but Michaela herself is amazing!

Start with high school. Michaela competed in wrestling in high school; you just don’t find many girls competing in high school wrestling. Add to that her gymnastics career, playing bass clarinet and then after high school, going to college and starting her own company - she’s been busy!

In 2016, Michaela sold her Twin Cities business to move to Wahpeton, N.D. With aging family in the area, she says, “I felt compelled to sell it (the business) and move to be closer to my family.” She purchased a rural home west of Elbow Lake a few years later. “I’ve always loved the farm life,” she said. “There’s a balance in my life with country living.”
What are you doing to market your community?
Recruit

How will you help potential residents choose your community?
Visit Us. Thrive with Us.
Quietly Beautiful - Wildly Connected

Community Lifestyle Toolkits

Our communities are all unique and offer various lifestyle amenities to fit each individual or families needs! Explore each community and find one that's right for you! Information on healthcare, education, employment, childcare, things to do and more – these toolkits have everything you need to make the move!

Questions? Give us a call and we'd be happy to assist you in anyway and help you explore our communities – 866.866.5432

Clara City

Milan

Montevideo
What are you doing to recruit new residents to your community?
Welcoming Options

1. Welcome Materials
   Create a welcome packet, welcome bag, or welcome guide. Have a plan to distribute.

2. Welcome Wagon
   Get the welcome wagon together and visit newcomers. Make sure to coordinate your efforts with other groups.

3. Welcome Events
   Hold regular welcome events for newcomers. Help newcomers build connections across the community.

4. Sustained Welcoming Initiatives
   Work over the long-term to make sure your community is a welcoming place. Be courageous.

Welcome
How will your community welcome newcomers?
The community is welcoming of new residents by those likely to still live in the community in 5 years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Community is Welcoming</th>
<th>Likely to Live Here in 5 Years</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>44%</td>
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https://welcomingamerica.org/initiatives/welcoming-week/
What are you doing to welcome new residents to your community
Engage
How will your community engage newcomers?

Engagement Ideas

- Neighbors and Newcomers
- Newcomer Supper
- Online group
- Grab A Bite
- Small Asks
WHY GRAB-A-BITE?

- **DO NOT**— ask the newcomer to buy, join, sign up for, or attend ANYTHING! If they ask about a Church or how they can be involved in the community, you are free to respond. However, the goal of this contact is to present yourself as a welcoming resource, not get them to join a club.

- **DO NOT**— let them pay for the meal.

- **DO NOT**— make assumptions about the person you are meeting with.

- **DO NOT**— gossip, or otherwise disparage anyone in the community or any other community.

- **DO**— ask open ended questions about the newcomer: “What brings you to town?” “What did you enjoy about the place you used to live?” etc.

- **DO**— be prepared to share your contact info & present yourself a reference for future questions. For example, let them know they can call you if they need a plumber, a hairstylist or are interested in a Community Club.

https://ottertaillakescountry.com/new-to-town/
What are you doing to engage new residents in your community?
Belonging

How will your community cultivate a sense of belonging for residents?
UNITING CULTURES
UNIENDO CULTURAS

St. James, Minnesota

Uniting Cultures: A community organization in St. James, Minnesota, for building a thriving, more welcoming community.

Our Vision: We envision a culture of inclusion where all individuals feel respected and valued, are treated fairly, and have equal opportunity and responsibility to excel in community and life.

Uniendo Culturas: Una organización comunitaria en St. James, Minnesota, para construir una comunidad próspera y más acogedora.

Nuestra Visión: Concebimos una cultura de inclusión en donde todas las personas se sientan respetadas y valoradas, sean tratadas justamente, y tengan las mismas oportunidades y responsabilidades de éxito en la comunidad y en la vida.

https://www.stjunitingcultures.org/home
“I’ve lived here for 40 years, but I still feel like a newcomer.”

“What does a person need to do to feel like they belong or are accepted here?”
What are you doing to help new residents feel like they belong?
Manage Leaving

How will your community connect with people that leave?
Manage Leaving
Everyone leaves your community eventually – make sure they know it’s always their home.

**Thank you notes**
Send a thank you note sharing the important things the person contributed to your community.

**Newsletter**
Create and share a community newsletter with former residents.

**Ask when they will return**
Ask when they will come back home. Be clear that they are welcome back.

**Farewell party**
Hold a farewell party. Thank the person or family.

**Check-in**
Check-in with a call, email, or card periodically. Share opportunities (jobs, businesses for sale, fundraising campaigns).
What are you doing to stay connected to people that leave your community?
Implementation Puzzle

Funding
How will you fund this work? Who will fund it?

Coordination
Good things are already happening. How can those activities be coordinated effectively?

Management
Who should be in "charge" of this type of work? Who will track progress toward goals?

Partnership Development
Who can you work with to accomplish these activities? Who has a shared interest in success
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Thank you.
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