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## Results from the Community Asset Survey: Elko County, Nevada

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# Results From the Community Asset Survey: Elko County April 2020

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## Introduction

The Nevada Economic Assessment Project (NEAP) is a statewide Extension program aimed at providing a baseline repository of socio-economic data for each county in Nevada. One component of NEAP includes a community asset mapping workshop conducted with community leaders and residents. The asset mapping component includes a community workshop, followed by an online community asset survey. The online survey is an opportunity to provide broader community participation, beyond the workshop participants, to help identify community assets.

As part of the NEAP process, the community asset workshop for Elko County was held in person with county officials and staff on Nov. 7, 2019. The community asset mapping component of NEAP is a “snapshot of assets”. It is not a full inventory of every asset that exists or is desired in the county. A snapshot provides a broad overview of the key assets in the community, at this moment in time (hence a baseline). Asset mapping is a positive way to promote and think about one’s community and can typically serve as a starting point for further discussions of possible actions and initiatives.

Asset mapping is a process to create awareness of local resources. Its intended purpose is for community members to recognize what their community already has while noting desired additions to their community. Typically, when community members gather, people begin by listing all the problems or needs within the community. When members begin with identifying needs first, they see an endless list of problems. Funding often tends to go to outside service providers, and residents view themselves and their community as deficient. As a result, residents can feel as though they are victims who lack the capacity to make change happen within their own community (Kretzman and McKnight 1993).

However, if residents focus first on assets and strengths within the community, they are far more likely to be committed to investing in their communities and use existing strengths to address needs. Empirical evidence strongly suggests community economic development is more successful when people are willing to commit to investing in themselves and their resources (Burkett 2011; Underwood and Friesner 2017).

Communities that focus on assets first are more able to effectively address needs by partnering with outside entities to leverage the resources and assets within the community (Kretzman and McKnight 1993; Pitzer and Streeter 2015).

Hence, successful community development must begin within the community itself. Results from the Elko County Community Asset Survey are provided in this special publication to provide a snapshot of existing and desired assets as provided by Elko County residents.

### Survey Results

Following the community asset mapping workshop on Nov. 7, 2019, an online community asset survey was open on Survey Monkey from Nov. 15, 2019, until Feb. 23, 2020. Paper copies of the survey were also available at the Elko County Extension office for residents who were unable to access the online survey.

A total of 54 residents (n=54) completed the online community asset survey for Elko County. A majority of survey respondents were women (72%) compared to men (27%). Ages of respondents included a cross-sampling of adults, with the highest frequencies within the age range of 45-55. The online survey is not intended to be a complete inventory of all assets in Elko County, but rather a snapshot of assets identified by residents at this point in time.

Respondents who provided input into the survey were from five of the 16 zip codes in Elko County. The majority of respondents 58% were from residents in the 89801-zip code (Table 1).

Table 1. Elko County Community Assets Respondent Zip Code Distribution, 2021

Zip Code	City	Survey Responses	Percent
89801	Elko	30	58%
89802	Elko	0	0%
89803	Elko	0	0%
89815	Spring Creek	18	35%
89822	Carlin	0	0%
89823	Deeth	1	2%
89825	Jackpot	0	0%
89826	Jarbidge	0	0%
89828	Lamoille	1	2%
89830	Montello	2	3%
89831	Mountain City	0	0%
89832	Owyhee	0	0%
89833	Ruby Valley	0	0%
89834	Tuscarora	0	0%
89835	Wells	0	0%
89883	West Wendover	0	0%

Respondents were asked on the survey to share, “*In one word, what is something you would like to brag about your community?*” The following word cloud (Figure 1) reflects respondents’ one word to brag about their community. The larger the word in the word cloud, the more often the word was used from residents on the survey. Therefore, the more frequently it was cited, the larger the word appears.

The process used to identify assets was grouped into six categories. These six categories were provided to residents during the community workshop and in the online survey as a framework to think about assets. The six asset categories are based on the seven community capitals (Flora and Flora 2013). The seven community capitals (i.e., built, natural, political, social, natural, human and cultural) are commonly identified as the ecosystem of a healthy community. The community capitals approach builds on the notion that all communities have assets. These assets may be inactive, or they may be invested to create more assets or leveraged to help fill gaps in the community.

Figure 1. Elko County Community Asset Word Cloud, 2021



Respondents were asked to provide what assets exist currently and what assets they desire for each of the six categories. The six asset categories can be fluid, implying the categories themselves are not the focus, but rather it is the the identification of the asset itself that is most important. For example, residents may identify a desired asset to have “reliable broadband”. This asset can be identified under the category of *Play*, *Economic* or *Values*. The six categories of assets are identified as follows.

1. Values
2. People
3. Places
4. Play
5. Economic
6. Group

## Assets

### 1) Values:

Values are an intangible asset of a community; however, shared values add to the quality of life in a community. Examples of values may include “safe community,” “a small-town feel” or “rural values.” Community values are important because values are the foundation to a community and local decisions often reflect these core values. Table 2 outlines existing and desired assets of values as identified by workshop participants in Elko County. To be respectful of participants who completed the online survey, all comments (verbatim) are included in Table 2 regarding values as assets.

Table 2. Elko County Online Survey List of Assets: Values

Existing	Desired
Courteous, respectful	Innovation; Help Less Fortunate; Integrity in Government
Agriculture; Art museum	Feeling of being safe
Safe (mostly existing)	Customer-oriented service
It feels that most of our community is courteous/respectful and it is what I value most about this community.	To be viewed as a key player/partner with the rest of the state (southern and western Nevada); collaboration between city and county governments
Education - Great Basin College (Existing) We do NOT need a sports program at GBC. That is being developed with little to no input from the community at large.	Family-friendly; Clean/Well-maintained; Good Schools/Academic Excellence -- NV is consistently low ranked nationally.
The continue resistance to any change to our community... chasing away new businesses, and no, our community is not welcoming or friendly... Winnemucca is, we are not...	It would be nice if more voices were heard as, at times, it feels that unless you know somebody in an important role or unless you own a big business in town, your voice will not be taken into account.
I have a mixture of existing and desired assets. While being community giving, respect/courteous, Responsible, and Friendly. I also am involved in the community through several groups, and am very open to change.	Open minded; Being more mindful of our land and environment (people trash the land out here); More engaging and involved city council and county commissioners
Conservative; Heritage	Open to change
Education	Acceptance of others (i.e. other backgrounds, locations, culture, sexual orientation, etc.)
Children & youth's success	Welcoming diversity and embracing differing viewpoints
	Open to change; Family friendly
	Improved education

*\*All data in this table were submitted by residents and survey respondents. Please excuse any spelling, grammar, or other inconsistencies. These are not the views nor opinions of the authors of the report.*

**2) People:**

Everyone in a community has some gift or talent he/she can contribute to help strengthen the community. The core of community rests with the capacity of its residents, the individual members of the community and how individuals can contribute. When people use their skills and talents in the community, they make the community stronger. Table 3 outlines existing and desired assets of people as identified by workshop participants in Elko County. To be respectful of participants who completed the online survey, all comments (verbatim) are included in Table 3 regarding people as assets.

*Table 3. Elko County Online Survey List of Assets: People*

<b>Existing</b>	<b>Desired</b>
Educators	Absolutely agree with all the blue bubbles!
Transplants from across the country and world who come for mining industry; Emergency Response Personnel	Open to Change - Accepting of Differences - Respectful of Divergent Views and Emerging Ideas
Basque, Hispanic	Investors who will bring in entertainment businesses, doctors, entrepreneurs
I would fall in youth engagement. I actively coach my children's sports teams and search out other youth program for them. I am also a financial professional in the area.	We need more health care professionals, but we all know that. We had more in the 1980s than now and thanks to the commissioners who sold our hospital to the money grubbers, we are in this spot of no resources...
Individuals in STEAM careers - existing & desired; diverse cultures - existing and desired; bilingual speakers - existing	Quality Healthcare (more doctors, specialists, surgeons, pediatricians, ob-gyn); High Tech/IT (some existing, but more desired); Excellent Teachers/School Administrators (move NV up in national rankings in test scores, graduation rates, college admission rates)
4-H and FFA are existing assets and should be supported.	More Diversity, Doctors, volunteerism; More engaging and involved city council and county commissioners
Theater, artists, writers, arts	Child care resources; succession planning for local and state level governmental offices and community leadership/organizations; legal resources for guardianship/counseling/family court
	Senior activities
	Certified Nurse Midwives / Home birth Midwives / free-standing birth center
	Pediatricians are a big need in this community.
	Health Care Professionals
	Doctors, more youth engagement, mental health professionals
	Professional women
	Less homeless people, less people on drugs

Existing	Desired
	Not everybody in Elko County is a Native Nevadan and shouldn't be disregarded because they are "not from around here."
	More mental health workers for children
	Multiculturalism; diversity
	Holistic, natural medicine
	Translators (Spanish/English); more suicide prevention specialists

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### 3) Places:

Every community has special places where people come together. Community is about coming together, and the places where people congregate are spaces for building community. These places may serve as a microcosm of community. Places can also add to a community's identity through a historic building or traditional stories about the community. Table 4 outlines existing and desired assets of places as identified by workshop participants in Elko County. To be respectful of participants who completed the online survey, all comments (verbatim) are included in Table 4 regarding places as assets.

*Table 4. Elko County Online Survey List of Assets: Places*

Existing	Desired
Western Folklife Center	I am always running into Elko people at Costco - no matter where they are - we need a Costco. We need more development on the East side of town - good restaurants, upscale bars and grills, a nice place to sit outside and enjoy a meal or a drink. Center for Healthy Families
Elko Convention & Conference Centers; Western Folklife Center; Lamoille Grove; Great Basin College	Updated fairgrounds; completion of sports complex in City of Elko; renovation of downtown corridor in city of Elko
City Parks	Additional indoor equestrian building and trails
School gyms and fields	Variety of businesses that diversity the economy to more than just mining. Utilization of the interstate to attract more businesses
Our soccer fields are an existing inventory. If you go down during the summer you will find many families enjoying the fields by gathering with friends while watching their children practice and play games. I invite anyone to go down during any summer evening and capture the environment. During winter you will see those same fields being used by families bundled up and laughing while throwing snowballs at each other or sledding down the smooth hills.	SAFE bike paths/walking paths/gardens; Outdoor amphitheater/concert venue; Restaurants/retail areas with outdoor seating/art/landscaping & trees; golf courses (more desired); "town square" or "heart of community" -- somewhere an ice rink and tree lighting could take place in the winter, and other events (car shows, carnivals, food events, First Friday/2nd Saturday family friendly events) could take place in other seasons.

Existing	Desired
Lamoille Canyon/Lamoille Town	Rec center
Elko city parks, spring creek marina, both Elko and spring creek golf courses.	Recreational opportunities including a rec center with gym, swimming pool, etc. A dog park....not everyone is comfortable with taking their pet off leash in the "back country"
Parks; Spring Creek marina; Spring Creek sports complex	Bowling Alley, mall, skating rink, concert hall, restaurants
Restaurants	Healthy Food Stores / Natural Stores; Fresh food establishments such as Souplantation
	Downtown Entrepreneurs
	Rec center
	Pocket gardens
	A Dog Park in Elko City limits; It's commonly a place in other communities where people who enjoy dogs can socialize, take walks and exercise pets.
	Would love something for spring creekers, since there are quite a few of us... a pool and something like that would be great... no more casinos or bars....
	Brewery
	I agree with more restaurants (not more of the same); Shopping Mall; Costco; WinCo; Family friendly attractions; Better natural, organic, holistic stores
	Swimming pool with graduated wading pool for young children, water slides, lazy river, separate lap pool, education center for healthy living workshops, stationary bicycles & treadmills, decent showers, changing stalls and bathrooms to be able to change & get ready for the day; Elko County Fairgrounds expand barn space & upgrade sound system to all areas of the fairgrounds

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#### 4) Play:

Play is an important part of life for all of us, from children to adults. Play gives us the time and space to meet and socialize with others, and improves our physical and mental health and our overall quality of life. The evidence outlining the benefits of play in the development of young children is overwhelming. Likewise, the value of play from children to adults offers wide benefits for a community. Locations for play are often seen as a focal point for communities. They offer opportunities for social interaction for the wider community, support the development of a greater sense of community spirit and promote social cohesion. Table 5 outlines existing and desired assets of play as identified by workshop participants in Elko County. To be respectful of participants who



completed the online survey, all comments (verbatim) are included in Table 5, regarding play as assets.

Table 5. Elko County Online Survey List of Assets: Play

Existing	Desired
The green bubbles sure make it look like there is a lot to do here. There isn't for someone who isn't necessarily an outdoors person.	A vibrant downtown within walking distance of safe, affordable housing. Access to cultural activities, arts and entertainment. Elko desperately needs low income housing within the community so children can walk to schools, the library, playgrounds, etc. The low income housing currently available is segregated to the outskirts or located in areas not conducive to walking. (Emerging & Desired)
U S Pony Club	Dances, nice places to play pool, throw darts, aquatic center
Ruby Marshes	Ski Lifts that actually get snow (put them in the Rubies); Larger trail network in the mountains; More organized Mountain Bike Trail network; Aquatic Center; Sidewalks; Public gathering spaces downtown for concerts
Parks; Spring Creek marina; Spring Creek sports complex	Desired: update/expand shooting range; completion of sports complex; completion of HARP trail/connection from east end of town to west end/sports complex; renovation of downtown corridor
The Elko County Fair is an existing asset and should be supported.	Bike lanes, walking trails, dog park
Restaurants	Basketball courts (existing but nice to have more); Walking trails, designated bike paths (desired); Safe access to Humboldt River in town (picnic areas, etc) -- currently too many homeless, no developed outdoor areas or adjoining 'waterfront' :- ) restaurants. Family Fun Center -- mini golf, driving range similar to Top Golf, go-carts, kiddie rides (carousel); More options for music lessons, tutoring, extracurricular engagement of students.
	More adequate soccer fields, with lights to play after the sunsets, would be desirable.
	Desired-XP Gaming, rock climbing
	Affordable and Professionally-Managed Golfing
	The need to keep lands open to hunting, hiking, etc. is essential, we are blessed for all that we have here...
	Walking paths; additional green space; bike lanes on roadways

Existing	Desired
	Splash park; Family friendly attractions (such as boondocks, ect...)
	Recreation/aquatic center is desired
	Swimming pool with graduated wading pool for young children, water slides, lazy river, separate lap pool, education center for healthy living workshops, stationary bicycles & treadmills, decent showers, changing stalls and bathrooms to be able to change & get ready for the day - desired Elko County Fairgrounds expand barn space & upgrade sound system to all areas of the fairgrounds; Johnny Appleseed Park - revamp to remove hidden areas to improve safety

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### 5) Economic:

Communities have economic power in local businesses. This power includes who they hire, what they purchase, what skills they teach and what resources they offer. Revitalizing a community's economic life is at the very center of local economic development. Communities have many steps to rebuilding the local economy, and it begins by recognizing the local institutions and organizations that exist. Table 6 outlines existing and desired economic assets as identified by workshop participants in Elko County. To be respectful of participants who completed the online survey, all comments (verbatim) are included in Table 6, regarding economic assets.

Table 6. Elko County Online Survey List of Assets: Economic

Existing	Desired
Great Basin College; annual events (Cowboy Poetry, Mine Expo, Balloon Festival, Fair & Horse Races)	Accessible Fast Internet; Healthcare, to include Medicare providers; Public Housing Facilities - Sober Living Residences; Diverse Restaurants; A Sound Barrier Wall Along I-80
Elko Federal Credit Union Strong local credit union rooted in investing wisely in local members. Nevada state Bank has a strong focus on small business lending and being able to leverage credit to small business for liquidity. Wafed Bank as well is a regional bank that still operates by small town sensible solutions and practices which is why they can offer lending solutions for an all in one custom construction loan others cannot. We have multiple financial advisors from Edward Jones, Raymond James, Wells Fargo	1) RELIABLE Internet services (highly desired)!!!!!! 2) Promotion of tourism beyond Cowboy Poetry, give Elko a "theme" -- example, in a ski town, all the hotels and businesses, even fast food restaurants look "alpine" I love those kitchy neon retro signs along Idaho street as one concept, or embrace railroad, or mining, or more with the cowboy theme. 3) Microbrewery/Microdistillery (desired...market promote tourism -- see Headframe Spirits in Butte for example). 4) Licensed daycare/preschool facilities that work with miner schedules.
Rail Port	More Shopping options, Costco, Target, bed bath and beyond, medical options, surgical center
	High speed Internet that is affordable and reliable

Existing	Desired
	Increase number of air flights like we used to
	Technical Fields (engineering or tech) outside of mining; More diverse economy so it's not driven solely by mining.
	No section 8 housing!
	At times it's customer service that is lacking in our area. We may go in to a local bank/store/restaurant/company, and get treated poorly. Positive customer service needs to be brought back and it would make people happy to go out and spend money in our community.
	Service Industries (QUALITY, timely and affordable car cleaning, housekeeping, fencing, asphalt/concrete repair, roofing, pet grooming, appliance repair, hay delivery, plumbing)
	Affordable housing construction; intercity transportation, broadband
	Additional phone companies
	Great Basin College should be allowed to grow as a stand-alone university. We value higher education and the cultural and community assets it provides. Elko's college serves all of rural Nevada but is undermined by the Nevada System of Higher Education and the current funding formula. Mining taxes need to be restructured to support higher education in academic and vocational training. (Existing and Emerging)
	Noted above, if our city/county fathers would not make it so hard for new business to come in, we would be in a better place... losing kings and Kmart in a year... get RID of 2 lanes downtown, what a bottleneck. Including more roundabouts...
	Economic diversity for sustainability and to bring in a diverse population
	Higher quality internet
	Nevada Gold Mines Legacy Fund

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## 6) Groups:

Groups and organizations are the foundation to a community's social fabric. Linkages and networks among community groups create social capital. Community groups (whether formal or informal) can often serve as the avenue for creating social trust, build relationships, and connect networks among community members. Involvement in these groups builds individual skills and increases involvement in community associations. Those involved in groups often help "fill the gaps" in a community and take on leadership roles. Table 7 outlines existing and desired groups as identified by workshop

participants in Elko County. To be respectful of participants who completed the online survey, all comments (verbatim) are included in Table 7, regarding groups as assets.

Table 7. Elko County Online Survey List of Assets: Groups

Existing	Desired
The Nevada Cattlemen's Association and the Elko County Cattlewomen are existing assets and should be supported.	Agree with the blue bubbles. Desired: Recovery Groups; Center for Healthy Families
DKG	Get rid of Spring Creek Association
The Family Resource Center is an organization that I consider a great asset to the community. They serve anyone in northeastern Nevada regardless of who they may be.	High School intramural leagues and places to play sports (if students don't make teams, they don't have other options)
Community Foundation of Elko County; Great Basin College	Trash services for outlying areas such as River Ranch- Desired
Elko Garden Club; Elko County 4-H Program; Toastmasters; Hospice; Heart and Shield: Hope for Families family violence prevention program	There are TOO MANY groups that provide redundant services. There are only so many volunteers and contributions to rely on in our community. It is confusing to newcomers who want to contribute but cannot discern between government and charitable organizations.
Gamble Oaks Pony Club; NENHA; Barrel racing club	Child care has always been a need.
Family Resource Center	Homebrew Club (desired)
Desired/Existing-Family Resource Center of Northeastern Nevada	Land/environment conservation advocate groups addressing climate change and local environmental issues.
Family Resource Centers of Northeastern Nevada	Elko Leadership Program (other Chambers offer this program) - desired
Family Resource Center; Vitality Integrated Programs	CADV
I think are current groups are pretty good.	Green Initiatives
Great Basin Audubon group	
Family Resource Center	
Ruby Mountain Therapy Riders	

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## Snapshot of Assets

As stated earlier in this document, asset mapping is a process to create awareness of local resources and strengths. Its intended purpose is for community members to recognize what their community already has while noting desired additions to their community. Identifying community assets is an important process in driving local economic development (Burkett 2011). To create a “snapshot of assets” across each category, comments were qualitatively grouped into key themes. Themes were identified based on survey responses for each of the six asset categories. Participant comments, as listed in Tables 2-7, were reviewed and categorized into dominant themes based on similarity of responses.

Developing themes from qualitative survey responses required responses to be reviewed and coded. Similar coded responses were grouped together to create a theme (i.e., the individual responses of all the service and civic clubs listed were placed under a general theme of “Service/Civic Clubs” to reflect a broader theme). The higher frequency of coded response per theme is reflected by a sequence of listing for each asset. A snapshot of assets for each category are summarized below.

### Values

*Table 8. Themes of Existing and Desired Values as Assets in Elko County*

<i>Existing Values</i>	<i>Desired Values</i>
<b>1. Respectful</b>	<b>1. Be Collaborative</b>
<b>2. Conservative</b>	<b>2. Open to Change</b>

### People

*Table 9. Themes of Existing and Desired People Assets in Elko County*

<i>Existing People</i>	<i>Desired People</i>
<b>1. Ranchers</b>	<b>1. Health Care</b>
<b>2. Multi-generations</b>	<b>2. Diversity</b>
<b>3. Native Americans</b>	<b>3. More involvement</b>

## Places

Table 10. Themes of Existing and Desired Places as Assets in Elko County

<i>Existing Places</i>	<i>Desired Places</i>
1. Open Spaces	1. Health Care
2. City Parks, etc.	2. Upscale Restaurants
	3. Renovate Downtown

## Play

Table 11. Themes of Existing and Desired Play Assets in Elko County

<i>Existing Play</i>	<i>Desired Play</i>
1. Natural Amenities	1. Walking Paths/Bike Lanes
2. Annual Events	2. Promote Natural Amenities
3. Youth Activities	3. Improve Municipal Centers

## Economic

Table 12. Themes of Existing and Desired Economic Assets in Elko County

<i>Existing Economic</i>	<i>Desired Economic</i>
1. Ranchers/Agriculture	1. Broadband
2. Available Land	2. Health Care
3. Mining	3. Affordable Housing

## Groups

Table 13. Themes of Existing and Desired Group Assets in Elko County

<i>Existing Groups</i>	<i>Desired Groups</i>
1. Resource Centers	1. Health Care
2. Youth Clubs	2. Child Care

### Limitations

A few significant limitations need to be noted in this report. First, a very small percentage of residents completed the online community asset survey (n=54) out of a county population of 52,778 (US Census 2019). Additional limitations to the survey are a majority of those who did complete the survey were female (72%), and survey respondents represented only five of the 16 zip codes in Elko County, with 58% of responses from zip code 89801. Given these limitations to the community asset survey, the results are a first step in identifying existing and desired assets within the community. However, the snapshot of assets identified in this report can be used as a **starting point for discussion** among a more diverse set of residents with local decision-makers, to explore how existing and desired assets can guide economic development decisions.

### Conclusion and Next Steps

Asset mapping is an important tool to assist communities in identifying resources and strengths that currently exist, and it can help reveal desired assets that residents believe should be improved upon to help drive local change in their community. The information provided in this report reflect results from the Elko County Community Asset Survey, in connection with the Nevada Economic Analysis Baseline Report. Both of these reports are tools that can be used to help inform and guide local decision-making for economic development and to understand what residents value and desire in the community.

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