N EXTENSION
College of Agriculture,
Biotechnology & Natural Resources

Results from the Community Asset Survey:
Lander County, Nevada

Marlene Rebori, Community Development Specialist

Joseph Lednicky, Economist II

University of Nevada, Reno Extension

This publication was produced under the **Nevada Economic Assessment Project (NEAP)**, which aims to provide county, state and federal agencies, and their partners, with quantitative and qualitative baseline data and analyses to better understand trends in each county's demographic, social, economic, fiscal and environmental characteristics.

More information on the NEAP can be found on our webpage: Extension.unr.edu/NEAP.

Results From the Community Asset Survey:
Lander County
April 2021

Marlene Rebori, Community Development Specialist
Joseph Lednicky, Economist II

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 Lander County was held virtually with county officials and interested community members on April 23, 2021. 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 Lander County Community Asset Survey are provided in this special publication to provide a snapshot of existing and desired assets as provided by Lander County residents.

Survey Results

Following the virtual community asset mapping workshop on April 23, 2021, an online community asset survey was open in Survey Monkey from April 23, 2021, until May 15, 2021. Links to the survey were made available on the NEAP website and the Lander County website.

No residents responded to the Lander County online community asset survey. The survey was available for 28 days and accessible on the NEAP website. Paper copies were also made available through the Lander County offices including the Extension office. Due to lack of participation in completing the online survey, the survey was closed, and themes to reflect a snapshot of assets are based soley on the asset maps completed by workshop participants on April 23, 2021.

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.

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. Figure 1 outlines existing and desired assets of values as identified by workshop participants in Lander County. To be respectful of participants who completed the online survey, all comments (verbatim) are included in Figure 1, regarding values as assets.

Figure 1. Lander County Community Workshop Asset Map: Values
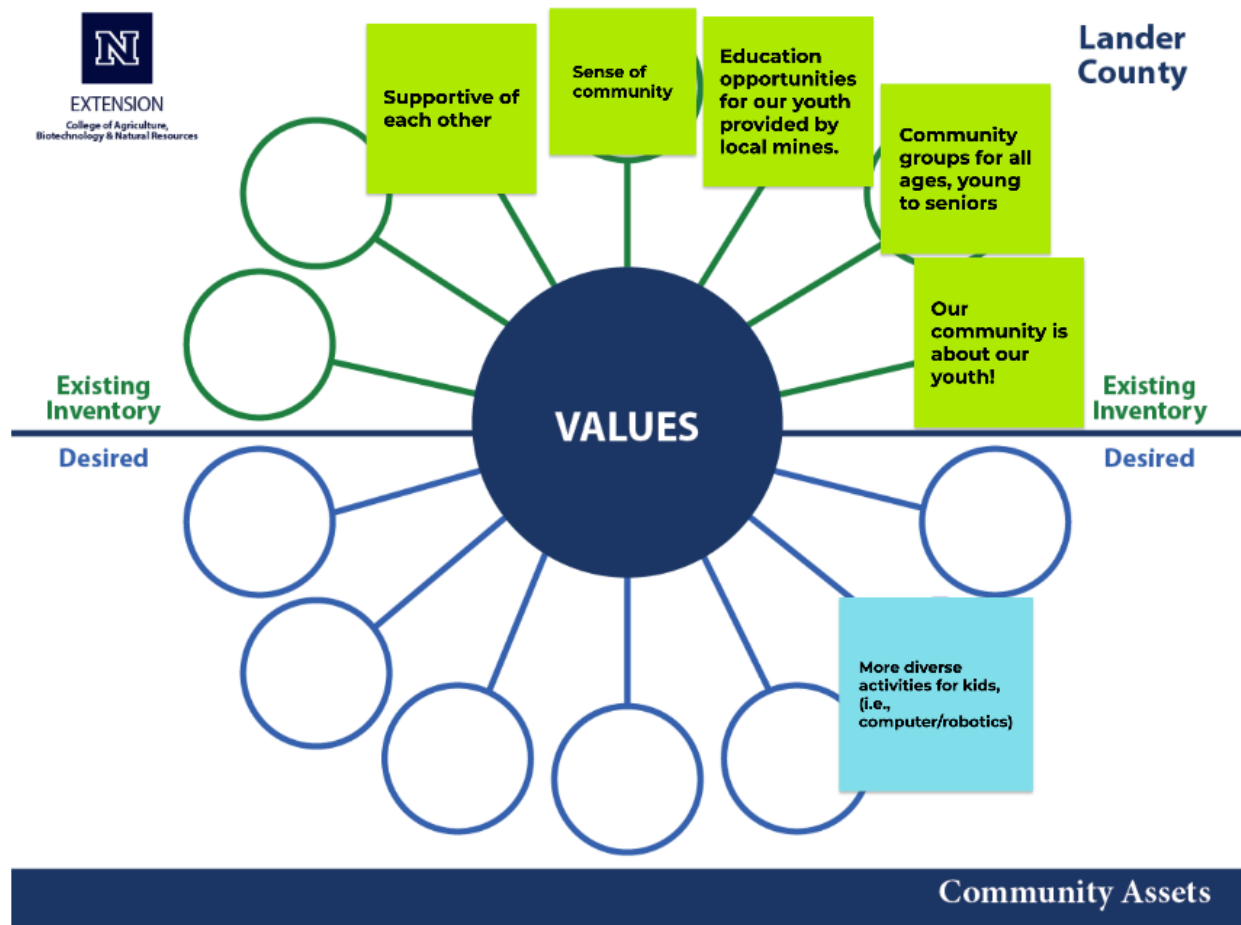
These existing and desired assets were submitted by residents and workshop participants. Please excuse any typos. These are not the views or opinions of the authors of the report.

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. Figure 2, outlines existing and desired assets of people as identified by workshop participants in Lander County. To be respectful of participants who completed the online survey, all comments (verbatim) are included in Figure 2, regarding people as assets.

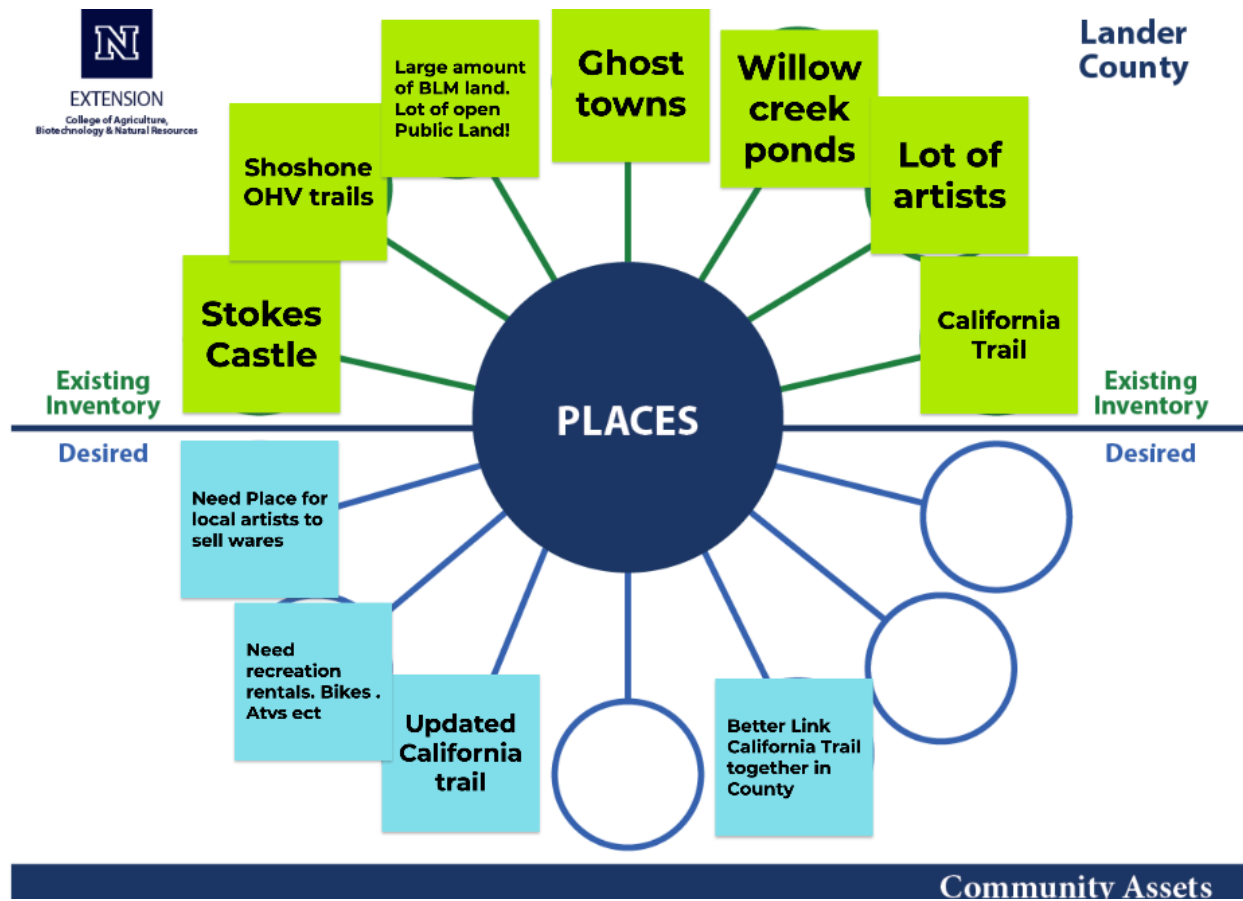*Figure 2. Lander County Community Workshop Asset Map: People*

These existing and desired assets were submitted by residents and workshop participants. Please excuse any typos. These are not the views or opinions of the authors of the report.

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. Figure 3 outlines existing and desired assets of places as identified by workshop particpants in Lander County. To be respectful of participants who completed the online survey, all comments (verbatim) are included in Figure 3, regarding places as assets.

Figure 3. Lander County Community Workshop Asset Map: Place

These existing and desired assets were submitted by residents and workshop participants. Please excuse any typos. These are not the views or opinions of the authors of the report.

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. Figure 4 outlines existing and desired assets of play as identified by workshop participants in Lander County. To be respectful of participants who completed the online survey, all comments (verbatim) are included in Figure 4, regarding play as assets.

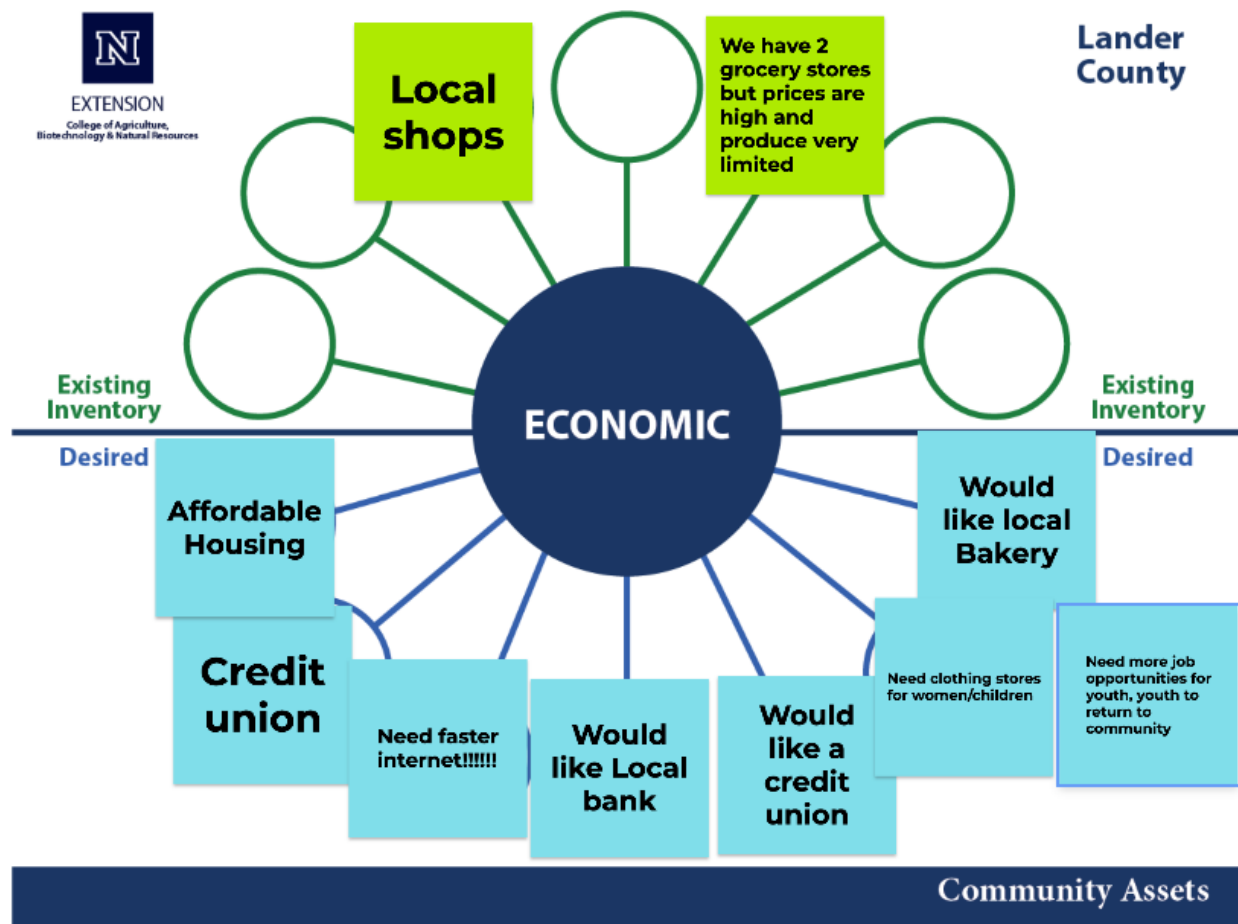*Figure 4. Lander County Community Workshop Asset Map: Play*

These existing and desired assets were submitted by residents and workshop participants. Please excuse any typos. These are not the views or opinions of the authors of the report.

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. Figure 5 outlines existing and desired economic assets as identified by workshop participants in Lander County. To be respectful of participants who completed the online survey, all comments (verbatim) are included in Figure 5, regarding economic assets.

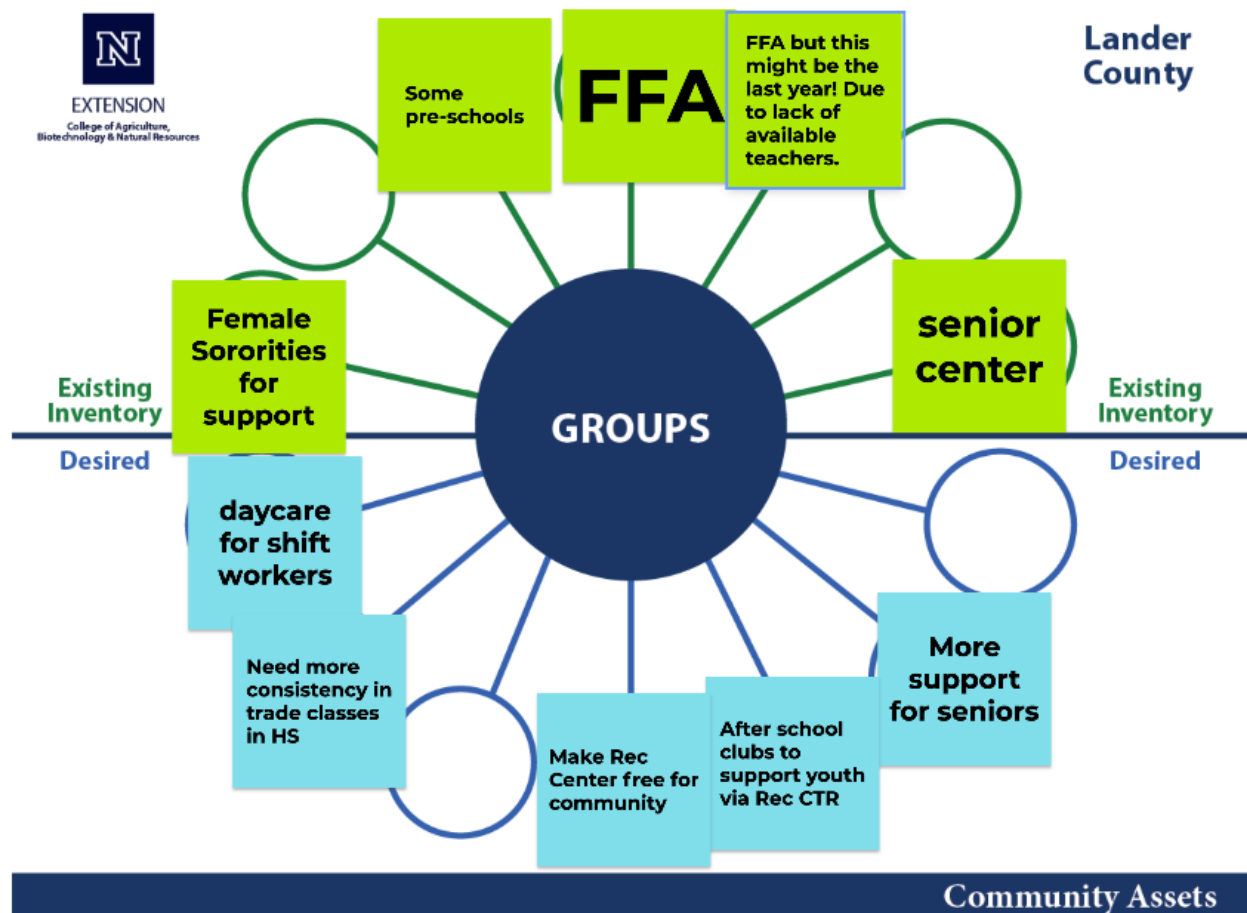*Figure 5. Lander County Community Workshop Asset Map: Economic*

These existing and desired assets were submitted by residents and workshop participants. Please excuse any typos. These are not the views or opinions of the authors of the report.

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. Figure 6 outlines existing and desired assets ofgroups as identified by workshop participants in Lander County. To be respectful of participants who completed the online survey, all comments (verbatim) are included in Figure 6, regarding groups as assets.

Figure 6. Lander County Community Workshop Asset Map: Groups

These existing and desired assets were submitted by residents and workshop participants. Please excuse any typos. These are not the views or opinions of the authors of the report.

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 Figures 1-6, 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 listing the top three existing and desired assets for each category is provided in Figures 1-6 and summarized below.

Values

Table 1. Themes of Existing and Desired Values as Assets in Lander County

Existing Values	Desired Values
1. Supportive Across Generations	1. More Diverse Opportunites for Youth
2. Sense of Community	
3. Youth Development Opportunities	

People

Table 2. Themes of Existing and Desired People Assets in Lander County

Existing People	Desired People
1. Miners/Ranchers	1. Diversified Workforce
2. Nonprofits	2. More Skilled Tradespeople
3. Teachers/Construction	

Places

Table3. Themes of Existing and Desired Places as Assets in Lander County

Existing Places	Desired Places
1. Public Lands Access/Opportunities	1. Better Integrate Cali Trail Within County
2. Ghost Towns	2. Venue for local Artists to display or Sell Wares
3. Stokes Castle	3. Recreation Rentals, Bikes, etc.

Play

Table 4. Themes of Existing and Desired Play Assets in Lander County

Existing Play	Desired Play
1. Outdoor Parks/Playgrounds	1. More Activities for Youth
2. Recreation Center	2. More Equitable Fee for Rec Center
3. Golf Course	3. More Activities for Seniors

Economic

Table 5. Themes of Existing and Desired Economic Assets in Lander County

Existing Economic	Desired Economic
1. Local Shops	1. Affordable Housing
2. Grocery Stores	2. Credit Union/Local
	3. Reliable, Low-cost Internet Service

Groups

Table 6. Themes of Existing and Desired Group Assets in Lander County

Existing Groups	*Desired Groups*
1. Senior Center	1. Childcare, After-school Clubs
2. Future Farmers America (FFA)	2. Support for Seniors
3. Preschools	3. Trade Classes/Clubs in High School

Limitations

A few significant limitations need to be noted in this report. First, a very small percentage of residents participated in the community asset mapping workshops (n~15) out of a county population of 5,798 (U.S. Census 2021). Additional limitations to the survey are a majority of those who did participate in the community workshop were Lander County employees and elected officials. Although an online survey was created to broaden participation, unfortunately the survey received no responses. Given these limitations to the community asset mapping process, 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 Lander 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.

References Cited

1. Akima, Y., Chapin, S. and Fairbrother P. (2013). "Role of social networks in community preparedness for bushfire." Conference paper *in* International Journal of Disaster Resilience in the Built Environment, July 2013. DOI: 10.1108/IJDRBE-01-2014-0010.

2. Arewasikporn, A., Sturgeon, J. and Zautra, A. (2019). "Sharing Positive Experiences Boosts Resilient Thinking: Everyday benefits of social connection and positive Emotions in a community sample." *American Journal of Community Psychology (2019) 63: 110-121.* DOI: 10.10021/ajcp.122279.

3. Burket, I. (2011). "Appreciating Assets: A new report from the International Association for Community Development (IACD)." *Community Development Journal 46 (4) October: 573-578.* DOI: 01.1093/cdj/bsr054.

4. Flora, C.B. and Flora, J. (2013). Rural Communities: Legacy + Change fourth edition Westview Press. New York, NY.

5. Kretzman, J. and McKnight, J. (1993). Building Communities from the inside out: A path toward finding and mobilizing a community's assets, ACTA Publications, Chicago, IL.

6. Pitzer, K. and Streeter, C. (2015). "Mapping Community Capitals: A Potential Tool for Social Work." *Advances in Social Work 16 (2): 358-371.* Fall. Doi: 10.18060/17470.

7. Green, G. (2009). "Community Asset Mapping and Surveys" *in* An Introduction to Community Development, eds. Rhonda Phillips & Robert Pittman. pps. 156-165.

8. Green, G. and Haines, A. (2007). Asset Building and Community Development, 2nd Edition, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

9. Miller, J. and Taylor, A. (2020). "Seeking a new relationship with communities. How local elected officials want to bridge divides, distrust and doubts." Harwood Institute and Kettering Foundation.

10. South, J., Giuntoli, G. and Kinsella, K. (2017). "Getting Past the dual logic: findings from a pilot asset mapping exercise in Sheffield, UK." *Health and Social Care in the Community 25 (1): 105-113.*

11. Underwood, D. and Friesner, D. (2017). "Asset Mapping, the Social Fabric Matrix, Economic Impact Analysis, and Criteria for Sustainability and Justice: Operational Elements for Holistic Policy Planning." *Journal of Economic Issues LI (3): 813-827.* DOI: 10.1080/00213624.2017.1359051.

12. U.S. Census Bureau Quick Facts. (2019). Lander County, NV. https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/landercountynevada. Accessed May 3, 2022.