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College of Agriculture,
Biotechnology & Natural Resources

Results from the Community Asset Survey: Lyon County, Nevada

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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.

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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 Lyon County was held virtually with county officials and staff on March 19, 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 Lyon County Community Asset Survey are provided in this special publication to provide a snapshot of existing and desired assets as provided by Lyon County residents.

Survey Results

Following the virtual community asset mapping workshop on March 19, 2021, an online community asset survey was open in Survey Monkey from March 24, 2021, until April 10, 2021. Links to the survey were made available on the NEAP website and the Lyon County website.

A total of three residents (n=3) completed the online community asset survey for Lyon County. A majority of survey respondents were men (66%) compared to women (33%). Ages of all respondents were older, falling within the age range of 55 to 65+ years. The online survey is not intended to be a complete inventory of all assets in Lyon County, but rather a snapshot of assets identified by residents at this point in time.

Respondents who provided input into the survey were from two of the seven zip codes in Lyon County (Table 1). All survey respondents (100%) were from Lyon County.

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

Zip Code	City	Survey Responses	Percent
89403	Dayton	2	90%
89447	Yearington	1	10%
89408	Fernley	0	0
89428	Silver City	0	0
89429	Silver Springs	0	0
89430	Smith	0	0
89444	Wellington	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. Lyon 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 Lyon 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. Lyon County Online Survey List of Assets: Values

Existing	Desired
Rural lifestyle; individualism; limited growth, open to limited economic opportunities.	Neighborly; diversity; controlled growth; open to expanding economic opportunities.
Rural values, easy access to community leaders	Safer community/community respecting each other

**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 Lyon 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. Lyon County Online Survey List of Assets: People

Existing	Desired
Political decisiveness; medium educational background; opinionated	Ethnic diversity; willingness to help others; youth activities; community involvement
	Community Involvement
people helping neighbors	Skilled and talented people

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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 Lyon 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. Lyon County Online Survey List of Assets: Places

Existing	Desired
Carson River; Our Park	More parks; hiking trails
Rolling A Ranch	Develop Hiking Trails
Off road adventures/fishing locations	Community involvement in gardening

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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 Lyon 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. Lyon County Online Survey List of Assets: Play

Existing	Desired
Back roads	Open lands; hiking trails; cultural events; parks
Ball Fields. Off Road	Community Swimming Pool
Numerous outdoor activities areas	Cultural events/sanctioned outdoor events

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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 Lyon County. To be respectful of participants who completed the online survey, all comments (verbatim) are included in Table 6, regarding economic assets.

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

Existing	Desired
Minimal shopping; minimal banking; brothels	More office space; small business friendly; family-oriented businesses
Manufacturing, Mining	Small Business Development
Local based Credit Union for all types of financial needs	Low cost internet services

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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 assets of groups as identified by workshop participants in Lyon 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. Lyon County Online Survey List of Assets: Groups

Existing	Desired
Boys & Girls Club; youth sports; churches; citizen advisory boards	community support groups; youth music programs; economic development commission
Church, CAB, Boys and Girls Club	Groups for Family Activities
Volunteer fire departments/ambulance services	groups to cleanup unlawful dumping in outdoor areas

**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.*

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 listing the top three existing and desired assets for each category is provided in Tables 8-13 and summarized below.

Values

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

<i>Existing Values</i>	<i>Desired Values</i>
1. Individualism	1. Manage/Plan for Smart Growth
2. Small-town Feel	2. Respect for Others
3. Maintain Open Spaces	3. More Community Involvement

People

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

<i>Existing People</i>	<i>Desired People</i>
1. Helpful With Each Other	1. More Community Involvement
2. Friendly	2. Opportunities for youth and families
3. Working Farmers/Ranchers	3. More Skilled Tradespeople

Places

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

<i>Existing Places</i>	<i>Desired Places</i>
1. Outdoor Opportunities	1. Developed Amenities for Outdoor Opps.
2. Libraries	2. Healthcare Facilities
	3. Community Involvement in Gardening

Play

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

<i>Existing Play</i>	<i>Desired Play</i>
1. Outdoor Recreation Opportunities	1. More Regional Parks With Amenities
	2. Diverse Cultural Events
	3. Community Swimming Pool

Economic

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

<i>Existing Economic</i>	<i>Desired Economic</i>
1. Manufacturing	1. Low cost, Reliable Internet Service
2. Mining/Ranching	2. Small business development
3. Local Credit Union	3. Health Care

Groups

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

<i>Existing Groups</i>	<i>Desired Groups</i>
1. Youth Groups	1. Economic Development Group
2. Churches	2. Groups to Clean up Dumping in Outdoor Areas
3. Citizens Advisory Boards	3. Community support groups

Limitations

A few significant limitations need to be noted in this report. First, a very, very small percentage of residents completed the online community asset survey (n=3) out of a county population of 60,903 (US.. Census 2021). Additional limitations to the survey are those who did complete the survey were aged 55+, and survey respondents represented only two of the seven registered zip codes in Lyon County. 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 Lyon 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 decisionmaking for economic development and to understand what residents value and desire in the community.

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