

Tremont eyes becoming 'Winning Community'

By Pam Keyes, Times correspondent
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TREMONT - Growth with a small-town feel.

That's the kind of future many Tremont citizens would like to see develop, according to comments given to a group of citizens trying to develop a plan for the village's future.

"All communities have challenges. We need growth, but how do we want to do that?" said co-chairman Brock Butts, during Thursday's meeting to show the citizens their plans for the future in short-term and long-term goals.

"Location, location, location, is one of our greatest assets," said Butts. "We need folks to help. This is a beginning-a master plan and we would love to have help."

History

Jim Dittoe, facilitator from Winning Communities Inc. came to Tremont in January to show residents what it would take to be successful in a fast-paced world.

He explained that the five C's - change, challenge, concern, commitment and championship - made a vision plan successful.

Residents got together in groups and decided what they would like to change and what kinds of assets the village already possessed.

This was the first step toward creating Tremont's vision.

Tremont was incorporated as a town on July 25, 1835. According to the 2000 census, the population of Tremont is 2,029. It has grown in population but is not keeping pace with Tazewell or Peoria counties.

Most residents of the residents in January said they like the small-town feel. They say the community has an excellent school system, library, safety, nice roads, governmental services and parks. But the town would like to grow but wants to keep its small town appeal.

After many community meetings, surveys, discussions and consultations with leaders, Tremont has come up with a vision statement.

The plan

The vision plan was broken down into six community goal areas: arts, recreation and leisure, community development, economic development, image and appearance, infrastructure, and technology.

"We want people to enjoy Tremont. We want to work with our park and extend it out to route 9," said Luke Porritt, team leader for arts and recreation. "It needs to be made more handicapped accessible. Other ideas were to make the park more beautiful with flowers and maybe sitting areas. We are hoping that clubs and businesses will help in that area. Although we already have a community center, we need to look at repairing or maybe even rebuilding. This is a long term goal."

Don Beard, team leader for community development, had another opinion.

"We need to increase our residential housing," Beard said. "We have very little to offer in the housing market. We also need to build a marketing plan for Tremont."

As a newcomer to Tremont, Kendall Stewart says he finds that the people of Tremont work together to achieve its goals.

"The first thing my team will be working on is to establish a new restaurant in the community," Stewart said. "We also want to bring new retail businesses in and stimulate existing businesses."

Lifelong Tremont resident says Dale Stuber there is room for improvement in Tremont.

"I am one of the old-timers and I think Tremont is a pretty place," Stuber said. "But, we can do better. We have three to four creeks that we can work with. If you go to Pekin, they have business after business, but Pekin (Mineral Springs) Park is beautiful. You see walkers, families picnicking, and children playing. They used their water sources to enhance a beautiful park. We could have this, too, with the use of the creeks."

Darren Camden is the team leader on infrastructure.

"No one sees infrastructure but it is an important part of growing and is costly," Camden said. "No one likes to hear this but we must have it. Some of our objectives are short term and can be easy to do. Others are long term but we need to create plans for improving and developing."

"Tremont is in pretty good shape as far as technology goes," said Gene Pflederer. "There are lots of communities that would love to have what we have. The only thing that we could improve on is to develop a web site."

The organization will continue to meet every third Thursday of the month. The team leaders will give reports and updates. Residents are encouraged to come and help shape the future. •