

## Cultural plans with new ideas

February 12, 2009

Dear Editor,

This week I read a book titled Cultural Planning for Creative Communities (Gord Hume, Municipal World, 2009). The author states categorically that “old thinking about economic development and a community’s prosperity are not effective today and Municipalities that want to prosper are finding new ways of delivering their traditional services. It is all about change!

Thinking

This book is about how to create, develop, and implement this new way of thinking and acting for local councils and their communities... a community that is rooted in the past, that doesn’t understand or respect the changing social climate... that isn’t responding to the new wants and needs of business and workers alike, is not going to prosper in the future... it is not a role that comes easily to some elected and appointed officials. It is a profound shift.

Safer

“It is safer and more comfortable to keep on the same old path, approving the same old reports and recommendations.”

We must put creativity at the heart of our communities BUT more importantly at the heart of our region-our Community of Communities.

We need to discover who the real leaders of the future are and if they are being effectively integrated into new global realities at the local level?

Are our tax dollars being put to good use in this regard or simply producing “same-old; same-old” reports with fancier covers and illustrations?

The author borrows a page from the Social Enterprise Movement, which is about advancing systemic solutions to major social problems. In recent years “it has become a global movement tackling issues of poverty, health, economic development, child welfare, etc.” Surely all these issues are rural issues!

Social entrepreneurs in contrast to current methodologies of dealing with the issues by identifying a need, raising money and delivering a program to address the need, are “driven not just to serve the need; they are determined to solve the problem.”

New breed

According to the author, there is a need to develop a new breed of intermediary with the competency to communicate in the language of developers, planners, community activists, economic developers, etc.

I would add to this list “faith-communities.” The author develops the idea that “Cultural Planning is at the heart of good, sustainable development” and that “bad development is often the result of poor Cultural Planning, and it can have consequences that ravage a community.”

I sense revolution will be in the air as rural people discern their own place, wanting to maintain their own identity as people living in a specific place.

So how do you see the distinctive character, lifestyle, and quality of life of the place where you live in the Community of Communities that impact your life?

Many ideas throughout this book are intended to provoke a new way of looking at communities and municipal governments, and how they do business and I suggest that we need to re-think some of the old ways of doing business, developing new partnerships. Dare I add new regional governance models?