

## It comes from within...

Do you ever hear someone say "I wish someone would open a \_\_\_\_\_"? Or, have you heard "If only we had a \_\_\_\_\_." This past week, we learned about a different form of Community Initiated Development that called on community members to start their own businesses cooperatively. The process is not an easy one, and it typically involves a large group of stakeholders coming together to develop a concept, issue stock and build a business plan to produce a new entity needed by the community. Examples from the Kansas Main Street Quarterly Training included a clothing store, restaurant and an art gallery. In some instances, the community banded together to "take over" an existing store that they considered vital. In other regional examples, the community banded together to build a business deemed necessary for the community's quality of life (like the brewery "Liquid Bread" in Hays).



So, why do I bring this up? Yes it was the topic of a quarterly training, but more importantly, this is a conversation we need to start having in our community. I think we are starting to find that waiting on someone external to "solve" our perceived "problems" is not the most proactive approach. Determining how WE can best come together and provide the goods and services demanded by our citizens is critical. However, we must understand that these ventures have various levels of risk and require local investment. Coming from a business background, I want to make sure that potential development can make a profit for the sake of sustainability. In some instances, we may have to look at retiring businesses and decide that, if no single individual has the means to purchase a store, we as a community form a cooperative to ensure a businesses continued existence. If there are categories of businesses we want, like fine dining or a men's store, it may fall to a group of individuals to invest in an enterprise.

We do have economic opportunities available in the community. There are markets that are untapped or underserved. By partnering investors with existing businesses to facilitate expansion, forming investment groups to build a business or forming cooperatives to purchase existing businesses, we can improve the economic viability of our local community while keeping more of our dollars right here in EMPORIA. Interested? Want more information? Join the Emporia Main Street Business Enhancement Committee, or our Community Initiated Development group. For more information, contact Emporia Main Street at [main.street@emporia-kansas.gov](mailto:main.street@emporia-kansas.gov).

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