

MAKING A DIFFERENCE



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- Global Food Systems
- Water and Natural Resources
- Health
- Community Vitality
- Developing Tomorrow's Leaders

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Grand Challenge: Community Vitality

Title: North Salina Community Assessment

Why is this issue important? Communities in Kansas face many challenges including access and availability of equitable housing, a shortage of childcare, food deserts, infrastructure deterioration, and limited business and/or services. In some cases, stakeholders are disconnected from one another and unaware of the resources available to make progress on these issues.

A needs assessment provides community members and leaders with an understanding of community assets, issues, and priorities. With this data, communities can map out a course for improvement by creating strategies to make positive and sustainable changes in their communities.

How did Extension address this issue? This past winter, Central Kansas District Director Cade Rensink partnered with the North Salina Community Development Group to complete the First Impressions Program, which helps citizens to see their community through the eyes of a first-time visitor.

A “secret shopper” visitation team was gathered and trained using clear guidelines for evaluation. Subsequently, the team explored North Salina’s residential, retail, and industrial areas, local government entities, schools, and other points of interest. Individuals provided anonymous feedback.

Results were shared through a facilitated stakeholder read-out. Representatives from the community, local government, non-profits, faith-based organizations as well as the media were all in attendance. The session was recorded and shared on social media and other platforms.

What was the impact?

- Over 90% of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed, through this assessment, they heard and understood perspectives of others
- Ten community assets were celebrated and 12 priorities were identified – with business development and access to food /groceries being the top two
- All respondents indicated they better understood their community’s pressing issues as a result of attending the meeting
- Stakeholders offered to support change in their neighborhood by working with others to:
 - utilize assessment results to guide future planning
 - involve more citizens in decision-making
 - participate in strategic doing action committees