ABSTRACT

Designed to facilitate rural development efforts, this pamphlet presents a grading key for ranking community factors in each of four key areas of progress as follows: (1) People Building (education, health services, cultural satisfaction, outreach to the disadvantaged, and leadership); (2) Community Facilities (housing, transportation, utilities, and public services); (3) Environmental Improvement (conservation, recreation, and community initiatives); and (4) Economic Development (jobs, business and industry, credit, and natural resources). Additionally, this guide provides instructions for creating a community action plan, suggesting that a graphic community profile be developed; opinions regarding the profile be shared; the community needs be identified and prioritized; tasks be assigned to community representatives; a steering committee be formed; and an action group be established to secure help from such U.S. Department of Agriculture agencies as Cooperative Extension Service, Farmers Home Administration, Rural Electrification Administration, Forest Service, Soil Conservation Service, and Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service. (JC)
COMMUNITIES DON'T STAY THE SAME—THEY GET BETTER—OR WORSE.

FOUR KEY AREAS OF PROGRESS ARE:

1. PEOPLE BUILDING
   Good communities are good places to grow up in and stay in. They are built by active, progressive citizens. Your community can provide the services and facilities needed to stimulate human development.

2. COMMUNITY FACILITIES
   Rural life does not have to lack urban comforts. It can have the best of both worlds: city conveniences and the advantages of country living. How your community stacks up in this regard is a measure of its progress.

3. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT
   Rural Americans are the custodians of most of America's natural beauty. Your community should be protecting its environmental assets—improving them—making them useful.

4. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
   Millions of youths would rather stay in rural America if they could. Good jobs are a key. Making your community a better place to live and work includes creating jobs. How? By increasing farm and business investment and by promoting civic improvement. Your community should be active in economic development.

NOW GRADE YOUR OWN COMMUNITY
GRADING KEY

| Superior | 4 |
| Good     | 3 |
| Fair     | 2 |
| Poor     | 1 |

PEOPLE BUILDING

EDUCATION
(Consider adequacy and availability to all)
High school
Vocational training facilities and instructors
Continuing adult education

HEALTH SERVICES
Availability of doctors, nurses, medical facilities
Health counseling services for those who need instructions and assistance

CULTURAL SATISFACTION
Availability of books and library services
Action by civic groups and clubs to meet community cultural needs. (Consider hobbies, music, art, plays, athletic programs, youth and adult social programs.)

OUTREACH TO THE DISADVANTAGED
Extent to which community needs are met

LEADERSHIP
Degree to which your community leaders strive actively to make your community a better place to live and work
Degree to which young leadership is encouraged, respected, given a voice

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

HOUSING
(Consider all sectors of your community in terms of living conditions — crowding, sanitation, upkeep and appearance, availability and costs)

TRANSPORTATION
Adequacy of streets, roads and public transportation service

UTILITIES
Adequacy of service and relative cost of —
Electricity and telephones
Gas
Water
Sewers

PUBLIC SERVICES
Police services and fire prevention and control
Trash and garbage removal
Meeting places
Hospitals and emergency ambulances

Total

Total
ENVIROMENTAL IMPROVEMENT

CONSERVATION
Cleanliness of lakes, streams, ponds, forests and shorelines in your community area.
Community antipollution ordinances to insure clean air, land and water.
Protection of forests, water and wildlife resources in your community by:
- Good fire control programs
- Flood prevention and drainage
- Erosion and sediment control

RECREATION
- Degree to which private lands and waters in your community are serving local and regional recreational needs: fishing, swimming, skiing, hiking, camping, hunting.
- Use of public lands in your community to contribute to its beauty, its recreational needs.

COMMUNITY INITIATIVES
Development of a group or committee to determine community environmental improvement needs and priorities.
- Creative projects: starting forests, development of water resources, beautification of existing assets.
- Good planning for community growth and expansion.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

JOBS
Degree to which your community encourages youth to stay after high school, college. Grade in terms of:
- Economic activity
- Financial opportunity
- Availability of nonfarm work for part-time farmers
- Job finding assistance

BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY
- Quality and variety of stores and services in your community.
- Attitude of your community with respect to seeking out and encouraging new industry.
- Community investment in civic improvement.

CREDIT
- Adequacy of credit sources.
- Contribution to community growth by banking and lending initiatives.

NATURAL RESOURCES
- Use of natural resources: soils, forests, water, shorelines, weather, mountains, wildlife, etc. to contribute to the community economy.
### PLOT YOUR COMMUNITY GRADES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>People Building</th>
<th>Community Facilities</th>
<th>Environmental Improvement</th>
<th>Economic Development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Superior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### DO OTHERS AGREE WITH YOUR EVALUATION?

- Get several opinions.
- Exchange views.

**FORM AN ACTION GROUP**

- If you and others think change is needed —
- Assign action responsibility for each task.
- Set up a steering committee to push progress, to help with problems, and to publicize accomplishments.

- Agree on what your community needs to make it better.
- Set priorities.
- Decide on how each task should be approached —
  - by civic volunteer action
  - by municipal, county or State government
HELP IS AVAILABLE

THROUGHOUT AMERICA, COUNTY, STATE AND REGIONAL RURAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEES HAVE BEEN FORMED. THEY ARE PREPARED TO:

- PARTICIPATE IN YOUR COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT ON REQUEST
- FURNISH ADVICE REGARDING LOCAL, STATE AND NATIONAL PROGRAMS THAT CAN HELP YOUR COMMUNITY
- SERVE AS A LINK BETWEEN YOUR COMMUNITY AND AGENCIES THAT CAN ASSIST IN YOUR DEVELOPMENT NEEDS
- SEE IF YOUR COMMUNITY NEEDS CAN BE MADE A PART OF ON-GOING OR PLANNED COUNTY, STATE OR REGIONAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMS

TO GET RURAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEES INVOLVED IN YOUR COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMS, SEE YOUR LOCAL REPRESENTATIVE OF ANY OF THE FOLLOWING USDA AGENCIES:

- COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE
- FARMERS HOME ADMINISTRATION
- RURAL ELECTRIFICATION ADMINISTRATION
- FOREST SERVICE
- SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE
- AGRICULTURAL STABILIZATION AND CONSERVATION SERVICE

IT'S YOUR COMMUNITY. NO ONE KNOWS ITS NEEDS BETTER THAN YOU AND YOUR NEIGHBORS.

TAKE THE INITIATIVE

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FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, WRITE:

Rural Development
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Room 242-E
Washington, D. C. 20250