

Wednesday, July 11, 2007

Moving Sheridan forward ... a process we all own

And the beat (as well as the process) goes on ...

The regular meetings of the Forward Sheridan Economic Development Strategic Planning Task Force are winding up and a plan is emerging. The Strategic Plan will be ready later in the summer.

Many individuals have been and continue to be involved in this process. Each represents a sector, group or interest within the community.

Different perspectives and perceptions have been shared, often resulting in greater understanding for many.

We often don't have the time or opportunity to "walk a mile in ... moccasins," but listening as opinions and experiences are shared helps a more holistic understanding to evolve and a more realistic and workable plan to emerge.

As the work on a Strategic Plan continues, the fruit of the community's continuing efforts is being seen. The recent grant for the community child-care center is a great example of this continuing

process.

Available, affordable child care was identified in the Community Assessment process several years ago as an issue needing attention.

The Forward Sheridan SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and

Threats) process last fall again identified this area as a challenge. Individuals have been working together, sharing ideas and exploring possibilities.

The resulting grant award will go a long way toward helping our community address this issue.

There is a bumper sticker that states, "The only constant is change." Change does seem to be a part of every day... in big ways and small.

With each passing day, we see change. It may be as simple as the pot-

A Community Affair

Cissy
Dillon

Planning for Sheridan's economic development



hole in our street being repaired or as big as a new road being built.

The Strategic Planning Task Force and the Forward Sheridan board and staff recognize that change is inevitable. Any plan will need to be flexible.

The emerging plan will set the stage for development for the next three to five years but will also allow for adaptation to changing circumstances.

As has been stated before, economic development is about people. Yes, it is also about defining what kinds of businesses are most appropriate for our community and about what the infrastructure needs are.

But people — you and I — are the nucleus driving the effort.

Effective economic development helps local businesses thrive; helps

workers find appropriate work, affordable housing and care for their dependents; and helps educational facilities align to workplace needs.

Successful economic development does all of this and more. Forward Sheridan's approach of involving community members has allowed our current process to be one we can truly own.

Cissy Dillon is a trustee for the Sheridan County Public Library System. She was a member of the Community Assessment Steering Committee, involved in the Vision 2020 project, and has worked on other community projects for many years.

"A Community Affair" is a weekly column from citizens who support Forward Sheridan, a professional business organization of invested partners whose purpose is to develop and maintain a sound economy in Sheridan County. Philippe Chino is president/CEO of Forward Sheridan.