

People not in spotlight help move Sheridan forward

An economist once said, "Everyone wants economic growth, but nobody wants change."

But during Forward Sheridan's work meetings, forums and discussions this past year, we found that observation was not supported here.

There is a willingness to support change when those affected and involved understand the benefits, as well as the costs, for the majority of the community.

When people are involved, they understand how change in their community can have long-term benefits.

As with most general observations, there are exceptions. However, it is an open, positive attitude that we are able to embrace.

Because of the dedication of the citizens themselves and their commitment to make positive changes in the community, I am hopeful we will continue to see this same enthusiasm and dedication as we look into the future.

I've seen amazing cooperation and commitment already, as more than 400 volunteers worked on Forward Sheridan's Economic Development Strategic Plan.

In October, November and December of 2006, more than 100 people shared their ideas for the future of the area in three open meetings.

From February to June 2007, another 300 citizens were involved in planning meetings, forums, and committee meetings, and there was incredible turnout from residents of our community who were open to new ideas if those ideas would better the area for those living here now, as well as future generations.

They supported reasoned change because they were involved. The planning process provided an understanding for the purpose of the diversified economic development effort and how planned change can take place without fear to change.

And we continue to see this cooperation, at both a resident level and the government level.

The city and county have hired planners for comprehensive and coordinated planning for the area community. They are responding to the citizens' wishes for broader overall planning for our future.

It is hoped this is just the beginning

A Community Affair

John
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Planning for Sheridan's economic development

of a continual process, as this sharing of purpose is good strategic development.

This kind of activity isn't necessarily all because of an economic development organization like Forward Sheridan. We do need such an organization to

be a catalyst in identifying economic issues that the community needs to address.

However, the citizens and their formal organizations are the ones that help in confronting the issues. The officials and citizens are willing to plan their county and city so they serve the people who live here.

The volunteers are not doing it for recognition. In fact, you may not even know their names and may never see their pictures in the newspaper.

Many of those who have positive visions for this community are eager to support positive changes and may never be recognized for their efforts.

They're doing the work behind the scenes, where they can participate in the process of shaping the accommo-

dation of future economic development.

These efforts are occurring, in part, because of the current growth of the area in population as well as the economy.

However, there is recognition that planned and guided future economic development alternatives should be in a direction that you, as the people who live and work here, want.

After all, it's the people and their activities that make our community what it is.

Our common purpose is to help plan our future as a community with a stronger, diversified economy that may mitigate the old boom/bust cycles and retain the qualities of life we as residents of Sheridan County have enjoyed.

John Patton is a former state legislator, city councilman, and businessman.

"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.