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Housing Needs and Much More

One of the things that keeps coming up as an area of concern is “Housing”. This topic goes back as far as I can see in our files and is included in every Strategic Plan that has been completed. It was also an area of concern in the “*Community Health Assessment Results 2016*” completed by Jefferson County Wellness Coalition, Jefferson County Health Department and FW Huston Medical Center.

We need to make a determination of what type of housing is needed – affordable, multi-family, single-family, rentals, first-time homeowners, etc. I have talked to many individuals and the most common answer is “all the above”. In the survey mentioned above, 27% of the respondents indicated “affordable housing”. What may be affordable to some may not be affordable to others, so where do we start?

In the coming months, I will be working on a Housing Survey. This will be an online survey and one that will help us determine what type of housing is needed. Using the results of the survey we can start working on a plan for development. I will be counting on all of you to help us address this opportunity for growth and to spread the word about the survey to family and friends.

Two more things mentioned in the *Community Health Assessment Results 2016* were affordable childcare and an increase in employment opportunities. Our unemployment rate for September 2017 was 3.2%, the state was 3.8%. An unemployment rate of about 4% - 6% is considered "healthy". Anything below that makes it difficult to find large employers due to limited potential employees. So, how many currently employed Jefferson County residents who work outside the county are willing to change jobs if something closer becomes available? This and other questions need to be answered with a “Labor Survey”.

As I delve into the needs of Jefferson County and where my attention needs to be focused, I get side-tracked with the next issue that pops up, and the next, and the next. This is why Strategic Planning is so important. Strategic planning is an organization's process of defining its strategy, or direction, and making decisions on allocating its resources to pursue this strategy. The plan will be online when it's finished and I will provide an update through future articles. The plan will be a living document and as things are completed another will be added.

One last thing before I close out...I want to hear from those of you who have an interest in seeing Jefferson County grow economically. Even though most say, “we’re a bedroom community”, we still need access to local goods and services. Why settle for less? Let’s GROW! One business at a time, one new house at a time, one more festival, one more community project...just one more thing to make us stand out. Send me your thoughts to the email address below. I want to hear from you!

Wishing you all a Merry Christmas and a spectacular New Year!