

Finding the 7 Capitals in Your Community

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September 2023

K-STATE
Research and Extension

Southwind District

As I have started to settle into my new position as the Community Vitality Agent for Southwind District and make my way around to communities that are within our district, there are many great projects and discussions that communities and groups are doing and supporting. I have been asked several times over the past three months, "What does the job of a Community Vitality agent consist of?" The foundation of community vitality is to help communities become a prosperous place to live, work, play, and thrive through identifying the bright and dark spots in that community, while encouraging growth in population and sustainability.



Vitality is defined as "the state of being strong and active" and "the power giving continuance to life." By a community having strong vitality, we are setting our local businesses up for financial prosperity as well as enriching the lives of current and potential residents. It also encourages individuals to become more involved in making their communities shine. Part of a strong community is using the guidelines of the Seven Community Capitals. Rarely do communities possess ALL community capitals, but all possess some community capitals. The capitals can create a foundation for expanding community capital areas, building on current capitals, or working to create opportunities in capitals that a community is currently lacking. I encourage you to think of the bright spots that your community has that fall into each of the Capitals listed below, and also think about projects that you can see your community benefiting from in each of these as well.

Natural Capital: The quality and quantity of natural and environmental resources existing in a community. Includes all natural aspects of community. Assets of clean water, clean air, wildlife, parks, lakes, good soil, landscape – all are examples of natural capital.

Cultural Capital : The values, norms, beliefs and traditions that people inherit from the family, school and community. assets may include local beliefs, values, history, foods, festivals, cultural heritage, art, etc.

Human Capital: Investments are those investments that add to the health, education, and well-being and self-esteem of people.

Social Capital: Represents the "glue" that holds a community together and whose presence can spur the type of economic growth that brings benefits to the entire community. Examples include leadership, working together, mutual trust, and sense of a shared future.

Political Capital: The ability to influence and enforce rules, regulations, and standards. Communities should allow all groups to have opportunities for leadership and engagement, and to have a voice in public issues.

Financial Capital: Includes forms of money used to increase capacity of the unit that accesses it. These include: savings, debt capital, investment capital, tax revenue, tax abatement and grants. Other examples of financial capital are investments, fair wages, internal and external sources of income.

Built Capital includes all human-constructed infrastructure such as sewers, water systems, machinery, roads, electronic communication, buildings, and housing.

Think about the following questions, What is it that you Love about the community you live in? If you could change one thing about your community, what would it be? What dialogue and with who, would you need to have a discussion with to make that change happen? For more information please contact Amanda Clasen, Community Vitality Agent, at amclasen@ksu.edu or at any Southwind Extension office.