

March 20, 2009 - Summary of the CALMAR AREA STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

Prepared for the Calmar Development Corporation

The full report can be found online at www.calmaria.com. Or for further information, contact John Heying at jheying@ssbank.net or Jim Buchheit at jwbuchheit@yahoo.com.

The Planning Process: The Calmar Development Corporation initiated this Strategic Planning Process for the Calmar Area in order to identify common goals and invite participation from the community. In January a survey was sent out to every business and household in Calmar to invite input and with an invitation to the planning meetings. At the first meeting on February 4 the community was led in an Asset Mapping exercise by consultants Luther Snow and Carolyn Corbin to identify individual and regional resources. At the March 5 meeting workgroups reported on the ideas they have developed and chairs and a steering committee were identified for going forward.

Immediate Opportunities: Several projects are poised for successful immediate completion including the Prairie Farmer Trail-Head workgroup led by chair, Don Schroeder. Other potential short term projects exist in each workgroup including downtown beautification and the Train Depot.

Big picture opportunities have also emerged such as the opportunity to renovate the historic Train Depot and to develop a Regional Wellness Center. The steering committee sees potential to align the goals of NICC with those of Calmar and the South Winneshiek area to create a center for Regional Wellness.

The workgroups are committed to: 1) an appreciation of existing assets and resources, 2) building on existing affinities and partnering with neighbors in the South Winneshiek area, and 3) acting like a network instead of a top-down organization. "My gain is your gain is our gain."

Meetings will be held the 4th Tuesday of each month. Meetings held at the NICC cafeteria. The next meeting will be the 4th Tuesday of April, April 28. Everyone who is interested in the future of the area is invited to attend.

Vision for the Future – Strategic Workgroups

Trail Head Project, Co-Chairs: Don Schroeder, Ron Bullerman. Don Schroeder led a large workgroup towards a vision for completing the Prairie Farmer Trailhead this spring. The group plans a community effort to landscape and develop the Trailhead in time for the Bike Trail opening in partnership with surrounding communities. The workgroup has partnered with a volunteer landscape architect who designed a master plan for the trailhead and Jeff Heying who designed drawings of the trailhead arch. There is a great deal of support to complete this project including volunteer Eagle Scouts who will assist

with the work. The trailhead has applied for a grant from Winneshiek County Foundation. Materials such as paver stones are in storage ready to be laid in place.

A Regional Wellness & Community Center - Co-chairs: Liang Chee Wee, Tami Brincks, Jenny Johnson. Liang Chee Wee, Provost for NICC, reported on the vision for a Regional Wellness-Community Center. A Center is desired as a means to create a healthier community of body, mind, and spirit; a safe place for young people to gather after school, for

families to spend quality time, for senior citizens to plan activities, and most importantly a place for community people to build and strengthen relationships. The vision includes making this a regional center for surrounding communities such as Spillville, Fort Atkinson, and Ossian. The Steering committee will invite area communities and rural residents to participate in the visioning and planning for this Regional Wellness Center in order to create a center that provides for the desires of the South Winneshiek Region. The Steering committee plans to research the Wellness Centers in surrounding communities of Waukon, Cresco, and New Hampton to learn from their building experiences. The workgroup has identified potential sources for funding of the project.

Retail Incubator –Chair Jim Buchheit
Jim Buchheit reported on the plans to partner with Calmar Development Corporation to attract essential retail to the community. Over the last year Calmar lost a full time plumber and floral shop. These are among the opportunities for new businesses in Calmar. The Calmar Development Corporation will act as an incubator by assisting new businesses. New business may receive reduced rent for a period or a low interest loan from Calmar Development. The Calmar Development Corporation ties new businesses to mentors and resources to get started in the business.

Depot Museum - Chair: Janelle Pavlovec
Luther Anderson reported on the vision for enhancing the Depot Museum. The vision for the Depot Museum is to build on its central location and iconic quality of the historic structure. The Museum will attract visitors interested in the history of the railroads, using Calmar’s position as a key depot to showcase changes in trains and culture over time. Anderson explained that the Depot can serve as a visitor informational center as well a center for community activities. Activities may include a bike swap, a sports trade show, a bike safety check, a community walk/run, lawn chair night, and dances.

Downtown Beautification - Chair: Ron Bullerman
Ron Bullerman reported on some ideas for downtown beautification. The State DOT will be repaving Highway 24 through town in the next year or two. As the highway is paved through town this opens opportunities to complete other works while the road is under construction. Sidewalk repair, attractive lighting, and other beautification activities will help Calmar put its best face forward for the many vehicles that travel through its major intersection every day.

Grocery Store and Farmers Market – Co-chairs: John Heying, LaVerne Anderson, John Heying organized this workgroup. Ron Bullerman reported for the group. The group researched startup costs for a small grocery. The research shows that startup costs for even a small grocery pose an economic barrier for attracting a new grocery. The workgroup will continue to look for options and identifies this as a longer range project. As an interim approach, the workgroup is looking at ways to expand the Farmers Market to accommodate more vendors by finding a more spacious location.

Trail to Lake Meyer – Chair: Jim Buchheit.
This has been a long range plan by many in Calmar to extend a walking/biking trail from Calmar to Lake Meyer County Park only one mile south of Calmar. This destination point is a hidden treasure in the county offering boating, fishing, camping, hiking trails and a nature interpretive center. The workgroup will continue to meet with the Winneshiek County Supervisors to request paving of the gravel road from Hwy 24 to Lake Meyer. Other long range plans include connecting the Prairie Farmer Trail to a regional trail system.