

## The Economic Development Challenge

**Thousands of small and medium-sized communities around the world are struggling with the same economic development challenges ...** Lack of exploitable natural resources, aging and declining populations, brain drain, lack of local export-oriented entrepreneurship, loss of employment, lack of skilled labor, business succession, business attraction and retention, immigrant recruitment and integration, and more.

### Systemic Problems

- Few communities have the money and resources to meet the challenges.
- Economic development requires decades of sustained effort to even have a chance of success.
- Economic development is usually too geographically dependent for neighboring communities to pool and scale their resources.
- Millions of dollars can be spent on a single initiative in a single community which can often result in little or no return on investment. (Examples: Build a road, renovate a building, subsidize a branch plant, invest in an existing business, tourism marketing, etc.).
- Long-term success often depends on a series of inter-related wins rather than one or two big hits.
- Economic development can be facilitated but not forced. (Unless you have tens or hundreds of millions to invest and are willing to take the risky “build it and they will come” strategy.)

### Logistical Problems

- The responsibility of economic development often falls to small, fragmented, and under-funded groups and volunteers.
- These groups often have frequent leadership changes, inconsistent strategies over time, and diverse stakeholders to answer to.
- They end up spending as much time trying to survive as they do on actual economic development.
- Initiatives are often done in isolation with no common strategy, consistency, or linkages.
- Measuring progress and success is difficult, if not impossible.

### The Result

While the process of economic development is not difficult to map, the logistics of execution are, in reality, impossible for most communities to accomplish.

Communities will try, and they will achieve some short-term wins, but the long-term goal of building sustainable communities will rarely be accomplished.

## The Solution

The solution is to fully engage and mobilize the entire community, rather than just a handful of people, towards the common goal of economic development. And, to do so in a way that is a natural part of people's daily activities, culminating into a critical mass of participation.

## Community Builder: The Power of People Networking

The success of community economic development often comes down to one key factor: people. It's less about roads or buildings or institutions ... it's much more about people.

Activities that retain, attract, and network the right people can lead to more success than any other "conventional" investment a community can make. But, mobilizing the wider community towards a common goal of economic development is a heroic challenge – perhaps even impossible using conventional communication and marketing methods. People are simply too busy living their own lives to be recruited in sufficient numbers to create critical mass.

**Community Builder is designed to leverage the power of people interaction.** Community Builder uses modern Internet social networking methods that have been proven highly successful by the likes of Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn, Wikipedia, YouTube, Google, Amazon, and others. But, it does so specifically for your community.

Community Builder is a website that serves as the central source of information, resources, and social networking for your local community and economic development activities. Through the nature of its expert design, Community builder facilitates economic development in a transparent and structured way.

**Your community will frequently visit Community Builder because it offers what they are seeking in the normal course of their own lives.** They do not have to know or care that they are participating in economic development. By simply visiting Community Builder, they are advancing the economic objectives of your community in a natural and structured way. They are doing so by being informed and knowledgeable, sharing ideas, gaining new skills, finding new jobs, starting new businesses, interacting with each other locally and globally, and much more.

## Community Builder Helps Communities ...

1. Attract and create new businesses.
2. Retain and grow existing businesses.
3. Nurture employment skills.
4. Facilitate employment connections globally.
5. Reduce out-migration.
6. Attract expatriates and immigrants.
7. Facilitate and leverage the power of global community involvement in economic development.
8. Bring agencies together  
– collaboratively rather than competitively.
9. Monitor and measure results in real time.
10. Generate revenue.

## Community Builder Solves 20 Community Economic Development Challenges

1. A **single common place for all economic development stakeholders** to promote and support. A collaborative and non-competitive oasis that reduces duplication of effort, dilution of budgets, and public confusion. Does not eliminate the need for multiple agencies, but instead allows them to focus on their specific strengths.
2. Everyone, **local and global**, will have a central place to go to find everything related to your community. A starting place for collaboration and research, and a pathway to other topic/organization-specific websites (municipality, tourism, chambers of commerce, development agencies, etc).
3. **Budding entrepreneurs** will have a single place in which to discover the various assistance that may be available to them, and an easy way to connect with the key people that can help guide and motivate them to take the next step. The result: more startups.
4. **Entrepreneurs** will have a place where they can establish meaningful business relationships and tap into your community's global network. This is especially critical for achieving export success.
5. Businesspeople will have a place where they can establish **mentorships**.
6. **Branch plant location scouts** will have a single online destination through which to discover the community and see a cohesive, well-organized, and modern initiative designed to build a sense of community and rally community support for business attraction.
7. **Business owners** seeking to retire or sell their businesses will be able to connect with buyers – locally and globally. Businesses will remain open and grow instead of being shut down. Sellers will have more wealth to spend and reinvest locally.
8. Local people interested in **furthering their skills or employment opportunities** will have a single online destination in which to discover the options available to them.
9. Students and underemployed individuals will have a way to connect with businesses interested in offering experience-building **internships**. Similarly, businesses will have an easy way to promote internship opportunities.
10. Local businesses interested in hiring new employees and connecting with new partners will have a way to **find the right people**.
11. Expatriates wishing to return, and immigrants wishing to settle locally, will have basic housing, living, **community information, and support networks** readily accessible to encourage them to take the next step.
12. Expatriates interested in returning home will have an avenue through which to communicate their desire to do so. Expatriates waiting years for the **right time and opportunity** to come along will be able to increase the likelihood of both coming together.
13. Local businesses interested in hiring new employees and connecting with new partners will have a channel to **connect with expatriates** interested in returning.
14. Local businesses seeking **investment financing** will have a way to connect with local or expatriate investors. Expatriate investors will have a way to find local companies in which they may be interested.
15. Locals and expatriates interested in staying abreast of **local economic and community news** will have a new online news source available. A source that may even be better than fee-based subscriptions, which are often limited in their relevant news coverage.
16. Promoting good news stories will be a cohesive process, with archival capability and a single place to showcase the **overall breadth and depth** of the activity that is happening in a community.
17. Nonprofits and community organizations will have an easy way to connect with volunteers, and **volunteers** will have a way to express their interests in helping.
18. A living and vibrant community that is **always current**. Minimizes the stale information that is common with community websites.
19. A way to **facilitate, monitor, and measure** community activity that leads to economic success.
20. Community Builder not only solves your primary challenges, but it can serve as a **revenue generator** rather than a cost center.