



Leadership

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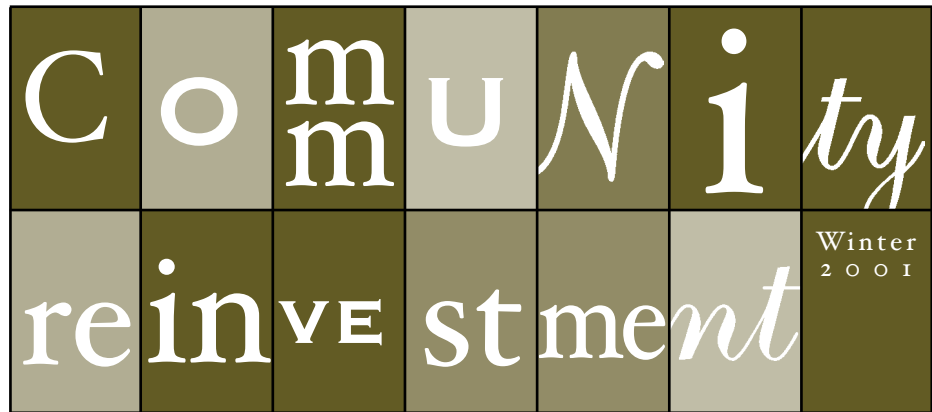
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Leadership

What real difference does community leadership make? What are key leadership traits? What is it that's special about the leaders of Garden City, Kansas—and what can we all learn from them?



ASPECTS OF LEADERSHIP

Vision

Creating a community vision, and the sometimes surprising role of leaders in doing that.

Responsibility

Doing what's needed as responsible leaders—and citizens—to shape a community.

Character

It isn't just what you can do, the position you're in, or how well you communicate. Eventually, leadership comes down to who you *are*.



FACES OF LEADERSHIP

People who make a difference.



RESOURCES

Leadership Resources

Books, programs and other sources for more information about leadership.

Community Affairs Resources

Programs and services offered by the Community Affairs Department of the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City.



PERSPECTIVES

AfterWord

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IN THIS issue . . .

Leadership

“What we need is leadership!” Well, all right...but what kind of leadership? Leadership to do what? How can people figure out what to do, and agree on how to do it? What are expectations of leaders in a community of independent thinkers? What if no one in the community knows where to start? What is “leadership” really about?

We have answers for you. Practical, uplifting, heartwarming answers found in Garden City, Kansas during the week of September 11, 2001. We’ve added a few observations of our own, along with bits of perspective on leadership from other people and places. The primary voices in this issue of *Community Reinvestment*, however, are from Garden City.

Why Garden City? Because it’s the best example we’ve seen of a community—of any size—taking its fate into its own hands. We’ve visited lots of places, many of them with excellent leadership, but Garden City has an indomitable spirit that makes leadership there stand out.

We’ve consistently heard concerns about leadership, especially from people in rural America. We wanted to explore what effective community leadership looked like, but we didn’t want to just write about abstract concepts. So we’ve used Garden City as a reference, and by doing that we can tell you about principles of leadership that work—and about a community that learns from its experience, adapts as necessary, and succeeds. Some of the leadership principles that fit in Garden City may not fit in your community, but we think most of them will.

We first wrote about Garden City three years ago, in an issue of *Community*

Reinvestment focused on credit in the 21st century. We thought this town of 30,000 people, with a minority population of over one-third, could show us what the future will look like in many communities as the United States becomes increasingly multi-ethnic and multicultural. We also thought we might hear a lot about problems. Instead, we were surprised and inspired by the positive, can-do spirit of this community and by how people here faced issues that others might find overwhelming.

The largest industry in Garden City is meatpacking, which draws workers from Mexico and Central and South America, Southeast Asia, Somalia, and other places around the world. With these immigrants have come challenges of housing, education, law enforcement and social services. Garden City has handled those challenges—with style.

We knew that growing rural communities are usually ones that have scenic and recreational amenities or are within easy commuting distance of metropolitan areas. Garden City is on the high, flat plains of southwest Kansas, 250 miles from Denver, 350 from Kansas City, 200 from Amarillo, Texas and 300 from Scottsbluff, Nebraska.

We knew there was strong leadership in Garden City, and we were curious about

LOOK AT Us Now!

The ideas we explore in *Community Reinvestment* are exciting, but our look, which had remained the same since we began publishing in 1993, had lost its luster. We decided it was time—and past time—to more clearly reflect who we are in our image.

The Community Affairs program provides information and educational resources to encourage community economic development and promote broad-based participation in capital markets. We primarily work in the Tenth Federal Reserve District, which includes Colorado, Kansas, western Missouri, Nebraska, northern New Mexico, Oklahoma and Wyoming.

We provide a variety of products and services to a wide range of people and organizations in rural and urban areas and on Indian reservations. The geography includes mountains and plains, with farmland and woods and small towns and suburbs and large cities.

How could we graphically reflect the what and the where and the who of what we do? We had to wrestle with it for a while, but we’re delighted to debut our new look with this issue of *Community Reinvestment*. We thank graphic designer, Micah Rott in the Public Affairs Department of the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City for our lively new design concept.

The look is new, but we have maintained the original purpose of *Community Reinvestment*: to feature articles that increase understanding of the process of community economic development, promote active participation in that process, and increase knowledge and understanding of public policy issues.

IN *THIS* ISSUE . . .

...the community has developed a shared culture and belief about effective leadership. People may disagree about the issues, but they agree on the expectations about leadership.

response to a recent crisis: in December 2000, a fire in one of the community's two meatpacking plants closed the facility and left 2,300 people—more than 10 percent of the work force—without jobs. An IBP meatpacking plant that employs 3,000 people ensures that Garden City is still a meatpacking town, but we wondered about the impact on the community of the elimination of so many jobs at ConAgra.

What we didn't know was that we would be talking with people about leadership and crisis at a time of national crisis the week of September 11. It was soon clear that appointments would be disrupted, and we considered rescheduling our trip. But then we thought, "What better way could we be spending our time?" We're glad we persevered.

Our earlier positive impressions of leadership in Garden City were resoundingly confirmed through conversations with a variety of community leaders. At the end of one long

day of interviews, one of us looked at the other and said, "Kind of makes you want to move here, doesn't it." Yes, it does. There's a resilient attitude and an approach to leadership in Garden City that is contagious within the community, and we hope it can be contagious to other communities.

Some of the benefits of leadership in Garden City are intangible, but others are very visible. A national department store is planning to build a store here as part of a pilot program of stores in smaller communities. The hospital is planning a \$42 million expansion. Garden City built its own fiber-optic system for telecommunications. The community college has the only hands-on industrial ammonia refrigeration training course in the world. The public schools educate children from multiple cultures, with nine different languages spoken by students. Main Street businesses have found ways to compete with Wal-Mart and other national chains.

We think there are lots of "right" ways to look at leadership, and different situations call for different types of leadership. In Garden City, however, the community has developed a shared culture and belief about effective leadership. People may disagree about the issues, but they agree on expectations about leadership.

We found answers to our questions about leadership in Garden City. We can't claim they're definitive, final answers to the big questions about leadership, but we do believe the truths of leadership in Garden City are truths of leadership in communities all over.

So what is it that's magic about leadership in Garden City? How is that spirit of optimism and success created and maintained? What does effective leadership look like? Read on and see!



ASPECTS of LEADERSHIP

Vision

Garden City clearly has a vision for itself, but most of the people we interviewed didn't talk about it. Perhaps it's too vague a word for the practical people here—or maybe the vision permeates the community so thoroughly that it doesn't need to be discussed. It's simply there, as part of everyday life.

The vision of the community is just that: “of the community.” No one person is expected to provide a vision for Garden City. “People in leadership in the community overall have a vision,” said Von Hunn, owner of the True Value hardware store and a member of the Finney County Economic Development Council board of directors. “They may not know how to get everyone on the same page, they just work to keep people involved.”

That involvement gives people a sense of ownership and pride in the community, and provides a foundation of support for the decisions that are made. “There are thousands of servant leaders in this community who are willing to step forward and make sure everyone's heard,” said Chamber of Commerce President Carol Meyer, who is also director of the Finney County Economic Development Corporation. “We have to do that if we're going to be a community—a group of people who choose to work together for a better future. Otherwise, we're just a township or a population.”

Historic vision.

Some of Garden City's success now is attributed to the vision and work of leaders

from the past. Dean Wiley was a long-term, progressive city manager, and his protégé Bob Halloran is city manager now. Business people who made their fortunes in cattle and gas were formidable competitors, but then exhibited a spirit of generosity when they established foundations and built community improvements that have had a lasting impact.

“Back in the 1960s and 1970s a handful of people decided this was home,” said Mayor Jim Wharton, who owns Every Bloomin' Thing Nursery. “They were willing to share a great deal of wealth, which adds to the quality of life here now. Earl Brookover built golf courses, and Fred Finnup built the zoo and park. Their gifts created a quality of life that people in most cities this size don't have.”

Some talked about how the vision and spirit of the community now are carrying on momentum that was created a long time ago. “Garden City has historically had strong leadership, and not just from elected officials,” said Donald Stull, a University of Kansas anthropologist who has studied Garden City and other meatpacking towns since the mid-1980s. “When meatpacking first came to Garden City there was a con-

“There are thousands of servant leaders in this community who are willing to step forward and make sure everyone's heard.”

Aspects of Leadership



“This ideal future is one that reflects economic growth and development, as well as a high quality of life for all residents.”

certed effort by a group of people from the schools, police, newspaper, nonprofit organizations and the faith community to meet the challenges. They have risen to the occasion, and they create a self-fulfilling prophecy—people in Garden City believe they will succeed, and that belief helps them succeed.”

The official vision.

The comprehensive plan for the community, subtitled “A vision for Garden City, 2000-2015,” includes a section entitled “Vision for the Future.” Development of this vision included numerous public meetings at which citizens were encouraged to contribute their ideas about the future of the community.

Points in the plan’s vision include: promoting beneficial economic growth, development and renewal; ensuring sound and

integrated planning; promoting growth of urban/suburban areas; providing public services; promoting housing at a reasonable cost; protecting the environment; conserving natural resources; preserving and enhancing historic, cultural, open space and recreational resources; and assisting business development efforts.

“Collectively, [these]...major planning concepts define a vision for Garden City’s future,” the plan says on page 3. “This ideal future is one that reflects economic growth and development, as well as a high quality of life for all residents. It is a future in which Garden City retains its environmental quality and capital-

izes on its wealth of natural, built and human resources.”

The vision statement is accompanied by a blueprint for progress that community leaders can follow, with full knowledge that the plan provides direction but that the future cannot be predicted. It’s assumed that developing a plan is an important process, but that flexibility will be required to deal with whatever actually occurs.

Implementation of goals to move toward the vision is done with full cooperation between the city and the county, which share building departments and codes. Planning and zoning ordinances discourage sprawl and encourage development in areas that already have roads, sewers, water and utilities. They encourage rural areas to remain oriented to agribusiness.

This approach to development fits with the conservation and preservation values

cited in the comprehensive plan, but the practical emphasis is on saving money and thereby giving the community a competitive advantage.

Leaders in Garden City work to support economic development in a larger community context. “You can’t divide economic development and community development,” said Steve Dyer, Director of Membership Services for the Chamber of Commerce. “The first thing visiting businesses do is talk to people in town. Employees have to want to live here.”

Intrinsic vision.

It’s a given that the vision for Garden City is built on a strong foundation from the past and that it incorporates the agreed-upon objectives of the city’s comprehensive plan for the future. What really counts, however, are the attitude and the actions of people now.

“People can’t be afraid to be visionary,” said Superintendent of Schools Milt Pippenger. “Too often, people reach a certain point and then stop. But we can’t stay in one place. As Will Rogers said, ‘Even if you’re on the right track, you’ll get run over if you just sit there.’”

“Some communities are so tied to their history and tradition that they get stuck,” Pippenger said. “Garden City doesn’t have the kind of history to fall back on that places like Dodge City or Abilene do. That’s been a real positive for us.”

There’s not much standing still or looking backward in Garden City. “This town leans so far forward, people have two choic-

es,” said Planning and Community Development Director Jim Neblett. “We can take a step forward or fall flat on our face.”

Garden City’s vision of itself as a growing, diverse regional center is clear. We think it’s the unwritten vision—and practices—of leadership in Garden City that will make that happen.

“This town leans so far forward, people have two choices. We can take a step forward or fall flat on our face.”



Aspects of Leadership

Responsibility

Garden City is the largest city in southwest Kansas, and it's 200 miles from any city with a population over 100,000. "We have to take care of ourselves and provide leadership ourselves," said Carol Meyer. "If we don't, no one will."

"Sometimes that's scary," Meyer said. "We're a very small community in western Kansas, and we're operating in a global marketplace. We have to build on our strengths, work on our weaknesses, and move forward. We do that by looking at what needs to be done, at whose responsibility it is to do it, and how we can cooperate to make it happen. We select what challenges we choose to take on as a caring community."

The responsibilities include supporting schools and the community college in their work to meet educational needs in the community and to train people for the workforce. Leaders are expected to provide information, citizens are expected to be knowledgeable about issues, and people are expected to be open to learning and exploring new ideas and ways of doing things. And, leaders in Garden City are responsible for welcoming and developing new leaders for the future.

Learning and educating

For many immigrants to Garden City, their involvement in the community comes initially through their children and the schools. "Language is often the problem with people getting involved," said Tony Mendez, pastor of Iglesia Luterana La Resurreccion and also vice president of the Ministerial Alliance and a member of the police board.

Jose and Elizabeth Torres, owners of a

retail business, Mi Rumba, also said language is a barrier. "People need to understand how important it is to learn to speak English," said Elizabeth Torres. "Parents and children both need to be educated, and it starts with the parents. Education helps you see things differently."

Garden City's school system employs translators to help overcome language barriers and continuously looks for ways to meet the needs of students and the community. Signs in the schools are in English, Spanish and Vietnamese.

"We have worked in the school district to make the kids happy so their parents will stay," said Linda Trujillo, Director of Supplemental Programs for the Garden City School District. "Happy kids make it easier for parents to put up with unpleasant jobs in the packing plant." As families remain in one place, both parents and children are more likely to become involved in the community. Lower turnover helps children learn better in schools, cuts costs for employers, and saves money for the city in terms of utility transfers, record keeping, etc.

By all accounts, and in spite of ongoing challenges, schools in Garden City are successful. They were featured recently in the Mott Foundation's publication *Communities and Schools* because of their excellence in providing multicultural education. Staff such as Trujillo and Migrant Community Resource

Lower turnover helps children learn better in schools, cuts costs for employers, and saves money for the city in terms of utility transfers, record keeping, etc.

Coordinator Janie Perkins have jobs dedicated to looking at how the schools can best meet educational needs in the community and how to address social issues that present barriers to education.

Superintendent Milt Pippenger recently took a group of educators from Grand Island, Nebraska on a tour through the schools. “They have employees working at their meat-packing plant who had worked at the ConAgra plant here,” he said, “and they wondered why their kids weren’t in their schools. They learned that even though people work in Grand Island, their families still live in Garden City because they’re happy in the schools here.”

The Garden City Community College also works hard to meet educational needs in the community. “Almost 60 percent of our students are residents of Finney County,” said President Carol Ballantyne, “and many of the others are from neighboring counties in Southwest Kansas. In fact, almost 92 percent of the people we serve are Kansas residents.” Several years ago the college developed a program to train people in industrial ammonia refrigeration to meet needs for employees at the meatpacking plants. That innovative program has drawn participants from 48 states and seven other countries.

Education in Garden City is not just a responsibility of the schools. “Leaders have to understand that people need to be educated and find ways to do that,” said Jose Torres. Another business owner, Von Hunn, would agree with him. “We have to educate people, and that starts with me talking with my employees and educating other people in business,” Hunn said.

City and county staff feel a strong responsibility to make information readily available so that citizens can learn about the issues and policymakers can make sound decisions. “There

are always naysayers,” said Finney County Administrator Pete Olson, “but when people have the facts, they understand why decisions are made the way they are.”

Leadership in Garden City is not a static goal to be achieved and held onto. It’s an evolving responsibility that includes finding replacements, training others and expanding the base of leadership.

One way future leaders are developed is through informal mentoring. “I waited a long time for Janie to grow up,” said Linda Trujillo, looking appreciatively at Janie Perkins, who is on her staff with the Garden City Public Schools. Perkins moved with her family from Mexico to Garden City when she was a child. Her father works in the meatpacking plant and her mother works at the hospital.

Perkins in turn introduced us to a young man she works with on the school district staff.

Leadership in Garden City is...an evolving responsibility that includes finding replacements, training others and expanding the base of leadership.



AsPectS of LeaderSHIP

The Leadership Garden City program...has recently undergone a transition from focusing on leaders and potential leaders with position and connections to focusing on people with passion and conviction.

“We have to serve as mentors and train others to come along,” she said. “If it works out, great. If it doesn’t you find someone else to work with and just keep on doing it.”

Perkins is one of three Hispanic persons on the five-member City Commission. “You have to be a doer,” she said. “If I can motivate others to get involved in politics, I’ll have accomplished what I wanted to.”

Other training of leaders is more formal. The Leadership Garden City program is designed to educate current and future leaders in the community. The program has recently undergone a transition from focusing on leaders and potential leaders with position and connections to focusing on people with passion and conviction.

“We weren’t seeing as much change generated in the community by graduates of the program as we wanted to,” said Carol Meyer, who

coordinates the Leadership Garden City program. “We think effective leadership comes, first, from self-awareness and personal conviction.

“Being a leader involves being clear about what you care passionately about, understanding your own strengths and weaknesses for responding, developing a strategy and taking action,” said Meyer. “Our training has moved from an emphasis on position and connections to an emphasis on caring and issues. It’s about how to bring about change and how to make a difference in the community.”

Finally, education and learning are absorbed simply from being a part of the community. “We’re ‘Heinz 57’ variety stock,” said Linda Trujillo. “I prefer the salad bowl analogy, not the melting pot. My children find other places boring, because to them the kids all look alike and act alike. They wear the same brand of jeans and the same colors. We have more color here—and it’s not just skin color.”

The learning that is absorbed includes subtle lessons. “Blaming others for problems isn’t accepted in Garden City,” said Milt Pippenger. “If there’s a problem, we sit down and talk about it and see what we can do to help.”

“If we participate in the community with our children, we’ll have positive change,” said The Garden City Telegram Editor and Publisher Steve Delaney. “That’s not necessarily leadership, it’s just common sense.”

Participating

When Milt Pippenger came to Garden City to be superintendent of the school district nine years ago, some business leaders let him know that they weren’t happy with the quality of education students were receiving in the schools. “But they weren’t just complaining,” Pippenger said. “They got involved and worked to help improve the schools.”



Citizens in Garden City are expected to be informed about the issues, to speak up and to support what they believe in. Leaders are responsible for listening, for being open-minded and flexible. They're responsible for acting on what's good for the community, not because of personal agendas or a desire for power.

People in Garden City know that they will disagree on issues, and they believe strongly that everyone has a right, and a responsibility, to speak and be heard. "We're totally open to new ideas," said George Hopkins, an optometrist who chairs the Finney County Economic Development Corporation board of directors. "We invite participation in the process—in fact, maybe we're almost too informal about that. Most people feel comfortable with expressing themselves at a meeting, and that sometimes results in a sloppy, inefficient meeting. But that's counterbalanced by the value of people knowing they have been heard."

Once the voices have been heard, the alternatives considered, and a decision made, people in Garden City assume responsibility for supporting it and making it work. "You'll find people here helping to pound nails in a board when they really don't believe those nails should be there," said Von Hunn.

Leadership is expected to reflect the diversity of the community and to change as the community changes. "Elected officials need to turn over," said City commissioner and bank President Jeff Whitham. "You need diversity in age, race, sex, etc."

In a growing community of 30,000 people, leaders said the opportunities to become involved are readily available. However, it is not assumed that everyone knows that. Finney County Administrator Pete Olson said one of his biggest concerns about leadership was how to involve more people. Several people—both

Anglo and minority—talked about how to involve more Hispanic and Asian people in leadership roles in the community. Some also wanted more young people in leadership positions, but understood the constraints on time for parents with small children.

"This is a young town," said George Hopkins, "with an average age of 26. I served on the city commission when I had just turned 30. Right now, our mayor is 85, but the other four members of the commission are in their early 40s.

"Younger people are more open to change," said Hopkins, who is 42 now. "They're less set in their ways, and they're not afraid of new ideas or of a next-door neighbor who doesn't speak their language."

Cooperating and Competing

"People who come here are surprised when they see how we cooperate with one another," said one Garden City leader. "Garden City is a very competitive town," said another. "We don't pay that much attention to what our neighboring communities are or are not doing," said still another. "We focus on what we want to do in Garden City, on what we want to be."

Which comment reflects the real Garden City? They all do. People in the community compete in business and in politics. They also cooperate. The community competes with others in the region, with an assumption that surrounding towns also need to thrive.

Policies and procedures for the Finney County Economic Development Corporation include a section about pirating: "It is the intent of the City to avoid participation in 'bidding wars' between Kansas cities or areas competing for the relocation of an existing Kansas business through attempts to offer the largest tax incentive or other public inducement,

"We don't pay that much attention to what our neighboring communities are or are not doing. We focus on what we want to do in Garden City, on what we want to be."

AsPectS of LeaderSHIP



Businesses in Garden City compete with one another, but they usually look for ways to expand the pie, not eliminate another's share.

which is detrimental to the state's economy and the public interest."

The city, the county, the schools, the community college and the chamber of commerce all have their own needs and priorities, but leaders of each of these entities meet every month and talk about what is most important for the entire community and how they can work together to make those things happen.

Cooperation across political boundaries also extends to the region. "We needed improvements to Highway 50, which runs through the middle of Garden City," said Pete Olson. "We talked to the Kansas Department of Transportation, and they agreed to do a study of what could be done. That study would need to cover the road from Mullinville, 80 miles east of us, to the Colorado border, which is 60 miles west, and they needed \$200,000 in matching funds to do it. Since the road improvements

would benefit all of southwest Kansas, not just Garden City, we set up a meeting with the other counties in the region and worked out a cost-sharing plan for doing the study."

The Finney County Economic Development Corporation is a member of a group of similar organizations in southwest Kansas. "We've worked hard on getting large dairy businesses to this area," said chair George Hopkins. "We've helped bring a dozen to the 13-county area—but none are located in Finney County. What we've learned from the beef industry, however, is that it's profitable to be near the producers. We think we have a good opportunity for value-added processing. The infrastructure is in place in Garden City, and we're a likely choice for a dairy product processing plant."

"Working with other counties in the region to bring in business makes sense," said Carol Meyer. "Garden City is a regional center, but if the surrounding communities can't survive and thrive, we're not a regional center to anybody."

Businesses in Garden City compete with one another, but they usually look for ways to expand the pie, not to eliminate another's share. "When the Westlake hardware store opened on the other side of town last year, some of my employees said, 'Oh man, what are we going to do?'" said Von Hunn, owner of the True Value hardware store. "They're direct competition. It's an old chain that's been around for a long time, and they have deep pockets.

"I felt that our customer service was good enough, we were filling enough niches, we had enough inventory, and we had a good clientele base," Hunn said. "For example, we've established the best sales, rental and repair for chainsaws in the region—and this is an area without many trees. All that has worked for us, and

we've had a good increase in business this year."

Hunn is one of the people who didn't support tax abatements recently approved by the city commission as part of an incentive package to bring a Kohl's Department Store to Garden City. "I like Kohl's moving here because it brings other business to Garden City," said Hunn. "But I'm against subsidies for retail business. A lot of people were really upset at our city commission for giving the abatements. I wasn't for that, but people need to understand that eventually having Kohl's here benefits all of us. Expansion of retail business means expansion of the tax base. I may not be for something, but if it's here, let's get behind it."

"Garden City is a younger, more aggressive community than some of the towns in the region," Hunn said. "You see the effects of capitalism here. People want to make money and they are willing to reinvest it in the community. People here are philanthropic."

People disagree with one another in Garden City, but what's striking is the lack of a "my way or no way" attitude. We talked with another business person who opposed the incentives for Kohl's and who believes that competing businesses can take away a part of the pie, rather than make it bigger.

"We welcome what naysayers have to say," said Carol Meyer. "There is no one right answer, and the first or second or third thing we do may not be right. The issues are complex, and someone who is called a naysayer on one issue will be positive on another. The naysayer's voice makes us stop and think about whether we are doing the right thing for the community. It doesn't make the process easy, but we need them."

We heard a few rumblings about issues and about leadership in Garden City. Although three members of the city commission are

Hispanic, only one speaks Spanish as a native language, which leaves some Hispanics uncertain about whether their voices can truly be heard. Key staff for government and some community organizations have been in their positions for many years. The knowledge and continuity this provides are appreciated by most, but some ask whether it might be time for fresh perspective.

Others think the focus on business development is too oriented toward agriculture. "Sometimes people ask why we don't work on bringing in a computer facility or building airplanes," said George Hopkins. "We don't have the facilities or the employees for those types of business. Our base is agricultural, and it makes sense to me to diversify our strategy in the ag area."

The battles in Garden City are won and lost, but dissent remains civil. When we visited Garden City three years ago, Seaboard Corporation was considering building a large pork processing plant in the area. Some were enthusiastic about the possibility, believing it would build on the strengths Garden City already has and increase population to a level that would bring national retailers to the community. Others were adamantly opposed, believing the city needed to diversify its business base and that another packing plant would just add problems for an already-challenged social infrastructure.

The perspectives differed, and there wasn't a clearly right or wrong answer. But people who had opposite views on the issue consistently said the same thing: "We'll make the best of whatever decision is made. We know we can successfully handle the challenges that meat-packing plants bring. If Seaboard comes here, we'll make it work. If they don't, we know we can create other opportunities."

People may disagree with one another in Garden City, but what's striking is the lack of a "my way or no way" attitude.

Aspects of Leadership

Character

“Leaders don’t have to be smart or rich or good-looking,” said George Hopkins. “They do have to show concern, be open, not hide things, listen, and be willing to walk forward.”

We heard similar comments about leadership from everyone we talked with in Garden City. “Who you are, what you believe, and what you do about it are what’s important,” said Carol Meyer. “Leadership is in making sure that the questions are asked, the voices are heard, and that we’re doing the right thing for the entire community.”

Open-mindedness.

“We’re a transient community,” said Meyer. “Thirty-two percent of the graduates of our leadership development program are gone. In some ways that’s good. It gives us more freedom to experiment and take risks. We build on our experience, but don’t let it be a limiting factor. We don’t have too many people saying, ‘We already tried that in the past.’ We’re a new community from what we were ten years ago.

“New people who travel in and out of the community make a difference,” said Meyer. “It means that new ideas flow in and out. New people who come here have traveled and had experience in other places. They bring new ideas into the community.”

“Flexibility is one of the most important leadership traits, because there’s something different happening all the time,” said Steve Dyer. “People have to be open-minded. Just because it was done this way in the past, we don’t have to do it that way in the future. We need to look at what’s in front of us, lis-

ten to people, and trust them.”

Dealing with ambiguity can be a challenge for all of us: it’s more comfortable to have clear answers and to think we can make things happen the way we want them to. Occasionally there really is only one right answer, and sometimes the future comes out as predicted. But usually, effective leaders have to adapt their skills and experience to fit situations—and people—that aren’t what or who was expected.

“Flexibility is a key,” said Penney Schwab, executive director of Mexican-American Ministries. “If something doesn’t work, people need to find another way. Leaders need to be able to see shades of gray. And they need a comfort level with people wearing suits and people wearing jeans.

“Garden City is pretty flexible and adaptable,” Schwab said. “Sometimes I think the ‘big vision’ can be highly overrated. Things change so fast, the vision may not have anything to do with current reality.”

On the other hand, being open-minded and flexible does not mean being undependable or unpredictable. “Leaders need to provide consistency,” said Jim Neblett. “They need to set policies and goals that provide a direction in which the community can consistently move, such as through a comprehensive plan.”

Integrity.

“Leaders have to believe what they say

“Leadership is in making sure that the questions are asked, the voices are heard, and that we’re doing the right thing for the entire community.”

and say what they believe,” said Von Hunn. “Most people can see through an individual who’s out there blowing smoke.” Honesty and integrity are expected of leaders in Garden City, as is the ability to put the good of the community before personal interests—or personal interests of others. “Leadership is called to make the tough decisions that may not always be popular,” said Hunn.

People in Garden City select leaders they trust, and leaders in turn trust citizens’ ability to make good decisions when they have all the information about an issue. Leaders and citizens have taken risks, and by confronting issues head-on, they’ve tested and expanded their capacity to handle all kinds of challenges.

That doesn’t mean decisions are always right the first time. “People here are not afraid to make a mistake,” said Milt Pippenger. “We’ll try something, and if it doesn’t work, we’ve learned and we’ll do something different next time.” George Hopkins said, “Until I fail a couple of times, I’m not learning anything.”

An attitude of trusting in the integrity of people is also evident within organizations. “I try to hire good people, and then let them go to do their work,” said Pippenger. “That’s true with others in the community, too. Trying to take over or take back what you’ve asked others to do limits you and them.”

“What volunteers and elected officials have to do in a community like this is hire people who have the same values as the community, with characteristics they respect, and give them leeway to do as they see fit,” said George Hopkins. “Our elections aren’t so much issue-oriented or based on getting some sort of product. They’re focused more

on the quality of life than on a specific agenda.

“We have good, efficient government taking care of the necessities,” said Hopkins, “and that encourages private business to come in. In western Kansas, people tend to be comfortable with who they have elected. There’s more trust, and less concern and attention to the process.”

“People may not see eye to eye with someone else,” said Mayor Jim Wharton, “but you don’t fire people because you disagree with them or don’t like them.”

“Until I fail a couple of times, I’m not learning anything.”



FACES of Leadership



Jim Wharton
Mayor and Owner,
For Every Bloomin' Thing Nursery



Juana "Janie" Perkins
City Commissioner and
Migrant Community Resource
Coordinator, Garden City Public Schools



Steve Delaney
Editor and Publisher,
The Garden City Telegram



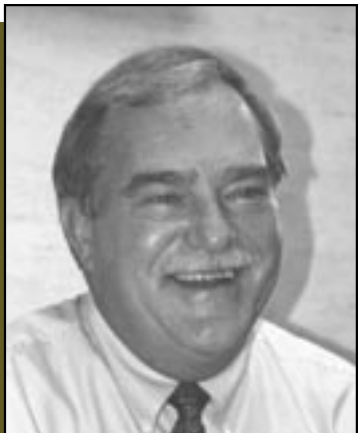
Penney Schwab
Executive Director,
Mexican-American Ministries



Jose Torres
Co-owner,
Mi Rumba Retail Business



Reverend Tony Mendez
Pastor, Iglesia La Resurreccion and
Vice Chair, Ministerial Alliance



Bob Halloran
City Manager,
City of Garden City



Dr. Linda Trujillo
Director of Supplemental Programs,
Garden City Public Schools



Jim Neblett
Director of Planning & Community
Development, City of Garden City



Dr. George Hopkins
Optometrist and
Chair, Finney County Economic
Development Corp.



Von Hunn
Board Member, Finney County Economic
Development Corp. and Owner, Garden City
True Value Hardware Store



Carol Meyer
President, Chamber of Commerce and
Director, Finney County Economic
Development Corp.



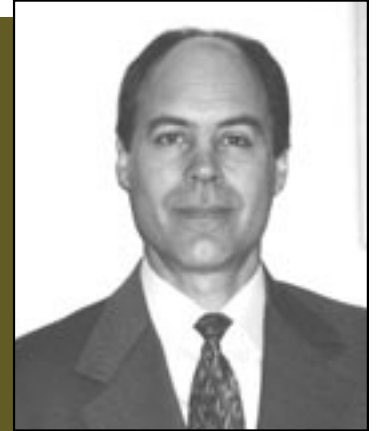
Dr. Carol Ballantyne
President,
Garden City Community College



Dr. Milt Pippenger
Superintendent,
Garden City Public Schools



Steve Dyer
Director of Membership Services,
Chamber of Commerce



Jeff Whitham
City Commissioner and President,
Western State Bank



Elizabeth Torres
Co-owner,
Mi Rumba Retail Business



Pete Olson
County Administrator,
Finney County, Kansas

RESOURCES

Leadership Resources

Below are sources for more information—and inspiration—on leadership. Some were recommended by leaders in Garden City, others are our own favorites.

Leaders are expected to provide information, citizens are expected to be knowledgeable about issues.

From Carol Meyer, coordinator of the Leadership Garden City Program:

The 21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader, by John C. Maxwell. The author summarizes his experience in leadership into a checklist for use by others who want to learn leadership skills. Thomas Nelson, 1998.

The 17 Lies That are Holding You Back and the Truth That Will Set You Free, by Steve Chandler. Stories and personal experiences to motivate people to live their lives based on truths. Renaissance Books, 2000.

The Four Agreements: A Practical Guide to Personal Freedom, by Don Miquel Ruiz. A code of conduct written in the voice of a shamanic teacher and healer. Amber-Allen Publishers, 1997.

The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference, by Malcolm Gladwell. Gladwell writes about how “Ideas and products and messages and behaviors spread just like viruses do.” Little Brown & Company, 2000.

Pay It Forward, by Catherine Ryan Hyde. A novel (and a film) based on a social studies class assignment to “Think of an idea for world change and put it into action.” Pocket Books, 2000.

From Dr. Milt Pippenger, Superintendent of Garden City Public Schools:

Total Leaders: Applying the Best, by Charles J. Schwan and William G. Spady. This book about leadership theories, written for educators but useful for anyone, focuses on authenticity, vision, culture, quality and service. Rowman and Littlefield, 1998.

Three of our own favorites:

Leadership Without Easy Answers, by Ronald A. Heifetz. Leadership related to values and authority, with theories, examples and practices of leadership adapted to needs and issues. Harvard University Press, 1994.

Leadership and the New Science: Discovering Order in a Chaotic World, by Margaret Wheatley. Scientists have moved beyond Isaac Newton’s mechanical theories in their research, and Wheatley suggests we do the same as we analyze leadership and the structure of groups. Barrett-Koehler, 2001.

The Art of Leadership, by Max De Pree. The CEO of Herman Miller, Inc. believes the success of this Fortune 500 company depends on interaction with employees and commitment to values. Doubleday, 1989.

The Community Leadership Association. A non-profit organization dedicated to nurturing leadership in communities throughout the United States and internationally. The Community Leadership Association, 200 S. Meridian Street, Suite 250, Indianapolis, IN 46225, 317-637-7408, <http://www.communityleadership.org/overview/overview.html>.

Community Affairs Resources

The Community Affairs program at the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City provides information and educational resources to encourage community economic development and promote broad-based participation in capital markets. Our areas of expertise include:

- Community economic development, including urban, rural and Indian country development;
- Financial resources that support development of affordable housing and small businesses;
- Access to credit.

We offer workshops on community economic development and access to capital, presentations tailored to specific topics and audiences, an annual conference co-sponsored with the Center for the Study of Rural America and other conferences focused on topical issues.

In addition to the semiannual publication of Community Reinvestment, we offer the following resources:

- *1stSource*, an Internet guide (www.1stsource.kc.frb.org) to public programs that support affordable housing, business and community development, and community infrastructure projects;
- *Doing the Undoable Deals*, a flowchart that outlines the roles of public and private sector resources and partners in community economic development projects;
- *Materials and Resources* from the 11 other Federal Reserve Banks, the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, and other agencies and organizations.

All our products and services are available at no charge. Brochures with more information about workshops and tools and resources are available. To learn more, see our web site at <http://www.kc.frb.org/home/subcommunity.cfm> or contact us at the addresses listed on the inside front cover.

“We think effective leadership comes, first, from self awareness and personal conviction.”

After Word

Our first appointment in Garden City was at 9:00 a.m. on September 11 with Jeff Whitham at Western State Bank. We talked of what was happening in New York City, then we talked about Garden City, and then we talked again about New York City.

“We had a stutter in our step for a while, but we’re still moving forward.”

What do people do in a crisis? The attack on the World Trade Center was very different from the fire in the meatpacking plant in Garden City, but many of the questions for leaders are the same.

It was late on December 25, 2000, when the central section of the ConAgra beefpacking plant burned. Two weeks before that, corporate leaders had driven stakes into the ground to outline the boundaries for a major plant expansion.

After the fire, Garden City leaders set about taking care of logistical necessities. They made sure state unemployment funds were available and provided counseling for people on how to get benefits. They made extra social services available. They cut the city budget in anticipation of reduced revenues. Then they looked to the future by working out a set of incentives to encourage ConAgra to retool and come back.

“We had a stutter in our step for a while, but we’re still moving forward,” said Pete Olson. ConAgra initially indicated they would let Garden City know in April if they would reopen or not. That decision had still not been made at the end of November, almost a year later. While leaders may find that frustrating, they’re not discouraged.

“I think it’s true that a community becomes stronger when tragedy of any kind

hits,” said Carol Meyer. “But we just have to buck up, and remind ourselves that we’ll be fine. We’ve had a meatpacking plant close before, and we got through it. We hope ConAgra will reopen, but we’ll be okay if they don’t. We’ll find another use for the facility within a couple of years.”

The attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11 was a long way from Garden City geographically. However, the community was directly affected when three planes landed in Garden City after federal orders to ground all aircraft. Since the small airport here didn’t have jetways, fire truck ladders were used to disembark the 178 passengers plus crew.

“It was like a dry run of our emergency response system,” said George Hopkins. Community leaders found shelter, food and transportation for the unexpected visitors. When there weren’t enough hotel rooms available in Garden City, arrangements were made to take people to Dodge City. Appointments were rescheduled, and new priorities were taken care of.

“There’s a lot of good communication and interaction among leaders in the community,” said Milt Pippenger. “Leaders are out and about in the community, and they support each other. Response during the week of September 11 proved how well the

community works together.”

No one could have predicted that air space in the United States would be closed down in a national emergency. No one expected a fire at the local ConAgra plant. But Garden City was able to respond well because the leaders there have had years of practice in resilience and adaptability.

“There is something different about Garden City,” said Donald Stull, an anthropologist at the University of Kansas. “Most communities don’t meet the challenges like they do—not that other communities we study don’t do good things, but there’s something special about Garden City. It’s had its problems, and it has had to learn on its own. IBP came to Garden City in 1980, and it’s the grand dame of meatpacking towns. It’s a diverse, cosmopolitan community that offers a variety of activities—and a choice of ethnic cuisine.”

“In Garden City, you belong everywhere,” said Linda Trujillo. “If you need help around here, you can get it.” Janie Perkins’ daughter, with her Hispanic mother and Anglo father, reflects that spirit. “She belongs to the Southeast Asian Club at her school,” said Perkins. “Girls of all backgrounds and skin colors dance in the Tet Festival, not just Vietnamese girls. The Vietnamese kids are good Salsa dancers. Any cultural celebration has others involved. With our geographic isolation, we have to make our own amusement.”

“People here smile, shake hands, hug, absorb the best of each other,” said Linda Trujillo. “There’s no problem with my preferring enchiladas to beef steak. People live where they can afford to live, or where housing is open. Someone said we truly are the western frontier, where each of us can be our own person. Other places are nice to visit

but when I come back to Garden City, I feel like I can take a deep breath again.”

Although we’ve written primarily about the strengths of leadership in Garden City, those strengths were developed in response to challenges. “We may have been coasting some before the fire at ConAgra,” said one person. “My guess is that we wouldn’t have been as aggressive about bringing in Kohl’s Department Store if we hadn’t had the fire.”

“The problems go on, in any meatpacking town,” said Donald Stull. “The turnover in the schools is 35-45 percent every year. The issue isn’t growth, it’s turnover. Crime

“In Garden City, you belong everywhere.”



“We truly are the western frontier, where each of us can be our own person.”

may level off, but it's not going to be eliminated. The executive director of one social service agency said leaders have to contend with 'change fatigue.' You can't stay 'up' for 20 years.”

“Garden City is America,” is the slogan often used in this community. Actually, we think America will be like Garden City only with luck, determination and a lot of hard work. However, since September 11 we may be moving more in that direction.

We've realized that while we can make plans and be prepared for contingencies, we can't control what will happen in the future. We're reminding ourselves that we cannot fear or condemn people just because they hold different beliefs or come from places with lifestyles different from our own. While we acknowledge the necessity of some decisions being made behind closed doors, we long for openness and trust, with our leaders and with one another.

We're increasing our ability to deal with change and uncertainty. We're celebrating the family and friends and community that we've sometimes taken for granted.

We can't change the fact that there will always be new challenges, that some of those challenges will be especially painful, and that there aren't always clear answers about what to do. What we can do is look to Garden City, Kansas for lessons about how to contend with change and diversity, how to face adversity and crisis, how to create a truly democratic community, and how to celebrate life.



Someone Said . . .

Bad attitudes and whining not allowed.

— Sign on the Wall, Adam's Rib Restaurant
Garden City, Kansas, September 2001

Chance favors the prepared mind.

—Louis Pasteur, 1822-1895

Leadership is a matter of intelligence, trustworthiness, humaneness, courage, and sternness.

— Sun Tsu
The Art of War, over 2,000 years ago

Most of us give ourselves good advice every day but seldom act upon it. As the old farmer told the young government agriculture agent, "Son, I already know how to be twice as good a farmer as I am.

— Richard Farson,
Management of the Absurd: Paradoxes in Leadership, 1996

The adaptive requirements of our society require leadership that takes responsibility without waiting for revelation or request.... One may lead perhaps with no more than a question in hand.

— Richard Heifetz,
Leadership Without Easy Answers, 1994

The need for leadership from people in authority becomes ever more critical during periods of disequilibrium, when people's urgency for answers increases. Yet that role is played badly if leaders reinforce dependency and delude themselves into thinking that they have to have the answers when they do not.

— Richard Heifetz,
Leadership Without Easy Answers, 1994

Leadership takes place every day. It is neither the traits of the few, a rare event, or a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. In our world, in our politics and businesses, we face adaptive challenges all the time.

— Richard Heifetz,
Leadership Without Easy Answers, 1994

Leaders...offer a vision for tackling an overwhelming disaster. Their wisdom, distilled, came down to four basic truisms: be calm, tell the truth, put people before business, then get back to business as soon as possible.

— Leslie Wayne and Leslie Kaufman, "Leadership, Put to a New Test,"
New York Times, September 16, 2001

One reason that the myth of the great leader is so appealing is that it absolves us of the responsibility for developing leadership capabilities more broadly. In a learning organization, the burden is shifted: a perceived need for leadership...can be met by developing leadership capacities through the organization..., not by just relying on a hero leader... Success in finding a hero leader reinforces a belief in the group's powerlessness, thus making the fundamental solution more difficult...Leading takes on new meaning in learning organizations. The leaders are those building the new organization and its capabilities...such leadership is inevitably collective.

—Peter Senge, as quoted by Russ S. Moxley in *Leadership and Spirit*, 1999

Leadership is much more an art, a belief, a condition of the heart, than a set of things to do. The visible signs of artful leadership are expressed, ultimately, in its practice.



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