

Rural Research Report



20th Anniversary Edition

Fall 2009

Volume 20, Issue 5

by Will Andresen

The author is an Associate Professor at the University of Wisconsin Extension serving as the Community Resource Development Educator in Iron County. His research focuses on location decisionmaking by young people as a foundation for community development initiatives in small towns.

Published by the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs

Stipes Hall 518
Western Illinois University
Macomb, IL 61455-1390
309.298.2237

www.IIRA.org

Attracting and Retaining Young People as an Economic Development Strategy

Introduction

A considerable literature exists documenting the migration movements of individuals. For example, James Jasper (2000) has written that Americans “change our residence . . . more often than any other culture except nomadic tribes” (71). The average American moves every five years, making this compulsion to move an important part of the culture. What can be done to make rural locations a location of attraction for this population on the move? This paper draws on the experiences initiated within the Gogebic Range to provide one answer.

In *Live First, Work Second*, Rebecca Ryan (2007) states that “three out of four Americans under the age of 28 said a cool city is more important than a good job” (12). These statements are supported by the *Cool Cities Survey* conducted by the State of Michigan which found that 68% of college students and recent college graduates agree with the statement “I want to live in a place that fits my lifestyle more than a job that pays the most” (Michigan Economic Development Corporation 2004).

In *The Rise of the Creative Class*, Richard Florida (2002) argues that members of the creative class “insist they need to live in places that offer stimulating, creative environments. Many will not even consider taking jobs in certain cities or regions—a stark contrast to the organizational age, when people moved to chase jobs” (95).

The important message of this report is that rural communities need to refocus their attention on addressing what makes their small towns and rural settings a destination sought after by those individuals relocating in American society. Understanding the location preferences of today’s young people will help these communities create the kinds of places that will attract these “people on the move.”

Much attention has been focused on the movement of people to the “stimulating and creative environments” found in larger, urban centers, where creative people are drawn to the arts, culture, night life, and to other creative people. Because of this attention, community development practitioners in small towns and rural areas may be inclined to build their community development efforts by offering these urban style amenities such as pedestrian malls and a thriving night life. This approach may work in those small towns and rural areas with especially unique assets such as lakefronts and mountains, or those located in a larger metropolitan area, but a much different approach may be more productive in most small towns and rural areas.

In 2004, the Michigan Economic Development Corporation through its *Michigan Cool Cities Survey*, asked 13,500 college students and recent college graduates between the ages of 18 and 35 to rate the importance of 31 factors in selecting a place to live. The results demonstrate a clear difference in location preferences between people who want to live in a downtown of a larger, urban community and those who want to live in a small town or rural area. The top seven factors selected by each group

showed absolutely no commonality between those wanting to live in a larger community and those wanting to live in a small town or rural area (Table 1). Therefore, small towns and rural communities that try to attract young workers by replicating big city amenities may wish to rethink this strategy. Instead, a more effective strategy may be one that is firmly rooted in understanding the value of small town assets.

Table 1: Location Decisionmaking Factors

Downtown of a Larger Community		Small Town or Rural Area	
1	Walkable streets	1	Scenic beauty
2	Gathering places	2	Safe streets
3	Many jobs	3	Affordable
4	Diversity	4	Place for family
5	Different lifestyles	5	Public schools
6	Shops/businesses	6	Sense of community
7	Art/culture	7	Low traffic

Source: Michigan Economic Development Corporation 2004

Considerable research supports the *Michigan Cool Cities Survey* findings that people choose to live in places with scenic beauty and high quality of life factors such as safety,

affordability, a place to raise a family, and good public schools (Henderson and Abraham 2004; McGranahan and Wojan 2007a; Salvesen and Renski 2002).

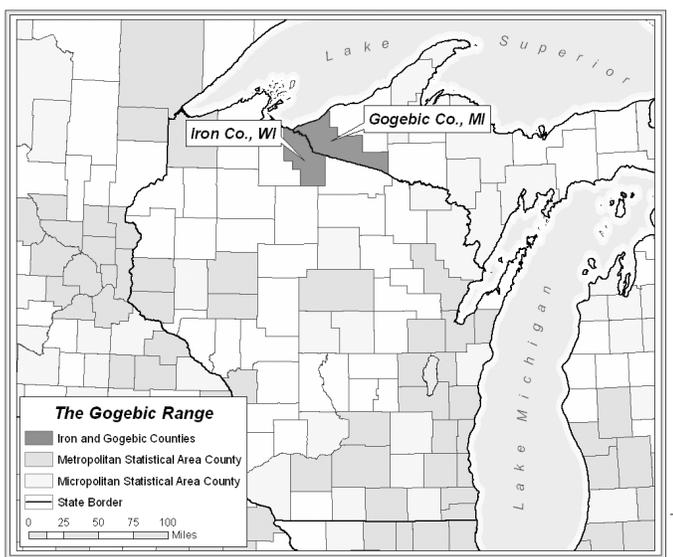
Researchers have also demonstrated a connection between these factors and positive economic growth: “Scenic rural places have higher levels of economic, population and income growth” (Henderson and Abraham 2005, 3) and “rural growth depends greatly on the attractiveness of rural communities, their landscapes and their climates” (McGranahan and Wojan 2007b, 5).

These two major concepts (that place-based considerations are often more important than employment-related considerations and that many people are attracted to the amenities of small towns and rural areas) were presented to leaders on the Gogebic Range (Wisconsin-Michigan) and received little traction. This data was localized by modifying the *Michigan Cool Cities Survey*, asking respondents to rate the importance of the same 31 location decisionmaking factors used in the *Cool Cities* survey. These survey results informed the creation of the Gogebic Range Next Generation Initiative to attract and retain young people.

Community Background

The Gogebic Range is comprised of Iron County, Wisconsin, and Gogebic County, Michigan (Figure 1). The Gogebic Range refers to both the range of mountains that runs through the region and to the surrounding communities that sprang up during its mining boom.

Figure 1. The Gogebic Range



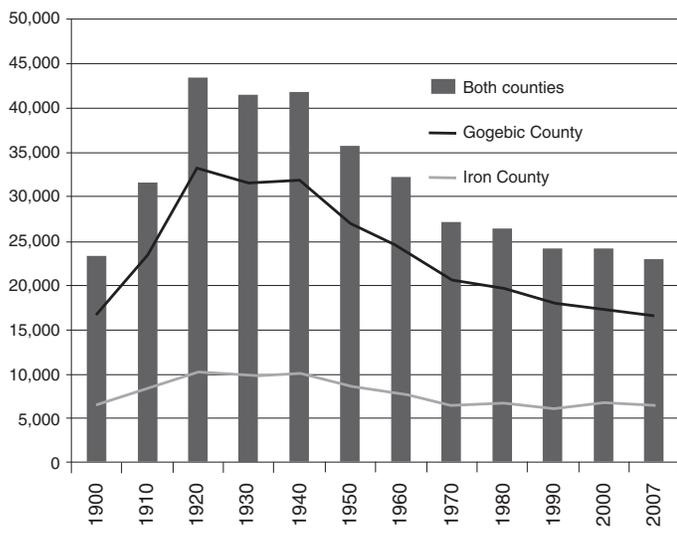
Source: The map was created by Matt Kures, University of Wisconsin Extension, Center for Community and Economic Development.

Iron ore was discovered on the Gogebic Range in the 1880s. The population of the Range rapidly increased until the mines started closing in the 1920s, beginning a decades-long population decline (Figure 2). Despite tremendous efforts in traditional economic development activities (there are 700 acres of available industrial park land, three empty spec buildings, and numerous and varied economic development programs), the population of the Gogebic Range has continued to decline. Clearly, the pull effect of employment opportunity has not been adequate to reverse population decline on the Gogebic Range.

A new community development strategy was needed to reverse this decades-long population loss and to create the kind of community that would be especially attractive to young people as a place to live and work. Residents understand that job creation is critical to any economic development strategy. However, focusing only on jobs leaves out several important groups.

One group is people who qualify for vacant positions in the community, especially in high demand jobs in the healthcare and design fields. This was a more serious problem at the beginning of this process than it is today, but looking forward at the retiring baby boom generation, attracting workers for these high demand jobs will become an increasingly critical challenge in small towns and rural communities.

Figure 2. Gogebic Range Population Trends



Source: U.S. Census Bureau (1995, 2007)

To help spread this message locally, a small group of business leaders and educators brought author Rebecca Ryan to the Gogebic Range to present her “Live First, Work Second” message. The program, entitled “Understanding the ‘Next Generation’: How Can the Gogebic Range Attract and Retain Young People,” was well-promoted to local government officials, economic developers, and the public.

Promotional materials included the following message from the president of the local community college: “To secure our economic future, our region must be successful in attracting and retaining young talent. Let Rebecca take you inside the minds of the next generation to see our community as a place to live and work through the eyes of today’s young people.” Nearly 250 people attended the free program and heard the thesis that choosing the right place to live is more important than finding the right job for many young people. At the end of the program, participants were asked to sign up for a yet-to-be-defined community development effort to help design communities to attract these young people. Fifty-seven participants volunteered.

To better understand location preferences of the community’s young people and to create a more rigorous and productive dialogue, the *Michigan Cool Cities Survey* was replicated on the Gogebic Range. A total of 668 high school juniors and seniors, college freshmen, and young professionals living on the Gogebic Range were surveyed. Close cooperation with the high school principals and superintendents from all five high schools in the study area ensured their participation in the survey. Surveys were distributed to all high school juniors and seniors during regular classroom sessions. A total of 331 surveys were returned from high school students.

I also worked closely with the president of the local community college in Ironwood, Michigan. All incoming freshmen completed a survey during their mandatory freshman orientation session. A total of 205 college students were surveyed. Young professionals working in the study area were reached via two primary methods: (1) working with employers to distribute surveys to their employees and (2) through my existing mail and e-mail contacts from previous leadership academy classes, various community and economic development groups, and local government officials. For the purposes of this study, “young” people were defined as under 40 years of age and “professional” included those working in business, finance, law, health-care, education, design, and related fields.

The Gogebic Range results were surprisingly similar to the Michigan survey. As previously noted, 68% of the *Michigan Cool Cities Survey* respondents selected “I want to live in a place that fits my lifestyle more than a job that pays the most,” while 60% of the Gogebic Range college students and young professionals agreed. And in terms of what location decisionmaking factors are most important to people who want to live in a small town or rural area, seven of the top ten factors were identical for both the *Cool Cities* respondents and the college students and young professionals who completed the Gogebic Range survey (Table 2). The top five factors, in fact, are identical and are termed “core community” factors.

These “core community” factors very closely describe the true strengths of the Gogebic Range. The findings, therefore, helped community members appreciate their community in a new light, ultimately leading to a community development effort focusing on the assets of the community.

Table 2. Comparison: Location Decisionmaking Factors

<i>Michigan Cool Cities Survey</i> (for those wanting to live in a small town or rural area)	<i>Gogebic Range Survey</i> (among college students and young professionals wanting to live in a small town or rural area)
1 Scenic beauty	1 Place to raise family
2 Safe streets	2 Safe streets
3 Affordable	3 Affordable
4 Place to raise family	4 Good schools
5 Good schools	5 Scenic beauty
6 Sense of community	6 Walkable streets
7 Low traffic	7 Low taxes
8 Concern for environment	8 Parks and trails
9 Close to friends/family	9 Four-season climate
10 Walkable streets	10 Close to friends/family

Source: *Gogebic Range Survey* 2008; Michigan Economic Community Development 2004

Gogebic Range Next Generation Initiative

The *Gogebic Range Survey* results were presented in a public forum of approximately 60 community adults of all ages. The 57 volunteers from Rebecca Ryan's initial presentation were invited along with other interested community members and leaders. Participants hoped to apply the lessons learned from Ryan's presentation and the *Gogebic Range Survey* results to help make the Range more attractive to young people as a place to live and work. Approximately one-third of the audience were *natives* who had lived on the Range all of their lives, one-third were *boomerangers* (a term borrowed from Ryan meaning those who grew up on the Range, moved away, and returned), and one-third were *transplants* who moved to the community from someplace else.

The forum presented the survey results and then recommended the creation of four work-groups to address four key opportunities identified from the survey findings. Two of the suggested work-groups focused on attracting young people from outside the Gogebic Range, and two work-groups focused on retaining young people who were already living on the Range: Work-Group 1, Attract Young Workers by Strengthening Our Niche; Work-Group 2, Attract Young Workers by Promoting Our Strengths; Work-Group 3, Retain Young Workers by Building Social Capital; and Work-Group 4, Retain Students by Better Connecting Them to the Community.

After explaining the rationale for creating each work-group, participants self-selected into which group they wanted to participate in by moving to the appropriate work-group table. Facilitators were solicited and trained for each work-group prior to the meeting. The facilitators led a discussion regarding the issues and opportunities related to their topic. While this discussion identified many excellent ideas, the main intent was to identify people willing to participate in an ongoing community development initiative. A total of 51 people participated in these initial work-group sessions.

At this session, all four work-groups committed to taking action beyond the public forum. All four work-groups continue to meet regularly under the direction of a volunteer leader. Two work-group leaders served as facilitators at the public forum. Three of the four work-group leaders are in their 20s and 30s. More and more people are becoming involved in these work-groups. Over 100 community members have attended at least one work-group meeting, with roughly half serving quite actively.

We continue to provide technical support to the ongoing effort and actively participate in two work-groups but have refused a leadership position believing that it is important for a variety of people to assume leadership roles for this community-based

effort to succeed. The purpose, actions, and outcomes of the four work-groups have been well-covered by the local media, including a very visible five-part series published in the local daily newspaper. Every six months, the public and the work-group participants meet to hear updates from each work-group leader in order to maintain the momentum of the initiative and to encourage cross-pollination of work-group efforts. These four work-groups formed the structure of the Gogebic Range Next Generation Initiative, resulting in the creation of several new collaborations and positive community development outcomes. A description of the four work-groups follows.

Work-Group 1: Attract Young Workers by Strengthening Our Niche

Many community development efforts focus on identifying and addressing the community's weaknesses. This work-group agreed to conduct an approach that identifies and strengthens the community's assets based on the principles of Asset Based Community Development (Kretzmann and McKnight 1993). With its tremendous natural resource attributes, the Gogebic Range is well-positioned to capitalize on this asset-based approach.

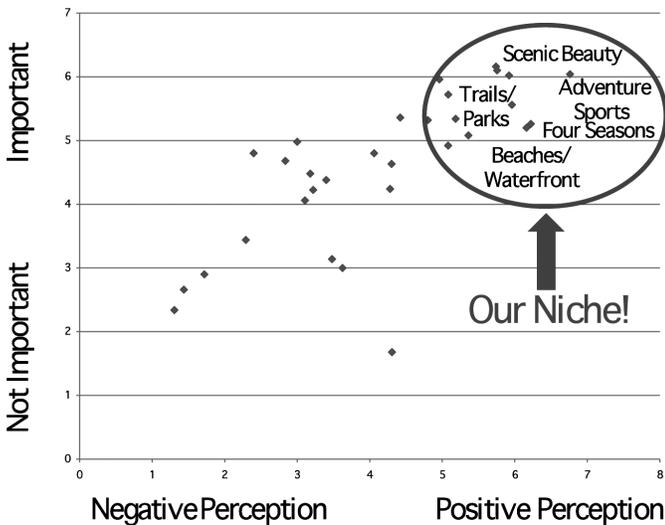
An interesting and helpful adaptation of the *Michigan Cool Cities Survey* was not just asking respondents to rate the 31 location decisionmaking factors by how important they were in making location decisions (the "ideal" dimension), but to also rate how well the Gogebic Range offered the same 31 factors (the "perceived" dimension). Appreciating these "ideal" and "perceived" dimensions greatly strengthened the understanding of the community and helped to develop a much-stronger community development initiative (as explored more fully in the following sections).

A two-dimensional model (Figure 3) is used to identify the Gogebic Range's marketing niche combining the "ideal" (vertical axis) and "perceived" (horizontal axis) dimensions. Those factors located in the upper-right quadrant are both important *and* positively perceived. This model was used to identify the "nature-based outdoor recreation niche" of the Gogebic Range comprised of the following five interrelated and supporting factors: (1) scenic beauty, (2) adventure sports, (3) trails/parks, (4) four seasons, and (5) beaches/waterfront.

The "Attract Young Workers by Strengthening Our Niche" work-group is charged with enhancing the "nature-based outdoor recreation niche" as a way to attract more young workers to the community. The work-group has established two primary purposes: (1) to create a vision for a proposed two-county trail route to serve as a catalyst for the development of a regional trail system connecting all five cities on the Range

and (2) to enhance awareness of the economic importance of strengthening the area’s “nature-based outdoor recreation niche.” Local officials from both counties have been instrumental in developing a mapped vision for the regional trail system. The group has also made several presentations to local governments, economic development groups, and service clubs—as well as several press releases—to obtain broad-based support for implementing this vision.

Figure 3. Two-Dimensional Model



Work-Group 2: Attract Young Workers by Promoting Our Strengths

According to the *Michigan Cool Cities Survey*, the top five location decisionmaking factors for young people who want to live in a small town or rural area are (1) scenic beauty, (2) safety, (3) affordability, (4) a good place to raise a family, and (5) good schools (the “core community” factors). When asked to rate how well the Gogebic Range offers all 31 factors, four of these five “core community” factors made the top five list for what the Range offers. Table 3 shows the top ten “ideal” factors (left-hand column) according to the *Michigan Cool Cities Survey* and the top ten “perceived” factors (right-hand column) according to the *Gogebic Range Survey*. Seven factors made both lists (shown in bold).

These seven factors, therefore, are not only the strengths of the Gogebic Range but are also the strengths of the Gogebic Range most desired by the targeted market. These regional attributes should be made a focus of marketing efforts. The “Attracting Young Workers by Promoting Our Strengths” work-group is working collaboratively with the chambers of commerce from both counties to promote the Gogebic Range as a place to live and work (not just to visit) based on these factors. Its signature promotion is the development of a promotional website designed around

the “nature-based outdoor recreation niche” (Figure 3) and the “core community” factors (Table 3).

Table 3. Top Ten “Ideal” and “Perceived” Factors

What Young People Want*	What We Offer**
1 Scenic beauty	1 Scenic beauty
2 Safe streets	2 Four-season climate
3 Affordable	3 Safe streets
4 Place to raise family	4 Close to friends/family
5 Good schools	5 Place to raise family
6 Sense of community	6 Affordable
7 Low traffic	7 Small businesses
8 Concern for environment	8 Walkable streets
9 Close to friends/family	9 Low traffic
10 Walkable streets	10 Adventure sports

* According to the *Michigan Cool Cities Survey* (for those wanting to live in a small town or rural area) (Michigan Economic Development Corporation 2004)

** According to the *Gogebic Range Survey*

Note: Factors in bold are on both top ten lists

Work-Group 3: Retain Young Workers by Building Social Capital

The survey results clearly demonstrate that young professional transplants are moving to the Gogebic Range for its “nature-based outdoor recreation niche.” Once they move to the Range, however, they do not connect socially with other people their age. Ninety-two percent of natives perceive “Friends/family” as a positive factor of the Gogebic Range, while less than 50% of transplants do. For single transplants and those without children, less than 40% perceive “Friends/family” as a positive factor. Natives and boomerangers both rate “Friends/family” in their top three “perceived” factors, while the same factor didn’t even make the top 15 list for transplants (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Top 15 Community Factors

Natives	Boomerangers	Transplants
Scenic beauty	Scenic beauty	Scenic beauty
Four seasons	Friends/family	Adventure sports
Friends/family	Safe	Four seasons
Affordable	Four seasons	Little traffic
Raise family	Affordable	Affordable
Safe	Raise family	Raise family
Small businesses	Adventure sports	Safe
Walkable streets	Beaches/waterfront	Beaches/waterfront
Beaches/waterfront	Little traffic	Trails/parks
Trails/parks	Walkable streets	Sense of community
Adventure sports	Small businesses	Small businesses
Little traffic	Sense of community	Good schools
Good schools	Good schools	Walkable streets
Sense of community	Trails/parks	Concern for environment
Concern for environment	Low taxes	Gaming

Source: *Gogebic Range Survey 2008* (among young professionals)

Not surprisingly, Gogebic Range transplants are much less likely to stay on the Gogebic Range than natives and boomerangers. For example, 92% of natives plan to “live here for quite some time,” while only 67% of transplants so indicated. Because most workplaces on the Gogebic Range are relatively small, it is especially difficult for new young people to find friends with common interests. The socializing and networking aspects of a community’s social capital is vital to community development. According to Robert Putnam (2000), author of *Bowling Alone*, “At the local or regional level, there is mounting evidence that social capital among economic actors can produce aggregate economic growth . . . under certain conditions, cooperation among economic actors might be a better engine of growth than free-market competition” (323). If people are to choose to make the Range their home, then we should be aware and respond to the importance of building a community’s social capital.

The “Retain Young Workers by Building Social Capital” work-group quickly renamed itself “Go-In’ Forward Next Generation Group” (the “Go” is for Gogebic County and the “In” is for Iron County). Its primary focus is to create socializing and networking opportunities for people to connect with other people, regardless of age and background. Already, “Go-In’ Forward” has 82 members, has held several successful social events (e.g., ski outings, group hikes, and night-life activities), and has engaged in local community projects (e.g., planning a community park) and fundraising activities (e.g., a Relay for Life and a Bowl-a-thon). Offering such options will help build the social capital of the Gogebic Range so that new residents will become better connected and will be more likely to stay.

Work-Group 4: Retain Students by Better Connecting Them to the Community

The survey results clearly demonstrated that very few local high school and college students plan to stay in the Gogebic Range or return some day. Only 30% of high school students and 22% of college students planned to “live here for quite some time.” When asked if they would likely return some day (after college or after their first job), the percentage barely increased.

Importantly, the survey found that the community’s young people do not just leave for a job as more than 60% of them plan to move to a community that “better fits their lifestyle.” Perhaps the most startling statistic is that 57% of college students wanted to live in a small town, but only 22% wanted to live on the Gogebic Range. And only 8% of high school students and 15% of college students believed

that the community is an attractive place to live and work for people in their 20s and 30s.

Why do Gogebic Range young people want to leave? And why do they not plan to return some day? One clue may be in how our young people perceive the community’s assets. Gogebic Range high school students and college students perceived all five of the community’s “nature-based outdoor recreation niche” factors much less positively than Gogebic Range adults. For example, 85% of adults perceived “adventure sports” as a positive feature of the Gogebic Range, but only 58% of high school students perceived it positively.

Many strategies to retain young people focus on youth leadership development, entrepreneurship, and asset-building. These activities may simply empower youth to leave and not return if we don’t also connect our youth to the community. In their review of one small Midwestern town, sociologists Patrick Carr and Maria Kefalas (2009) were surprised that “adults in the community were playing a pivotal part in the town’s decline by pushing the best and brightest young people to leave, and by underinvesting in those who chose to stay, even though it was the latter [who] were the town’s best chance for a future” and concluded that “given that (small) communities are hemorrhaging young people, investing most of their energy in developing young people who will end up elsewhere makes little sense.”

The “Retain Students by Better Connecting Them to the Community” work-group is striving to connect all of the community’s youth to the “nature-based outdoor recreation niche” of the Gogebic Range as a way to encourage them to stay in the community or return some day. The work-group, composed of educators, school administrators, and extension educators, is attempting to accomplish this through community-based social marketing principles such as place-based education, service-learning, and youth-in-governance practices.

For example, the work-group initiated two partnerships between the Iron County UW-Extension office and two local educational institutions: (1) a partnership with the local community college to create a nature photography project to encourage youth to explore and appreciate their surroundings and to share their efforts with their peers and the broader community; and (2) a partnership with a local high school to provide service-learning opportunities to students based on a needs survey of local stakeholders.

Conclusion

Replicating the *Michigan Cool Cities Survey* was an important step in better understanding the location preferences of today's young people to help initiate an important dialogue in regard to the Gogebic Range. The survey results supported the literature by showing that young people on the Gogebic Range also value living in the right place and helped the community appreciate its strengths, including its "core community" assets and its unique "nature-based outdoor recreation niche." The findings also identified four major asset-based opportunities to address the community's declining population. These opportunities gave rise to four work-groups which formed the Next Generation Initiative to attract and retain young people on the Gogebic Range.

Most recently, young professionals from the Gogebic Range conducted a "First Impressions" exchange with young professionals from a neighboring community to help the respective communities further understand how they are perceived by young people. Each community sent a team of five to six young professionals to visit their partner community. Each team will prepare a "First Impressions" report of their visit, using a template based on the *Michigan Cool Cities Survey's* 31 location decisionmaking factors. A community "Exit Survey"—again based on the 31 factors—will be delivered to young professionals leaving the Range to better understand both the "push" and "pull" factors related to their decision to leave. This new information will be shared with all program participants, the public, and local media through the biannual update sessions.

Whether this initiative will ultimately reverse the decades-long population decline of the Gogebic Range is difficult to determine. However, several indicators point to positive short- and mid-term outcomes. These shorter-term outcomes generally reflect new opportunities for social networking and the creation of important new communitywide collaborations and partnerships. For example, new opportunities for social connections have been offered through the creation of the "Go-In' Forward" group. According to one of its young members, "Through social networking devices such as Facebook, e-mail, and a variety of activities, the

'Go-In' Forward' group has created an accessible network for young members of our community. New members to the area have an opportunity to [make] friends and create connections to help make the Gogebic Range their home. This will help establish a sustainable population of young professionally motivated people in our community."

The Next Generation Initiative also created four collaborative endeavors, including an effort by four chambers of commerce to promote the region as a place to live, the vision created by five communities for a regional trail system, and two student retention partnerships between the local extension office and two educational institutions. According to one participant,

The formation of the "Strengthening Our Niche" Group has indeed been one of the most positive steps I have been involved with in my 35 years in the area.

Two counties from two states are now discussing ways to create a multi-use trail system to attract young people to live in the area. Groups involved include area chambers, local governments, individuals, federal agencies, and parks and recreation departments. Just to get this level of involvement and to agree on a project has been a positive milestone. This initiative will progress into many other facets because the people are becoming involved. New leaders are emerging and new thoughts are being brought into the picture. I think we are in an exciting time on the Range.

Understanding how the community is perceived by its young people will help ensure that the Gogebic Range Next Generation Initiative's asset-based community development approach will effectively attract and retain young people. The collaborations, partnerships, and networking opportunities created by this research-based initiative should contribute to reversing the decades-long population loss the Gogebic Range has experienced since the closure of its mines.

References

- Carr, P. J., and M. J. Kefalas. 2009. The rural brain drain. *The Chronicle Review* (September 21). Retrieved October 12, 2009, from <http://chronicle.com/article/The-Rural-Brain-Drain/48425>.
- Florida, R. 2002. *The rise of the creative class*. New York: Basic Books.
- Henderson, J., and B. Abraham. 2004. Can rural America support a knowledge economy? *Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City Economic Review* 3: 71-95.
- Henderson, J., and B. Abraham. 2005. Rural America's emerging knowledge economy. *The Main Street Economist* (May). Retrieved October 5, 2009, from www.kansascityfed.org/RegionalAffairs/Mainstreet/MSE_0505.pdf.
- Iron County UW-Extension. 2008. *Gogebic range location decision making survey results*. Hurley, WI: Iron County UW-Extension.
- Jasper, J. 2000. *Restless nation: Starting over in America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Kretzmann, J. P., and J. L. McKnight. 1993. *Building communities from the inside out: A path toward finding and mobilizing a community's assets*. Skokie, IL: ACTA Publications.
- McGranahan, D. A., and T. R. Wojan. 2007a. Recasting the creative class to examine growth processes in rural and urban counties. *Regional Studies* 41(22): 197-216.
- McGranahan, D. A., and T. R. Wojan. 2007b. *The creative class: A key to rural growth*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service.
- Michigan Economic Development Corporation. 2004. *Michigan cool cities survey: Summary of findings*. Lansing: Michigan Economic Development Corporation.
- Putnam, P. 2000. *Bowling alone*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Ryan, R. 2007. *Live first, work second*. Madison, WI: Next Generation Consulting.
- Salvesen, D., and H. Renski. 2002. *The importance of quality of life in the location decisions of new economy firms*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina.
- U.S. Census Bureau. 1995. *Population of counties by decennial census: 1900 to 1990*. Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau.
- U.S. Census Bureau. 2009. *Population estimates: County data sets*. Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau.

The Rural Research Report is a series published by the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs to provide brief updates on research projects conducted by the Institute. Rural Research Reports are peer-reviewed and distributed to public officials, libraries, and professional associations involved with specific policy issues.