

Tutorial Final Papers

Decline and Renewal in the Heartland

Fall 2004

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Forward

The essays in this collection were written in response to learning about loss. They are the authors' efforts on the final assignment in a first-year tutorial, "Decline and Renewal in the Heartland," that I taught in the fall of 2004 at Grinnell College. We first studied the loss of a biome: the nearly complete destruction of the tallgrass prairie by the mid-nineteenth century European American settlers of the Midwest. We studied the loss of the relatively sustainable system of farming created by those same settlers as it gave way in the decades after the Second World War to the relatively unsustainable agricultural system of today. And we studied the decline of small rural communities – and a way of life as close as this country has come to Thomas Jefferson's vision of an agrarian culture – due to the changes in agriculture and the rise of mass urban society. Surveying the natural and cultural landscape of the Heartland in the early 21st century, we must agree with Sheryl St. Germaine (2003:76) that "this is a landscape about loss."

Over the years, perceptive individuals – the great Iowa-born conservationist Aldo Leopold comes first to mind – have taken note of these various forms of loss and tried to draw the public's attention to them. Until recently, their voices were relatively few and far between, but in the last twenty-five years more and more people have become aware of the problems of habitat destruction, industrial agriculture, and the decline of rural communities and have stepped forward to combat them. The class spent most of the semester studying the efforts of ordinary citizens—some singly, but more often working together through networks and groups—to change course. We found two broad types of effort. Some groups and individuals focus their efforts on slowing or even stopping further decline by, for example, protecting remnant prairie, working to reduce the use of synthetic chemicals on farms, or opposing the siting in their community of a big-box discount store. Other groups and individuals focus their efforts on reclaiming lost landscapes by promoting new alternatives to the prevailing trends. They are restoring tallgrass prairie on marginal farmland, experimenting with alternative energy sources or farming methods, and attempting to revitalize small towns. The students researched both types of effort, and I have arranged their essays in these terms.

I had both an explicit and an implicit goal in teaching a tutorial on this subject. I wanted to introduce the students to the region of the country where they had chosen to attend college and to some of the problems it faces. Many hail from elsewhere, but even those from the Midwest are not necessarily familiar with the kinds of decline that have occurred and are continuing around them. My implicit goal was to convey to them something about the importance of place in human experience and the importance of cultivating a connection to a place so that each of them will assume a part in caring for the places in which they ultimately choose to live.

Germaine, Sheryl St.

2003 "Walking the Prairie Railroad, Thinking About Loss." *In the Middle of the Middlewest: Literary Nonfiction from the Heartland*. Becky Bradway (ed). Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press.

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Wal-Mart's Impacts on a Small Town and How a Small Town Can Prevent the Construction of a Wal-Mart

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Nebraska state senator and grocery owner Doug Cunningham said, “large, big-box retailers like Wal-Mart suck the life out of small towns” (Hammel 2004: 1). While Wal-Mart promises more jobs and a boost to the local economy, the opposite is true. Wal-Mart’s business practices force companies to manufacture goods overseas and outsource jobs. Because of these business practices Wal-Mart is able to offer, as its slogan suggests, “everyday low prices” and drive local stores out of business. Local businesses provide a certain quality of life and are essential to small town communities. For this reason small towns often want to do everything they can to prevent a Wal-Mart from establishing itself in their community. Grinnell, Iowa, faces the threat of a Super Wal-Mart, and because of the detrimental effect a Wal-Mart will have on their community it is reasonable that they’ll attempt to find a way to prevent the super-store from opening in their city limits.

Wal-Mart forces the corporations it does business with to sell at very low prices, causing them to outsource jobs overseas. A prime example of this is the Huffy bike corporation. Huffy did business with Wal-Mart for several years and had to constantly cut prices to keep up with Wal-Mart’s demands. At one point they gave away the designs for higher quality bikes to rival manufacturers in order to produce a larger quantity of low end bikes for Wal-Mart. And to further appease Wal-Mart by keeping everyday low prices Huffy moved its entire business outside of the United States (Fishman 2003: 68). Despite Wal-Mart’s claim to “Buy American,” 80% of its business comes from China (Lipchitz 2004). In fact, in the last five years alone Wal-Mart bought \$12 billion worth of products from China accounting for 10% of all Chinese exports to the United States (Fishman 2003: 68).

Wal-Mart also has a direct detrimental effect on local business. A 1995 statewide survey showed that since Wal-Mart opened its first store in Iowa in 1983 50 % of clothing stores, 42% of variety stores, 30% of hardware stores, 29% of shoe stores and 17% of all jewelry stores have gone out of businesses (Quinn 2000: 4). An economic survey conducted by Iowa State economics professor Ken Stone stated that “a total of 7,386 local businesses have been lost since 1993” (Norman 1999: 21). Paul Nowasell, Grinnell business owner who moved in after the first Wal-Mart was built in Grinnell, recalled that “there were three hardware stores here before I came and of course they’re all gone now” (2004).

This loss of local business also destroys the downtown of small towns. Wal-Mart normally builds its stores on large undeveloped plots of land outside of the established business district drawing business away from the downtown. The Save Historic East Aurora group of New York projected that the impact of new Wal-Mart on their town would “strip our retailers, and especially our Main Street business district, of 68 percent of their existing sales” (Quinn 2000: 12). This is important not only on an economic level but also for the community. The state of the downtown represents the vitality of the town

itself. Bill Menner a member of Grinnell Renaissance, a group created to revitalize Grinnell's downtown, observed that "if you see that all the stores have boards covering their windows you're not going to think to yourself, this a place where I want to live" (2004).

The loss of one local business affects the entire local economy. Money spent at a local business is more likely to remain in a local economy. In fact, "75 cents per every dollar spent at a local business stays in the town but only 44 cents of every dollar spent at Wal-Mart stays in town" (Nowasell 2004). Local businesses keep each other viable, a phenomenon Paul Nowasell referred to as a "ripple effect," and Grinnell city council member Byron Worley called local business "cross pollination" (2004). "I don't expect a new super Wal-Mart to hurt me directly, in terms of lost competition," said Paul Nowasell, "but I do think it will affect the people I depend on for business" (quoted in Montgomery 2004: 1). While Wal-Mart does bring in new jobs to a local economy, the jobs lost by competing local businesses create a net loss in jobs in a small town.

One of the most appealing promises Wal-Mart can present a small town is that they will bring in new jobs. However, other effects caused by the construction of a Wal-Mart cause a net-loss in jobs in a local economy. For every \$10 million dollars in sales Wal-Mart employs from sixty-five to seventy workers while for the same sum local businesses employs about one-hundred and six people. (Quinn 2000: 5). Steve Dobbins, CEO of Carolina Mills, observed

People ask, "How can it be bad for things to come into the U.S. cheaply? How can it be bad to have a bargain at Wal-Mart? Sure, it's held inflation down, and it's great to have bargains but you can't buy anything if you're not employed. We are shopping ourselves out of a job (Fishman 68 2003).

Also the new employment opportunities offered by Wal-Mart are low wage jobs. In 2001 the average Wal-Mart employee "pulled in \$8.23 an hour, or \$13,861 a year" (Bianco and Zellner 2002). The federal poverty line for a family of three at that time was \$14,630 (Bianco and Zellner 2002). Wal-Mart not only decreases the number of jobs available in a local market, the jobs they create do not pay enough for a family to survive.

Finally, citizens of a small town where a Wal-Mart has moved into end up losing tax dollars because of the services a Wal-Mart requires. The planning board of New Paltz, New York, calculated that even with the tax revenue gained by a new Wal-Mart the cost of municipal services and tax abatement provided for the store would cause the town to "come out losing \$13,000 dollars a year" (Quinn 2000: 13). This estimate did not include the potential loss in tax revenue created by the loss of local business caused by Wal-Mart.

Local businesses are essential to the vitality of a small town because they create jobs and a sense of community. When a Wal-Mart moves into town it destroys local businesses with which it is in direct competition and replaces them with fewer low paying jobs. The loss in revenue caused when local businesses in direct competition with Wal-Mart go out of business affects the rest of the town's economy because that money can no longer be spent at the surviving stores. Adding insult to injury, the town must pay for its loss of vitality created by Wal-Mart through taxes providing municipal services to Wal-Mart.

Clearly, there are legitimate reasons for a small town facing the threat of a Wal-Mart moving in to fight the placement of the retail giant within their borders. The task of fighting Wal-Mart is a daunting one. Wal-Mart is the world's largest corporation and is willing to spend large sums to get its way. In North Elba, New York, Wal-Mart spent \$2.5 million during the application process (Norman 1999: 133). The result of a town fighting Wal-Mart can be costly and ultimately fail. During its fight the city of Pella spent over \$150,000 in legal fees and still ended up with a super Wal-Mart (Worley 2004).

However, there are success stories. The town of Greenfield, Massachusetts, successfully thwarted a potential Wal-Mart in their town on a budget of \$17,000 dollars (Norman 1999: 127). Brookfield, Wisconsin, was able to reject a big box retailer in less than five minutes (Norman 1999: 121). Other easy victories took place in the cities of St. Petersburg, Florida, and Walpole, New Hampshire, where great amounts of pressure were put on the developers not to sell the land to Wal-Mart (Norman 1999: 122).

The most obvious approach a small town can take to oust a Wal-Mart is to boycott the Wal-Mart once it has moved into town. However, this plan is not a reasonable one. While those who will be directly affected by the new Wal-Mart will be passionate about boycotting Wal-Mart, others are "easily persuaded by the power of a good deal" (Nowasell 2004). Wal-Mart has a powerful advertising machine that allows it to draw not just from the town it settles in but also surrounding communities. One of Wal-Mart's corporate strategies is to "carpet" the land, placing a Wal-Mart about every seventy-five miles (Quinn 2000: 15). The end result of this strategy is that an entire county falls within reach of at least one Wal-Mart (Quinn 2000: 15). For this reason the best solution is for a town to prevent a Wal-Mart from building a super-store within their city limits.

If a town does not want a new Wal-Mart it is important they take an active role in preventing it because Wal-Mart is notorious for sneaking into town. In Arroyo Grande, California, Wal-Mart repeatedly issued statements that it had no intent on moving into town. At the same time a developer was trying to rezone a large parcel of land for an unidentified store which he claimed was not Wal-Mart. These claims were shown to be false when a citizen came forward with a sell-lease agreement signed by Wal-Mart and the developer months before (Quinn 2000: 32). Wal-Mart also hides itself from the public eye by creating "newly formed corporations that are affiliates of Wal-Mart's real estate division" (Norman 1999: 89). In Manhattan, Kansas, a group called the Broadstreet Investment Company bought a parcel of land next to an existing retailer. This land happened to be Frank's mobile home park. Broadstreet Investment Company promptly evicted over 50 residents of the mobile home park, covering up that the real cause behind the eviction was Wal-Mart (Norman 1999: 89).

Preventing a Wal-Mart from coming into a town in the first place is also not an easy task. Situations are unique depending on the environment of each individual town. The town of Grinnell, Iowa, is facing the threat of a super-store moving in, and the methods of preventing the arrival of a Wal-Mart described will pertain specifically to how the citizens of Grinnell can resist the placement of a big box retailer in their town.

The process for a Wal-Mart or another super-store to enter Grinnell is a unique one because the area of land where the retail giant wants to build is not currently part of the town. The developer has requested that the city of Grinnell annex this portion of land so that sewage system can be provided by the town. A Wal-Mart would not move into an area of land where they would have to construct costly sewage facilities, so if the

annexation of that land could be prevented the big box store would most likely be prevented from moving in as well. Unfortunately Grinnell had already tried to annex this segment of land several years ago but was prevented by the land owners. This means that if annexation was refused the decision would be brought to court by Wal-Mart. Grinnell City Council member Byron Worley feels that Grinnell would most likely “lose a costly court battle” with the retail giant (2004). This request for annexation was initially rejected by the city’s planning and zoning commission. This vote however, has been appealed and the planning and zoning commission voted to annex the land.

The other option for Grinnell’s battle against Wal-Mart is to use local zoning ordinances to prevent Wal-Mart from moving in. While Wal-Mart would most likely win a court battle if annexation was refused, any zoning ordinance whose objective is “to serve the public welfare of its residents or enhance property values or sustain the vitality of a community’s commercial center” will be legally supported in court (Norman 1999: 153).

When land is annexed by the city of Grinnell it is automatically zoned as a residential area. In order for a Wal-Mart or any other super-store to be built there it must be zoned as a commercial area. There are several ways to prevent the newly annexed land to be re-zoned as commercial. The first is to show that the construction of a Wal-Mart would lower the property value of the surrounding land which zoning bylaws “seek to protect” (Norman 1999: 155). An economic impact survey commissioned by the city of Grinnell could go a long way towards proving the detrimental effects of a Wal-Mart. If it can be demonstrated that property values would be lowered by a new Wal-Mart, zoning decisions will not be seen as arbitrary by Iowa courts and greatly aid the case of the anti-Wal-Mart community.

The second way to justify not re-zoning the land as a commercial plot is to show that a new Wal-Mart will hurt the general welfare of a community (Norman 1999: 155-157). A community’s general welfare is another aspect which zoning laws were created to protect, and an economic impact survey that shows that local businesses would be negatively affected would provide ammunition for the anti-Wal-Mart cause. Similarly, statistics about the effect Wal-Mart has had on other downtown areas would be useful.

Finally, if the creation of a Wal-Mart is not “harmonious with the town’s comprehensive plan,” zoning laws could be enforced to prevent the super-store (Norman 1999: 155). A comprehensive plan is a written document that states a city’s mission for the future. If Grinnell’s comprehensive plan includes anything about the preservation of downtown or supporting the town’s economic viability then it could be argued that a super Wal-Mart would violate the plan and an anti-Wal-Mart zoning decision would be held up in the courts (Quinn 2000: 27).

If none of those arguments are found to be applicable by the zoning board there is one final option. The city council could pass a law stating that no business may occupy an area of land larger than a specific size. This would be legally acceptable because it would not discriminate against only Wal-Mart but against any unnecessarily large buildings. In 1996 the city of Hailey, Idaho, enacted a law that put a 36,000 square foot cap on all buildings (Norman 1999: 166). The town of Skaneateles, New York, also passed similar legislature (Norman 1999: 166). If the town’s comprehensive plan included a section about keeping the town beautiful then such a law would have considerable legal backing.

For citizens to more effectively argue their case before of a zoning board, a broad based citizens group should be created (Norman 1999: 122). This group will be in charge of educating the public about the consequences of a new Wal-Mart coming to town and fundraising. Fundraising will be especially important because of the financial clout held by Wal-Mart. It is important to ask local business owners to contribute because you “can’t defeat Wal-Mart by holding bake sales and car washes” (Norman 1999: 127). The anti-Wal-Mart campaign in Greenfield, Massachusetts, raised its \$17, 000 mainly through larger contributions made by local businesses (Norman 1999: 127). The money raised should be spent on advertising in local newspapers, legal counsel with experience in zoning cases, and on an economic impact survey. Both advertising and legal representation raise the profile of a citizen group which puts pressure on the city’s zoning board. The economic impact survey will be most useful in defending the zoning committee’s decision if Wal-Mart tries to sue to over turn it.

While a Wal-Mart moving into town can be seen as a decline, preventing a Wal-Mart can be more than simply stopping a decline. If a citizens group is created a community could use the fight against Wal-Mart constructively. A fight against Wal-Mart could easily take the form of an effort to revitalize a downtown of city. An anti-Wal-Mart group is most likely pro-small business, and a rally around local businesses can spark renewal in a small town and unite a community.

Wal-Mart has a large detrimental effect on local economies. Its business practices force companies it does business to move their operations overseas, decreasing the work force in the United States. It pushes out local businesses and replaces them a business that provides lower paying jobs. The effects of a Wal-Mart on a local economy give a town reasonable cause to attempt to prevent a Wal-Mart from moving in. Wal-Mart is a tough opponent with incredible amounts of funding and advertisement, but this does not make them invincible. A Wal-Mart can be preempted by manipulating zoning laws to prevent them from gaining the ability to build in the first place. A citizen coalition could best provide the funds necessary to commission a financial impact survey and a zoning law attorney to provide the legal backing for such zoning restrictions. If all this can be done then a small town has a fighting chance against Wal-Mart.

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Localized Wind Energy Generation: Renewing the Heartland's Energy Systems

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During the Euro-American settlement of the American Midwest, farmers found themselves in need of a source of power for pumping water and other tasks. Though the strength of livestock could be tapped for these jobs, wind was the most abundant energy resource available to users scattered across the vast open spaces. Europeans had used windmills to mill grain for centuries, but the wooden mill designs from the Old World fared poorly in the dusty, abrasive winds of the west (Root 2004). The invention of the Halliday mill in 1854 opened the potential of wind energy to farmers throughout the newly-settled Midwest. By the 1920s, about two million windmills dotted the landscape (Root 2004). In the era of the First and Second World Wars, farmers developed the need for electricity to power their radios. As an alternative to driving into town to have their dry cell batteries recharged, rural dwellers began installing wind turbines specifically to generate electricity to power their connection to the outside world. Many Midwestern companies, including the popular Iowa-based Wincharger brand, dominated the growing market for turbines (Root 2004). As the industry grew, wind energy delivered the modern age of electricity to rural consumers off the grid. Hundreds of thousands of Midwestern farm homes were powered by wind in the 1930s (Park 1981:14-17). This didn't last long, however: President Roosevelt's Rural Electrification Administration eventually put an end to the period of the wind-powered farm when it installed rural utility lines in the late 1930s, but wind power's significance in American frontier history is clear: it aided both the initial development of the Midwestern states in the 19th century and their modernization in the 20th. It seems fitting, then, that use of energy from wind should play a role in the economic, social, and environmental renewal of the heartland in the 21st century.

Since the 1980s, the development of wind turbines capable of large-scale electricity production has established wind energy as a popular source of renewable power and opened up new possibilities in the rural United States. The winds of the Upper Midwest are, on average, the strongest in the nation, and Iowa alone holds the capacity to meet 5% of the nation's renewable energy needs (Haman 2004, Factor 2000). Since Iowa is fortunate to be the tenth windiest state, the choices Iowa communities make in tapping this resource could have a profound effect on the state's energy economy and the overall process of renewal (Haman 2004). Wind energy holds the potential to help localize Iowa's energy system. Increased reliance on the local wind resource could decrease dependence on coal from Montana and other fossil fuels from foreign countries, an economic benefit for the state. In addition, the high-profile presence of a wind turbine in a rural area promotes energy consciousness for miles around and provides an invaluable educational opportunity for local schools.

However, as with all modern technologies, development of wind turbines and wind farms in Iowa has its pitfalls. In some locations, wind is simply not strong enough to be developed economically, and since utility-scale wind turbines can cost as much as

two million dollars apiece, incomplete planning can result in a financial disaster (Haman 2004). Care should also be taken to ensure that as many wind farms as possible are owned by local energy suppliers. Wind farms owned by out-of-state companies provide only minimal boosts to local economies, so Iowa wind development incentives must be balanced with the need to take control of wind energy's profits to the extent possible. With sufficient planning and precaution in tapping Iowa's wind resource, however, the new trend toward wind energy could contribute to Iowa's renewal by providing a local economic boost, a positive environmental impact, and a renewed consciousness of energy for the state.

Because of the high initial capital investment required for wind energy, most wind development has been done by utility companies in the form of large wind farms. The price of a turbine, combined with the expense of thoroughly evaluating a site for its wind energy potential, can cost millions of dollars, and a return on this investment can take as long as twelve years (Wind 2004). A wind turbine is hardly a low-risk investment, either. Environmental hazards, from severe storms to low-flying airplanes, present serious risks to a wind project. Unforeseen downtime and repair costs resulting from these hazards or simple breakdowns can threaten a turbine's profitability. And since wind turbines operate in the often adverse conditions of the outdoors, wind farms don't last as long as other kinds of power plants. A typical turbine's advertised lifespan is only 30 years, and its actual one may be shorter (Spirit Lake School District 2004). Generally, such a large, risky investment is possible only to utility companies, which evaluate one site and erect a cluster of turbines on it. This trend began in the early 1980s thanks to the Public Utility Regulatory Policies Act of 1978, a federal law which requires energy companies to buy a certain amount of energy from renewable suppliers (Iowa Energy Center 2003). This policy includes wind and other renewable energy sources, such as geothermal and biomass, but wind is a very attractive means of filling this requirement thanks to the recently-renewed wind energy Production Tax Credit (PTC), which was reinstated through 2005 last September. This bill provides a 1.5 cent-per-kilowatt-hour tax credit for energy generated by wind turbines (American Wind Energy Association 2004). This critical measure paves the way for \$3 billion worth of wind energy investment nationwide over the next few years, a growth in the industry that could bring more large-scale wind generation facilities to Iowa.

However, though they generate a large amount of clean energy, major wind farms may not benefit the overall renewal process as much as smaller, more localized wind energy facilities. Iowa is already home to several utility-scale wind farms, and most of the largest wind-generation facilities produce power for major utility companies based outside the state. Since construction of these wind farms only lasts a few months, and since landowners often receive only 1% of the profit from major utility-owned wind generators built on their land, the overall economic benefit from these facilities is limited (Haman 2004). Such projects, since they minimize risk by mass-producing wind energy in one location, are generally favored as the most efficient way to expand America's renewable energy supply, despite the limited local benefits of this approach. Wind turbines that generate energy directly for local consumers, though a theoretically riskier principle, may prove to provide a bigger help to the renewal of Iowa's rural communities.

Wind turbines established especially to provide power for nearby homes and schools, as opposed to expansive corporate-run wind farms, more clearly represent a

renewal in the sense that they re-localize a community's energy supply. Localized production of energy may contribute to making the community healthier and more self-sustaining. The town of Waverly in northeastern Iowa has a tradition of localized energy. Instead of plugging in to a major power company, Waverly has produced its own energy for the past hundred years. Wind is only a part of Waverly's energy system, but the benefits of localized power are clear for this community. Glenn Cannon, the general manager of Waverly Light and Power, articulated this in 1994:

...The utility is and has been a cornerstone in the development of this community. Waverly is a vibrant community and has always met challenges head-on. The operation of its electric utility reflects this spirit of innovation and determination. The City made a wise decision back in 1904 by spending \$13,500 to own their electric utility. That choice has yielded millions of dollars in helping the community prosper, while still owning an asset worth over \$20 million (Waverly Light and Power 1994).

Cannon adds that "small, local generation is a likely prospect for future resources." Waverly succeeded in keeping its electricity competitively priced for a full century and has maintained a progressive attitude toward power generation while doing so. Today, 5% of Waverly's power comes from wind, which is one of the highest rates in the world (Crosbie 2003:102). Its three large-scale turbines, which together produce 2.4 megawatts of energy, provide enough power for the yearly electrical needs of 761 homes (Iowa Energy Center 2003, Crosbie 2003:102). Waverly is a working example that community energy systems are possible and economical, even in an age of utility company networks that span several states. It also demonstrates that such localized systems have a greater range of flexibility, as evidenced by the fact that Waverly Light and Power is well ahead of its heavyweight peers in conversion to renewable energy. An increased reliance on local energy generation could help other communities to reclaim some control of their electric utility and benefit their renewal process.

The increasing affordability of wind power generation opens the possibility of local generation to many more communities across Iowa. The Spirit Lake school district was among the first in Iowa to use wind as their source for local power generation, since Spirit Lake is in the exceptionally windy northwest sector of the state. Students and school district leaders spent two years measuring the wind speed at the school and familiarizing themselves with electrical costs, wind turbine options, and government regulations. They found a strong indication of total investment return, partly thanks to a coincidence of the low summer wind speeds and the summer shut-down of the school. One of the biggest difficulties in a localized wind system is that homes' electricity needs are highest in summer, when wind speeds are lowest. Usually, the need to buy extra power from major utility providers in the summertime can threaten the economics of a project, but the monthly energy needs of a school matched nicely with the wind's seasonal energy potential (Haman 2004). With the help of a \$119,000 grant from the Department of Energy and a loan to cover the rest, the district installed a \$239,500 wind turbine in 1993 (Spirit Lake School District 2004). The loan was paid off in 1998, three and a half years ahead of schedule, and as of July 2004, the turbine has generated

312,000 kWh annually, an amount equal to the energy produced by burning 156 tons of coal (Spirit Lake School District 2004).

Not only has Spirit Lake's wind project been a dramatic financial success, the presence of a wind turbine just south of the playground provides a unique educational resource. The school's energy source is a part of lesson plans from the first grade to upper-level science classes, and schools from the surrounding area even visit the school to see and learn about wind turbines (Nation, Spirit Lake School District 2004). From learning the basics of wind generation to studying the wind speed and kilowattage data tables recorded by the turbine's computer every day, the turbines provide a valuable opportunity for energy education. The close presence and high visibility of wind turbines in a community helps reconnect residents with their energy source, and the Spirit Lake project is a great example. As students study the energy production and economics of the turbine that powers their school, they develop the strong energy consciousness that comes from involvement in a localized energy system.

While any small-town community could benefit from a local wind energy system such as the one in the Spirit Lake School District, most will not achieve it quite as easily. Not only do wind conditions vary in different regions of the state, but since examples like Spirit Lake are still relatively uncommon, wind energy remains a tough sell in most rural communities. For example, proponents of wind power in Grinnell held a brief symposium in November, 2004, to consider the local potential of wind. At first glance, Grinnell appears to be a likely candidate for a wind energy system. Wind speeds need to average at least 12 miles per hour for a turbine to operate economically; winds in the Grinnell area average about 14 mph (Haman 2004, Iowa Energy Center 2003). The town is already actively engaged in its own renewal process through efforts such as a downtown revitalization project and successful CSA programs. In addition, Grinnell College, a liberal arts institution known for its predominantly liberal, environmentally-conscious student body, plays a significant role in the politics and policy of the town. The environmental potential and the social motivation are certainly there, but the community has adopted no official plans for a wind turbine. At the November 16 symposium, speakers from the Iowa Energy Center and Wind Utility Consulting were careful not to imply a clear verdict for Grinnell's wind energy potential, given the lack of a direct study of local wind conditions. College and community leaders are hesitant to begin the expensive and uncertain process of picking sites, evaluating wind potentials, and gathering funding. College Dean Jim Swartz would only say that the college considered there to be "significant challenges" prohibiting a college-sponsored wind energy project in Grinnell, despite the generally positive sentiment expressed by many students and faculty at the symposium (Andelson 2004). Whether leaders in the Grinnell community will take on those challenges remains unclear, but this situation suggests that even in a relatively proactive and progressive town like Grinnell, making the leap to wind energy can be a daunting prospect.

Efforts by the Iowa Energy Center (IEC), a part of Iowa State University, help to make it easier for localized wind energy systems to be established in Iowa. Using a \$5.9 million initial grant drawn from a slice of Iowa utility companies' revenues from 1995 through 1997, the center established the Alternative Energy Revolving Loan Program (AERLP) (Haman 2004, IEC n.d.). Under this program, the IEC will finance 50% of the cost of approved alternative-energy facility projects, up to \$250,000, at 0% interest (IEC

n.d.). This can make a world of difference in helping small utility providers afford the daunting capital investment in alternative energy projects such as wind turbines. The \$250,000 limit does little to help large-scale wind farm development by major utilities, and thus the benefits of this program are focused toward smaller projects. The Spirit Lake school district took a \$250,000 interest-free loan from the IEC in 2001 to finance a larger second turbine for \$780,000 (Spirit Lake School District 2004). Now, Spirit Lake is the first school system in the nation to derive 100 percent of its energy from wind. Once the turbines are paid off in 2008, the school will enjoy \$120,000 in energy savings every year, money that can be directed back into education (Spirit Lake School District 2004, Crosbie 2003:104). The expansion of Spirit Lake's project is only the beginning, though: The IEC lists about a dozen small wind projects that currently derive funding from the AERLP (Iowa Energy Center 2003).

Localized energy production, however, is not limited to schools like Spirit Lake or communities with local-energy legacies like Waverly. Located near Algona, Iowa, the Iowa Distributed Wind Generation project is a likely example of how the local wind-generated energy systems of the future may work. Consisting of three turbines with a combined generation capacity of 2,250 kW, this small wind farm produces energy for municipal energy suppliers throughout the state (Iowa Energy Center 2003). It is not a participant in the AERLP; instead, it operates in a manner not unlike the Community Supported Agriculture programs that have helped to renew Iowans' connection with their food supply. The \$2.8 million project is offset by a DOE grant, reducing the capital for the three turbines to \$1.6 million. Small municipal energy providers bought shares of the farm's output when it was built in 1998 at a rate of \$702.74 per potential kilowatt (Algona Municipal Utilities n.d.). Seven providers split this cost in different proportions, from Cedar Falls, which bought 1480 kW, to Westfield, which bought 10 kW (Algona Municipal Utilities n.d.). Such a setup shares the risk associated with wind energy, and though the cost per share in this example is dramatically offset by government help, energy co-ops may be the best way for communities to invest in locally-generated wind energy (Haman 2004). However, even though local wind power generation is more viable today than ever before, many communities may be hesitant to make this investment, especially those in weak-winded areas of the state.

As Waverly has demonstrated for a century, a source of locally-generated power can be an economic boon for rural communities, and wind power makes possible the harvesting of a new resource available in many areas in Iowa. Many of Iowa's towns are seeking a renewal in the strength of their local economy, and for some, generating some of their own power by harvesting the wind is a viable way to take control of their electric utility and benefit the local economy. The Spirit Lake school district's project exemplifies another benefit of a clean local power system: the high-profile presence of wind turbines in a community helps reconnect residents to their energy supply and provide a valuable educational resource for energy-aware schoolchildren. The generation of wind power has the potential to play a beneficial role in the economic and social renewal of the Midwest, all while promoting a positive environmental impact by reducing the reliance of burning coal and oil. Not all communities are situated suitably for turbines, and not all communities will have the courage to make the leap toward local generation. However, a localized wind energy system is a proposal many communities

should consider as a means to achieving an economic, social, and environmental renewal in their neighborhood.

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Wind Energy and Biomass: The Next Wave of Energy

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Over the past several years, a movement has begun to reform American energy sources. Environmentally- and energy-aware individuals have realized that the nation's reliance on fossil fuels is shortsighted and that the state of the environment is in decline due in part to the pollutants that fossil fuels release when burned for energy. So, these aware individuals started exploring alternative sources of energy in hopes that they will be able to sustain our energy-hungry country's needs and improve the state of the environment before the world's supply of oil has been depleted and there is nowhere else to turn. In the Midwest, two of the main environmentally-friendly energy sources—wind energy and biomass—are ingenious providers of clean, renewable energy. Both are proving effective on a large scale. However, not only are these sources effectively renewing the nation's energy supply; they are also renewing communities through providing opportunities for economic and educational development. It is just these qualities that keep alternative energy advocates motivated in their quest for clean energy.

Since the Industrial Revolution, the natural environment has been in a state of decline due to widespread reliance on fossil fuels. Land has been damaged due to strip mining and air quality has declined because of the burning of fossil fuels (Berger 11). In the last hundred years, average global temperature rose 1.0° Fahrenheit. In contrast, the global temperature increased by 2.6° Fahrenheit in the prior 9,900 years (Berger 15). This warming coincided with both an increase in industrial farming practices and an increase in dependence on oil for energy. The increase in industrial farming practices, due to small farmers' inability to keep up with lowered crop prices, also created an atmosphere of decline in rural towns (Davidson). While it is apparent that the nation cannot sustainably continue down its slippery slope of excess pollution compounded by increased demand for size, until recently there was little willingness to search for renewable energy options. The earliest large scale energy alternatives were developed in the 1970s with the widespread adoption of solar power (Berger 5) and wind energy experiments (Berger 140). However, it was not until 1993 that the government adopted steady federal tax incentives for renewable energy ("Grassley"). According to the Spirit Lake Community Schools Wind Energy website,

Current patterns of energy production and use threaten both the environment and future economic growth. Much of Iowa's energy comes from coal and oil, which generate pollution. Some comes from nuclear power, which creates safety hazards and produces radioactive wastes. In addition, Iowa remains vulnerable to rising fuel prices and disruptions in energy supply (Spirit Lake).

While environmental health has been in a decline, people recognize that and do not hesitate to admit that they feel America's energy industries should do something about it. According to a recent Minnesota Public Radio poll, 72% of respondents answered that they are very concerned or somewhat concerned about the state's electrical supply (Helms). In addition, 64% replied that "alternative energy technologies like wind and

water power should be pursued first” (Helms). This sentiment is not an uncommon one. Bill Grant, director of the Midwest office of the Izaak Walton League of America elaborated on the poll results to state that “Minnesotans’ interest in energy alternatives is consistent with national polls” (Helms). Americans realize that fossil fuels are nonrenewable and unreliable energy sources that force the federal government to be involved in risky foreign affairs (Berger 10). Environmentally- and energy-aware persons have also recognized the need for energy alternatives, and have been doing something about it. Solar, wind, biomass, and geothermal energy sources have been developed on a large scale in the United States. In the Midwest, biomass and wind energy have an advantage due to favorable environmental conditions.

Biomass

Biomass is the more recently adopted of the two sources, and is still being developed. Biomass utilizes plant matter, usually from the grass family. The most popular type of biomass fuel in Iowa is switchgrass, a prairie grass native to the Midwest. It is harvested much like wheat and is rolled into bales—much like hay. Subsequently, it can be burned in furnaces either in combination with or as a replacement for coal (Tenenbaum 1). As of March 2002, there was a 274,013 ton per year demand for switchgrass (Eathington and Swenson 3). This translates to 213,700 tons of nonrenewable coal that do not have to be imported from other states or burned in power plant furnaces (Eathington and Swenson 5). In contrast, because switchgrass is produced as a crop, it is an entirely renewable, locally grown energy source. Because it is a native prairie plant, switchgrass is a more environmentally friendly crop than traditional row crops. It requires less fertilizer, replaces lost carbon in the soil, prevents soil erosion, and filters water through the soil more successfully than other crop options (Cooper 109). Also unlike coal, it is nearly completely clean to burn in the end because switchgrass consumes nearly the same amount of carbon dioxide in its growing stages as is produced in burning. While coal emissions are high in sulfur dioxide, switchgrass emissions have also been proven to be “very low in sulfur dioxide and mercury” (Tenenbaum 2).

Utilization of biomass as a form of alternative energy also has important economic advantages over burning coal. The March 2002 switchgrass demand translates to \$6.4 million in payments toward workers, farmers, and investors, or 331 jobs in the energy sector. When all economic sectors are taken into account, this translates into \$26.6 million in economic spin offs and 470 jobs that are all kept within the Iowa (Eathington and Swenson 3-4). If this money were not paid to Iowa workers and investors, it would be sent out of state to coal mining industries in other parts of the country. The money coming into rural Iowa communities through switchgrass production lends itself strongly to renewal efforts. With more money coming into rural communities, more vibrant downtowns and more economically stable families can be expected to result (Andelson).

Wind

Wind energy is a second, better-developed form of alternative energy production. Wind energy has been utilized for thousands of years, first appearing in 200 AD in what is present-day Iran. Wind has been commercially harvested in the Midwest for several years, and currently produces 1,554,785 MWh of energy per year in Iowa alone (Eathington and Swenson 3). Wind energy is a truly innovative form of energy production, because it is a completely clean, renewable energy source. In 2002, the

amount of wind energy produced in Iowa replaced 980,000 tons of coal energy (Eathington and Swenson 5). In fact, each 1650 kWh turbine saves the equivalent of 750 railroad cars of coal, or a 7.5 mile long train, from being shipped into Iowa and burned. The utilization of wind energy over coal reduces SO₂ in the atmosphere by 475 tons, nitrogen oxide by 190 tons, and mercury by 11 pounds per year (Hanan). To put it simply, the utilization of wind energy will “pollute less, displace fossil fuels, [and] reduce damage to the environment (Spirit Lake). According to Arnold Kholhede, a wind farmer in Buffalo Ridge, Minnesota, “[Wind turbines are] good for the environment. There’s no pollution from them whatsoever. And we have some real good winds around here” (quoted in Stenger). In fact, the Midwest has proven itself to be perfect for wind energy production. Iowa in particular is an advantageous area for wind production because, according to Tom Wind, an engineer with Wind Utility Consulting, “there’s a ridge that goes through Iowa that’s higher in elevation” (quoted in Pitt). Because of this, Iowa is the tenth windiest state in that nation and the fourth most wind-developed (Hanan), after California, Texas, and Minnesota (“Companies”).

Wind energy makes sense in the Midwest, especially where the economy is concerned. Wind energy is a key piece in the income of Midwest farming communities. For farmers, farming the wind is often more lucrative per acre than raising traditional crops. In fact, every year \$5 million is paid to wind farmers in royalties or rent in the West and Midwest, which averages out to approximately \$2,500 per turbine (Toner 2). Kholhede, the Buffalo Ridge farmer, finds wind turbines to be “a real good second income” (Stenger). He leases five plots of land to a utility company, which in return pays him \$2,000 per year for each plot. In comparison, the same amount of land put into corn crop would bring Kholhede little more than \$100 (Stenger).

Money earned from wind farming income has the advantage in rural America of staying local. The 1,554,785 MWh of wind energy produced yearly in Iowa translates into \$65.51 million in earnings for workers, farmers and investors and 65 jobs. However, when spin off money is taken into account, there is effectively \$175.8 million in total industrial output, accounting for 852 jobs (Eathington and Swenson 4-5). Furthermore, for every \$1 million spent on wind energy production in Iowa, \$508,954 is spent in all other Iowa industries in spin off sales. In comparison, for every \$1 million spent in every other energy producing method, only \$244,811 is spent in spin off sales. The large discrepancy is due to money being shipped out of state to obtain other fuels, federal subsidies for wind production, and the higher price that wind farmers get for their product than other energy producers (Eathington and Swenson 4-5). Just as the income earned from wind farming stays local, so does the money spent to purchase turbines. Many of the turbines used today are built in rural Minnesota, and according to Bill Grant, “The money that’s spent [on new wind turbines] circulates in these communities... It doesn’t go out of state, like it does [when utilities buy] coal or natural gas” (“Companies”).

Drawbacks and Solutions

While the economic and environmental reasons for alternative energy production are strong, there are some drawbacks to installing wind turbines and burning biomass. One of the main drawbacks with biomass and wind as alternative energy sources carry is its price. Biomass is expensive to burn; in fact, it costs three times as much to farm and

burn switchgrass as it does to import the same amount of energy as coal from Wyoming (Cooper 109).

Although biomass is more expensive than coal in short-term monetary value, burning the native switch grass holds advantages in the long run. The Chariton Valley Biomass Project in conjunction with Alliant Energy burns biomass because they have measured long-term values. They see biomass as a wise investment because of “nontraditional costs and benefits when evaluating agriculture and energy markets” such as the long-term costs of global warming and the benefits of soil, water, and air protection (Cooper 109). When these costs are measured “biomass becomes more attractive as a renewable energy source” (Cooper 109).

Modern wind turbines are also expensive. A new, 1650 kWh wind turbine costs \$2 million per turbine, which is a major hindrance to farmers interested in joining the wind farming community (Hanan). Additionally, loans can take several years to pay back. The problem of cost is compounded in Iowa, where utilities “pay two cents per kilowatt hour returned back to the power grid [from wind-generated electricity], while they are paid from seven to fifteen cents by consumers buying their power” (Pitt). In contrast, in Minnesota and Wisconsin, wind farmers receive market price for the wind that they return back to the power grid (Pitt).

Luckily, Iowa provides some unique remedies to the problem of cost. An Iowa program, the Alternate Energy Revolving Loan Program, runs a loan program in which loans are granted to wind farmers, and as they pay back their loans, the money “revolves back” to pay for new projects (“Alternate”). In addition, both biomass and wind energy production have a 1.8 cent per kWh tax credit in place (“Wind”). The wind energy tax credit makes paying back loans much easier and makes wind energy investment more appealing to energy companies (Kafka “Wind”). In fact, because of the recent reinstatement of the tax credit, which had run out and was renewed in October, it is expected that there will be \$250 million in wind investment by the end of 2005 (Kafka “Wind”).

Wind energy also creates some environmental, aesthetic, and technical concerns. Some concern exists about the killing of birds in wind turbines. This was because in Altamont Pass, California, in the early nineties, raptors were being killed in turbines. It was later found that the turbines were put up in the middle of raptor nesting grounds (Beck and Reeves 17). In response to this issue, bird migratory and nesting patterns are mapped before turbines are built, and turbine rotations have been slowed down so that birds can see the blades more easily. In subsequent studies, only one or two birds per year per turbine have been killed (Beck and Reeves 17). There are also noise concerns about wind turbines because they make a buzzing sound when producing energy. However, wind turbine noise is minimal and has been found to be at approximately the level of a library reading room (Beck and Reeves 17). Unfortunately, one of the most worrisome challenges to wind farming is inadequate transmission lines for the amount of energy that is currently produced. North Dakota by itself could potentially produce 35% of the electric power consumed in the United States, but because of inadequate transmission lines, this is not possible (Kliwer 2). The lines needed may cost up to \$500,000 per mile and therefore few are willing to attempt installation (Kafka “Wind”).

Some Examples

With the benefits and costs of wind energy and biomass in mind, many farmers are growing switchgrass and installing wind turbines on their farms, and several energy companies are investing a significant amount of money in using these renewable energy options. The Spirit Lake, Iowa, school district was the first school district to obtain all of its power from wind energy. Their wind venture began in 1993, when the school district installed a wind turbine to supply energy to Spirit Lake Elementary. The school paid off their loans from the wind turbine within five years of its installation. The turbine produced enough energy that within ninety months there was ample supply to meet all of the elementary school's energy needs and to provide the school with nearly \$25,000 in reimbursement for unused energy. In 2001, the district installed its second turbine. It should be paid off by 2007 (Spirit Lake). The wind turbines not only provide an opportunity for clean, inexpensive energy for the schools, they also provide educational opportunity for the students of Spirit Lake schools. Curriculum about wind energy has been incorporated into the syllabi of students of all grades so that an appreciation for the importance of alternative energy sources will continue into the future (Spirit Lake).

In southwestern Minnesota, the towns along Buffalo Ridge are based on wind energy, both economically and communally. The largest concentration of wind farms in the world sits on Buffalo Ridge, which has 600 turbines on 25 individual wind farms (Kafka "South"). Wind development in Storm Lake and Lake Benton now creates enough wind power to supply 200,000 Midwesterners with energy, the equivalent of 300,000 tons of coal and 500,000 tons of carbon dioxide emissions (Stenger). Not only does the area find profit and employment in wind farming itself, but Buffalo Ridge towns also find money in tourism throughout the region. According to Marlin Thompson, the mayor of Lake Benton, "[Wind farming has] been a boon to the community... not only from the standpoint of employment, which is important to small communities, but also from the standpoint of tourism" (Stenger). School groups and tourists visit the area, and each year the town of Alta holds a Wind Festival, celebrating its unique asset (Stenger). In Lake Benton, there is a thriving historic downtown area in addition to a museum called the Heritage Windpower Learning Center, a testament to the importance of tourism to the vitality of the downtown area ("Heritage"). In Buffalo Ridge, wind energy definitely lends itself to promoting both environmental and community renewal.

The Alliant Energy Utility Company, in conjunction with the Chariton Valley Biomass Project in Iowa, has also decided to invest in biomass production. Regardless of the increased cost of using biomass in place of coal, the group has decided that the long-term benefits of biomass are more important than the short-term costs. Five percent of the energy produced at the company's power plants is obtained through the burning of biomass, which is one of the highest biomass utilization rates in the world. This five percent requires 200,000 tons of biomass produced on 50,000 acres of land (Cooper 109).

Finally, the Iowa Energy Center, which researches and promotes the use of alternative energy sources, explains in its mission statement that it maintains its participation in and funding of research practices in order to "serve as a model for state efforts to decrease dependence on imported fuels and to decrease reliance on energy production from nonrenewable, resource-depleting fuels [...and to] strive to increase energy efficiency in all areas of Iowa's energy use" (Iowa).

The efforts that towns like Lake Benton, school systems like Spirit Lake, utility companies like Alliant Energy and research groups like the Iowa Energy Center put into improving alternative energy sources are very significant. They have created an expectation that the Midwest can utilize alternative energy sources, and they are serving as examples by doing so, even when it is not cost-effective in the short term. Through wind energy and biomass, perhaps the energy profile of the entire country will change to include clean, local, and sustainable energy sources, leading to environmental and community renewal.

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Iowa's Affordable Housing Crisis

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"All right," says the carpenter, when the piece of siding is finally aligned with the others. Carefully picking nails from borrowed toolbelts, several college students touch the points to the wall and timidly tap the heads with hammers, mindful that their fingers are still gripping the shafts. The cacophony of hammering swells as nails are driven in, fingers safely out of the way so the hammers can fly at full speed. As some people finish hammering or stop to pick up a dropped nail, the sounds gradually synchronize until a few hammers pound the wall in unison so that it resonates like a large woody drum. Then the students move to the next piece that others and I have put it in. We shove it this way and that until the carpenter is satisfied, and then we hear the words again. "All right."

We fumble for nails. One volunteer discovers a grasshopper has taken up residence in her toolbelt. Her position is filled by others while a friend from Florida, accustomed to much larger insects, calmly removes the grasshopper and tosses it gently into the grass. Another student is perched on a ladder overhead, nailing plastic lining around the edge of the roof. Ten college students and three farmers/carpenters have devoted their Saturday to building a new house for a local family currently living in a rundown house a few blocks away.

Obtaining housing has become more and more difficult for Iowans with lower incomes. Housing is a key factor in the life of every person, and the lack of it presents concerns for the futures of many. The lack of housing is the result of a growing disparity between the costs of housing and the incomes of those attempting to obtain it. One significant effort to bring housing to these people is the Habitat for Humanity volunteer program. Another possibility is a change in policy to make government programs more compatible with satisfactory housing. Both programs consider the human element in housing.

The family for whom the house is being built is hardly in an uncommon situation. Iowa, like the rest of the country, "is experiencing an affordable housing crisis." A crisis situation in housing affordability, where more than half of an occupant's income is spent directly on housing, can lead to a host of other problems. The most obvious, homelessness, is hardly unknown: "As a result of the housing affordability crisis, 4% to 6% of America's poor become homeless each year" (Harburger and White 2004: 496-497). Other problems, although they may seem less severe, also exist. Because so little disposable income remains, people in affordability crises are ill-prepared for medical emergencies or accidents. Also, to increase the amount of disposable income, people or families in crises generally find the least expensive housing available. Often, such housing is substandard. An Iowa State University census study of housing lists such factors as "age of the units, number of rooms, number of persons per room, utility and maintenance costs" and others as significant when considering the housing situation (Hanson et al 1998: 1).

The same study noted that Iowa “housing units” (a term for the places people live) are among the oldest in the nation: the median year of construction for all units was 1956. Only four states and the District of Columbia have earlier median years (Hanson et al 1998: 3). Similar analyses within the same study paint a picture of aging housing. Old houses are not necessarily substandard, but without proper maintenance, they naturally decay. Maintenance costs for older homes are generally higher, and decay increases the potential for the sort of sudden accidents that people in housing affordability crises can so little afford. Correspondingly, the average percent of income spent on housing has increased in recent years throughout the state (Hanson et al 1998: 47).

As poor people become less able to afford housing, several programs have combated the availability crisis. These programs emerged in force in Iowa in the 1980s and '90s (Hamin 2003: 370). The program in which I participated, run by Habitat for Humanity, focuses on building “simple, decent, affordable houses in partnership with those who lack adequate shelter” through volunteer labor (<www.habitat.org>). The key components of this program are that it attempts to provide adequate housing at a low cost while involving people, both those who will eventually live in the house and those who volunteer to build it.

This reliance on volunteer labor means that those who participate do so because they truly want to and because they believe in the importance of providing housing. For example, one of the farmers/carpenters at the “build” I worked at, a veteran of Habitat for Humanity builds, said he believed that providing housing for people would eventually “eliminate poverty.” This illustrates the importance in housing for people attempting to climb out of poverty: a recipient of a Habitat house in Des Moines said, “To be 44 years old and to finally own my own home ... is like a dream come true.” An organizer of that building project noted, “Having a house is one of the basics ... When you own your own, you make other attachments in the community” (*Des Moines Register*, March 10, 2002).

The emphasis on community connections reflects the human element of all housing. This human element seems to be what draws people to support and also to participate in volunteer efforts. The city of Des Moines once sold a lot it owned to Habitat for Humanity, even though the organization was actually the lower bidder. The neighbors to the lot, who submitted the higher bid, had wanted to expand their yard. The city accepted the Habitat bid because it believed the overall benefit would be greater, a “way to provide affordable housing in the city.” The neighbors eventually “felt silly bidding against it” (*Des Moines Register* July 19, 2001).

Volunteers at other projects noted that “it’s fun to see the project take shape and know that they are helping give something back to the community” and that “it’s rewarding to know that ... [they] are able to provide a home for someone...” (*Des Moines Register*, July 3 and November 6, 2002). Such sentiments are echoed by many others. Most volunteers noted that the reasons they began volunteering stemmed from a desire to help other people, and that they continued to work for the same reason. Volunteers recognized the importance of a home. My volunteer experience was similar. I chose to work on a house because it would directly benefit a group of people by giving them a place to live while recognizing their abilities through their own participation in the project. This recognition of human dignity seems to me to connect the desire to help others and the recognition of the importance of homes. Both are aspects of respect for human dignity.

This respect is a motivator for efforts to supply people with housing. The “dream come true” described by the Des Moines woman reflects that owning a house is not simply the physical building. The inherent stability of a home provides opportunities rarely available to people without permanent housing. These include the ability to engage in self-furthering activities (such a work or education) which would otherwise be impossible because of the difficulties in homeless survival.

The importance of dignity was clear in another housing-related volunteer program I participated in: joining five other college students and several people from church in helping an old woman move into an assisted-living facility. It was most important to recognize that although the woman was no longer able to live on her own, she still had that basic dignity, which demanded respect. This connection to dignity is related to the ultimate goal of such efforts: rather than simply halting the housing affordability crisis, the efforts strive to reverse it by providing people with the opportunity to escape from poverty.

Although the Habitat for Humanity programs and the church-based program I participated in have high success rates, they are limited by size. Habitat for Humanity is widespread (it operates in over 100 countries and builds a house every 26 minutes, including houses in Iowa) (<www.habitat.org>), and church-based groups are present all over the country, but both are inevitably focused on small groups of people. To really cover all people in poverty, the most feasible solution is government-based programs, both state and federal.

The several government-based programs designed to alleviate poverty do not seem have met much success in providing long-term solutions. An analysis by Dorothy S. Harburger and Ruth A. White (2004) suggests that the problems associated with the large welfare programs, the bulwark of governmental poverty assistance, may stem from policy structure. The analysis notes that “Child welfare agencies lack the capacity to provide permanent supportive housing, but even more fundamentally, they lack the mandate to do so.” Because parents cannot obtain suitable housing without assistance, child welfare workers are obligated to place children in foster care, even though a much more productive solution would be for the children to live with their parents, whom the government would assist in finding suitable housing (Harburger and White 2004: 494).

The difference between current government programs and the type recommended by Harburger and White is that current programs are merely stopgap measures, designed to only hold back current problems without really solving the underlying causes. Harburger and White’s ideas would directly treat what is seen as the root of the need for so much foster care: simply change policy to favor leaving children with parents whenever possible by providing the necessary subsidies for parents and children to live together in safe housing.

The strategy of treating housing as the root of all problems has a flaw, however. It can lead to simply replacing housing, which is a stopgap measure at the deepest level, although it may appear to be a way of renewal. A truer renewal would be to remove the barriers to easy housing access. This would require either making housing much less expensive or the poor much richer. Both routes can be debated in economic circles. It is interesting that Habitat for Humanity is an effort in the first direction, while government welfare programs are, in a way, an attempt in the second.

Although programs such as those described above may not be truly renewing, they might lead to true renewal indirectly by creating precedents that large numbers of people would be compelled to follow. If it were no longer expected that poor people will have difficulty obtaining housing, then it would attract far more attention to all people who do have difficulty obtaining housing. This would then be fertile ground for change.

Thus, the efforts I have described here are limited by quantity. Their effectiveness depends precisely on how many resources are placed behind them. If Habitat for Humanity programs were manned by twice as many volunteers and had a coordinating staff twice as capable, houses could be built twice as fast. If more money were allocated to child welfare workers in the way Harburger and White suggest, more parents could be subsidized so as to find suitable housing for their children. All depend, however, on their ability to counteract a constant force against the availability of housing.

Despite the fact that these are band-aid efforts against the general affordable housing crisis, they do an admirable job of establishing the human element of housing by increasing human involvement. As people support housing for others through tax funding or directly through building it with programs such as Habitat for Humanity, they create housing-based relationships, where the houses are vectors of human community.

This human element is, in my opinion, the most important of all the parts of the general housing affordability crisis. Because these programs create a precedent for more human interaction, they also may begin a renewal of human relationships. This precedent does not depend on resources because it is ideally self-propagating: hopefully, once people see the possibility of increased relationships with others, they will pursue them and inspire others to do likewise.

Although this is speculation that the renewal efforts will have ideal results, the strength of the relationships formed through housing efforts is evident through the experiences many have had through the Habitat for Humanity programs. The simple fascination of building a house is so strong, and the relationship between the builder and the person for whom the house is intended is so present, that it is scarcely possible for them not to be an inspiration to others. Volunteers have noted that they “change lives” and have cried at dedication ceremonies for houses they have helped build (*Des Moines Register* March 10, 2001 and December 12, 2003).

Similarly, the compulsion of many people to return to Habitat for Humanity projects shows the strength of these relationships. My group, for example, planned on returning to the house we had worked on before, continuing what we had already done. We were crushed to learn that, because the intended family had decided to move out of the state and had requested to be “unassigned” the house, construction had halted until a new family could be found. Personally, I still remember the locations of several nails that fell through the front porch while we were nailing on siding. I’d like to go and get them before someone else discovers them inadvertently (such as a hypothetical young child of whichever family gets the house when he or she decides to be adventurous and crawl beneath the porch) and gets hurt. I feel quite responsible for the work I did on the house. If it turns out that the siding we put on was not nailed tightly enough, and blows off, or that it was nailed on too tightly and buckles in the summer heat, I will feel very guilty. The frame of the house, the foundations and floorwork were all put in by volunteers who did not have the experience of professionals. Ultimately, whoever lives in the house will be placing a great deal of trust in those who built it.

As a director of a regional Iowa Habitat for Humanity put it, "The house gives a family stability. It gives the parents something to pass on to their children" (*The Gazette*, Feb. 14, 2004). The housing affordability crisis in Iowa is extremely pressing, not so much because of the actual lack of accessible housing, but rather because of the human suffering that occurs because of that lack. The various efforts to make housing more accessible have the potential to renew human relations generally, and to alleviate the indignity of not having a place to live.

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Personal Experience in Volunteer Work

The Family Farm in the Industrial World

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According to Chuck Hassebrook, executive director of the Center for Rural Affairs, "the assumption guiding farm policy in America is that family farm...decline is necessary and ultimately good for the nation. That assumption is wrong". As an effect of such an assumption, U.S. Senator Thomas Harkin (Democrat of Iowa) points out that "farmers have been forced to sit idly by and watch stockholders in these giant agribusiness firms make money at a rate 1000 percent better than farmers. It is abundantly clear that something must be done [to] ensure independent family farmers can compete" (Iowa Farmers Union). In fact, from 1997 to 2002, the number of family farms in Iowa has decreased by 2,375 farms (U.S.D.A.). While the number of family farms are in decline, the average size of farms is up five percent and the average age of farmers is up to 54 years old (U.S.D.A.). However, these trends are not necessary and are not ultimately good for the nation. Family farms are important not only in the production of food and fiber, but also in the health of rural communities. To fight the current decline and to spur renewal, many organizations and people, from politicians to independent farmers, are working at every level to preserve family farming.

Craig Lang, President of the Iowa Farm Bureau, sees a challenge in family farmers properly describing themselves. He explains that a farm of any size has the potential to be defined as a family farm. However, the National Family Farm Coalition describes the family farm not in terms of farm size, but rather by the fact that the "family provides the vast majority of labor and management decisions" (NFFC n.d.). The existence of these farms is important for society, food production and rural communities. More farms, instead of larger farms, contribute to healthier societies through more equally distributed resources, such as wealth, power and income (Hasserbrook). When members feel ownership, there is more of a sense of community, which leads to more social capital--community service and like-minded projects. The Quad-City Times reported that "despite the financial hardships of farming, more than 90 percent of farmers donate money to their churches, almost 90 percent believe it's important to volunteer their time to community activities, and more than half donate money to civic groups" ("Iowa Farmers Discourage Progeny"). If large companies controlled a great majority of all farm land, opportunities for independent farming would be minimal, and the lack of diversity in farm size would make the food supply less resilient. Lastly, Craig Lang states "the family will risk all they have to insure success. Corporate structures do not have this characteristic. Their direction is driven by shareholder profits rather than environment and soil needs. Therefore, family ownership is the best structure to insure sustainable and protective ownership of our land and soil resources" (Lang 2004).

Moreover, the jobs of independent farmers are threatened. Many family farms cannot maintain operations without a "job in town" or some sort of second income. This problem arises from the changes in the economy, such as technological evolution or globalization, which directly affect business firms in the agriculture sector and family farms. In response to these effects, in many cases, the firms join together, creating

vertical or horizontal integration, so that they can "improve their ability to control production costs, satisfy market demand and generate additional revenue" (Harkin 2004: page 2). By joining together and leveraging costs, firms can control the different processes involved in getting their products out to consumers. Farmers, however, "typically cannot leverage their costs beyond the farm gate" (Harkin 2004: page 2). As a result, family farms face ever tighter profit margins and have a more difficult time "remaining competitive in the market place" (Lang 2004). Tighter profit margins have led 95 percent of surveyed Iowa farmers to report that "it takes more than one income" to keep farming and have led families to recommend that their sons and daughters not choose farming as a career ("Iowa Farmers Discourage Progeny").

Federal legislation affects the future of family farming on a national level. Certain past and current actions of legislators have given farmers more control and protection over their operations or have brought national attention to different hardships faced by farmers. For the most part, agriculture legislation takes one of two forms. In one form, legislation acts as a bill to restrain or control the effects of big business. In the other, legislation acts as a program or administration set up to aid or reward the farmer. In order that the programs and administrations are the most useful, they are specialized. These administrations range in control from product inspection to giving loans and the programs range from those concerning environmental issues to those dealing with fair prices for commodities. The Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA n.d.) facilitates the marketing of most agricultural products while promoting "fair and competitive trading practices for the overall benefit of consumers and American agriculture" (GIPSA n.d.). The Financial Services Authority (FSA n.d.) gives farm loans to existing farmers who cannot obtain commercial credit in order to purchase farming related items or to make improvements. These loans may also be given to beginning farmers who cannot qualify for conventional loans because they have insufficient financial resources. In order to make sure farmers are receiving reasonable prices on their commodities, the Direct and Counter-Cyclical Program was introduced as a part of the 2002 Farm Bill, giving farmers both direct and counter-cyclical payments according to current market prices and loan rates of the individual farmer. The direct payment is given regardless of market prices and loan rates, while the counter-cyclical payment is given in order that the farmer is receiving the specific price target. The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP n.d.) allows agricultural landowners to enter into ten to fifteen year contracts to "receive annual rental payments and cost-share assistance to establish long-term, resource conserving covers on eligible farmland" (FSA n.d.). Along with helping to protect the nation's long term ability to produce food by protecting and increasing the quality of the environment, the program gives farmers a steady income.

Government legislation concentrates mostly on preventing large agricultural firms from using unfair practices. U.S. Senator Thomas Harkin, along with the other Democratic staff on the Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee prepared a document on the unfair practices and current trends of the large agribusiness firms. Titled "Economic Concentration and Structural Change in the Food and Agricultural Sector: Trends, Consequences and Policy Options" (2004), the document's purpose is to shed light on issues of growing concentration in the agriculture sector and on the problems such concentration poses to agricultural producers, rural communities and consumers. Senator Harkin hopes that the report will foster "a real debate between lawmakers and

producers around the country to find ways to level the playing field" (Iowa Farmers Union). The report addresses proposed legislation from the 107th and 108th Congresses as well as already passed legislation, such as the 2002 Farm Bill which amended the Packers and Stockyards Act, giving protection against unfair preferential practices to those who raised hogs for others by bringing hog production contractors under the bill (O'Brian).

Different organizations play different roles in aiding family farmers. Some work on a statewide to national level like the Iowa Farm Bureau and the larger American Farm Bureau, while others work on a more local level like Practical Farmers of Iowa. Iowa Farm Bureau along with American Farm Bureau seeks to "help farm families prosper and improve their quality of life" (Lang 2004) by making sure anti-trust laws are properly enforced and by working to have profit fairly shared between factory and farmer all the way to the market place. Craig Lang, President of the Iowa Farm Bureau, believes "large agribusiness can be farmer's best friend or worst enemy" (Lang 2004) and that without it farmers would not have adequate access to world markets. Thus, he feels that it is most important to "figure out ways to work with large agribusiness, not try to stop them" (Lang 2004). Lang believes that over the last 80 years the Iowa Farm Bureau, along with the American Farm Bureau, has been very successful in keeping families on the land by pressuring legislators to propose and pass legislation that protects and aids independent farmers.

Believing that it is important to start at the local level instead of the national level, the American Farm Bureau credits the experienced success to the grassroots agenda. In fact, the group looks to members to set the policy that is pushed in Washington D. C. Starting with over 2,800 county Farm Bureaus, thousands of members around the country are elected to serve on the county boards. Next, the county boards set policies and elect delegates to attend the annual state meetings to voice the concerns of their county Farm Bureau. After the state Farm Bureau sets their policy, they elect new delegates to represent the state at the annual American Farm Bureau meeting. When policy is decided, the pressure is put on legislators to produce legislation that incorporates the decided policy. Lang points to currently proposed legislation to ban packer ownership of livestock and other bills that are making way as evidence of the success the group is having with getting "key agricultural representation" developed by members at a local level into the U.S. Attorney General's office. However, the example of one piece of legislation does not properly reflect the power that the American Farm Bureau wields. Five million members strong, the American Farm Bureau is consistently ranked by *Fortune* Magazine as the most influential farm group in Washington D. C (American Farm Bureau).

Working on a local to statewide level, Practical Farmers of Iowa is an entirely different kind of group from the larger Iowa Farm Bureau. Started in 1985 in response to the farm crisis that saw the demise of thousands of farms in Iowa, Practical Farmers of Iowa seeks "to research, develop and promote profitable, ecologically sound and community enhancing approaches to agriculture" (PFI n.d.). Unlike Iowa Farm Bureau, which seeks to aid farmers mostly through lobbying activities, the 700 members of Practical Farmers of Iowa seeks to connect people interested in practical agriculture with farmers that can supply that knowledge and experience. The knowledge these farmers present is a "practical sensuous, personal skill that develops with careful attention to the distinctive yet dynamic social and physical features of a specific locality and that is fundamentally tied to direct experience of a particular place or activity" (Hassanein: page

31). In order to connect people, Practical Farmers of Iowa has set up different programs to address important parts of the education: farming systems, marketing systems, youth and student, and special projects. In particular, the farming systems program seeks to use on-farm research to build relationships between scientists and farmers in order to increase the part farmers play in agricultural research. From these "learning relationships" (PFI n.d.), Practical Farmers of Iowa hope to move "university and agribusiness research toward sustainability" (PFI n.d.).

Like the act of setting up networks by Practical Farmers of Iowa, acts that arise through social networks in the community play an equally important role in aiding farmers. These networks help to cushion times of hardship and act as a constant reminder to farmers that they are not alone. A recent story on National Public Radio's program, *This American Life*, provides an example. In the prologue, a farming family experiences hardship when John, the farmer of the family, comes down with a neurological disorder just after all the money had been spent on buying and planting the seeds. When the time came to take the products to market, he went into the hospital, later becoming paralyzed. With no other regular help on the farm, Suzie, the five-month pregnant wife who was caring for their four-year old daughter, had to do the farm chores the best she could. Because they had only moved to the location two years before, they did not know their neighbors well. They knew the farmers at the farmers market, but they did not know them to the extent that they would, for example, go over to each other's houses. However, the farmers at the market put up a sign at John's booth explaining the family's current state of trouble, opened up a fund, and collected money. Particular acts of kindness included: one neighbor coming by daily to harvest their flowers and sell them at the booth, giving the family the money; another neighbor gave them money that she made from her paintings of their flowers; the ladies in Suzie's book club all contributed to a relief fund; tuition for their daughter's preschool was paid for; and ten farmers came and spent the day harvesting John's crops. This last act particularly touched them, because the time the farmers spent harvesting John's crops was time not spent harvesting their own crops. John later recovered from paralysis and started working again, but he would forever be indebted to the helpful farmers. Without the actions of the farmers, John and Suzie would have gone through extreme financial turmoil and would have, perhaps, lost the farm.

Recently, I had an opportunity to help an Iowa farm family in a similar situation. The man of the household had died of what was most likely a massive heart attack, and a majority of his crops were still out in his fields. Thus, on a Saturday morning, I left with my uncle and we made our way via tractor to join a group of about fifteen farmers. When we arrived, the combines of the other farmers were harvesting the corn five rows at a time. Having harvested the corn, we loaded the corn into the large bins. During this long process, I talked to my uncle. He told me that it was a tradition to drop whatever you were doing and help the farmer in need. In response to my question concerning similar experiences, he said that my grandfather got help from neighboring farmers when he fell from a tree and broke his ulna and radius. On that occasion, the neighboring farmers spent a day planting his crops for him. After my grandfather had recovered from the injury and harvested the corn, he joked about how that year's crop was one of the best he had in a long time. This nearly unspoken tradition of mutual aid helps save family farms from going under when disaster strikes. The community comes together to cushion the blow of any hardship, and they do it all for nothing. They do not ask for gas money or for

expenses incurred for their labor, but take pride in being a farmer and in helping out another.

From the national level of legislators proposing bills, to farmer organizations either pressuring the legislators to propose the bills or networking farmers to help educate like-minded farmers, to the community coming together to aid a family in need, the chain for success in family farming comes to the farmer himself. Paul Willis, a hog farmer who raises pigs in seven different locations on his 1000 acre farm, was having trouble making a profit because the way he raised his pigs caused him to earn poor profits. The pigs he raises are fatter, spend more time outside, get more exercise and have less stress than confinement pigs. Following "humane husbandry standards developed by Diane Halverson of the Animal Welfare Institute" (Crosbie 2003:36), Paul was initially penalized for his pigs not being as lean as confinement pigs. However, consumers are becoming more and more concerned about where their food comes from, and Paul's pigs are now earning the high price they deserve through Bill Niman, a California rancher who distributes free-range meat to restaurants. By finding this specific niche, Paul can survive as an independent farmer, along with the now more than 200 farmers that he contracts with, paying them a "fifteen-dollar per hog premium over what they would receive in traditional markets" (Crosbie 2003:36).

On 550 acres in Poweshiek County, Barney Bahrenfuse raises cattle, hogs, sheep, chickens, and has recently started raising goats, all of which are fed on crops he raises himself. Like Paul Willis, Barney practices a more environmentally sound way of doing things. He does not use antibiotics on his livestock unless there is truly a need for it, and all his livestock spend a majority of their time outside. When asked why he practices those methods, he answers that he does what he was brought up doing, and he does it out of concern for the animal's health. Like many other farmers, Barney gets involved with other groups. He is a member of Grinnell Area Local Food Alliance, Iowa Network for Community Agriculture, and Practical Farmers of Iowa. Spending most of his time volunteering for Practical Farmers of Iowa, he has served on the board twice. His thoughts on the future of family farming are mixed. He believes that the future of family farming "can be possible" (Bahrenfuse 2004), but the mainstream of Iowa agriculture--corn and soy--is not very promising for independent farmers. Instead, he feels that the ability to succeed for many independent farmers lies in their ability to find a niche. At the end of our conversation, Barney spoke of the importance of what he had just done--educate me. For farmers to remain successful in practicing sustainable agriculture, they need to interact and educate anyone they can, from students to other farmers. "Hardly anyone knows anything about farming so whatever they learn is a plus" (Bahrenfuse 2004).

While large agribusinesses do pose threats, it is important to acknowledge the importance they have in the agriculture sector. Some who support big business say that independent farmers farm because they enjoy it or say that farming is not their livelihood. However, others like Barney believe that while farmers do farm because they enjoy it, farmers "should be able to make a living without a job in town" (Bahrenfuse 2004). If farmers can work with large firms, the opportunities for farmers and the likelihood that they will be able to make an honest living improve greatly. However, Senator Harkin feels that will be difficult to do, noting that "it is clear that efforts to this point to stop or even slow the devastating effects of consolidation and vertical integration have been

ineffective" (Iowa Farmers Union). To fix the problem, enacted laws need to be aggressively enforced and other laws must be passed to level the playing field. For this to happen, it is essential that all the groups from politicians to the individual farmers not just in Iowa, but around the country do their part.

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Community Rebuilding on the Pine Ridge Reservation

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Community is a multifaceted idea that cannot be described in only a few words. Many factors contribute to whether or not a community will be successful and prosperous or problematic. Pine Ridge Reservation is a dysfunctional community. Many efforts are being made to revitalize it, but, sadly, these efforts have so far not shown great success. Programs that recognize the complexity of community end up addressing problems superficially because they're spread too thinly. Programs that focus on one problem fail to address the interconnectedness of the entire community. Therefore, both strategies fail.

The rural dilemma on the Pine Ridge Reservation is more complicated than the rural dilemma elsewhere in the United States because of a combination of land ownership rights, availability of wage employment, an artificial economy and dependence upon the United States government for sustenance and money. Job scarcity, severe depression and family abuse, severe poverty and intense alcoholism are the effects of many contributing causes that have led to over one hundred years of decline on the reservation. For the purpose of conciseness, depth, and length, I will primarily focus on economic causes of the unhealthy community and economic efforts at renewal, although I will touch briefly upon other types of decline and renewal on the reservation. As President Bill Clinton said in his speech to the community at Pine Ridge Reservation, "...we must have jobs if we want these communities to work....their [adult community members] lives have to be evidence that looking to tomorrow pays off" (Clinton, 1999). In the following pages, I will discuss the nature and cause of the weak community on the Pine Ridge reservation and the requirements for a healthy community. Then I will discuss the strategies that individuals and groups are using to revitalize it. Finally, I will discuss the extent and limits of community improvement on the reservation.

Jan Flora accurately describes the complexity of community:

We have found it useful when looking at communities to focus on six types of capital: cultural, human, social, financial/built, natural, and political. These resources can either enhance or detract from one another. When one type of capital is emphasized over all others, the other resources are decapitalized, and the economy, environment or social equity can be thus compromised... (Flora, 2004: 9).

The term "capital" in this case refers to an asset that is invested to create new resources over time. For example, natural capital can be used immediately for profit, or it can be a continuing resource for a community. In order to create and maintain a healthy and prosperous community, these six types of capital must balance each other for the most part. On the Pine Ridge Reservation, the capital that is lacking the most is the financial/built capital. Almost all of the money gained on the reservation is used for consumption rather than investment; in fact, "an estimated 90% of the reservation's income winds up being spent off the reservation—and about half of it leaves within 72 hours of showing up" (Miller, 2002: 4). This is the exact same problem that the small town of Mechanicsville had to deal with in Broken Heartland and a sign of a very weak

community (Davidson, 1996: 7). Lack of financial capital leads to weak “built capital”—that is, “factories, schools, roads, restored habitat, community centers...all of which contribute to building other capitals for communities” (Flora, 2004: 10). Indeed, lack of adequate financial capital leads to weak built capital on the Pine Ridge Reservation. There is not a single bank, hotel or movie theater on the Pine Ridge Reservation, even though it is home to about 31,000 Lakota citizens (Miller, 2002: 3).

Further, a lack of job opportunities prevents residents from acquiring a job even if they have the education to do so. As for residents who want to start their own businesses, the tribe has to appropriate a piece of land for a prospective business owner, then the business owner must apply for a five-year lease, then apply before the tribal committee, then the Bureau of Indian Affairs must review the application (Miller, 2002: 3). At any time, the tribal council may delay or deny the application process. Red-tape regarding land-ownership rights on the reservation often discourages outside businesses from coming to places like Pine Ridge because outside businesses can never fully own the land they use. The tribal council only leases land for short intervals at a time.

If there were businesses on the reservation to provide tribal members with the services they needed, the economy on the reservation would become less dependent on government funding, and more jobs on the reservation would allow more people to work. Currently, the entire tribe is dependent on the United States government for food, money and support. Most of the businesses on the reservation that exist are tribally-owned. However, when outside businesses attempt to boost the economy by adding competition to tribally-owned businesses, they either can't buy the land or they lease the land for a few years, and then leave.

Another aspect of this problem is that wage-employment is a foreign concept to Natives on the reservation. With unemployment rate consistently around 80%, “The most basic elements of employment—showing up on time, dressing appropriately, scheduling time off in advance—are alien concepts to many Lakota, simply because job scarcity has left huge numbers of them inexperienced...” (Miller, 2002: 4) According to the U.S. Census Bureau, even though the estimated population of Shannon County was 13,209, there were only 28 established businesses in the county, and only 817 employees (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002). Including the invisible homeless residents on the reservation, other population estimates are closer to 30,000 (Miller, 2002: 3)

Decline on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, unlike decline in other parts of rural America, has roots all the way back to the 1800s when the U.S. government seized Sioux land and placed natives on reservations. At that time, the Lakota people practiced a mixed economy—simple agriculture, hunting and gathering, and fur trading with white settlers. Relationships between the natives and white settlers had been uneasy, so the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868 established the Great Sioux Reservation and agreed to supply the Lakota people with schools, instruction in farming, a physician, a blacksmith, a carpenter, an engineer, a miller, seeds, and agricultural implements. Most importantly, however, was the rationing system and protection from the United States army (Biolsi, 1992: 5). The Black Hills agreement later stated that the United States government would provide rations “...until the Indians are able to support themselves” (Biolsi 1992: 17).

Instead of supporting themselves, the Lakota people gradually became more dependent upon government financial assistance and sustenance, because they could not break away from the artificial economy. The United States government originally wanted

to convert the American Indians living on reservations into independent farmers. These attempts were made in vain. First, the Sioux people had only migrated from Minnesota within the past hundred years, so they had not perfected their understanding of the semi-arid landscape. Secondly, even if they had lived in the region for thousands of years like the Ioway in Lance M. Foster's "Tanji na Che: Recovering the Landscape of the Ioway" (Foster 1999), they would most likely have been primarily hunters. Weather in South Dakota is often dry and unpredictable; traditional farming techniques do not fare well without heavy irrigation, which the residents on the reservation often couldn't afford. Being unfamiliar with traditional agriculture techniques, residents living on the reservation were awkward with tools and ruined the crops.

The Lakota people were not familiar with capitalism and had trouble even accepting the concept of land as property. Therefore, they lacked the skills of their white neighbors to create businesses. In 1906, 5,700 of 6,700 residents on Pine Ridge were on the ration roll (the ration roll was meant to "instill labor discipline in Indian men and to prevent them from becoming ration loafers" (Biolsi, 1992: 25-27)). The type of labor available to the Indians was manual labor like "building and repairing dams and reservoirs" and "riding and repairing government fences" (Biolsi, 1992: 27). What's worse is that the Office of Indian Affairs controlled the job market, the rations, the wages, the land, and the people living on the reservation. "During the assimilation era, in the 1880s, the BIA's presence on reservations increased dramatically. Indian agents became responsible for operating schools, dispensing justice, distributing supplies, administering allotments, and leasing contracts. By 1900 the Indian agent had, in effect, become the tribal government" (Henson, 1996). This sort of dependence only promoted depression, a loss of culture, hopelessness, and degradation.

Luckily, renewal efforts began in the 1930s with the New Deal. The Office of Indian Affairs (or the Bureau of Indian Affairs) had been established in 1821 after a bill passed in Congress that "gave the president authority to appoint a Commissioner of Indian Affairs to serve under the Secretary of War, and have 'the direction and management of all Indian affairs, and all matters arising out of Indian relations'" (Henson, 1996). During the New Deal, efforts were made to decrease the OIA's control over the Indian's lives. Instead, Lakota people would be elected to tribal office, and a special emphasis was placed on community. The community would have the power to fill vacancies in the local OIA staff, and the community funds would only be allowed to be spent with community authority. As part of the New Deal, the U.S. government pledged to promote Indian education; it agreed not only to promote the study of Indian civilization and culture, but also to train Indian people to fill administrative positions in the OIA and Indian community governments. Additionally, a separate judiciary system was enacted for the reservation; the Court of Indian Affairs was to be composed of seven circuit judges and would have jurisdiction over all members of the community and also over non-Indians who were living on the reservation.

In the 1970s, Congress passed laws such as the Indian Self-determination Act, the Indian Child Welfare Act, and the Healthcare Improvement Act, that meant to boost the economy on the reservation without interfering with the tribal government. The BIA's goals became:

- (1) To encourage Indians and train Indians and Alaska Native people to manage their own affairs under a trust relationship with the federal

government; (2) To facilitate, with maximum involvement of Indian and Alaska Native people, full development of their human and natural resource potentials; (3) To mobilize all public and private aids to the advancement of Indian and Alaska Native people for use by them; and (4) To use the skill and capabilities of Indian and Alaska Native people in the direction and management of programs for their benefit (Henson, 1996).

Yet, even these dramatic governmental methods did not boost the economy as much as the government hoped. The economy is still artificial and dependent on federal aid/food stamps. Unemployment still rests at nearly 80%. Current efforts to combat poverty and lack of community cohesiveness are still attempting to promote independence. Currently, eighteen permanent nonprofit organizations exist on the Pine Ridge Reservation. Three are religious organizations and two are educational. Other services include instruction/guidance on housing, promotion of the Lakota culture, services to children and the elderly, assistance with housing, leadership training, and assistance with alcoholism.

Non-profit groups typically use one of two techniques: either they provide specified services to individual people, or they utilize a variety of methods to combat several aspects of decline. The Pine Ridge Habitat for Humanity chapter, which has existed in the Pine Ridge community for six years, builds an average of one house a year. Although Habitat for Humanity directly affects specific people's lives, it doesn't necessarily contribute to the Pine Ridge community revitalization as a whole. Other service groups that provide specific services include the American Red Cross division on the reservation and service groups that visit the reservation for a short time period to perform single tasks such as building a house, repairing infrastructure, or providing community meals for a certain amount of time.

Specific service groups such as this one fail to address the interconnectedness of the community. More housing does not guarantee that a family will be able to keep a steady job, stay clear of alcohol, or become an integrated and useful member of the community. Providing the relief of type of capital does not necessarily revitalize the community as a whole, because "When one type of capital is emphasized over all others, the other resources are decapitalized, and the economy, environment or social equity can be thus compromised..." (Flora, 2004: 9). For example, stressing the built capital, while providing short-term amenities and benefits for the community, may actually decrease the political capital because the governmental institution no longer needs to worry about providing these for the community, so they cease putting energy into that endeavor.

This, in fact, happened on the Pine Ridge Reservation. The government provides the reservation with about \$40 million a year, and few jobs exist on the reservation that aren't on the public payroll (Miller, 2002: 3). In this case, the government provides a specific form of relief that actually enhances the reservation's dependence on the government. The reservation doesn't just need money pumping into the system; it needs to create its own healthy economy through businesses that exist on the reservation itself.

On the other hand, some relief programs on the reservation are designed to address the interconnectedness of the community. Groups like the Organic Gardening Project work with several organizations to rebuild several aspects of capital. The Organic Gardening Project specifically targets natural, financial, cultural and human capital. Its goal is to use organic gardening as a tool to promote economic development, education,

and environmental improvement. OGP works with the Christian Relief Services and the Oglala College to sponsor a four-month project in which students from Oglala College as well as community members work with Bonn University in West Germany to learn about soil management, plant health, organic vegetable production, and Lakota studies (Fox, 1997: 3). The class brings diverse people together and teaches them cooperation, patience, leadership and responsibility.

Several offshoots of OGP have formed. Three years after the program began, the Public Safety Garden Correctional Program was formed by a former graduate from OGP, and it “gave inmates from the Pine Ridge jail a chance to garden and “dry out” as they served their sentences” (Fox, 1997: 3). Also, Oglala Lakota College has developed six organic gardening courses within its curriculum after being inspired by the OGP project. The commonality among many community service groups is that they not only help the needy, but they demand that those people take an active role in helping themselves. As the members of Allies of the Lakota express in a campaign to promote KILI radio (the largest Indian-owned and operated public radio station in America) and the Porcupine Clinic (the only independent Indian community-controlled health clinic in America), “Neither of these organizations were started by the government, or by a charity meant to “save” the Indians....Both are founded in the belief that community control of health care, education and community is the key to bettering the lives of our people and ending the cycle of poverty” (Weatherford, Jack: 2004)

Other service programs that address the complexity of community as it relates to renewal include the Lakota Training and Leadership Institute, Hands of Faith Ministries, and small service groups that volunteer briefly at several organizations at a time. While these programs seem more successful at renewing the community, they don’t succeed as much as they would hope because they address community issues superficially because they are spread too thinly.

I participated in one such general, short-term service group over fall break through the Alternative Break program. We built furniture, painted the outside of a building, carpeted the floor of a thrift shop, sorted clothes, served as a kindergartener teacher’s aid at an elementary school for two days, weeded gardens, put skirting on an RV, cleaned ovens and other appliances and cooked a community meal. Although we performed many tasks that were useful to the community, we did not affect the economy on the reservation for the long-term. The paint will chip off the building in a few years, the weeds will grow back, the people we fed will become hungry once again and Pine Ridge Reservation will continue to exist as it did before we set foot upon its soil. The biggest complaint that participants expressed was that we didn’t make enough of a difference. Some ventured far enough to say that we didn’t make a difference at all.

However, groups like Hands of Faith Ministries do make a difference. Within the category of programs that address several aspects of capital, some groups focus on a large number of people (like the work that my service group provided), and other groups help a fewer number of people while still focusing on addressing several types of capital. Hands of Faith Ministries is a strong example. It is technically an alcoholic rehabilitation program, but instead of just tackling alcoholism, it utilizes a three-phase program that includes an introduction to biblical principles, physical restoration, recoverer’s 12-step program, work treatment plan, life skills classes, vocational skill classes, individual/group counseling, family counseling, church leadership, and part-time employment. If the

individual succeeds especially well, Hands of Faith will help him search for a house and a vehicle to transport him to and from work.

The reason many groups approach assistance from many angles is that these problems are all interrelated. Alcoholism and family abuse among community members on Pine Ridge stem from depression, and depression comes from feelings of worthlessness and inability to survive on one's own/provide for one's family. Lack of jobs leads not only to poverty and hunger but also boredom and resentment.

The extent of success these efforts have achieved to revitalize the community/economy is difficult to measure. 50% of Hands of Faith graduates stay off alcohol for at least two years (Hoyt, personal communication: 2004). However, no statistics exist about the economic or domestic "success": do these men find a secure job? Do they succeed in putting their families back together? Unemployment is still consistently around 80%, 75% of children living on the reservation are physically, psychologically, or sexually abused. Arrests for drunkenness in 2000 were 11,606 on a reservation with a population of about 30,000 people (Hands of Faith Ministries brochure, personal communication: 2004).

Although the revitalization attempts are valiant, they have not renewed community on the Pine Ridge Reservation. The causes of the dysfunctional community are so complicated and layered that programs aimed at renewing the community have not been able to succeed. Groups that focus energy on revitalizing a specific capital don't succeed because the other forms of capital continue to suffer, and the community becomes at risk of disrupting the balance and further crippling the community. Groups that address the complexity of community either focus on particular individuals or on larger numbers of people; either way they address the issues too superficially. Perhaps the reservation needs more of both types of renewal programs. Or maybe it needs to synthesize the two methods.

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Organizations and Individuals in Prairie Reconstruction and Restoration: The Motivation for Participation and its Benefits

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Prairie restoration and reconstruction are growing trends. Prairie restoration refers to the restoring of an area where some original prairie is still intact. Prairie reconstruction refers to the establishment of prairie where no original prairie remains. Community groups, schools, businesses, and government have become involved in the prairie rehabilitation effort for different reasons. The beautification of the landscape and helping to renew an ecosystem which had all but vanished are universal benefits that all organizations achieve through their restoration and reconstruction efforts. Like the groups involved, the individuals working in prairie restoration and reconstruction are also united by shared interest. The applicability of prairie restoration and reconstruction to many different groups can be found by examining these groups individually.

“When a patch of habitat is reduced in area by 90 percent, the number of species living in it eventually shrinks by about half” (Wilson in Stevens 1995:146). In Iowa today less than 0.1 percent of the original prairie still exists, and the proportion in other states is not much higher (Andelson 2004). Before early settlers cultivated the Midwest, golden grasses and colorful forbs stretched from Canada to Texas. Today pieces of preserved prairie, found in uncultivated areas such as pioneer cemeteries and along railroad tracks are referred to as “prairie remnants.” It is too late to save many of the plants and animals that depended on the prairie hundreds of years ago, but many of the living organisms that currently inhabit preserved and restored prairies are rare and endangered. Efforts to maintain species diversity are important to many environmental action movements.

There are some very important reasons to protect and restore the prairie that apply to everyone. William Stevens (1995:146), an environmental journalist for the *New York Times*, writes in his book, *Miracle Under the Oaks*, “The world would be a poorer, less interesting place in the face of an extinction spasm.” These benefits tend to be long term and ultimately important for earth and all its inhabitants, including humans. First of all, one common argument for protection of species diversity in all ecosystems is how the loss of an ecosystem might deny us potential foods or medicines. Humans are far from understanding the immensely complicated workings of nature. The potential for benefits from a new discovery regarding an organism that might be endangered is a factor we must consider. The concept of “the circle of life” is substantiated in trophic level interactions among ecosystems. In other words, the numerous interactions between all organisms on our planet are extremely complex, and human knowledge of these interactions is severely limited. The cure for a disease might be, unbeknownst to us, locked away in an endangered prairie flower or insect. On a similar note, the neglect of prairie may actually be more immediately harmful than previously thought. The proliferation of diseases like AIDS and Ebola are thought to result from human encroachment on nature in rural Africa. Due to the complicated interactions of varying ecosystems there is no way of knowing if the loss of the prairie could result in a similar and immediate threat to human life. Some long term dangers of destroying the prairie for crop lands have already been witnessed, the most

prominent being erosion and the loss of top soil that has occurred over the last 150 years. This loss is detrimental to farming as the richest part of the soil is washed away. The result is more expensive farming and the increased use of pesticides and fertilizers, dangerous for their own reasons.

Before the Midwest was converted into farm land, the prairies were dependent on the fires which occasionally roared across them. These fires were often lit by native peoples for various purposes, including hunting. Regardless of their source, without these fires the prairie would succumb to the invasion of foreign plants like hawthorn, ash, and maple (Stevens 1995:27). For the same reason, prairies today also depend on fire. Therefore, it is not enough to protect prairie remnants from farming; prairies must continue to receive attention lest they slip backwards into scarcity.

As with all movements, in order for prairie restoration and reconstruction to spread, education about the prairie must spread as well. The University of Wisconsin (2004) at Madison has been involved in restoration and reconstruction since the 1930's. The University of Wisconsin (2004) has incorporated prairie studies classes into their catalog and has also been involved in outreach to public grade schools. In order to encourage the restoration movement, the university created the Earth Partnership for Schools program to assist teachers in establishing restoration projects on school sites and altering their curricula to incorporate restoration (UW at Madison 2004). While the Earth Partnership for Schools program is not specific to prairie restoration, it has helped more than 15 schools and school districts establish prairie restoration sites on school grounds and develop a curriculum that teaches restoration (UW at Madison 2004). As a result of programs like these, children at these schools will be exposed to a rich source of knowledge that was not available previously. Children may also benefit from a greater appreciation for nature and the outdoors.

Grinnell College is another institution where prairie restoration and education have come together. In 1967 Grinnell College bought some land ten miles from campus with the potential for recreating prairie, oak savanna, and woodland areas (Mottl 2004). This land was named the Conard Environmental Research Area or CERA. Originally this land was part of the Grinnell College Biology Department and was used as such. However, in 1999 Grinnell College created the Center for Prairie Studies, the first organization of its kind among educational institutions (Andelson 2004). The Center for Prairie Studies has opened CERA for use in many disciplines including art, chemistry, archeology, and other classes (Andelson 2004). The Center for Prairie Studies has also brought the college together with the Grinnell community and has worked hard to spread knowledge about prairie restoration. The Center's mission statement clearly summarizes its goals:

The Center for Prairie Studies at Grinnell College is dedicated to increasing the awareness, appreciation, and understanding of all aspects of the North American Prairie. Acknowledging that our local is steeped in history yet continuously changing, the center is committed to helping students, scholars, and community members uncover the natural and cultural life of the prairie. The center's programs serve as catalyst for studying this place and its people (CPS Pamphlet n.d.)

The Center has reached out to the community on several different levels. First of all, the Center has several programs open to the community. The Center holds farm tours, prairie site tours, and woodland wildflower walks and welcomes community members to lectures and symposia on relevant topics (Andelson 2004). The Center for Prairie Studies publicizes these events by maintaining an e-mail list and putting up posters announcing these events around the

community. The Center has also published a "Guide to Prairie Sites Near Grinnell, Iowa," which is distributed free of charge in the community.

Secondly, the Center has worked with local public schools to incorporate prairie related environmental studies into their curriculum. Every year fourth grade teachers from the local school bring their students out to CERA where the children can actively witness the prairie ecosystem. The children have partaken in many activities, including an ongoing study of butterfly populations (Andelson 2004). The Center has also worked with the local public middle school to create a small prairie plot and the high school to create a prairie studies course.

Lastly, the Center has worked with other organizations involved with prairie restoration or reconstruction, and businesses that are looking at establishing prairie on their premises. The organizations that communicate with the Center for Prairie Studies include the Iowa Prairie Network and the Poweshiek County Pioneer Cemetery Group among many others.

Prairie restoration can not be upheld by schools and interested business alone. Groups ranging from local community groups to national organizations are important because they can provide organization for people who are interested in the prairie. One prominent example of one of these organizations is the Iowa Prairie Network.

The Iowa Prairie Network is a grass-root, volunteer, non-profit, organization that is dedicated to the preservation of Iowa's prairie heritage. IPN was formed in 1990 by Iowans concerned that our prairie heritage was disappearing. People needed an organization that would bring those that know about prairie together with those that wanted to learn, to form a network of advocacy for Iowa's natural heritage (IPN 2004).

The Iowa Prairie Network publishes newsletters and keeps a calendar of events where people interested in prairie restoration can come together and participate in the restoration movement. Besides the drive to protect the environment, people join the prairie movement for many personal reasons as well.

One vital aspect of the prairie protection movement is the interaction that takes place between groups at different levels of prairie involvement. One clear example of this kind of relationship can be witnessed in the efforts of two prairie restoration organizations, an agribusiness and a couple of private landowners. A 205 acre prairie remnant in the Loess Hills was purchased by the Nature Conservancy from Bill and Dotty Zales of Westfield, Iowa with funding from the Pioneer Hi-Bred International Inc. and the Loess Hills Alliance (Nature Conservancy 2004). The property is located within the Department of Natural Resources designated bird conservation area near the Conservancy's Broken Kettle Grasslands Preserve. Interactions like these are important to the prairie protection movement as a whole. Higher levels of communication between varying groups involved in the prairie helps speed up the process of restoring the prairie and helps spread knowledge about the validity and methods of proper restoration and preservation. It is also important to consider why individuals, such as Bill and Dotty Zales, work to contribute to prairie protection.

There is tremendous variation in the personal benefits people gain from prairie restoration and reconstruction. The prairie's beauty in itself is enough motivation for some to get involved in restoring the prairie. Larissa Mottl (2004), the manager of the Conard Environmental Research Area, finds the diversity of plant life in the prairie thrilling, "as turf grass and trees can get boring." Others find that working in the prairie can be a religious experience. Neil Chapman, who is now an intern at the Illinois Chapter of the Nature Conservatory, has spent many hours working with the prairie. Chapman (2004) recalls that "one volunteer expressed to me that they are doing a moral good by restoring our creator's work." To others, restoration jobs

like seed picking can be a relaxing break from the stresses of school and work. "Picking seeds is different than going walking because it also draws the mind away from other matters. Additionally there is no drive to get somewhere" (Balasubrahmanyam 2004). Some find that the prairie's diverse life can provide a sense of wonder and longing curiosity. Lynne Westphal (cited in Stevens 1995:193), a social scientist working for the U.S. Forest Service, suggests that, in a broad sense, "the overriding reason why people volunteer is the yearning to get closer to nature."

A relatively new aspect of prairie reconstruction is the growing participation of businesses and corporations. A local Grinnell business, ASI Signs, with the help of Grinnell College biology professor Ben Graham, established a 2.5 acre prairie reconstruction on their premises ten years ago. Owner Tom Latimer (2004) likes prairie grasses and wild flowers; he likes the way they look and weather. "Purely the enjoyment of the color and seeing grasses emerge, the fun of it" was enough motivation for his effort (Latimer 2004). However, philosophically Latimer believes that we have to some extent a moral obligation to protect the environment which is too often not a large enough priority in industry. Additionally, the prairie engages employees with something besides work; for example, "occasionally a fox or grouse will be spotted in our reconstruction and we will all take a break to have a look" (Latimer 2004). Economically a prairie remnant is expensive to reconstruct, and upkeep requires work. Latimer (2004) joked about how a local high school student, an employee at ASI Signs, is nicknamed "the thistle man . . . Every summer he walks through the prairie site and weeds the invasive thistles." Despite the work, Latimer says he saves about a thousand dollars a year in mowing expenses. Business owners must weigh the costs and benefits of prairie reconstruction, but examples like Latimer's show that businesses can benefit.

While prairie reconstruction is still uncommon in the business sphere, some other businesses have also decided that it would benefit them. Ironically, John Deere, one of the pioneers of the prairie plow, also has benefited from their prairie reconstruction efforts.

Searching for the perfect environmental solution to beautify as well as create natural buffer zones around its Midwest factories and other important units, John Deere began a tall-prairie-grass-restoration program in 1977. Since then, the project has grown to include 10 locations and has become a positive model for corporate landscape architecture (Deere 2004)

The last "group" that benefits from prairie restoration and reconstruction is the government. While the preservation of prairie in the form of parks can be viewed as either a government responsibility or politicians appealing to environmental interest groups, the government actually can and has benefited from reconstructing prairie. One very prominent example of government benefit is at Fermilab, a research laboratory for high-energy physics. Since 1975, Fermilab (2001) has been enlarging its prairie reconstruction; they have currently restored over 1200 acres of prairie. Fermilab's website describes the benefits of their efforts. In addition to the beauty that the prairie provides, "Prairies and wetlands naturally conserve water and prevent runoff and erosion, thereby helping aquifer levels, protecting topsoil and reducing the extent of flooding" (Fermilab 2001).

Government involvement in prairie restoration also exists in a more expected form: state and federal parks. The restoration or reconstruction of prairie in state and national parks is important for the same reasons that were stated earlier as applicable to everyone. Additionally, state and national parks preserve nature for public visitation. People have many personal reasons for visiting these wildlife refuges. The protection of the environment by a national government is relatively new.

On June 30, 1864, President Abraham Lincoln signed a bill granting Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias to the State of California as an inalienable public trust. This was the first time in history that a federal government had set aside scenic lands simply to protect them and to allow for their enjoyment by all people (NPS 2004).

Government involvement in the preservation of ecosystems is vital for three main reasons; first, the government can afford to invest in the preservation of ecosystems where private organizations may not; second, the government can preserve the parks indefinitely which private organization may not be able to guarantee; and lastly, only the government can pass laws which criminalize actions contributing to the harm of these areas. One ecosystem that the government has gotten involved with is prairie. One of the larger prairie refuges is the Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge located about 20 miles east of Des Moines (Jones and Crushman 2004:126). The refuge began with about 5,000 acres, although "Congress has authorized the acquisition and restoration of up to 8,600 acres at this site," and the refuge adds land as it is able to (Jones and Crushman 2004:126). By 2003 the refuge had been expanded to 5,500 acres including 3,000 acres restored grasslands (Jones and Crushman 2004:126). This expansion has been a huge growth from the 3,600 acres of remnant prairie intermingled with crop land that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service acquired in 2003 after a power company decided not to build a proposed nuclear power plant on the same site (Jones and Crushman 2004:126). The Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge is not unique, many other prairie remnants and reconstructions are being protected by the government.

All of these examples reveal the extent that prairie restoration and reconstruction can be applied to people and groups in many areas. If knowledge continues to spread about how restoration and reconstruction efforts are undertaken and how they have been beneficial, the preservation of this unique ecosystem will undoubtedly progress as well. These examples show that many different groups with many different purposes can participate in prairie restoration and benefit by their efforts.

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Agriculture and Awareness in Iowa

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The more I reflect upon my life, the more I begin to realize how much of it has been determined by the actions of agribusiness conglomerates. When my parents informed me in December of 1999 that my father had lost his job at the small agricultural cooperative at which he was employed and that moving elsewhere was inevitable, my spirit was crushed, albeit not the first time I had heard such news. Farmer's Grain Cooperative in Belmond, Iowa, my father's employer of eight years, had been bought out by a much larger agribusiness outfit, and my father's employment was subsequently terminated. It seemed so unfair—unfair to me, my brothers, my sisters, my mother, and especially my father, the hardest working man I've ever known. After nearly thirty years of dedicated service in agricultural business, my father had fallen victim to “downsizing,” or whatever euphemism corporate psychologists currently insist upon using, yet again. Due to the turbulent state of agribusiness, my family has been forced to move numerous times throughout Iowa, Minnesota, and South Dakota, each time no less painful than the time before. And with every corporate buyout and merger came drastic changes, usually for the worse, in the lives of my parents, my siblings, and me.

Unfortunately, my father's experience is not unique. The economic hardship experienced by my family is only a microcosm of a much larger phenomenon occurring throughout the Midwest, and particularly in north-central Iowa. This phenomenon, in which large industrial agricultural conglomerations continue to grow by enveloping smaller cooperatives and companies, has ultimately been detrimental to the welfare of many families who work in agricultural professions throughout northern Iowa. The further growth of agribusiness conglomerates will only intensify the economic woes of Iowa's family farmers and cooperative employees alike.

Such corporate growth is currently being combated by individuals, organizations, and political action committees in Iowa and elsewhere who share the common belief that family farms are worthy of preservation and renewal and that the industrialization of agriculture should be reduced to a minimum. However, those who oppose the further industrialization of agriculture in northern Iowa are unlikely to achieve their goals unless a much greater number of Iowans come to share their ideals. The vast majority of Iowans are seemingly oblivious to the dangers of agribusiness conglomerates and the ill consequences of their continued growth. The general public does not know of my family's plight or of the similar hardships experienced by many other Iowans. Awareness of such realities must be fostered to a greater extent both in the public and in the political arena in order to induce widespread agricultural, social, and economic renewal in northern Iowa and throughout the Heartland.

In the November-December 2004 issue of *Grassroots*, a periodical published by the Iowa Farmers Union, the organization's president, Chris Peterson, stated:

Bio-tech and the big players have no trouble asking for (demanding) assistance from the government and the lawmakers at all levels for their projects. We need at least to educate and tell politicians what we want and need; if we

don't, who will? We need to stand up and do this as a coalition as articulately as possible to be successful....We need to find ways to revitalize rural America's economy and quality of life, and create opportunities for young and beginning farmers (2004:2).

The above statement nicely illustrates the great obstacle that faces opponents of the continued growth of agribusiness—the strong support such corporations receive from our government and its lawmakers. In 1995, industrial farming operations received \$3.98 billion in federal farm subsidies, approximately 55 percent of federal farm payments. In 2002, industrial farms received \$7.8 billion in federal subsidies—nearly double the amount such operations had received seven years earlier (Drury for Iowa Senate 2004). “What we’re seeing here and everywhere in this business is the corporate industrialization of agriculture by non-farmers. They say bigger is better...but for whom? Not for family farmers and certainly not for rural communities,” said Chris Peterson in his analysis of the situation.

Furthermore, Mr. Peterson rightly acknowledges the crucial importance that educating local and state politicians has in promoting renewal. The Iowa Farmers Union and the Iowa Citizen Action Network (ICAN) are two organizations that are attempting to do just that. ICAN is an “alliance of community, religious, labor, senior, farm, environmental, and civil rights organizations...working together to raise the living standards and improve the quality of life for all people in Iowa.” (ICAN 2004) With 13,000 members, it is the largest organization of its kind in the state of Iowa. “On issue after issue we run up against the well-financed lobbies of the medical, pharmaceutical, and insurance industries, as well as the utility companies, energy producers, toxic polluters, and other monied interests,” states ICAN’s website, echoing Chris Peterson’s claim that Iowa’s government and lawmakers are becoming increasingly beholden to the will of corporate powers, including agribusiness.

One such lawmaker is Republican congressman Tom Latham, who has represented Iowa’s fourth congressional district (which constitutes the bulk of north-central Iowa) for the last ten years. Throughout his political career, Latham has received generous campaign contributions from the political action committees of several corporations, such as agribusiness giants Monsanto and Archer Daniels Midland. According to data released by the Federal Election Commission on October 25, 2004, Latham received \$110,650 from such agribusiness political action committees during his last congressional term alone (Center for Responsive Politics 2004).

Like Republicans, Democratic candidates often receive exorbitant contributions from the same agribusiness PACs, although usually to a lesser extent. For example, Leonard Boswell, the Democratic congressman representing Iowa’s third congressional district, received \$50,001 from agribusiness PACs throughout his last term (Center for Responsive Politics 2004). Due to their strong relationships with agribusiness conglomerates, both the Democratic and Republican parties bear much of the same responsibility for the gradual rise of industrial agriculture and the subsequent eradication of the family farm. Politicians from both parties are in dire need of awareness as to the crisis currently afflicting northern Iowa and most of rural America.

Indeed, organizations such as the Iowa Farmers Union and the Iowa Citizens Action Network are facing an uphill battle in influencing our politicians. However, this

is not to say that their efforts to gain political support have had no success. Paul Johnson, a recent candidate for Iowa's fourth congressional district and a self-proclaimed "independent Democrat," is evidence of the growing relationship between grass-roots organizations and political candidates. Johnson, who is certainly not your average politician, ran a different campaign than his more mainstream Republican and Democratic counterparts did, perhaps explaining his status as an "independent Democrat." Throughout his campaign, Johnson acknowledged the plight of the family farmer, as well as the dire need for reform in agricultural policy. On his campaign website, Johnson stated:

American agriculture is at a crossroads. One road leads to increased consolidation of food and fiber production systems. It leads to an industrial world where today's proud, individual farmers could end up being relegated to the margins of agriculture—to tend the gardens surrounding the massive food and fiber factories. It leads to fewer farmers and poorer communities, and it takes the "culture" out of agriculture. This is the direction we seem to be heading. It is an easy road—a superhighway....The alternative is a road less traveled today....It is one that still encourages individual ownership of land,...[and] diversity and creativity....It keeps farmers on their farms and creates opportunities for our children. Today it is a gravel road, not for lack of interested travelers but because our national agriculture policies have doomed it to washboards and dust. But that can be changed (Paul Johnson for U.S. Congress 2004).

Such bold proclamations are rather uncommon among contemporary political candidates. Perhaps Johnson's ability to make such claims can be explained by identifying the contributors of his campaign. Unlike his opponent, the incumbent Tom Latham, who received endorsements from massive, out-of-state, agribusiness conglomerates, Paul Johnson was primarily endorsed by local political action committees and organizations, including the Iowa Farmers Union and the Iowa Federation of Labor (Paul Johnson for U.S. Congress 2004). Therefore, Johnson was not beholden to Monsanto or Archer Daniels Midland in formulating his policies. Instead he looked for such guidance from the grass-roots organizations and their members—family farmers and their supporters living in rural Iowa—which supported him. He, in turn, supported them.

Despite further endorsements from individuals such as Senator Tom Harkin, the National Farmers Union, Wes Jackson (president of The Land Institute), and newspapers such as *The Des Moines Register* and the *Ames Tribune* (Paul Johnson for U.S. Congress 2004), Paul Johnson was defeated by a margin of 20% of the vote (Eller 2004). It can only be speculated as to exactly why Johnson lost his bid for Congress. However, some clues do exist. According to exit polls conducted by CNN for the 2004 election, the most important issue for Iowa voters in selecting candidates was "Moral Values," followed by "Economy/Jobs," "Iraq," "Terrorism," "Healthcare," "Taxes," and "Education." (CNN.com Election Results 2004) The state of Iowa ranks number one in the production of corn, pork, and soybeans. Nearly one-fourth of all hogs produced in the United States are raised in Iowa (ICAN 2004). Simply put, Iowa is an agricultural powerhouse. Therefore, it is surprising that "Agricultural Issues" would not be included among the choices for "most important issue" in Iowa exit polls. This mind-boggling omission is indicative of systemic factors which continue to impede the growth of awareness of

agricultural issues among the public. First of all, this exemplifies how little debate of agricultural and rural issues there is in the American media. The debate, or lack thereof, over biotechnology in the U.S. media also demonstrates this. In an article entitled “Genetically Engineered Food: Media Coverage,” columnist Anup Shah said of the subject:

Outside of the United States, there has been some public debate in the last couple of years about the possible benefits and possible risks of genetically engineered food....In the United States, however, the media (and Wall Street) has been promoting biotechnology, but with limited debates on the concerns people have....Many do not realize that some food ingredients are genetically modified or engineered (Shah 2002).

If biotechnology is not discussed in the American media, how is the American public to learn of the consequences of its use? Such is the case with agricultural issues in general. If the issues raised by organizations such as the Iowa Farmers Union are not echoed by the media, there is little hope that such organizations and grassroots movements will be successful in their objectives. Granted, there are exceptions to the media’s lack of coverage of these issues, such as *The Des Moines Register*, which devotes more attention to agricultural news than most other newspapers. However, by and large, there is a lack of discourse regarding agricultural issues in the American media. The media must play a key role in spreading awareness of agricultural issues, thereby promoting renewal.

While it seems absurd that agricultural issues would not be incorporated into the exit polls for Iowa voters, it would perhaps be more illogical to add the topic, for the concept of the exit poll itself is inherently flawed. To rank “Agricultural Issues,” “Iraq,” or “Economy/Jobs” alongside “Moral Values” is to imply that these subjects are independent of one another. The notion that moral values should be separate from our beliefs about issues such as the economy and the war in Iraq is a dangerous one. Unfortunately, this separation is largely present in the collective consciousness of our society; agriculture and other issues are not generally thought of as moral issues in Iowa or elsewhere. However, local efforts are being made to reform this perception. A primary objective of the National Catholic Rural Life Conference, which is based out of Des Moines, Iowa, is “[to help] people develop a deeper awareness of where their food comes from and to make conscious decisions to support farmers and food companies that do not exploit workers.” (Zimmerman 2004) Brother David Andrews, the head of the National Catholic Rural Life Conference, believes that “this type of consciousness is growing” in Iowa, largely due to the campaign “Eating Is a Moral Act,” which is sponsored by the NCRLC and is just beginning its third year (Zimmerman 2004). “The campaign...with its flyers, seminars and educational materials focusing on moral decisions that come into play in food purchasing...is striking a chord for many across the United States and, in particular, on college campuses[.]” In its support of the integration of morality with the purchasing of one’s food, the “Eating is a Moral Act” campaign is actively spreading the truth as to the true nature of agribusiness and its consequences. By promoting such public awareness, they are promoting renewal. However, they are not alone in their quest.

“I want to know what’s in my food and that it’s safe and wholesome for my family and me. I want to know who grew it, that they got a fair price, and that the water and soil are being protected,” stated Dr. Kamyar Enshayan, an agricultural engineer and founder of the University of Northern Iowa Local Food Project (Witt 2004:119). Enshayan’s project allows him, among many others throughout northern Iowa, to achieve just that. The objective of the UNI Local Food Project is to strengthen the local agricultural economy by linking institutional food buyers to local farms and processors in northern Iowa. Evidently, Dr. Enshayan’s campaign has been a successful one, for “the United States Department of Agriculture has recognized it as one of the dozen most successful efforts of its kind in the country” (Witt 2004:119).

Both the University of Northern Iowa Local Food Project and the “Eating is a Moral Act” campaign of the National Catholic Rural Life Conference seek to integrate moral values and concern for social justice with agricultural issues in educating the public. Unfortunately, the average Iowan is largely uninformed as to the path on which we, as Iowans, are headed. The average Iowan does not likely realize that by buying a particular product from his or her local grocery store, they are contributing—albeit in an indirect manner—to the further growth of such agribusiness giants as ConAgra and Archer Daniels Midland and the subsequent demise of the family farm. Iowans, by and large, do not realize the immense implications of their actions and lifestyle. Nor do they realize that agricultural issues can and should be viewed as moral issues. Awareness of these realities is being fostered in north-central Iowa and throughout the United States through grassroots movements, but it is unlikely that there will be significant reform in agricultural policy unless the issues that are being raised by the Iowa Farmers Union, the Iowa Citizens Action Network, the National Catholic Rural Life Conference, and innovative, independent thinkers such as Paul Johnson are given greater exposure in the media and in state and national politics.

Generally speaking, I believe that Iowans are good, honest, moral people who care for their families, their friends, and their communities. If Iowans are made aware of the grim realities of agribusiness and the disastrous effects that it has had on their communities and in the lives of their relatives and friends, I believe that there will be renewal. If Iowans are made aware of the alternative solutions to industrial agriculture, such as the UNI Local Foods Project and other community-sustaining agricultural (CSA) systems, and of the moral imperative in choosing such alternatives, Iowans will become involved, and renewal will ensue.

However, if there continues to be a lack of discourse regarding agricultural issues in the political arena and in the media, agribusiness conglomerates will continue in their unrestrained growth, tearing apart local communities and destroying lives throughout Iowa. If Iowans continue to be unaware of this crisis, they can not and will not fight it. “I should, therefore I can,” is the mantra of Barney Bahrenfuse, an organic farmer from Grinnell, Iowa (Bahrenfuse 2004). If Iowans know not what they *should* do, nor what they are capable of, how can they be expected to do it?

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Renewing the Business District of Downtown Grinnell

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Retail businesses have played an important part in the city of Grinnell since its founding in 1854. Starting with a single store, 16 by 24 feet in size with an attached sleeping room, the business sector of Grinnell has undergone a series of expansions and decline over time and presently numbers 308 retail establishments (Early History of Grinnell, Iowa: 10-11, Baumler and Stone: 6). In the past few years, Grinnell Renaissance, the Grinnell Chamber of Commerce, and the individual retail business owners themselves have made efforts to revitalize the business sector of downtown Grinnell. These efforts at renewal have been very slow, and the results have neither been immediate nor obvious; yet the gradual revitalization process will reap success for the city and the retail business community of Grinnell in the long run.

Retail businesses in Grinnell are concentrated in the downtown area, the location of which changed slightly at the end of the nineteenth century as the result of a fire on June 12th, 1889. Before the conflagration, the main business district of Grinnell was along Commercial Street, which is south of Fourth Avenue along the railroad tracks (see Fig. 1)¹. The fire started at noon in the elevator of F.S. Treat & Co., located midway between Main and Broad Streets, when everyone had gone home for dinner. Forty-one structures burned down, bringing fifty-four businesses to an abrupt end. Within a month, however, plans for rebuilding the business district had been published in the *Grinnell Herald* (*Grinnell Herald Register* 1989: 12). The newly built area was called the Phoenix Block because it came out of the ashes of the old burned down block (Menner 2004:15). The new business district was shifted northward to comprise the area bounded by Commercial Street and 6th Avenue, and Park Street and West Street (see Fig. 2). This district came to be known as downtown Grinnell, the location of most of Grinnell's businesses. The period after the rebuilding of downtown until the Great Depression was one of two general periods of great prosperity for Grinnell businesses (Menner 2004: personal communication).

In the early 20th century, downtown Grinnell underwent some significant changes in infrastructure. The Post Office, the Interior Telephone Company, the *Grinnell Herald* and *Grinnell Register*, and other service providers came to occupy newly constructed buildings. By the end of the first quarter of the 1900s, the business sector of downtown Grinnell was flourishing and almost at its peak with structures to house retail businesses for many years to come (Menner 2004: 16).

The second period of prosperity came after World War II, when downtown Grinnell underwent change for a number of reasons. The paving of U.S. 32 in 1931, which was later named U.S. 6, brought more people into Grinnell and made Grinnell a regional shopping destination (Menner 2004: Personal communication). According to Bill Menner, the first and present executive director of Grinnell Renaissance, "There were stores at street level, there were stores upstairs, the streets were full on Saturday mornings and all day, people just came and stayed, and there were many restaurants. That

¹ Figure 1 is not included in this version of Ofori-Addo's paper.

was kind of the golden era of retail business in Grinnell” (Menner 2004: Personal communication). However, the opening of Interstate 80 three miles south of Grinnell in November, 1962, had a contrary effect on retail businesses in downtown Grinnell. (iowahighways.home.mchsi.com). The interstate made it very easy for shoppers to drive to Iowa City or Des Moines to shop in the big malls and departmental stores, a factor which contributed to the decline in the retail business activities in downtown Grinnell (Menner 2004: personal communication).

However I-80 did not pose the biggest problem, because even after it was opened, a strong core of businesses remained in downtown Grinnell until 1985, when the opening of the Wal-Mart store drove away JC Penney and Co., Sears Merchants, Spurgeon’s and many other minor stores, which could not or would not compete with Wal-Mart’s prices (Grinnell city directory 1979: 1986, Menner 2004: personal communication). Menner described the impact Wal-Mart had on downtown Grinnell this way: “Suddenly it became just as easy but a lot less expensive to buy from Wal-Mart many of the essentials, and a number of downtown businesses didn’t survive. They couldn’t compete with Wal-Mart or were scared to compete...” (Menner 2004: personal communication). This fear resulted from the inability of any other chain stores or independent business to compete with Wal-Mart’s large capacity of operation. Any business that may have intended to compete was bound to incur massive losses. “Iowa State University Professor of Economics Ken Stone found that 5 years after the opening of a super Wal-Mart, locally owned stores within a 20-mile radius lost 19% in sales” (Pamphlet 11/29/2004: received at meeting of concerned citizens regarding new Wal-Mart store).

Bill Menner suggests that another reason for the reduction in the numbers of retail businesses in downtown Grinnell is the Americans With Disabilities Act, passed in 1990, which required businesses to provide access for disabled persons to the buildings (Menner 2004: Personal communication). Formerly, most of the service-providing businesses were on the second floor of the buildings downtown, and because these buildings had no elevators the only solution was for these businesses to move down to the first floor. Nonetheless, many retail businesses, already facing severe competition from Wal-mart, were forced to close when this happened because service-providing businesses were better able to pay the higher rents on the lower floors. For example the ability of a law firm to pay rent was higher than that of a store owner. As a result, where retail stores once dominated downtown, there was soon an almost even mix of retail and service providing firms (Menner 2004: personal communication). A quick survey of downtown businesses in November 2004 proved that there was not a single shop on the second floor of any building in downtown Grinnell. However, in the years that followed the decline, the opening of *niche* shops downtown to replace the ones that had folded gained great popularity among Grinnell’s retail business people.

Another major factor that affected retail businesses in downtown Grinnell within the last 15 years was the birth and growing popularity of online shopping. Shopping online negatively affected the retail business sector downtown as it became popular in the late 1990s to early 2000s. Suddenly, it became easier and more convenient to shop from the comfort of the home than to go to a store downtown. Mary Ogata, owner of Paper and More on 4th Avenue, brought up the issue of the internet:

It amazes me how people can buy things from the internet. Apart from buying something with a familiar brand name, buying things online because they are advertised in a certain way is a great risk. How can one tell what quality, color or texture of goods they are getting online? However, people have grown to prefer that to coming downtown to get what they want (Ogata 2004: Personal communication).

It is obvious that the internet had a significant impact on Grinnell retail. Total average sales per retail firm in Grinnell fell from over \$300,000 between the late 1980s and 1993, to about \$225,000- \$200,000 between 1994 and 2004, even though retail businesses increased by about 18.56% over the period (Retail Trade Analyses 2004: 6). The impact of online shopping may not have accounted totally for the fall in the retail sales, but it certainly contributed to the decline.

During an interview, I asked Bill Menner if he would call the ups and downs in the history of retail businesses in downtown Grinnell a series of declines and renewals. He disagreed and said he would rather call them transitions or evolutions (2004: Personal communication). Nevertheless, he asserted that downtown had been through several revitalizations and was presently going through another. The Grinnell Chamber of Commerce began the first initiative to revitalize its member businesses downtown but did not have the finances to fund its project. Instead the Main Street program, founded in Grinnell in 1986, brought federal funding for loan buy down programs and improvements downtown (Goodrich 2004: personal communication). Thus the first active effort to revitalize downtown was undertaken by Main Street Grinnell, part of a state wide program to revitalize downtowns all over the country by offering financial incentives to selected retailers. After seven years of impressive progress, the Main Street Grinnell program ended in 1993 due to political issues (Menner 2004:16). Several separate initiatives to renew downtown Grinnell followed the fall of Main Street Grinnell. Grinnell Renaissance was created in 2000 to focus on the revitalization of downtown Grinnell. The Grinnell Chamber of Commerce is also creating new projects geared at renewing the downtown retail businesses.

The offices of the four year-old Grinnell Renaissance organization are located in the Grinnell Community Center on Park Street. It is headed by its first executive director, Bill Menner, who was hired in the year 2000 after living in Grinnell for 11 years and working with the public radio station, KUNI. The mission statement of Grinnell Renaissance is "to enhance downtown Grinnell's vitality through programs targeting aesthetics, retail diversity, historic preservation, arts and culture." Menner is in charge of executing the projects after the executive board has agreed on them. In the past 4 years, Grinnell Renaissance has initiated activities, programs and projects aimed at creating an attractive downtown that people will want to visit and shop (Chavez-Silva 2004: personal communication). Grinnell Renaissance hosts "Music in the Park", a summertime music series to foster community spirit by gathering the townsfolk in Central park. It also initiated a program that invites potential business owners to Grinnell, shows them around, and helps them to find a possible location for their business. Monica Chavez-Silva, who acts as a link between Grinnell College and Grinnell Renaissance, described the organization's activities in the following terms:

We've tried to foster an environment that is inviting for business. That has happened a couple of ways with structured things including, Music in the Park... intended to bring excitement back to downtown, give people a reason to be downtown, and get people to remember that there is a downtown. It has been going on for three years now with Bill being very strong behind it. I cannot say it has had a direct effect on businesses but it is a roundabout way we are trying to use to bring downtown into prominence. Bill also does a lot with trying to bring specific businesses into town. Before the Mexican restaurant came to town, he was the one who showed them around, found out more about their situation, tried to find them locations, he was really rolling up his sleeves going around, making phone calls and trying to make that happen. He did that same thing with the Chinese restaurant, Chuong Garden. He was the main person people could call and talk to. It is not a very formal thing but a very practical thing; there is a person that people can call and get information from (Chavez-Silva 2004: personal communication).

Another initiative of Grinnell Renaissance is a façade grant program for downtown businesses, to help the buildings stay attractive and to re-do some of the old ones. So far the organization has given \$12,000 in façade grants, which was later expanded by a grant of \$100,000 from the federal government. There are plans to give some of such grants to start off new businesses by possibly subsidizing their rent for the first few months of their occupation (Chavez-Silva 2004: personal communication).

A third project Grinnell Renaissance is undertaking by involving the whole Grinnell community is the renovation of Strand Theater, which closed down in 2002. To do this, Grinnell Renaissance created the Marquee Club, through which they raised \$110,000 in eighteen months to fund the renovation project (Menner 2004: personal communication). Those who contribute at the highest level -\$1,000- will have their names engraved on a plaque on their own chairs in the theater, while those at the lowest level-\$25- will be given a gold membership card, which will give the admission to special events (Grinnell Strand Theater Brochure 2004). By involving the community, Grinnell Renaissance hopes to create a sense of ownership in the people and to encourage them to take part in what they have helped to create. They hope also to attract Grinnell College students by offering a discounted ticket for movies, bringing them downtown more often and getting them to explore and shop in the retail stores (Menner 2004: personal communication).

A second major effort at revitalization is the re-paving of the streets downtown by fall 2005 (see Fig.3). This renewal project will also include the installation of attractive signposts and park benches (see fig. 3). Funding for this street project is largely by the federal government to improve Grinnell's street system and beautify downtown Grinnell. Grinnell Renaissance and the Grinnell Chamber of Commerce are actively involved in this project. Menner said:

We want more people to come downtown, we want downtown to be viewed as the central meeting point in the community, and we think that by having people come to the movies, and drive along our newly paved streets, and sit in our new park benches along the streets and enjoy the way the buildings are being restored and repaired, they will feel a closer connection to their community, to

their downtown, and will support those businesses more by maybe skipping the trip to Wal-Mart or Des Moines and buying more downtown (Menner 2004: personal communication).

The Grinnell Renaissance and the Grinnell Chamber of Commerce are excited about this construction project and have no doubt that it will boost retail activities in downtown Grinnell.

One major organization actively involved in the activities of the Grinnell Renaissance is Grinnell College. Monica Chavez- Silva, the first to occupy her office as the Director of Community Enhancement, which was created in 2000, is the main point of contact between the College and the community on development projects; her job is to figure out what role the College can play in revitalization efforts. She is also in charge of all financial contributions that the College makes to the town. According to Chavez-Silva, “the college made a 3 year joint pledge of \$50,000 each with the city of Grinnell, to help fund Grinnell Renaissance to just focus on downtown. At the end of those three years, the college pledged an additional \$25,000 for this year and \$15,000 for next year to help to keep it going and hoping that it will get independent somehow” (Chavez-Silva 2004: personal communication). The college’s dedication to the community by making such contributions is a major factor that has boosted the activities of some of the renewal efforts.

The Grinnell Chamber of Commerce, headed by Larry Goodrich, has a membership of about 235 businesses, with which the Chamber works very closely on a daily basis. Of these 235, about 40 are retail businesses. The mission of the Chamber is to promote and advance business and commerce for the Grinnell area through leadership in economic, governmental and social development. When I asked about how they were carrying out their mission, Goodrich said, “We’re always recruiting new people, new shops, (even) a Tai restaurant. One of the things we are looking at is a family style restaurant to bring into Grinnell. We do this by personal contact, mailing, and our website” (2004: personal communication). Goodrich also talked about tourism as being, in his own words, “a tremendous boost to the economy” (2004: personal communication). The Chamber of Commerce hopes that the tourists they bring to Grinnell would eat and shop downtown, hence improve the retail sales in downtown Grinnell. In July of this year, the Chamber brought six busloads of tourists to Grinnell (Goodrich 2004: personal communication). When I asked Larry Goodrich if the Chamber of Commerce had any other big plans for tourism in the near future, he had this to say:

Our goal next year is to bring about two buses a month to Grinnell. And also with the facilities that the college has and the facilities of the motels, we are working on booking conventions here. We’ve got 1 booked for next year and 2 for 2006. These conventions bring nearly 400 people to town for 2 to 3 days. So that’s what we are working on to help the economy because they are going to shop and eat downtown and buy gas while they are here (Goodrich 2004: personal communication).

Thus the effort of Grinnell Renaissance dovetails with the goal of the Grinnell Chamber of Commerce.

In addition to the work of these two dynamic organizations, a major contributory factor to the renewal has been the attitude of the retailers themselves. The retail business owners of downtown Grinnell have identified certain strategies by which they have survived through some very harsh years for retailing. The first of these is the quality of service they provide that comes naturally to the hospitable Grinnell business owners. Larry Goodrich used to own Awards Unlimited on Main Street; he sold it in July of 2003 when he was ready to retire. In response to my question about what made his business thrive, he said:

Number 1 is providing good service. When Tom Sonnichsen comes to me on a Thursday and says Larry I messed up, I need 6 plaques and 4 trophies for our soccer banquet or our volley ball banquet on Saturday, I always got the job done and got it to him and always met the deadline. Providing service is one of the things our little stores do that the big super stores don't. And that's why I think my little business was successful. Within seven years, it tripled in size and sales volume (Goodrich 2004: personal communication).

Jim White, owner of Bates Flowers and Greenhouse since 1971 (70th year of existence), was very enthusiastic about sharing his experience with me. He described how, Bates Flowers and Greenhouse had met the needs of the community by providing what was essential at the time. He spoke of times when they had traded cattle, hogs, and chickens. They did and occasionally still provide flowers on credit for funerals and weddings when people cannot afford to buy them. There were times when he could not pay his employees or restock his store because his customers took close to 18 months to pay for their purchases. He attributed Bates Flowers' 103 years of existence to the good service they provided and their friendship with their customers (White 2004; personal communication). Jim described his relationship to his customers in these words:

We see people from birth to death, every occasion, happy, sad all of those. We build up a rapport. It's kind of like a family... We are one of the businesses that have lasted probably because of the loyalty of our customers. This morning I just had a young man call me from India, who went to Grinnell College. He really appreciated our friendship...he will just come and sit here, right in this room where we are and would read, just to get away [from school]. He wanted flowers to be sent to someone in India...he probably would have gotten it much cheaper in India but he wanted to buy it from me. I think that is kind of unusual but that is like part of our course. I have had times when I had to wake up in the middle of the night when someone had had a baby and fix flowers for them. People appreciate that you take the time for them and that is something that we do (White 2004; personal communication).

The second strategy the retailers downtown have adopted to survive is the opening of *niche* shops. Larry Goodrich called his shop a *niche* business because no one sold trophies and plaques in Grinnell (Goodrich 2004; personal communication). Bill Menner also commented:

We have moved away from a regional center for people to go shopping; we have evolved into what is called the *niche* retail, where we have gift shops and decorating stores and art shops and frame stores and specialty items that people

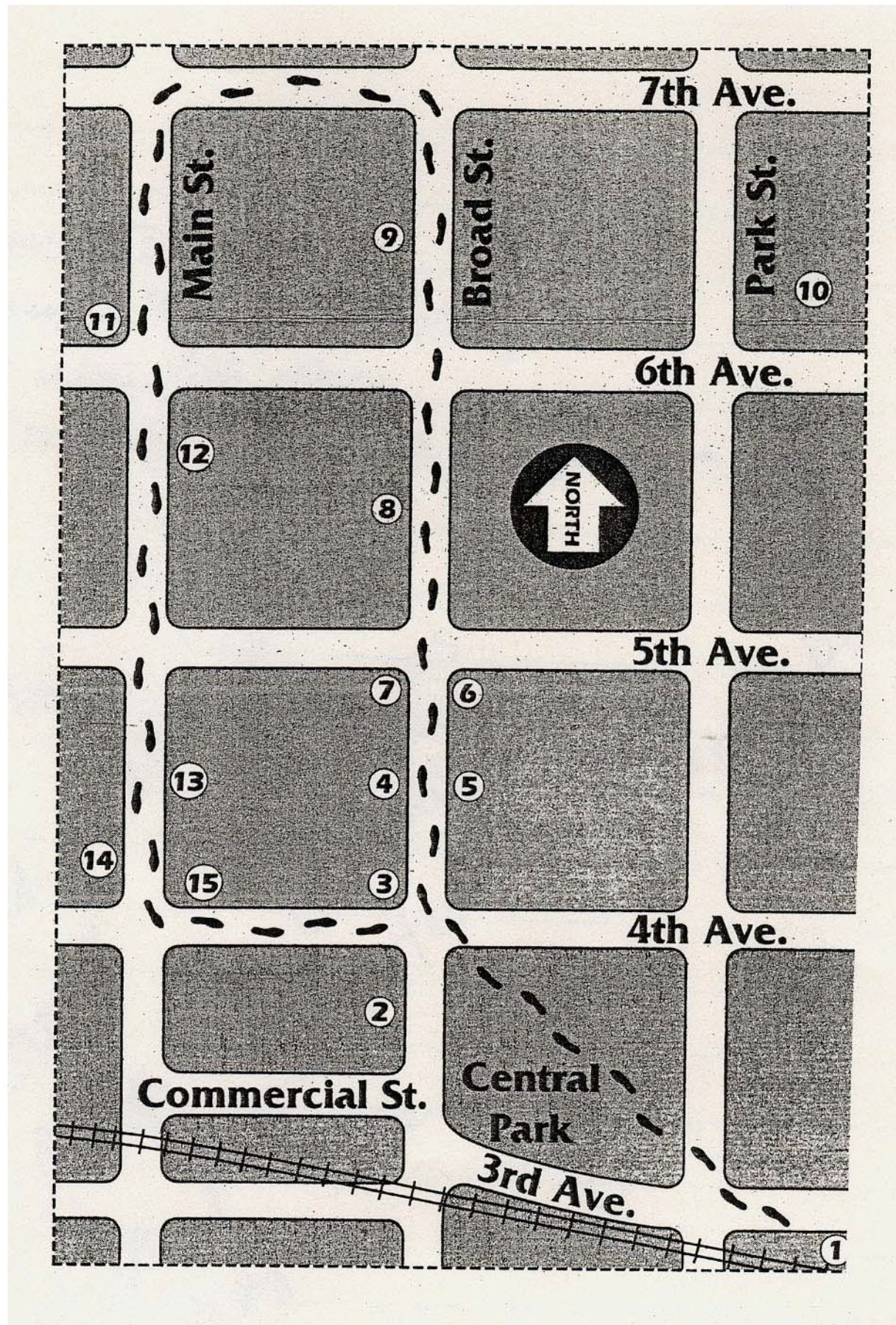
can't find at the supermarket or the Wal-Mart or Target. Those are the sorts of businesses that are the future of a small town (Menner 2004; personal communication).

The retailers in downtown Grinnell have come to realize that their only chance of survival in the business world was not to compete head on with the big department stores but rather to carry what is unavailable in the big department stores. Mary Ogata of Paper and More said, "When I was about to open my shop, I went to Wal-Mart to see what they had so that I would not buy those for my store" (Ogata 2004: personal communication). Menner also had this to say about *niche* shops:

We are actively seeking antique shops for town. We've recruited a quilt shop to come in. These are the kinds of businesses that we know that bigger departmental stores can't and won't compete with because they don't want to. But we know there are lots of people who will buy those sorts of items and who will make Grinnell a destination. If you are, for example, some one who is interested in art, quilts and antique and you knew that Grinnell had 3 art galleries, a quilt shop and a couple of framing stores, and had the college art gallery, you may come and spend the whole day here. So it's all about taking the retail that exists and making it destination for other people (Menner 2004: personal communication).

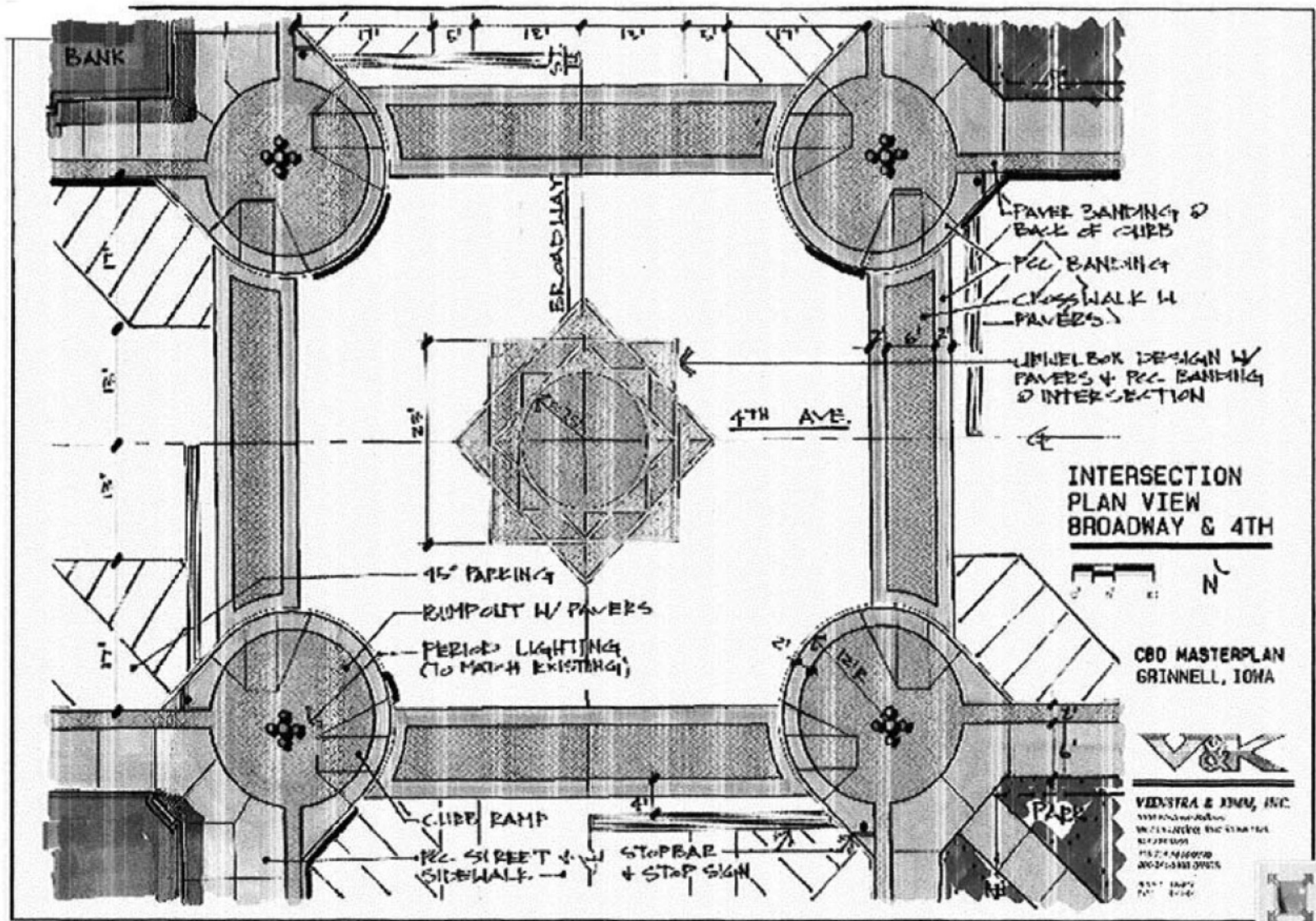
A walk through downtown Grinnell today reveals a totally different view from what one would have experienced in the late 1800s and early to mid 1900s. Although cars have replaced horses and so the typical 19th century harness, millinery, wagon and lumber stores and livery stables no longer exist, the variety of retail stores and goods have not changed much over the century. Nevertheless, while the variety has stayed the same, the number of stores has declined substantially (see Table 1 and Table 2). The efforts at renewing or rejuvenating downtown Grinnell's retail businesses may not be reaping the most impressive results at the moment, but they are steps in the right direction. Most good things take a while to take shape, and it is too early in the renewal process to pass judgment about its success. However, the new roads, Strand Theater, and tourism plans look and sound very promising, and it will not be long before we see the outcome. When I asked Monica Chavez- Silva if she had seen any improvement in the retail businesses, she said, "I can't really tell, but I know that while there may not be an obvious quantitative increase, there sure has been a qualitative improvement" (Chavez-Silva 2004; personal communication).

Figure 2



Outline map of the area of downtown Grinnell

Figure 3



The intersection plan view for the street e-pavement project to be completed by fall 2005.
All the street intersections downtown will look like this.

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Prairie Restoration: The Ethical Choice

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On a Saturday afternoon as I enjoy the sun and ecstatically run my hands along the elegant stems of Indian grass and big blue stem collecting their seeds, I realize that I have never felt more peaceful and calm in my entire life. Since my arrival at Grinnell, I have been captivated by the prairie, and I jumped at the opportunity to participate in restoration efforts. I took part in a seed harvesting project for the Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge, at Reichelt Prairie and A.C. Morris, where I met many committed and enthusiastic volunteers. I began to wonder who these people were and why they (and indeed why I) were giving up their free time to frolic around in whipping tall grass prairie. What was so appealing and attractive about the prairie? What follows is an answer to these questions.

Before European settlers migrated into the heart of the North American continent in the mid-nineteenth century, the “prairies were just vast space, with a seemingly changeless and monotonous sea of grass” (Sayre 1999:5). Endless rich prairie stretched from horizon to horizon. Ironically it was precisely this richness that led to the prairie’s disappearance. European settlers discovered the land’s potential to grow a multitude of crops and sustain their growing community. They consumed the land, tamed the wildness and turned it into agricultural terrain. This transformation of the land in the mid-nineteenth century has had devastating and lasting effects on the environment. When the settlers ploughed unswerving, monotonous lines across the undulating prairies, they not only destroyed the native habitat of the bison, elk, and prairie dog; they also, as farming increasingly turned from sustainable diverse crops to unsustainable monocultured cash crops, depleted soil and water quality and damaged the natural environment.

As a result of these decades of agricultural transformation, we have become distanced from the land and from nature, and so have ignored our role in preserving these things. However, lately there has been a revolution of sorts, an environmental and social movement through which people are growing increasingly aware of the historical significance, the environmental importance and the vulnerability of the precious prairie ecosystem. These efforts have effectively led to a reversal – from decline to renewal. Over the past few years and presently, prairie restorationists are seeking with unprecedented zeal to expand the realm of the prairie. People are restoring the prairie for a variety of reasons: some for environmental purposes, others for social enhancement, and still others for spiritual well being. Altogether, these reasons show that prairie restoration is an ethical choice.

As Anthony Bradshaw (2002: 3) writes, “[the] well being of our planet depends on its living skin, without which the land would become unstable and importantly ... life as we know it would perish.” Life as the prairie knows it has indeed perished. Today the native tall grass prairie comprises only 0.1% of land in Iowa, and many native species including little blue stem, rattlesnake master, and lead plant, have been depleted. Prairie restoration seeks to restore native grasses and forbs by planting collected native seeds, suppressing exotic species, removing trees, and burning the prairie regularly to ensure regrowth. These acts are ethical in the sense that they are conscious decisions to revive the environment’s “living skin.” The people performing prairie restoration are not, as Conard Environmental Research Area,

Biological Field Station Manager Larissa Mottl notes, looking for “instant gratification” (Mottl 2004) but rather are involved in prairie restoration for its long-term environmental and moral impact. The revival of the “skin” – the grasses and forbs – does indeed have enormous beneficial environmental effects. The creator and owner Prairie Creek Wildlife Refuge, Carl Kurtz, observes that prairie restoration is “the best way to protect soil, enhance water quality, and increase wildlife habitat” (Kurtz 2004).

Efficient prairie restoration comprises a healthy interaction among prairie plants, which in turn depend on interactions with high-quality soil. Prairie grasses have extensive root systems which bind the soil together, preventing soil erosion. Prairie grasses also increase the amount of carbon stored in the soil, and this element, in the form of organic matter, protects the soil against erosion and is indicative of soil fertility. Carbon, in the form of organic matter, also increases the soil’s nitrogen carrying capacity and the availability of nutrients required for growth by prairie plants (Anonymous 2002:165). Thus, prairie restoration curbs soil erosion and increases soil carbon and nitrogen content, thereby improving soil quality.

Improvement in soil quality through prairie restoration ensures that most nitrogen is recycled within the ecosystem and so decreases the leakage of nitrogen from the soil into underground water sources (Anonymous 2002:164). On agricultural land, fertilizer use, disposal of animal waste, and changes in vegetation result in elevated concentrations of nitrates, which penetrate underground water sources. High nitrate concentrations in drinking water are a threat to young children. In healthy prairie soils, organic matter stores nitrogen and helps ensure that nitrogen does not leach into groundwater. Thus, in improving the quality of soil, prairie restoration also improves the underground drinking water supply for local communities.

An improvement in soil and water quality also benefits all prairie animals and plants, and increases wildlife habitat and biodiversity. One of the goals of the Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) is “[t]o increase biodiversity by reconstructing tall grass prairie and savanna habitats” (www.tallgrass.org). Increasing wildlife habitats does increase biodiversity, which is, as Grinnell College anthropology professor Jonathan Andelson says, a “self-evident good” (Andelson 2004). Specifically biodiversity increases because it revives communities in peril and “preserves the good of the community ... since a diverse system provides more resources, more alternatives, for solving problems and responding to threats” (Katz 1997:173). Increasing biodiversity is necessary as it recognizes the importance of a healthy natural community and therefore is an ethical act in itself. Respect for the interdependent cooperation of a community leads to an appreciation of biodiversity, increasing “evolutionary flexibility” and creating “options in the face of environmental change” (Andelson 2004). Prairie restorationists report a steady increase in the return of birds, mammals, insects and butterflies to restored prairie sites (Kurtz 2004). Thus, clearly, prairie restoration does lead to an increase in biodiversity.

A conscious effort to increase biodiversity results from the realization that, as famous conservationist Aldo Leopold (1989:183) observed, “civilization is ... a state of mutual and interdependent cooperation between human animals, other animals, plants and soils.” An effort to improve the common water supply shows an ethical connection with other community members who share that water. Not only is the immediate community who drink that water affected, but also all others “along the Mississippi and the Gulf” (Mottl 2004). This is so because improvement of local water quality decreases the amount of pollutants and toxins carried and deposited downstream by rivers. Thus, improvement in water quality benefits

numerous people and builds strong ties within the community. Hence, alongside environmental concerns of prairie restoration there is a general social concern and a need to rebuild a broken community.

In the latter half of the twentieth century, an attempt to increase production and endlessly expand farms led to a deterioration of such feeling of community. Farmers became victims of a system geared to maximize productivity and profit, as the production of cash crops meant that they increasingly needed to depend on off-farm resources such as “lumber, fuel, fencing, sugar, nuts, honey, and fruit” (Sayre 1999:4). That is, the prairie made farmers successful producers but also huge consumers and debtors. Therefore, not only “after decades of zealous agricultural clearing,” as Eric Higgs (2003:78) writes, were “native prairies ... in short supply,” but also the human communities themselves began to collapse. This loss was compounded by the farm crisis of the 1980s. As the prairie heritage was thoroughly eliminated, there was a loss of sensitivity and consideration for neighbors and other community members.

Just as the downfall of the prairie went hand in hand with a degradation of the human community, the restoration of prairie coincides with a rebuilding of community. Restoration of the prairie rekindles old feelings of compassion and concern among community members as the community experiences a feeling of common responsibility for the wellbeing of the prairie. That is, prairie reconstruction creates a sense of ownership and togetherness. Community members combine efforts to restore the prairie and engage in activities such as seed harvesting, and such participation gradually translates into a ritualistic quality of community efforts and gatherings. Individual concerns are discarded and activities are undertaken for the good of the community as a whole. There is a steady development of community attachment, and selfish progress gives way to community development. In this way, consistent involvement in prairie restoration is connected to the renewal of community. The natural community, including man, gains from prairie restoration, for it builds community, strengthens common values, and provides avenues for learning.

Attempts to renew the community begin with understanding the community and learning about it. The Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge seeks “to increase public knowledge and understanding of prairie through environmental education” and “to provide a diverse recreational landscape for public use and education” (www.tallgrass.org). By promoting an awareness of the natural surroundings, restoration projects such as Neal Smith’s induce an appreciation for the natural and social community. People realize that “species exist in relationship to other biota and the physical environment that sustains them; humans exist as parts of an interdependent social community” (Merchant 1992:134). Local residents recognize that everything around them – Indian grass, the buffalo, the elk, the fox, and even their next-door neighbors – shares the natural community, and in this way they begin to appreciate the complexity of the functioning of the entire natural society. An awareness of the richness of the community creates a feeling of pride and responsibility which leads to a growing concern for the environment and the society that inhabits it. A combined effort to renew shared environment and space contributes to social enhancement.

The future of any community lies in the hands of the next generation – the children. Therefore, one of the most important steps towards the renewal of community is teaching the children of the community. To this end, prairie restorationists seek to educate youth about the growing environmental concerns and create appreciation and an unconscious feeling of responsibility towards the natural world. The NWR conducts separate events for school children and Scout groups, promoting admiration for the prairie and a familiarity with the

landscape. Similarly, Larissa Mottl frequently guides school children through CERA, exposing them to the variety of the prairie and igniting within them a fire of enthusiasm and zeal. Walking and hiking through the prairie also offers awareness in the form of “learning by getting out” (Andelson 2004). Active participation in prairie restoration through outdoor activities exposes one to the practical and realistic functioning of knowledge. This form of learning is rarely taught in the typical educational system. Thus, prairie restoration leads to learning through building an appreciation of the prairie and exposure to unconventional forms of education.

The prairie offers other forms of learning through spiritual and aesthetic inspiration for all those willing to see beyond the flat, supposedly monotonous expanses of grass. Many prairie restorationists enjoy the stimulating and demanding task of prairie restoration and consider it a “challenge to piece back together this complex ecosystem” (Mottl 2004). As so little is known about the original prairie, there is an “element of mystery” (Mottl 2004) associated with prairie reconstruction. Not only do the mysterious prairies awaken slumbering questions within every individual, but they also provide the appropriate environment for the answering of these questions. That is, the prairie offers the undisturbed natural peace required for deep thought and inner reflection. There is a sense of spiritual peace associated with time spent in the prairie and in connecting with the land. Some acquire such spiritual peace by connecting with the land and others through the reinforcement of religious beliefs.

All human beings “seek contacts with nature because we derive pleasure from them” (Leopold 1989:168). Restorationists derive that pleasure by opening up their senses to the prairie, “connecting with its elements through all senses” (Andelson 2004). Restorationists connect with the land through their eyes by cherishing the “forms, shapes and the colors” (Mottl 2004) of the prairie. Some connect with the prairie through touch, others through smell or taste. As one prairie lover said about foraging in the prairie, “I always smell before I taste it” (Andelson 2004). Indeed, some individuals regard connecting with the prairie as a source of inspiration for art, music and literature. In whatever case, the prairie provides an opportunity for everyone to appreciate the natural world in their own way.

For many the prairie presents an opportunity to organize their thoughts and beliefs. The prairie gives a chance to draw together our opinions of life and our religious views, as Larissa Mottl notes that her “church is the outside” (Mottl 2004). Through my own volunteer activities I have experienced a sense of openness. Every time I am out in the prairie, in the rippling waves of vast grassland, I am reminded that I am only a part of the bigger picture – only a fragment of the whole. As I realize this truth over and over again and reinforce my personal religious beliefs, like Larissa Mottl, I hear the “land breathing a sigh of relief” (Mottl 2004). The prairie helps me along the path of my life and the land triumphs in its victory. I, like many others, have learned a great deal from the prairie.

Aldo Leopold’s land ethic encompasses the primary reasons – environmental, social and spiritual - involved with restoring the prairie. Instincts prompt an individual to fight for his or her position in society, but ethics prompt him or her to co-operate. The land ethic simply enlarges the borders of community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals or altogether, the land (Leopold 1989:203-204). In short, as Leopold (1989:204) states, “a land ethic changes the role of *Homo sapiens* from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it,” and in this context humans need to learn to respect the land and all things living on it. We are the stewards, and it is our responsibility to take care of the land. It is imperative that we attempt to return the land to its healthy state for both generous social reasons and selfish

environmental ones, but most importantly for a sense of personal enrichment. I think that the urge to protect the natural world needs to come from within each person. People take the initiative to protect the natural landscape because something within them urges them to do so. Their innate value system insists that the natural surroundings be preserved. As I wandered around in the prairie collecting seeds for restoration purposes I was thinking not about how my contribution would affect the soil and water quality; nor about the animal species driven close to extinction that will benefit from my efforts; nor about future generations who may or may not be fortunate enough to witness the beauty of a prairie. I would agree with Larissa Mottl that, rather, I participate in restoration efforts “just because” it is “just the right” thing to do (Mottl 2004). Some of us are born with a feeling of responsibility towards nature, but in some cases the spirit needs to be kindled. Some people need persuasion in the form of economic, political, or even environmental benefits to convince them that prairie restoration is worthwhile. I participate in restoration activities because they satisfy an inner responsibility; I would agree with Grinnell College biology professor Jonathan M. Brown that restoration gives my life a “sense of purpose” (Brown 2004). For me prairie restoration is the right thing to do, and the ethical thing to do.

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The Potential for Renewal: Education in the Heartland & Grinnell

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Education has the potential to play a fundamental role in the revitalization and renewal process in the Heartland. Rural school districts, such as Grinnell, use a variety of programs and methods in order to halt decline and strive for renewal towards healthy towns and communities. Healthy schools foster strong communities by bringing people together and preparing youth to become contributing, educated members of society. In Grinnell, both traditional and alternative methods of education are used with the goal of providing the resources, skills, and opportunities students need to develop personally and academically.

In 2004 the governor of Iowa, Tom Vilsack, ordered a fifty million dollar budget cut in educational funding, a 2.5% decrease in state funding in just one year. The cuts have had a significant impact on schools that already have difficulty maintaining ever-increasing standards. Field trips, new technology, textbooks and extra-curricular activities will be lost in many districts as schools attempt to educate students without access to important resources. According to Jim Hurley, a Waverly-Shell Rock teacher,

This year represents a benchmark in my career of 32 years in science teaching — my budget is exactly 10 percent of what it was in 1972. Adjusted for inflation, I am sure that the purchasing power now available to serve my students is more like 5 percent of what it was over three decades ago. Then I purchased lasers and power supplies, now it's flashlights and batteries. Beakers have been replaced by paper cups, and experiences have given way to simulations and videos (myiowaschools.org).

According to the Grinnell-Newburg Superintendent Dr. David Stoakes, the main issue plaguing rural schools throughout the Midwest is declining enrollment. He sees the issue as a direct result of the decrease in family farms and increase of industrial agriculture. As families leave the agrarian lifestyle they gravitate toward urban pockets in search of jobs and opportunities. Stoakes refers to Des Moines, Iowa City, Sioux City and Cedar Rapids as “pocket metropolitan areas” which are growing while the rural systems face a dwindling student population. Between 1999 and 2011 enrollment in Iowa, on average, is predicted to drop 4.8% (National Center for Educational Statistics). Approximately two thirds of Iowa school districts are losing students, predominately in the rural areas and small towns, whereas one third of the districts are gaining, mostly in the ever-expanding metropolitan areas (Stoakes, 2004). The trend of declining enrollment and decreased birth rate, coupled with the increasing out migration of families leaves small towns with under-enrolled schools. (Davidson 1990:62). Davidson states, “A town devoid of children is a town devoid of hope” as much of “small-town life revolves around the many school events which mark the seasons for townspeople.”

A declining enrollment is tied to the amount of funding, as each child in the Grinnell-Newburg district is “worth” approximately \$4,580 in terms of allocated money

for the district. In Grinnell, larger classes, fewer teachers and the loss of a guidance counselor are just a few manifestations of the loss of funding. During the 2002-2003 school year the Department of Education in Iowa observed the Grinnell-Newburg School District in order to provide both positive and negative feedback. The inspectors checked compliance with accreditation standards for the Grinnell-Newburg district and made recommendations. Despite the tough financial situation, the schools in the Grinnell-Newburg district are performing above average in terms of state testing, ACT scores and dropout rates (Progress Report 2004 & myiowaschools.org).

Another issue plaguing Iowa is the “brain drain,” the growing tendency for college graduates to leave Iowa after graduation in search of jobs and possibilities elsewhere (Davidson 1990. P.62). In the early 1990s, as many as two-thirds of seniors from the University of Iowa planned to leave the state, including an even higher percentage of engineering and business majors. Newly certified teachers are also leaving Iowa in pursuit of more desirable salaries offered in other states. According to superintendent Dr. David Stoakes, Iowa’s teacher’s salaries rank around fortieth in the country, making it difficult to attract and retain high-quality teachers.

During George W. Bush’s first term as president he implemented the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) program that has had far-reaching effects on schools nationwide. The goal of the program is to promote student achievement, school accountability, and greater choices for parents with children in failing schools (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/education/>). According to David Stoakes, it is difficult to disagree with a program that supposedly hopes to educate and provide opportunities for children. However, in reality, the expectations are high and the program is severely under-funded. The district receives approximately \$12,000 per year of funding for the program, an amount that is inadequate in terms of meeting federal performance expectations (Stoakes 2004). The federal government allocates money for No Child Left Behind using population formulas, providing little help to small, declining rural schools. The government recently authorized the Rural Education Achievement Program (REAP), allowing small rural schools to consolidate the money received from various federal education programs. It provides additional funds specifically for small rural schools to supplement the federal funds they receive under existing formulas along with separate grants available to rural schools with a high rate of poverty (<http://grassley.senate.gov>). As a result of declining enrollment, the district also loses funding for each child that leaves, adding to the circular problem of lack of money in rural public education.

The focus of No Child Left Behind has been almost exclusively on math, reading and science, at the expense of a more well-rounded traditional liberal arts education. Teachers in Grinnell have been striving to meet requirements while also maintaining a certain level of autonomy and well roundedness in the classroom. Stoakes said the upside of the NCLB plan is that it has forced the district to strive for achievement in the given areas and focus attention on the basic skills, which are vital anyway.

Lori Francis, the director of the alternative high school in Grinnell, has a different opinion on the new federal program: “No Child Left Behind is what happens when a group of stupid white men determine educational policy.” She feels there are major flaws in the plan, many of which were never carefully considered. Supposedly failing schools are punished, while “successful” schools, predominately in suburban and upper-class

areas, are rewarded. Additionally, the standards in each state are different, so the program is inconsistent in its application and fairness (Francis, 2004). Marty Solomon, a writer for EducationNews.org, wrote that “the No Child Left Behind law assumes that every child in America, regardless of mental capacity, emotional handicaps, background, motivation and will, can achieve at the same proficiency level as all other children and that all children can excel in every subject” (Solomon, 2004).

Grinnell has two major systems of education on the high school level, although the programs are becoming more intertwined as time progresses. The first includes the traditional public school system and federal and state efforts to enhance education and provide opportunities. The other is a more innovative approach to education, particularly geared towards those students that have difficulty in the mainstream system. Despite their different approaches towards education, both Grinnell High School and the alternative school, New Horizons, are facing a year in which halting decline is a major priority as the schools deal with budget shortfalls.

A distinction can be made between the top-down approach found in the more traditional public school settings and the communal approach towards learning in the alternative program. Dr. David Stoakes views his position as superintendent of the Grinnell-Newburg school district primarily as a facilitator of change. He is an overseer of the Board of Education for the Grinnell-Newburg school system and helps guide the board through the decision-making processes, particularly working with the increasingly tight budget. He sees the district going through a drastic transformation with the loss of students and funding, yet he is working hard to prevent decline. Educators predict rural elementary school enrollment to drop about 5% and high school enrollment to drop 6% statewide between the years of 1999 and 2011 (National Center for Educational Statistics). In Iowa, 21% of rural schools have lost more than 10% of their students, a statistic that clearly reveals the migration away from rural, small town life (Beeson, 2003).

In the 2002-2003 school year, approximately 86% of graduating seniors in Grinnell indicated that they would go on to pursue post-secondary training (Progress Report 2003). Stoakes would like to increase the number of graduates going on to pursue some additional form of education, but budget cuts led to the loss of guidance counselors and contributed to the fourteen percent of students who go straight to work. Essentially, the district is attempting to prevent the slide towards decline by retaining students and working with the available budget. In the future Stoakes hopes to raise proficiency in the areas of reading, math and sciences in accordance with the NCLB program. He would also like to increase the opportunities available to students in his district through additional AP offerings and enrichment classes (Stoakes, 2004).

New Horizons, the alternative high school in Grinnell, was founded in 1995. At the time, several students from the Grinnell-Newburg district had been traveling to the alternative high school in Marshalltown. A strong group of supporters and educators believed that Grinnell could support an alternative school and successfully petitioned the school board for funding. New Horizons has cultivated a very stable relationship with Grinnell High School, which now allows full access to classes and extracurricular activities to New Horizons students. Many of the students take a combination of classes from both schools, essentially working with the staff to design the education system that works best for each individual. Currently, the school has more students than its capacity

of twenty-five, primarily because some attend only part-time. New Horizons has established itself as a legitimate alternative to the traditional high school and has had tremendous success gaining acceptability and credibility in the community over the past ten years (Francis 2004).

Lori Francis, the director and one of the founding teachers, feels that the school gives students options and looks at the educational process serving the students' best interest. The school provides individualized support, and the students go at their own pace and help choose their classes. Francis emphasizes the importance of engaging students through collaborative learning, whereas the classes in the large high school tend to lean away from one-on-one interaction due to the higher ratio of students to teacher. New Horizons is publicly funded, receiving money from the district, and is therefore subject to the statewide budget cuts. The school is open year round, though in the summer there are two shorter sessions each with twelve students coming from districts without an alternative school. The summer program includes intense tutoring sessions helping students improve or gain proficiency in one or two specific areas such as reading or math (Francis, 2004).

Francis discussed the importance of the location of the high school, which is a large room inside of a community college. New Horizons is similar to a one-room schoolhouse, which is reflected in the cooperation towards learning between students, teachers and peers. Many of her students start New Horizons viewing secondary education as intimidating and post-secondary education as virtually unattainable. Having the school within a college setting helps to bridge the gap between the high school and college environments. Students begin to view the pursuit of higher education as a reality as they build familiarity and a relationship with the college. According to Francis' anecdotal information, about twenty-five percent of the students graduating from the program go immediately to a post-secondary school of some sort. After about one year around forty percent are enrolled, and after about four years approximately seventy-five percent have gone on to more schooling (Francis, 2004). These rates are remarkable, since many of these students were failing out of more traditional systems.

Lori Francis views education as a primary means of renewal and means toward sustaining small-town life. During an interview she discussed the program's dedication to encouraging all students to pursue some form of post-secondary education so that all students can become contributing members of society. According to Francis, "as jobs in the unskilled labor market decrease, it is going to be necessary to have more than a high school diploma to survive financially." She discussed the fact that most of the students going on to four-year universities and higher education leave their small rural towns and rarely return. The students that do not go on to pursue higher education often remain in Grinnell or other rural communities and are limited by the availability of jobs, low wages, and lack of opportunities for success (Francis, 2004). New Horizons attempts to help students reach their potential as successful members of their communities by encouraging and preparing students for post-secondary education. Francis believes that the students in her program ultimately have the potential to revitalize and renew Grinnell, as they are the ones that will most likely remain in this community. If each student can become an independent, contributing member of the town, there are infinite possibilities for the renewal of rural America.

Renewal in the Heartland includes empowering students through education with a feeling of pride and responsibility for their community and surroundings. Through this sense of accountability comes renewal in America. During the present time, all of the Grinnell schools are facing major financial hardships, with effects ranging from lack of classroom materials to a decrease in staff and therefore an increase in class size. The schools are attempting to deal with the decreased funding, although often the alternative forms of education are most threatened by the cuts.

There are several local renewal efforts attempting to halt rural decline by salvaging and improving education. One example is the Buddies Program at Davis Elementary School in Grinnell. The program pairs students from Grinnell College with third and fourth grade students who may be struggling either academically or socially. The goal is to mentor these students by spending time with them in order to provide encouragement, support and compassion. In my personal experience working with the project, the college volunteers attempt to prevent the children from “falling through the cracks,” which is a sad reality in larger public school systems. Often a small amount of concentrated personal attention can have a great impact on a child’s self-esteem and ability to cope and function well in school.

Other educational renewal efforts in Grinnell include programs run through the school, community and Grinnell College. As part of a work-study program, Grinnell College pays students to tutor at the local high school. In addition, there is a program called Grinnell’s Activities, Tutoring and Enrichment Services, G.A.T.E.S., located at Grinnell Middle School. It provides tutoring and preparation for high school, a safe, after-school environment and extracurricular activities (Grinnell College).

Consolidation is yet another option for renewal in rural schools facing declining enrollment. There are several disadvantages, however, resulting in controversy throughout the Midwest as to its effectiveness. Enrollment has been declining since 1969, and many educators argue that schools should consolidate resources and students. The incentives for consolidation include maintaining fewer buildings, hiring fewer teachers and staff, offering a broader range of classes and paying teachers higher salaries (Davidson 1990 p.60). However, opponents of the idea claim that consolidation leads to very long bus rides for many children as well as an increase in class size and a decrease in the amount of individual attention that each student receives. Other creative methods of consolidation are beginning to occur in rural districts. One example is the use of computers and technology where students remain at their normal school, but are taught through a two-way computer program allowing them to interact with a teacher who may be geographically far away (Hoegh, 2004). As technology improves so will its application within classroom settings to enhance rural education.

In general, Iowa has a tradition of valuing education and literacy. In *Broken Heartland*, Davidson states, “the rural Heartland still affords residents low crime rates, an unhurried pace of life, and an emphasis on traditional values of family, hard work, entrepreneurialism, education and civic participation” (Davidson 1990. p.169). As state and national funding for education decreases, continued community renewal efforts will be necessary in order to maintain education as a value in rural communities.

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Taking the Right Fork in the Road: Grassroots Opposition to Interstate Highway Construction in Indiana

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Why in these days of cost cutting would the Indiana State Government choose to build a new interstate highway that would cost \$1.7 billion? Why in these days of increased environmental awareness would the government choose to build said highway where it would destroy over one thousand acres of forest? Why in these days of accelerating loss of prime agricultural land would the government want to construct this highway in a way as to take over four thousand acres of farmland out of production? Why would the government want to build Interstate 69 with those costs, when there is a viable alternative that costs half as much and destroys neither farmland nor forest?

Hoosiers are asking themselves those questions about the planned site of the new interstate to be built through Indiana. The state government used three criteria for choosing the route: personal accessibility, freight movement and time savings (INPIRG). The rise of groups dedicated to changing the government's decision shows that Hoosiers are rejecting the government's priorities in favor of other concerns. The number of groups opposing the new I-69 is directly related to the number of reasons for which people can oppose the highway. Groups range from the environmental to the fiscal conservative to farmers' groups to blocs who just do not want the highway in their backyard. The groups' many contrasting ideologies fortunately do not prevent them from working together to change the state's mind. It is that kind of willingness to set aside their particular agendas that has allowed the groups to have some success in opposing the construction of I-69.

I-69 is the product of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) age. The treaty required that trade be facilitated between Canada and Mexico, so the Federal Highway Administration (FHA) proposed a new superhighway. The highway was to come south to Indianapolis and from there go to Evansville before proceeding south and west toward the border of Texas with Mexico. However, the FHA left the route through Indiana up to the state government. The Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) studied twelve different plans for the route between Indianapolis and Evansville before the governor picked the final plan.

The route the governor chose (as shown in Appendix A) upgrades an existing highway from Indianapolis to Bloomington and then creates an entirely new highway from Bloomington to Evansville. Along the way the so-called "new terrain" route would destroy forests and farmland and even cut Patoka National Wildlife Reserve in half, all in the name of a few more minutes (A Common Sense I-69). An alternate route supported by all of the groups opposing the new terrain plan would go from Indianapolis to Terre Haute along I-70 and then south to Evansville along and upgraded US-41. The alternate route, because it follows existing highways, would not destroy any forests or farms, and it would cost much less. Estimates for the "common sense" route put it at about \$900 million, about half of what the new terrain estimates are (A Common Sense I-69). However, the "common sense" route is longer than the new terrain route by about

thirteen miles. Thirteen miles, though, is less than ten percent of the 142-mile-long new terrain route. At superhighway speeds it would add approximately ten minutes to the trip (A Common Sense I-69). Those thirteen miles outweigh the costs in money, forest and farmland, as the government suggests, is what the anti-new terrain groups dispute.

As already noted, the groups advocating the upgrading plan oppose the new terrain route for a variety of different reasons. Some, such as the Association of Monroe County Taxpayers (ASSMO), oppose the route for economic reasons. Others, like the Sierra Club of Indiana, are primarily opposed to the environmental implications of the new terrain route. Still others, such as the Indiana Farmers Union and American Farmland Trust, decry the loss of farmland that would accompany the planned highway. Even groups of clergy and Labor Unions are joining the fight against the planned construction of I-69 (Alliance for a no New Terrain I-69 Highway).

ASSMO, like most of the other economically concerned groups, takes exception to several economic aspects of the proposed highway. They are, of course, concerned by the much higher costs of the current plan over the alternatives, but they have other reasons as well. Monroe County is right in the path of the new terrain route, so they studied the INDOT's claims that the highway would boost the local economy and the growth would justify the additional cost. The evidence they found supported none of what had been suggested. Studies showed that for every dollar put into the new terrain highway only 81 cents would be returned to the state (Road to Ruin Taxpayer). Also the federal money, which was to offset some of the cost for the state, turns out to be coming from the road maintenance fund that would normally be used to repair other roads (I69 Quick Facts). I-69 would come at the expense of every other highway in Indiana.

Additionally, at least one organization has calculated that this project, which has been touted as an "economic development" plan, would only create a total of four jobs per county per year. That is a total of sixteen jobs a year for a total cost of about a million and a half dollars for each job created (Road to Ruin Taxpayer). Furthermore there is no correlation between the number of interstate highways a state or county has and its prosperity. As shown in Appendix B, Indiana already has one of the top five highest densities of interstate highways but also has the second highest per capita job loss in the US (I69 Quick Facts). Even more perturbing is that southern Indiana, where another existing interstate, I-64, runs leads the state in unemployment and is at the bottom of the state in terms of per capita income (I69 Quick Facts). The Federal Highway Administration went so far as to say, "Based on [an] analysis of direct highway benefits and the likely indirect benefits of economic development, the proposed highway is at best marginal from a cost effectiveness standpoint" (I69 Quick Facts).

Groups such as Environmental Law and Policy Center (ELPC), the Sierra Club of Indiana, and Friends of the Earth oppose the new terrain plan because it will destroy valued parts of the environment. The new terrain route as it is currently planned would require the destruction of forest, cut through a wildlife preserve, damage geologically vulnerable terrain and endanger the habitats of several endangered species. The new terrain route would destroy at least a thousand acres of forest, far more than the alternative, which would be less destructive as it would only entail upgrading existing roadway. Geologically the area through which the current plan would run is very sensitive to construction. The land is considered "karst" (land in which there are underground caves and caverns) where building a highway could easily damage the

delicate terrain (Indiana I-69 Highway: Battle Against the Boondoggle). However, environmentalists take the most offense at the decision to bisect the national wildlife preserve along the way. Construction of the highway would damage the wetlands of the preserve, which are becoming a rare and endangered habitat in Indiana with about 87 percent already destroyed. Damaging the wetlands would also destroy the habitats for the bald eagle and the Indiana bat (Road to Ruin Taxpayer, INPIRG).

Farming groups oppose the plan because it would destroy at least four thousand acres of farmland even as Indiana is “already losing prime farmland faster than any other state except Texas” (Road to Ruin Taxpayer). The alternative plan would have nowhere near the impact; a few acres might be touched in widening the highway, but nothing substantial. However, the loss of land is not the only issue. A farmer who loses some land would be justly compensated, but if the farm is split in half by an interstate, tractors and other necessary heavy machinery cannot easily be moved from one side to the other creating an unnecessary hardship.

Many of the remaining groups do not have an agenda other than opposing the construction of the new terrain route. Citizens for Appropriate Rural Roads (CARR) and Indiana Student Public Interest Research Group (INPIRG) do not have a particular ideology but instead were founded with the purpose of stopping I-69. Alex Witteveld of INPIRG joined because he didn’t “want to see the state of Indiana destroyed by this highway” (Witteveld). He feels that many members of his group joined because they “care about the state of Indiana” and “they are concerned for the citizens of Indiana” (Witteveld). Sandra Tokarski, one of the founding members of CARR, feels similarly. “Most Hoosiers recognize a wasteful project when it is thrown in their faces” (Tokarski).

The Anti New Terrain Alliance has a very diverse membership. However, they have come together with a common cause. Statements on the websites of multiple groups show that they are united on stopping the building of a new terrain I-69, no matter whether the arguments pertain to the groups’ stated mission. On its website the ELPC includes the fiscal, farming and economic issues just as prominently as the information about the environmental impacts (Indiana I-69 Highway: Battle Against the Boondoggle). ASSMO decries the environmental impacts that the new terrain route would have (I69 Quick Facts). The first argument listed by the Friends of the Earth is that the alternate route “would cost nearly \$1 billion less” than the new terrain plan (Road to Ruin FOE).

What this shows is that the groups are pulling no punches to defeat I-69. The ELPC is almost surely primarily concerned about the environmental impacts, but includes the other arguments because they lead to the same conclusion. The same is true of ASSMO; as a group they are probably not particularly concerned about the environment. Even the Friends of the Earth probably do not care very much about that billion dollars; they are an environmentalist group first and foremost. Should the situation have been changed and had the environmentally sound, economically sound and fiscally responsible routes been different, it is likely that those groups would find themselves on opposite sides of the battle.

The alliance has found itself very successful in opposing the new terrain I-69 plan. Construction on the project was supposed to begin in 1996, but as yet no earth has been turned. The nature of the project determines the nature of the efforts to stop it. This is not a legal issue and therefore is not being challenged in the courts. It is, though, a

political issue. The campaign against I-69 has been primarily one of grassroots action. Much of the work that is being done in opposition is that of writing editorials and letters to legislators. CARR has been especially involved in getting Hoosiers in contact with their legislators. On CARR's website there are links to many of the key members of state government. Another key component has been educating the public about the issue and the alternatives to the current plan. INPIRG is currently working on a campaign to educate college students at Indiana University who can in turn educate their hometowns (Witteveld).

The groups also involved themselves heavily in the political arena. The Hoosier Environmental Council spends some of its time lobbying the state legislature to prevent it from passing bills that would help fund the new terrain I-69 (Keener). Other groups, such as Count US! PAC, were educating concerned people about whom they should vote for in the 2004 gubernatorial election. Count US! endorsed the Libertarian candidate for governor along with an ambivalent stance on the Republican candidate while opposing the incumbent Democrat (Indiana 2004 Voters Guide of Candidates). Additionally, Count US! supported two Republican state legislators, one Democrat for state legislator along with two Democrats and one Green Party candidate for Congress (Indiana 2004 Voters Guide of Candidates). Again, this non-partisan list shows the commitment of anti-new terrain Hoosiers to the singular issue of Interstate 69. That the group members are willing to at least consider giving up their usual political preferences for one issue is impressive.

The ability to form an alliance dedicated to one issue is very important for grassroots campaigns. Infighting between groups over ideology would hurt the alliance's ability to create a broad appeal for support. As Steve Packard, the founder of a large and very successful grassroots prairie restoration group, discovered, "It was better and more effective to build a broad societal consensus on a single issue, even if many of the disparate kinds of people who shared the consensus parted ways on other issues" (Stevens 45). When a group held that everybody "'had to be pure and perfect about everything,'" Packard believed, that meant they were destined to be "'infinitesimal' in numbers and influence." (Stevens 45).

Therefore the Alliance had the understanding that the objectives of the campaign were by far the most important issue they had. They felt that the common objective was more important than their allies' motivations, more important than the stigma of cooperating with members of opposing political parties, and more important than the other positions candidates may have held. That is what made ELPC put information about the fiscal, economic and farmland ramifications on their website. That is what made ASSMO list the environmental implications on their website. The people of the anti new terrain alliance are truly dedicated to their goal of preventing the planned construction of Interstate 69, and that dedication is the primary reason why the alliance is so diverse. The diversity in turn contributes to the success of the campaign because, as Alex Witteveld put it,

I think the entire stop I-69 coalition in Indiana which includes INPIRG is having pretty good success. The coalition consists of Republicans, Democrats, Farmers, Environmentalists, Business Owners, students, and all kinds of people. With such a diverse group somebody in office is bound to listen (Witteveld).

Unfortunately for the committed and persistent opponents of the new terrain plan, apparently the project will break ground soon. Despite his ambiguous stance during the campaign, Republican governor-elect Mitch Daniels has announced that construction on the new terrain route will go forward with all possible speed (Daniels Wants Full-Speed Ahead On I-69 Extension). Daniels may feel that it is worth it to earn the enmity of the Anti New Terrain Alliance simply to remove the highway as an issue from any future campaign. It would be better to have the controversy now at the beginning of his term and let it die a natural death years before his next campaign.

What may seem like a loss for the grassroots groups is not their failure. They could expect no more effort from themselves than what they gave. However, do not count them out just yet. The alliance has already stopped two governors from beginning construction, and will try just as hard to stop the third.

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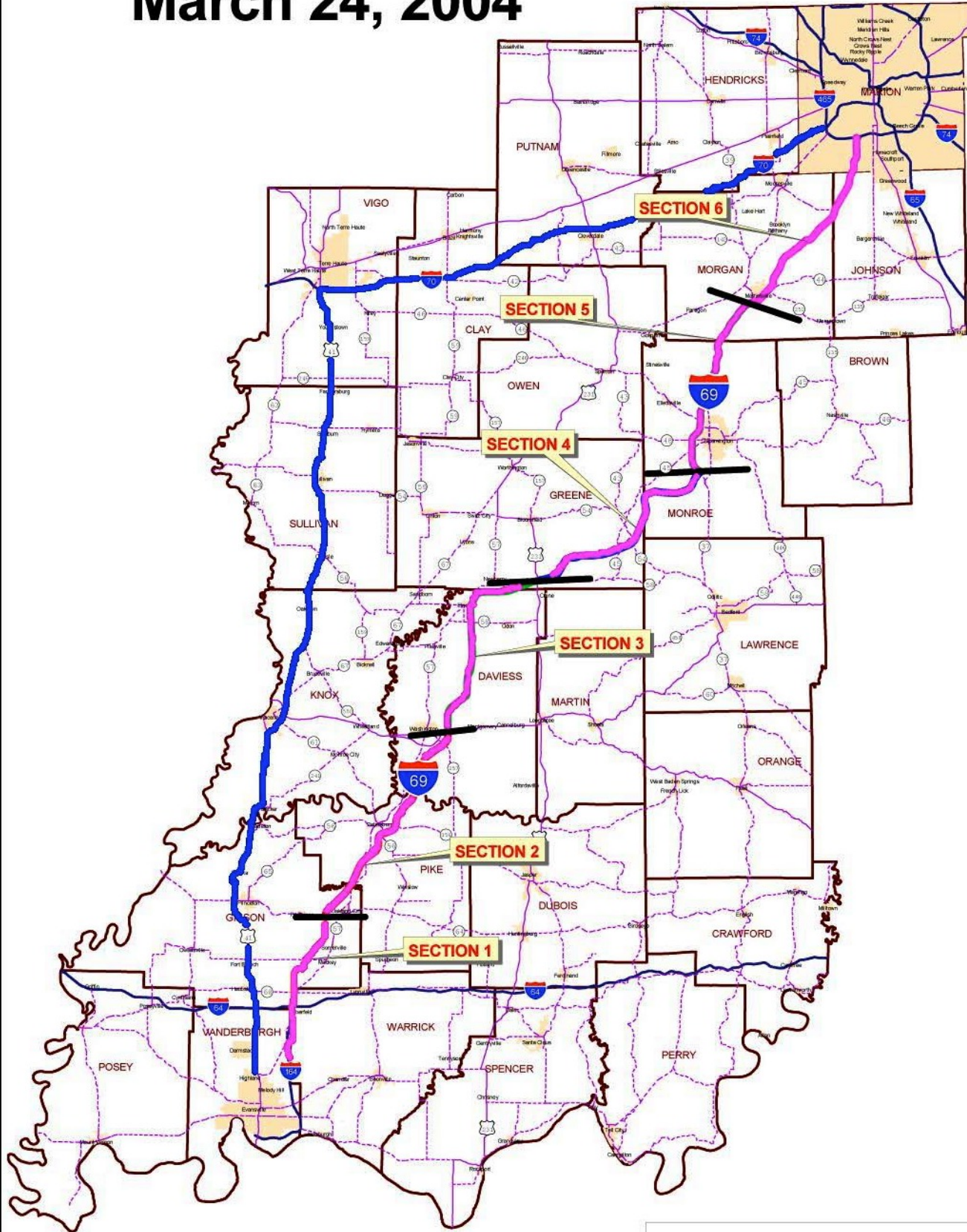
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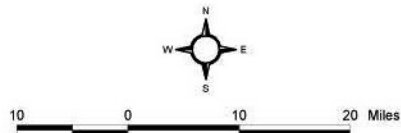
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Appendix A

I-69 Approved Corridor March 24, 2004

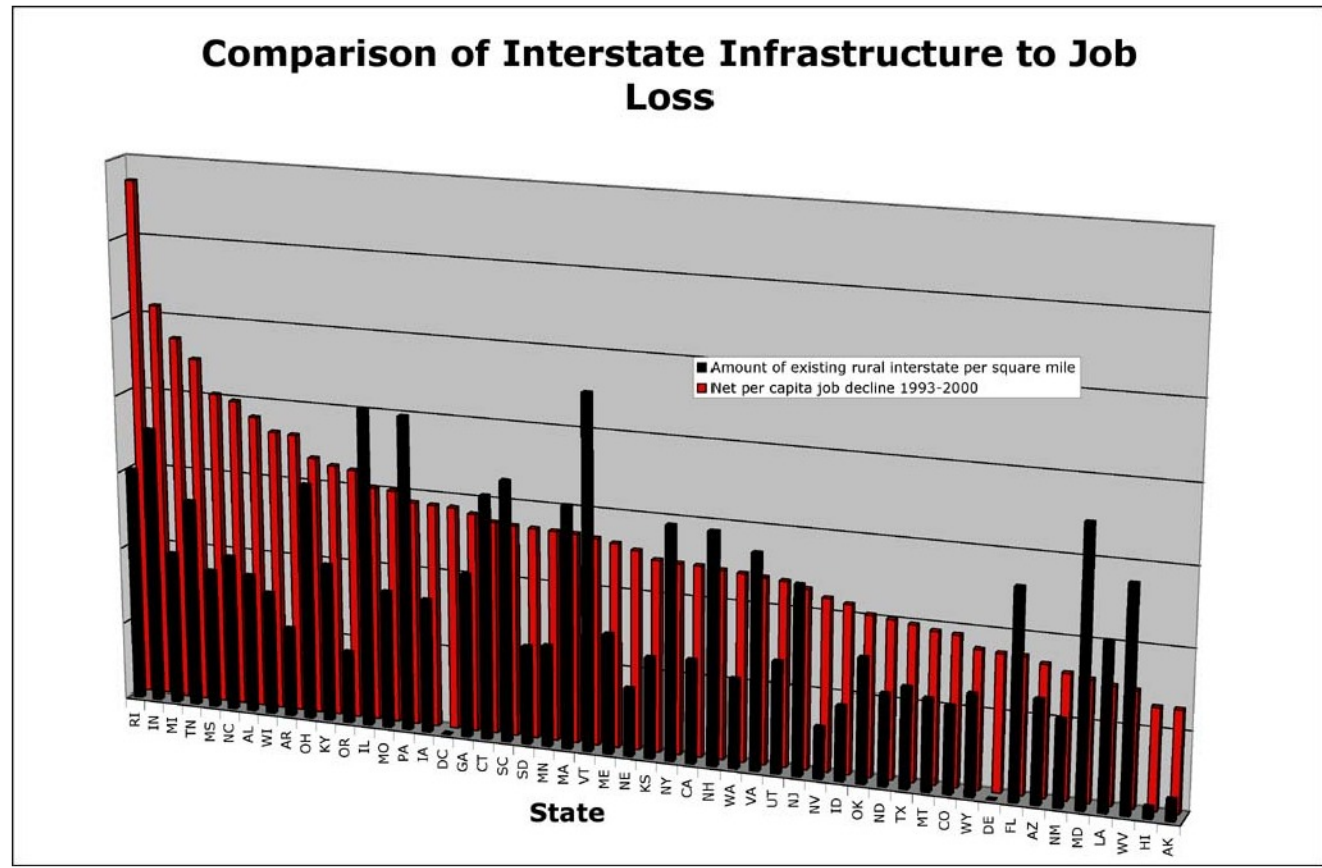


Joseph E. Kernan, Governor
J. Bryan Nicol, Commissioner



New Terrain Route —
I-70, US-41 Route —

Appendix B



Joining the Food Revolution in Grinnell

Professor Jonathan G. Andelson

“Let’s make Iowa the food capital of Iowa.”
-Neil Hamilton

“People did it before,” Karie said in a tone somewhere between hope and desperation. “Couldn’t we do it again?” Several of us were sitting around a table one day five years ago on the campus of Grinnell College in Iowa discussing the possibility of a community supported agriculture (CSA) initiative in the town of Grinnell. Karie, though, was already possessed by a larger vision of local food self-sufficiency. What piqued her was the estimate we had heard that ninety percent or more of the food eaten by Iowans was produced elsewhere. “It really is crazy,” Ann agreed, “when so much of the best farmland in the country is right here.”

Like people in most places around the world, Iowans once produced most of their own food. The first European American settlers, like the native peoples who were in the area before them, raised or hunted nearly all of their own food. Although the coming of the railroad in the 1860s greatly increased opportunities for exchange with distant markets, and sugar, coffee, and tea began coming in quite early, still, a quick look at the annual state agricultural censuses reveals that Iowa historically produced a wide variety of food crops on a commercial scale. Wheat, rye, barley, potatoes, apples, cherries, plums, grapes, strawberries, pears, peaches, raspberries, tomatoes, sweet corn, popcorn, melons, sorghum, and sweet potatoes were all grown for market on Iowa farms in the twentieth century, most of them within the last fifty years. Likewise, cattle, hogs, chickens, ducks, sheep, and goats have all been raised commercially, as well as bees for their honey. Traditionally, produce from farmyard and back yard gardens contributed significantly to the diet of most families, not only during the growing season but, due to home canning and other forms of food preservation, throughout the year.

Iowa’s food system has changed significantly in the last fifty years. Today, over 97 percent of the state’s cropland is used to produce field corn, soybeans, and alfalfa, virtually none of it for human consumption. Cattle, hogs, and chickens are still raised on a large scale, but the organization of production, particularly of hogs and chickens, is much different than it was. Whereas in 1954 four out of five Iowa farms produced hogs and chickens for market, today, although the number of each produced in the state has held steady or even increased, only one farm in ten produces hogs, and one in fifty raises chickens. This level of specialization obviously necessitates bringing other foods into the state from elsewhere. Another important change is the increase in the amount of highly processed and packaged food and fast food that Iowans eat, most of which originates from out of state as well.

I doubt, though, that any of us sitting around the table that day had quite conceptualized the whole picture. As Vince, whose family was among the first CSA members, said at some point, “I just want to eat good, healthy food raised by people I know.” We all felt that way, but it was Karie who had drawn us together. She had

recently graduated from the college, had learned about CSAs through attending field days sponsored by Practical Farmers of Iowa (PFI), and had received a post-graduate grant from the college's Office of Social Commitment to stay in town to work on the CSA idea. In an effort to identify potential producers and "eaters" for the CSA she made phone calls, knocked on doors, visited other CSAs in our region, and met with some key people in the community. A local organic soybean farmer who was in the midst of developing a value-added tofu production plant steered her to Ann, who raised vegetables organically near Malcom, a few miles away. "I was always interested in alternative farming practices," she later recalled. "We grew up without chemicals, and my parents were good at telling us how the food was raised, where it came from." Ann became the first farmer to volunteer to be a producer for our CSA.

A series of organizational meetings at the public library followed. These were attended by a handful of people that Karie began to refer to as Core Potential Eaters, as well as by some additional producers: Rebecca, who raised vegetables near Deep River, fifteen miles southeast of Grinnell, and brothers Dennis and Doug, who farmed near Lynnvile, fifteen miles south. The geographical dispersion of the producers was valuable insurance for the CSA against local crop loss due to pests, hail, flooding, or other natural disasters. Later we learned that having multiple producers also increased the variety of produce members received, since each producer enjoyed growing a slightly different array of vegetables. Barney, a local livestock producer who had already been direct marketing his meat for several years, also came to the meetings, and a couple of people talked about offering eggs. Ann and Karie even proposed a name for the about-to-become association; it had come to them on a drive through the countryside, where they had seen one of our native prairie plants, erect and tall like a beacon along the roadside: Compass Plant CSA.

Everything seemed to be coming together to make our CSA a reality, except that at the end of our final planning meeting no one had stepped forward to coordinate the whole business. "Can we make this happen?" The long silence that greeted Karie's question seemed like a death sentence, until Brenda said, "OK, it looks like we need some help," and stepped forward to meet the need. Brenda, who with her husband and children had moved to Grinnell only recently onto a farm that had been in her husband's family for a hundred years, became our executive captain, and the details were achieved.

That first year the Compass Plant CSA had three producers and twenty families. Each of the families purchased a share for \$200 (or half a share for \$100), and every Tuesday came to the pickup site at the activity center of a local church to receive a virtual cornucopia of fresh produce, everything from the familiar sweet corn and tomatoes to what-do-I-do-with-it turnips and kohlrabi. If it had been possible to assemble the season's share on a single table, what a sensory extravaganza it would make: deep purple eggplants, aromatic basil, tongue-tingling peppers, green and yellow and lavender pod beans, zucchinis as long as your forearm, carrots as sweet as sugar, and -- ahhh -- garlic. The bounty was staggering, and many times my own family could not finish a week's share before the next one arrived. We ended the year with a potluck dinner for the producers and shareholders, impatient for the arrival of spring and the first salad greens.

Compass Plant CSA has gotten a little larger every year. We've been fortunate to have a series of energetic and capable student interns funded by the college's Center for Prairie Studies working with us every summer: Jess and Brian the first summer, then

Lauren, Erika, and Katharine. As I write, four years into our venture, thirty-five families are enjoying the end of this season's harvest. We have lost a few eaters to moves or family changes but gained more. The members are clear about the reasons that draw them to local food. "It's just good, delicious stuff," Jackie said, going to what for many eaters is the heart of the matter. But there are other incentives. "I enjoy being in tune with the seasons, not simply eating what's in the grocery store," Lorna said. "We look forward to what each season brings. We also like eating food that's grown responsibly with a minimum of chemicals. And I like knowing where my food is coming from." For Jon and Jeannie, one of the appealing things about the CSA is the element of surprise. "We love the surprise of not knowing in advance what we're going to cook for Tuesday's dinner. We enjoy the challenge of figuring out a plan for using all the produce during the week." For some, social considerations are part of the appeal. "I enjoy going to the weekly pickup, interacting with like-minded people, knowing they're going home and eating good food," one member said. Jon agreed: "there's a social element to the whole thing -- connecting with neighbors we don't see regularly otherwise, and also with the countryside."

Connecting with the countryside was not part of the initial arrangement of Compass Plant, but in the second year something that Ann describes today as "a big thing for the CSA" made it possible: Brenda and Lisle offered their "century farm" as the weekly pickup site. Although the church's activity center that we had used the first year certainly was adequate, the short drive to their farm at the edge of town provides an ambiance that in obvious ways complements what the CSA is all about: a weathered old barn, a few cattle contentedly munching hay in the barnyard, gabbling chickens in front of the henhouse, an herb garden, and assorted barnyard cats. It is a place to linger, to allow children a few minutes of exploration, to glimpse a once common but increasingly rare surrounding. Even the low-ceilinged room where the produce is laid out, with its rough walls through whose cracks bits of sunlight sparkle of an afternoon, feels right. Everyone enjoys the location, and so now a lovingly hand-painted sign for the CSA stands permanently by the driveway.

Just as you cannot have a CSA without eaters, so are the producers essential. Their reasons for being involved complement the eaters' reasons. Dennis's general goal as a farmer is "to grow food the best way possible." For him this means using organic practices, even though he and Doug have not undertaken the burdensome paperwork to be certified organic according to government standards. By way of explanation he says, "I once got drift from a neighboring farm, and you can lose your certification from that. People who get our food can ask about our methods, and they can visit our farm to see how we do everything. If they do, they'll see some weeds because we don't use chemicals." Doug and Dennis have two and a half acres in vegetable production, and during the peak of the summer Dennis says he puts in around 55 hours on the farm. They both also have full-time day jobs. "The garden is a kind of a stress relief for me," Dennis says, "at least when the weather is nice," which of course is not always the case. A couple of years ago, their garden got hammered by hail, and they lost a considerable amount of produce, which meant that the Compass Plant eaters did as well. Such is the shared-risk nature of a CSA. This is one reason Dennis likes producing for Compass Plant.

Another reason involves his comparison between the CSA and the farmers markets he and Doug sell at, including the one in Grinnell. There they have to pay for a vendor's space, set up tables, man the tables for about three hours while interacting with customers, then pack up the tables and drive home -- a total time investment of over four hours. The CSA drop-off generally takes him less than an hour. He would like to see Compass Plant double in size, which would allow him and Doug to shift their production away from the farmers markets and toward the CSA. Either way, though, their truck gardening will probably only provide a modest supplement to their income. More than for the money, they farm because of the satisfaction they get producing healthy food from the land.

A similar goal motivates Ann. "My parents raised us with the stewardship thing: what you take from the earth needs to go back somehow. And what you put into the earth shouldn't hurt it. It was hard for me to reconcile this kind of thinking with what I was taught in ag school at Iowa State in the late 1970s, but I've kept that vision." Another important consideration behind Ann's farming choices is wanting to do the right thing for her children's health.

Like Doug and Dennis, Ann does not depend on her CSA income for a living; she also teaches agricultural science at Grinnell High School. Brenda has a part-time job, and her husband Lisle works for an implement company. Of the producers associated with the CSA only Barney, who direct markets beef, lamb, pork, and chickens to local customers, including many Compass Plant members, supports himself from his farm income. This year he's been getting 10 cents per pound over the local market price for his beef (with a self-imposed ceiling of \$1.00 per pound) because people are willing to pay more for it. He generally receives a premium on his other meat as well. Still, Barney is not exactly prospering; he uses old farm equipment (of his several tractors, the newest was built in the 1960s), barter for many of his needs, engages brilliantly in what the French call *bricolage* – a proficiency at scrounging, saving, and re-using – and lives simply. He is the first to admit that his "getting by" lifestyle would probably not satisfy most people, even most farmers. But he is happy. He is also doing what he thinks is right. He likes to quote a Gaelic saying he learned from the Iowa farmer-poet Michael Carey: "If you should, you can." "I feel the local foods movement is something we should do," he says. "It makes sense environmentally, and it's socially responsible."

Everyone associated with Compass Plant CSA agrees, but sometimes we wonder: will it ever be possible for like-minded producers to make a decent living from local food systems? The answer can only be, "it depends on the demand." The public must choose what kind of food it wants. But perhaps the public can use some help making up its mind. This conviction led several organizations in the Grinnell area to form GALFA, the Grinnell Area Local Foods Alliance. A partnership among Compass Plant CSA, the college's Center for Prairie Studies, Imagine Grinnell (a non-profit quality of life foundation in the community), the Poweshiek County Extension Service, the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service, the Iowa Valley RC&D, Iowa Network of Community Agriculture, Practical Farmers of Iowa, and the Grinnell Farmers Market, GALFA works to promote local foods in a variety of ways. The Center for Prairie Studies created a directory of local food producers who market locally. Two years ago, with critical support in the form of a grant from the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture at Iowa State University, GALFA hired a half-time coordinator to develop an

“institutional buying initiative.” Whitney works to bring together local producers and institutions that serve or sell food. Members of the Environmental Action Group on campus began a student garden that provides produce to the Grinnell Community Meals Program and Mid-Iowa Community Action. Most recently, we worked with Ann to secure a seed grant from the college’s Office of Community Enhancement to develop a student garden at the high school that we hope will provide fresh produce for the school cafeteria.

The local foods movement in Grinnell has come a long way in five years. Although Karie the catalyst has moved on to enroll in the Sustainable Agriculture program at Iowa State University, the rest of us remain, working in our various ways to advance the causes of healthy eating, community economic well-being, food security, environmental improvement, and the ties of neighborliness. It is remarkable how many good things come from the simple act of eating food produced close to home.