

A Network to Grow Successful Communities

People of Diverse Views Can Forge a Common Good

“Our mission is to identify, connect and develop leaders who transform towns, cities, counties and regions into thriving communities.”

BY ANGIE BAUR



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It seems to be in our DNA as human beings to draw together. Families, tribes, neighborhoods, clubs, churches, political parties, professional associations: all are systematically structured networks of individuals to which most of us cling for survival, for identity or for a sense of purpose. The modern phenomenon known as Facebook calls this by a single word: “friends.”

At Public Square Communities (PSC), the word would be—you guessed it—“community.”

Since 2004, PSC has worked with 26 communities representing over 78 cities and towns. Annually since 2005, we invite these communities to spend one day together, learning from and supporting each others’ efforts. The enthusiasm and hopefulness borne of this community-of-communities is extraordinary. In recent years, the word “network” has emerged to describe this unique association of communities.

Network can be defined as “a supportive system of sharing information and services among individuals and groups having a common interest.” That describes the network of Public Square Communities.

The Public Square Network offers several benefits. Most important are the relationships between individuals in different communities that offer connections to resources. Email, texting, phones and social media link citizens in distant communities in a matter of seconds. Also, face-to-face conversations among two or more communities allow in-depth discussion of current challenges like conducting successful bond elections, improving health care, building workforce housing, or fostering trust among elected officials.

I would sum up the benefits enjoyed by Public Square’s Community Network as: (1) connecting effective and aspiring civic leaders; (2) exchanging mutual wisdom about challenges

and opportunities; (3) building partnerships for development; and (4) creating mechanisms for long-range planning.

So, are you intrigued? If so, an opportunity to explore how your community can join this network is before you. Public Square Communities is seeking applications from motivated communities ready to engage their citizens for the critical work of community development within their community’s four sectors: business, education, government and human services.

PSC’s mission is to identify, connect and develop community leaders who transform towns, cities, counties and regions into thriving communities which nourish youth, engage citizens and foster partnerships. Through our proven step-by-step guided process, communities have called forth new leadership, addressed unresolved conflicts, restored confidence and hope, strengthened struggling institutions, and taken on large-scale development projects.

Successes include city-county consolidation; multi-county tax credits; community-owned theaters with digital technology; new park and recreation facilities; successful bond elections for health care, schools and aquatics; and in all cases, a new way of making community decisions that inspires more citizens.

If your community would like to join the Public Square network, applications are available on our website, www.publicsquarecommunities.com. Or for more information, email me at abaur@buildthesquare.com, or call 316-239-9451. Public Square will add up to four new communities in 2013. Deadline for applying is April 1. **KCL**

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