

## Building relationships, building a town

There are big changes happening in the rural town of Hoffman, Minn. Just five years ago, Main Street storefronts stood empty, the poverty rate was at 11%, and the population was in a steady decline. Now, local residents are actively working to build a vibrant, thriving community.

Hoffman residents worked together to revitalize their town through the Horizons program, an anti-poverty community leadership initiative funded by the Northwest Area Foundation. By participating in Horizons, residents built relationships and set priorities for action through a dialogue-to-change program.



*Hoffman, Minn., residents receive the Minnesota Community Pride Award in 2009*



Read about Muriel's  
inspiring leadership at  
<http://bit.ly/murielsstory>

Muriel Kruseman, a community leader who has spent most of her life in Hoffman, was astounded at the progress they've made: "People from all different walks of life – from the banker to the people who work in small town businesses to farm people – all came together and we all worked for a common goal. Many of these people had never met each other before."

Transformations can be seen in every corner of town. Some actions have had an immediate impact, such as painting houses, installing playground equipment, establishing community gardens, and cleaning a park. Participants have also worked toward long-term changes:

- Residents successfully lobbied to eliminate the ban on townhouses, allowing young families and older people to access affordable housing.
- With help from a small business incubator, 26 new businesses fill once empty stores.
- An empty building was converted into a "health mall," which includes a podiatrist, chiropractor, massage therapist, and audiologist.

Collectively, these actions are bringing Hoffman back to life. While the population in the county has continued to decline, Hoffman residents are eager to welcome 16 new families to the town, and businesses continue to thrive.

View and download the discussion guide, "Thriving Communities," at [http://bit.ly/tc\\_guide](http://bit.ly/tc_guide).

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## About Everyday Democracy

A national leader in the field of civic participation and community change, Everyday Democracy helps people of different backgrounds and views talk and work together to create communities that work for everyone.

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