

What's Developing

There are “reasons” that people give when they talk about the success – or lack of success – of small towns. Consider the ones listed below. Have you ever had these thoughts about your hometown? Can you understand why they are myths instead of facts? *Wanda Jundt*

6 Myths About the Future of Small Towns

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Myth 1 - Towns that are "too small" have no future.

The truth is that there is no magical number at which a town can survive. Heartland Center research has shown that even very tiny towns, with populations as small as 100 or less, manage to survive through thoughtful planning, entrepreneurial genius and hard work. No community should perceive itself as "too small" to survive.

Myth 2 - A community's location is key to its survival.

In an Information Age, leadership, not location, is the most important fact in community survival.

Myth 3 - Industrial recruitment is the best strategy for economic development.

Study after study shows suggests that industrial recruitment, alone, is not a realistic long term answer. Communities must adopt a broad-based economic development plan that supports existing businesses and encourages entrepreneurship.

Myth 4 - Small towns can't compete in the global economy.

Many rural communities have small manufactures that are producing high-quality products for a unique marketing niche, which extends beyond the local area to a regional, national or even international market. Small towns throughout America are home to an amazing variety of highly sophisticated, entrepreneurial successes.

Myth 5 - The "best people" leave small towns as soon as they can.

It is true that many people find opportunities elsewhere, but it's also true that many talented and capable people choose the quality of small town living.

Myth 6 - The rural and urban economies are not interdependent.

It's not really news that rural industries such as agriculture, mining or land management are playing a smaller role in the rural-urban economic mix. This doesn't mean, however, that cities and counties could maintain their quality of life without farm products, coal, oil and the natural resources, available to the city and country person alike.