

## **Allegiances and Alliances, or Independence: Identity and Human Ecology**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Woodville poses a fascinating question for human ecology. This small New Zealand town is midway between other small cities and nearby towns, and so residents are caught up in a situation of divided allegiance. People ask, "Should we link up with or shop in another city or town, or remain independent and buy locally?" Another way of stating this question about relationships is in terms of conflict or co-operation or perhaps dominance and submission. The essential problem is that the town's leadership and residents have two choices: attraction towards and allegiance to one or more of several other nearby settlements versus establishing and promoting their own separate community and identity. This latter strategy would involve going forward alone in terms of planning for future development.

This article deals with the issue of attraction to others and building alliances versus choosing a separate destiny, and presents the situation of Woodville as a case study. Part of an independent strategy is the question of self-identity, for an alliance with another town or city, or even with others, would dilute uniqueness and independence. Submission to or co-operation with others is a strategy, just as is the search for independence. Rappaport (1977, p. 168) states, "Effectiveness of an organisation is not measured by any one goal, but rather by its ability to adapt, grow, survive, and maintain itself." The conclusion in this paper advocates a point of view that making the best of local assets and self-promotion as a special place may be the optimal strategic solution, at this time, for this community.

This dilemma in promoting, developing, building or reducing and resisting relationships with others is a key concern in the field of human ecology. Such an issue is probably more frequent than admitted and many individuals, communities, regions and nations face similar concerns. Finding the best strategy for gaining the best outcomes for the members of a given community

is no simple matter, but theories, principles, and ideas from human ecology may offer some guidance.

This paper follows a project that began with an ecologically based study of the small community of Woodville in rural New Zealand. Woodville, having suffered the lean farming years of the 1970's and 1980's became much more prosperous due to new businesses locating in town in the 1990's. Many new shops opened and retailers were generally happy. This paper follows with a plan along themes that resulted: Woodville residents need to support their own town and its businesses more than they have in the past. Not only that, but Woodville must provide attractions such that more people will come to visit and stop to shop.

### **WOODVILLE**

Heller (1989) aligned a community to a locality, a relational community or a collective political power. The BBC English Dictionary (Sinclair, 1992) defines it as, "a group of people who live in a particular area or who are alike in some way". McMillan and Chavis (1986) and Heller (1989, cited in Orford, 1997) suggest that a community is within a geographical area or as a community of social interaction that networks. A community has also been described as a population sharing a defined area (Levine and Perkins, 1997). Almost any human grouping sharing a commonality can be termed a community. Sub-communities also co-exist within particular communities.

The fertile alluvial soils east of the Manawatu Gorge support sheep, beef and dairy farms. The Manawatu River flows on the southern boundary, and standing majestically to the northwest is Mt Wharite in the Ruahine ranges. From Wharite, radio and television waves are transmitted. The east is bordered by the Puketoi-Waeaepa Ranges. The north leads into the southern Hawkes Bay.

The Reed Dictionary of New Zealand Place Names (2002), states Woodville was so named because it was situated within a region of native

bush. Along with many service centres for the rural hinterland throughout New Zealand, Woodville declined after 1970 due to reducing farming profits. However, currently a renaissance is occurring due to development of new businesses, the computer age of tele-working and increased mobility.

Early history is now legendary. The dominant Maori tribe within this once remote area was Ngati Kahungunu. The first pakeha explorer in this area was Jack Duff in 1840. Development depended upon transportation, and it was not long before the main road and rail links were initiated, and then were completed by 1897. Woodville quickly thrived as a major road and rail junction. The first building was completed in 1875 and a school was built in 1877. Post-1875, Woodville was a convenient place to stop along the coach route, as a junction.

On 5 January 1875, a New Zealand newspaper publicised Woodville as "... the great inland city of a hundred years hence ..." (Shaffer, 1973, p.10). In 1878, two of the senior author's great-grandfathers were each balloted a block of land. Shaffer (1973) referred to Woodville as a bush frontier, quite typical of many townships within the developing nation of New Zealand. One hundred years hence, Woodville was a thriving service centre, the school had a healthy roll of four hundred and it met the residents' general needs.

However, with the advent of the European Economic Commission in 1957, then the European Free Trade Association in 1960, the role of Britain began to shift towards membership in the European Economic Community (EEC) and along the way, farming supports, subsidies, and profits for New Zealand were cut. New Zealand's dependence on Britain for financial support, as a trade partner, and member of a Commonwealth alliance faded quickly. Woodville, like other New Zealand towns, began to lose essential services. In fact, Woodville soon became a "decaying" community (Kelly, 1990). As the town was reliant upon farming, many farming wives gained employment elsewhere, thereby also starting a trend of buying their goods elsewhere. By the end of 1980s, many businesses closed.

A local farmer, for example, viewed his farm as a microcosm of New Zealand and stated that the best years on his farm were in the 1960s and 1970s. Since then, residents have felt discou-

raged, like Jason (1984) found in his studies. And, as Moos (1975, as cited in Jason, 1984) found that the social climate had a strong influence on the sense of well-being in the community. The population began to decline (Statistics New Zealand, 2002) and many people simply packed up and left.

After a couple of depressing decades, Woodville has recently reversed the trends. Still a small town of only 1491 people (Statistics New Zealand, 2002), Woodville's major employer after local farming is now a meat company. At the height of the processing season it employs over six hundred people and therefore contributes a huge amount of money into the local community. Woodville benefits as staff take advantage of the cheap housing and live locally. Four houses from elsewhere have been relocated recently, and are all rented (Mr H., personal communication, 02.05.02).

Further, in terms of Barnett (1953, cited in Linney, 1990), and La Piere (1965, cited in Linney, 1990) Woodville has the ingredients for even more social change. Innovative people do arrive from time to time. The community now is generally receptive and local sales people promote innovations. Fortunately, New Zealanders became more mobile, and although this was initially one of the factors in the decline, more recently this actually led to positive changes. In comparison, where nearby Pahiatua is generally busy during business hours, Woodville is now busy virtually twenty-four hours a day seven days a week (Ms. D., personal communication, 12-3-02). Interestingly, the key innovators of change were antique dealers who arrived in the mid-1990's and set up shops serving the tourists passing through. Along with food outlets, these shops have been an integral part in the turn around which has subsequently occurred. The increased prosperity is evident in the fact that there are only one empty shops in the main street. Various other shops have opened – ones that might not have survived earlier. In fact, locals now lament that they cannot get a park in the main street in the weekends (Mrs H. personal communication, 20-03-02).

Observations revealed, in one day, seven camper vans in the main street. The senior author spent some lunch times observing the clientele of a café. Most drove late model cars, spoke on cell phones and locked their cars. Those from Woodville dressed more casually, spoke face to

face and did not lock their cars. The pace of life in Woodville is slower than that elsewhere, one of the reasons many older folk have stayed in Woodville (Mrs G. personal communication, 30-03-02). This observation was further highlighted at the rail-crossing while the lights flashed and the train remained stationary. An Auckland driver in front rudely gesticulated to the train engine driver as the lights stopped and we were able to proceed. Some people are in a hurry, but those in Woodville are not.

Woodville, a pretty little town, has shops newly painted with attractive flowers out-side either in barrows or in pots. Away from the main street, there is evidence of past prosperity. Another innovative change since 1998 is a radio station beamed to all residents from 7 am – 10 pm daily. As (Jason and Klich, 1982, cited in Jason, 1984) found, this has given the residents a real sense of community. Grass-roots organisations give support (Perlman, 1976, cited in Heller et al., 1984) and locally, this occurs with the elderly population who still attend church, the Country Women's Institute, Floral Art groups, and similar organisations. A close camaraderie can be noted among the long time locals.

When one local became an all Black rugby player, the community raised supporting funds. District Dog Trials and the AMP show continue to hold interest for those of farming stock. But the current membership of the Old Folks Association is now only fourteen. The membership of all the service clubs has declined (Mrs B. personal communication, 20-03-02). Woodville does not cater for those of the middle years. Except, as one new resident (Mr S.) stated, "Woodville is a dumping ground for solo-parents due to the cheap rentals". Still, the comments about the school were very positive with many services offered.

The crux of the current dilemma about strategic futures is shopping. Only about half the people shop locally. One new businessperson (Mr V) was very happy with his decision to move to Woodville. He has already bought still more land to open a car yard, and an old villa which he was restoring. Another businessman (Mr S.) would not be in Woodville if it were not for the huge traffic flow. In addition, he is able to do forty percent of his business on the Internet. He regularly exports to Australia and the United Kingdom. The general feeling from residents

was that they wanted more work opportunities and activities for younger people locally. Interestingly, only those over fifty who completed a questionnaire intended to retire in Woodville. But, most people commented positively on the friendliness of the local people. Some newcomers commented on the negativity of some residents but those that had come for business as has Mr S. from Auckland, are happy with their decision, at least for the time-being.

In general those who have lived in Woodville longer were more positive than those who had come purely for business reasons. One businessman (Mr L.) was most emphatic when stating that he did not socialise locally. Most see Woodville as a "satellite" town to Palmerston North, only twenty minutes drive away. Most thought that Woodville would retain its population as people live in Woodville and commute. For example, one district to the east, (Kumeroa) has no vacant cottages, people have moved there and commute to Palmerston North or tele-work (Mr H.).

Many respondents to a questionnaire commented on the lack of social services. Ironically, recently, every household received a questionnaire asking for their views on the Social Services available within the area. This is a positive initiative, with reference to Thomas and Veno's (1996) work with regard to community development and the process of strengthening a community. The Tararua District Council appears to be totally behind Woodville in terms of support. They, in conjunction with Property Brokers, a real estate firm, funded a stand at the recent Auckland Home Show. The staff was impressed with the amount of interest shown (Ms D. personal communication, 20-03-02).

The local policeman gave an insight into Woodville's problems. Firstly minor juvenile crime is a problem – a skate board park for youths is dominated by the "town bullies". House burglaries, large amounts of benefit fraud and rural drink driving link in with cannabis cultivation and dealing in illicit drugs. Mr. G advised that the average male income is only \$17,000, female income is \$11,000 (nationally it is \$37,000 and \$19,000 respectfully (Statistics New Zealand 2002) and the school is rated decile 4, in the below average category. Kelly (1966, cited in Levine and Perkins, 1997) theorised that people adapt when their environment changes. The ecology of Woodville, including the rural

downturn of the 1970's and 1980's, is the core reason for these peripheral (policing) problems.

Woodville has had a ten per cent reduction in population. In general, the age distribution shows that Woodville has less population from those fifteen years old to those over seventy. Those with children have moved out and the school roll dropped from around four hundred to the current two hundred (Mrs B. personal communication, 20-03-02.) No local jobs for those with children were available in the 1970's and 1980's. However, the nearby Oringi Freezing Works has helped provide employment more recently, and currently, a new boning plant is being added.

In terms of the work that Cowen (1980, cited in Orford, 1992) studied, Woodville is capable of providing its own social support. The "informal helping" referred to occurs within the slower pace of life. People stop and chat with other customers and the retailers while shopping. The small town also supports two hairdressers – a well-known place for "informal helping".

Woodville can lay claim to being in Southern Hawkes Bay, the Manawatu region or the Wairarapa – depending with which government agency you are dealing. This situation dilutes the support received and diffuses identity.

Since the hard times of the 1970s Woodville has slowly begun to prosper again. Although the population has decreased, locals feel that it will not decline further. Bright futures lie ahead of many businesses and the future looks assured. Most people are positive and the constant traffic flow has been the genesis for the increased prosperity. Although various problems occur, they are no different than any other small town experiences.

### FUTURES

One aspect of human ecology is to try to understand a particular situation. An even more important part however, is to seek to act in ways that make a situation more optimal for persons and their environment. The following quote encapsulates an intervention. "An intervention plan is any systematic effort at introducing a change in individuals, social systems, populations or networks of social systems which has as its desired end the improvement of the individual environment fit" (Murrell, 1973, p. 181). An ideal result would be that Woodville,

as an entity, is supported more effectively economically, socially and culturally.

Realistic future directions call for an explanation of location. It is not imperative that an explanation be either objective or subjective. As Lewin, (1951, cited in Heller et al., 1984) stressed, the most relevant environment is that experienced by the individuals involved. Therefore it is important to find out how residents themselves perceive their situation. This ties in with ideas by Spradley (1979, cited in Heller et al., 1984; and Levine and Perkins, 1997) who talked about use of the ethnographic method. He claims that problem definition is value laden and that when we identify a problem we define it in terms of our own worldview. However, by endeavouring to leave our values and cultural backgrounds behind, we can begin to appreciate what has meaning to the residents of a community.

The general consensus from interviewees is that Woodville is in a "renaissance" period and that the momentum of growth experienced recently needs to be perpetuated. The fact that there is only one vacant shop in the main street is ample testimony.

An Action Research Cycle, composed of problem definition, fact finding, goal setting, and action, illustrates a proposed plan. This method, developed by Lewin in 1951 (Heller et al., 1984), indicates that many types of interventions are available along with numerous methods. The following plan fits with the particular situation of this community.

### PROBLEM DEFINITION

For an intervention, a social regularity must be chosen, that is, a phenomenon that is occurring in the environment that is linked to a psychosocial outcome (Tolan et al., 1993). Then those involved can alter the social regularity so that the outcomes differ for the population and/or environment. Murrell (1973) argues that maximising different resources will enhance psychosocial accord. In other words, by intervening, positive benefits can result for the local residents. In theoretical terms, it is an "emergent construct at both the setting and the mesosystem level" (Tolan et al., 1993, p. 96). Settings such as schools or agencies focus on within-setting social regularities and mesosystems focus on procedures and transactions between settings. A social regularity may be measured at a single

point in time or over repeated intervals. Seidman (1987, cited in Tolan et al., 1993) says a social regularity is only meaningful with relation to the lives of the persons living within their domain thereby validating the allowance of subjectivity when describing the ecology of the community. "The ecological approach defines the relationship between the observer and the observed (participant) as the source for the construction of meaning about the phenomena to be studied" (Tolan et al., 1993, p. 27).

In relation to what Tolan et al. (1993), have discussed, Woodville needs to be more supported by its own residents. Murrell (1973) enthuses about the increasingly recognised contribution that people can make within their own community. In ecological terms, this enhances the relationship between the community and the residents.

The social regularity chosen is: "Woodville residents currently do not always support and promote their town economically, socially and culturally".

If the salient social regularity is not targeted (Watzlawick et al., 1974, cited in Tolan et al., 1993), then only first order changes will be affected. It is important to note that wealth and power (the vested interests) are distributed in the second order changes. Therefore all of the "players" must be pulled on side to gain positive and long-term changes. In an intervention, the phenomenon must be looked at from an ecological perspective rather than a person-centred one. Therefore the phenomenon must be looked at through taking account of the whole environment. Trickett (1984, cited in Rappaport, 1987) advocates this approach as it fits better when studying the complexities of communities. Woodville, like all communities that involve a population base, is as diverse as any. This highlights the importance of moving about the community, spending time there and seeing how it "ticks".

### FACT FINDING

For an intervention plan to be successful, the community needs to get involved. Perlman (1976, cited in Heller et al., 1984) found that citizen participation in community organisation has many benefits for the citizens including improving the quality of the environment and of the services offered.

Woodville can once again become a boom

town, but a sense of identity needs to be developed along with a sense of pride. If residents do not support their own town, it will again decline as it did towards the end of the 1970s and the 1980s due to the farming slump. The community needs to perceive sufficient benefits to gauge the worth of an intervention.

In America the term "neighbourhood revitalisation" is often used. Heller et al. (1984) describe this phenomenon as a local effort to revitalise deteriorated neighbourhoods by way of physically and economically improving the environment. The proposed intervention can be aligned to this goal and this in turn will increase a sense of community. Because of the larger economic and demographic picture, referred to as the supra-system (Mr G., personal communication, 03-05-02), it is important to direct energies where they will be most effective. The main aspect is to keep the middle-class and working residents (Ahlbrandt and Cunningham, 1979, cited in Heller et al., 1984) involved and, ultimately and ideally have them spend their money in their own town rather than elsewhere.

Such a plan must be realistic. There is no way that Woodville can become a major service centre such as exists in Palmerston North, a much larger hub of commerce and business. But, what is important is that all the current services remain and that the population must at the very least, be maintained. Recent demographic research shows many people from the North Island are relocating to the South Island of New Zealand. This migration would have been unheard of even ten years ago. The people are shifting purely for economic and social reasons. Some people have recently chosen to relocate and retire in Woodville from Auckland and north of Wellington (Mr H., personal communication, 12-05-02). As previously mentioned, for the first time in many years, only one shop in the main street is now vacant. Talk of an art gallery and a wrought-iron shop opening along with possibilities of a used car business in the main street is circulating. A drive through Woodville reveals lots of cars parked in the main street. Woodville is lucky that there is constant traffic.

### GOAL SETTING

This topic includes the strategies, planning and tactics that lead on to the action involved in the intervention. The themes identified need plans particular to their own niche market.

Woodville needs to be supported by locals, economically, socially and culturally. By this, they need to be positive about their town, spend their money locally and encourage others, particularly tourists and visitors, to do so as well. Socially they need to be more involved in clubs and committees and the cultural environment. Most people now involved in committees are older, the younger residents do not tend to be involved (Mrs M. Personal communication, 14-05-02). Active residents need to serve as role models for others living in Woodville and visiting. When this is done, the town will benefit not only financially but also a sense of community will become more positive, therefore encouraging people to spend more time and money in the town. This is testimony to Orford's (1992) comment about the aims and aspirations of community psychology not being modest! According to Tolan et al. (1993), small wins are important when creating change. It is these small wins that encourage a community to strive for bigger goals. Those in the second order of change who are initially targeted must excite and enthuse those in the first order of change. The main goal of the intervention plan is so that Woodville can build a secure base not so reliant on farming. In the words of a common expression used in financial investments "all its eggs are not in one basket". Another theme that came through from various discussions was that Woodville needs beautifying (Mr. S., personal communication, 15-05-02).

### **ACTION**

Part of the intervention plan must be for the retailers to assess their current status, so that a comparison of where they are post intervention can be made. This would entail, as well as accounts of their daily takings, knowledge of the source of their customary financial base with respect to local, regular, or out of town persons. As the population is now static, the intervention plan must concentrate on three themes. It is intended that these three themes will target the first order changes as described above. This is where the power lies.

#### **GETTING PEOPLE TO SPEND THEIR MONEY IN WOODVILLE**

Most of the questionnaire recipients stated that they do not do their main grocery shopping

in Woodville, those that did tended to be the older residents, coincidentally the ones who have lived through good times. A perceived and real notion exists that the prices of consumer goods are more expensive and that the range is not broad enough. However, the size of the retail area has recently increased to provide more room for stock (Mr H., personal communication, 12-05-02).

To encourage others to shop, further incentives are required. Although, a financial incentive is important, there needs also to be a moral incentive. Rappaport (1987) talks about empowerment as being a pervasive and positive value allowing residents to control their own affairs. Two other important aspects to note are that Rappaport (1987) states that locally developed solutions are more empowering as is the fact that people gain more empowerment if their activities are more meaningful. However, Riger (1995) maintains that participation does not result in more influence or control. It is important though to build on a strong cohesive community. Riger (1995) also advocates the importance of neighbourly support, thereby again stating the strength of home-grown support and help. Neighbours do tend to rely on each other in times of trouble.

Mr. B. (personal communication, 08-05-02) says that there is no problem getting people to rent houses, but it is difficult to get them to buy. This is because, first, seasonal workers and solo parents do not tend to buy houses and, second, people would rather rent cheaply and invest their capital elsewhere. In that way, their capital will appreciate in value.

*The retailers may think of some of the following innovations:*

Offer free or discounted grocery/consumer product delivery

Offer discount shopping cards

Commence a "Buy Woodville" campaign

Have a monthly market for produce, antiques, crafts and other wares of local origin

Have a "spot the whatever" competition in the shop windows.

#### **ENTICING MORE TRAVELLERS TO STOP**

A total of 15,540 traffic movements take place through the main intersection each day (Taranaki District Council Statistics, 2002). Also prominent in the statistics, some 700 trucks pass through the Manawatu Gorge every day. In

marketing terms, this is a real and unique strength that could be marketed so that customers would react positively. They could change from being a passive to become an active customer.

Attracting tourists and travellers is not simple. Many of the following strategies are called “mining the road”, therefore catching the driver’s eye and enticing him or her to stop. Woodville’s main advantage is the geographic location of being at the junction of two main highways. New Zealand towns such as Taihape and especially Tirau have taken advantage of their own high traffic count. Like Woodville, few shops provide services for locals but there are varied and interesting shops for tourists to visit. Mr. S. (personal communication, 14-05-02) believes that if Woodville looked more like Cambridge, with beautiful trees, it would appeal to more people. People need to drive into a place and feel good, then they are more disposed to stop and buy something. Of the seven hundred trucks that pass through the Manawatu Gorge each day, ten percent stop for petrol and food. How can this figure be increased? Perhaps, by “mining the road” and specifically targeting truck drivers, the numbers would grow. Mr. G, (personal communication, 08-05-02) says that Woodville could be New Zealand’s best place to stop for services.

Build huge billboards promoting Woodville as the #1 rest stop in New Zealand

Publicise Woodville more

Plant aesthetically pleasing trees at all the entrances. It may be a long term project, but it has to start sometime.

Capitalise on the antique shops. Do they have an “Antique Trail?”

Put a new café in the one empty main street shop, for example a “Brown Sugar Café”. People always need food and a loo (toilet)

Build a “super-loo” or highly attractive public toilet

Advertise “coffee to go” “food to go”. People are in a hurry, so local shops can capitalise on small amounts of time when they stop. Do not make it a disadvantage.

Market Woodville in the “Ye Olde Country Fayre” style

Have the shops painted in the same “antique” theme

Increase the potted flowers in the main street in line with the plans that are underway to beautify the rose gardens next to the Museum.

Take greater advantage of the Radio Station’s cheap advertising rates

Use other local radio stations

Put features in the local newspapers, recently a full page advertisement was placed in the Wellington Dominion newspaper about “Destination Woodville”.

Market a “Day Shopping in Woodville” – get mini-buses to come with groups from other nearby towns.

Put updated brochures in every shop

It is possible to encourage more people to come and experience the local town. Woodville is situated in a beautiful part of the country and is central to several districts, including Wairarapa, Taranaki, Hawkes Bay, Manawatu and Wellington. Entrepreneurs could set up and market “day-trips” of adventure tourism. Further, these could be advertised on an Internet site. Local attractions could be better promoted, for example, the wind farm, jet-boating, a gorge walk, bungee jumping off Balance Bridge, hiking, horse treks, quad bike trips and trout fishing. Farm stays in nearby Kumeroa (a district east) could be advertised and developed. The lucrative week-end retreat market might be better served. The two hour drive from Hawkes Bay or Wellington makes Woodville an ideal drive away from home. Companies like “Footprint Expeditions” could target customers for the Woodville Market.

For these varied suggestions that in total make up the intervention plan, the powerful people in charge must be consulted and brought on side. Understandably, contacts with the Tararua District Council and the Woodville District Vision have been most supportive, so getting them involved would not be a problem. In fact, it might be almost like “preaching to the converted”.

With a proposal such as an intervention plan, initially, contact should be made with the Woodville District Vision (an amalgamation of the Woodville Community Board and Mainstreet). The amalgamation took effect from 1 February 2002 as a result of a request by both parties as it was felt that they were doubling up on the work that they were both doing (Woodville Community Services Document, 2001). Discretionary funds are available for small amounts but any large sums must be allocated in the Tararua District Council Budget. The meetings are held monthly. Any initiatives that are accepted can be allocated a small sum or for a larger sum, a presentation must go to the Tararua

District council headed by the Mayor.

### EVALUATION

The final task is to formulate an evaluation of the merits of any intervention. There is a great importance placed on providing feedback to the community (Thomas and Veno, 1996). This is a valuable tool in generating further discussion among a community. With respect to Tolan et al. (1993), they recommend the following for the full process of evaluation:

Select the criteria of merit.

Set the standards of performance for each criterion (absolute or comparative).

Measure the performance of criteria.

Synthesise the results and make an overall value judgement.

However, they also note that the more important the social problem the more difficult it is to create change. As this is a hypothetical exercise only, obviously the pattern of changes that occurred due to the intervention plan needs to be examined, bearing in mind that retailers have a reasonable knowledge of their situation prior to the intervention plan.

### CONCLUSION

There is certainly cause for hope for Woodville. After the hard financial years of the 1970s and 1980s, the townsfolk and the "powers that be" feel that there is promise in any plan to revitalise Woodville. The themes identified in this paper concentrate on creating more spending with local retailers, also enticing more travellers to stop, and finally, encouraging more people to visit. Overall, once such a plan is implemented and the locals get behind the momentum, they will start benefiting from the plan. Once "small wins" are realised, larger ones will occur by the increasing promotion and awareness of the hidden talents that lie within.

**KEYWORDS** Ecological. Rural. Local. Self-promotion. Community

**ABSTRACT** This paper follows a project that began with an ecologically based study of the small rural town community of Woodville in New Zealand. Woodville, having suffered the lean farming years of the 1970s and 1980s, has become much more prosperous due to new businesses locating to the town in the 1990s. In order for Woodville residents to capitalise on

this new prosperity, it is imperative that they themselves support Woodville economically, culturally and socially. The conclusion in this paper advocates that the local community makes the best of their assets and self-promotes the community.

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