

HCP reviews Design Team's visit, considers what projects to tackle first

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Healthy Communities Partnership (HCP) members were still on a "high" last Thursday night at a recap meeting following the successful June 9-11 visit by the Minnesota Design Team.

The consensus of two dozen or so members who met at Hope Lutheran Church was that HCP must now concentrate on a visible project that can be completed very soon — to show people this whole effort is more than just talk and visioning sessions.

"They made it clear, we need to help the community center project 'go,' " Char Moore added. "We also have to promote businesses in and around town ourselves, not just let the Chamber do it. And we have to have a positive attitude, not spread rumors or gossip!"

Anything that is done must include the entire area, John Fjelstul emphasized. "We need to think more broadly; everything from signage, and even where to place that signage."

Orv Rosenberry of Shingobee Township suggested the city and townships logically could work together on three projects: city park improvements, historical museum needs and Evergreen Cemetery. Joint powers agreements should be considered so that townships would be equal partners and legally be able to offer fiscal support.

Fjelstul said he would soon propose that the city and townships get together and start talking informally.

"No agenda; just, 'How can this become a healthy community?'" he explained. "We aren't going to build on the past. We're going to build on the future!"

Steve Bilben gave some preliminary ideas for how to extend and link bike trails through downtown Walker, and for how cyclists could follow road shoulders, existing roads and trails east and south to circle back to town.

Cass County Commissioner Jim Dowson said that at a recent meeting, the Leech Lake Tribal Council was very supportive of the idea of extending trails around Leech Lake.

A visitor's center at city park, and a skateboard park somewhere in town were other possibilities that piqued volunteers' interest and produced discussion.

John Grimley suggested the public needs regular updates on HCP activities. Possibilities included a newsletter, postings on HCP's Web site, and articles in The Pilot-Independent.

HCP's executive committee will meet twice a month, and the entire membership will hold regular monthly meetings, as they set goals and work on projects.