

## **Lots for Sale! Lots and Lots of Lots...**

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Communities often approach economic development in much the same way. They decide they need some sort of economic development plan that will lay out the top three businesses they need to attract. Sometimes they even hire an economic development officer to work on attracting those businesses or industries. All that is left to do after that is to wait patiently for those businesses or industries to show up, right? Wrong.

The pinnacle of this activity is seen all around North America with signs on the edge of town that say, "Lots for Sale". Every time I see one of these signs I always wonder aloud, "Lots of what?" If that is all you have done then your community's entire economic strategy is premised on the notion that people all over are just looking for a little bare piece of serviced land that is for sale, and they will move to your community because YOU have a lot for sale. It doesn't matter if you have access to education, or healthcare, or a strong social network, or a great quality of life, or a strong business community...as long as you have a bare lot for sale, people will come. Ha ha...nope. People want to live in a community, not just on a lot.

In many cases communities try a little harder and hire an economic development officer with the notion that it is entirely up to that person to go and find, attract, and retain businesses or industry to the community. In the majority of cases I have seen, however, the local municipality has rules, regulations, policies, and an attitude that actually drives away business. The economic development officer, or sometimes the CAO, gets blamed for failing in the mission to grow the community, but the policies set by the elected council directly contradict those very efforts.

Economic development is not an activity, but a culture within the community. If you want to drive economic growth it must be part of your values. Values that don't change with the wind or your sentiment. Frankly, if your values change whenever you are challenged, they aren't values at all, but merely interesting hobbies. Businesses prefer to invest in cultures where they are valued, where their investment is welcomed, where their employees will find a good quality of life, and where they can prosper along with the community.

What is your community culture? Does it support your economic development efforts, appeal to businesses, and have an air of success and openness about it, or does it just have lots for sale, lots and lots of lots? The difference may determine if your community will live or die.

*This syndicated content is provided by Doug Griffiths, best-selling author and chief community builder at 13 Ways, a company with a mission to push communities to face their challenges to find their unique path to success. For more information visit [www.13ways.ca](http://www.13ways.ca), or we can start the conversation at [info@13ways.ca](mailto:info@13ways.ca).*