

# EXTENSION SNAPSHOT

Fulton-Mason-Peoria-Tazewell Unit

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## Manito Revive & Thrive community meetings makes for village revitalization

What began as a simple phone call from Jerald Schier, [Manito village](#) trustee, in Spring 2024 grew into a community effort to revitalize the town. Manito Revive and Thrive community meetings were a catalyst for the village's new strategic plan. Local leaders collaborated with [Richard Proffer](#), community and economic development educator, to develop goals, mission and vision statements, and to plan the community meetings.

"We heard feedback from over 40 people during the two community meetings," commented Proffer. "The community members were given the opportunity to share their ideas and concerns, as well as connect with other Manito citizens."

"I loved getting to talk to my community and feeling we all could make a change," wrote one participant on their final program feedback form.

Following the community meetings, the city established three project areas: business development, tourism/village beautification, and infrastructure. Those sub-groups established priorities such as bringing in a grocery store, beautifying the main highway through town, updating city ordinances, and dealing with vacant and abandoned buildings.

Manito is a village located in Mason County, Illinois. It has a population of around 1,500 per the 2020 Census. While on the smaller size, the local leaders for the project took on the challenge and are now quietly reinventing the town.

Infrastructure is dealing with a long over due review of the town's ordinances and the downtown's building problems. Some recent wins are that all ordinances have had their initial review and now their legal aspects are being examined. Plus, the community joined the [Prairie Hills Land Bank Authority](#) to help the community deal with building issues in their downtown.

The Tourism committee has many plans to help improve the look of the village ranging from hanging attractive bright colorful banners and having communal flower pots with seasonal plantings all along Manito blacktop. Future plans include involving members of the local garden club in maintaining the flower pots while expanding the beautification throughout the village and the development of the area around the village pond.

Business Development is looking at ways to attract new business to the village. They are currently working with [Sean Parks](#), of Illinois Institute of Rural Affairs, on attracting a grocery store to the area. Future projects include sporting tournaments being held in the park.

Richard has migrated from a group community facilitator to a community resource advisor. He is available to help other rural communities in Fulton, Mason, Peoria, and Tazewell counties. He said that each community project is tailored to the individual community's needs and desires.



Photo by Richard Proffer | Illinois Extension

*Manito conducted Revive and Thrive community meetings as a catalyst to develop a new strategic plan. The top three priorities are business development, tourism/village beautification, and infrastructure.*

### Richard Proffer

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