

City Council Agenda Item Memo

From: Laura Schoen Carbonneau, Visit Brookings

Council Meeting: January 28, 2025

Subject: Presentation: First Impressions Program

Presenter: Laura Schoen Carbonneau, Visit Brookings
Kelsey Doom, Brookings Area Chamber of Commerce
Kirsten Gjesdal, Downtown Brookings

Summary and Recommended Action:

Visit Brookings, the Brookings Area Chamber of Commerce, and Downtown Brookings will provide a presentation to City Council outlining the First Impressions Program. The program is intended to swap two similar communities in order to help communities assess and develop opportunities and strategies for community improvement.

Item Details:

Three Brookings economic development partners are working together to participate in the state's inaugural First Impressions Program, run through the South Dakota State University Extension Office. Downtown Brookings, Visit Brookings, and the Brookings Area Chamber of Commerce have begun initial preparations.

First Impressions is a program designed for community assessment and improvement. It gives communities a chance to learn about existing strengths and weaknesses through the eyes of a first-time visitor. The results of the program can serve as the basis for community action.

Brookings has selected Aberdeen as our comparison city based on population and similarities in community offerings. Volunteers from each community will make an announced visit to the other community and then report on their findings. It is similar to a "secret shopper" program, but scaled larger so a larger sample of each community will be assessed.

Once the visits have been completed and results compiled, they will be shared with city leaders and the broader community. Depending on findings, interest and funding opportunities, action may be suggested or taken to address any points identified through the process.

Legal Consideration:

None.

Strategic Plan Consideration:

- Safe, Inclusive, Connected Community – The City of Brookings will create an environment for inclusive programs, gathering places, and events where the community can safely live, work and come together to participate in opportunities for learning, recreation and enjoyment.
- Service and Innovation Excellence – The City of Brookings will provide an accessible environment committed to ongoing innovation and outstanding service through listening and engagement.
- Economic Growth – The City of Brookings will support effective diversified community investment and equitable opportunities for prosperity.

Financial Consideration:

Brookings is proud to be part of the first program of its kind in South Dakota. As such, there are no fees paid to SDSU Extension. This equals a minimum value of \$10,000 for Brookings.

Supporting Documentation:

Presentation
Program Overview