

## Starting a conversation with the next generation Think tank explores community's future

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Vitality is a quality sought by individuals, business entities and communities to remain on the cutting edge.

The Nelson County Economic Development Agency (NCEDA), City of Bardstown and Bardstown -Nelson County Tourist and Convention Commission are no exception.

Thursday evening, NCEDA invited young community members to a meeting to get them thinking about how to make Bardstown and Nelson County more attractive to the 25- to 40-year-old age group.

NCEDA President Kim Huston opened the informal get-together by explaining that her goal was to make Bardstown a “cool place” — an entertaining place to have fun and raise a family. Huston said she hopes having this quality of life, with good education, leadership, services, restaurants and shopping, will bring young people back to Bardstown and also lure others who visit and decide it's a place they would like to stay.

“Nostalgia is a powerful feeling,” Huston said, but, “We need to know what you want and what will keep you here.”

Huston also showcased some online media being used by the groups with the help of young people including Dawn Ballard, Bardstown -Nelson County Tourist and Convention Commission vice president of tourism expansion and marketing; Internet guru Spalding Hurst; and liaison with the city and special events coordinator Anne Ballard.

Facebook users can become fans of the Bardstown -Nelson County Tourist and Convention Commission as well as the City of Bardstown and stay up-to-date with local happenings. Other social media avenues where Bardstown is making an appearance are Twitter, YouTube, Trip Advisor, Yelp, Foursquare and it even has an iPhone App.

Bardstown Mayor Dick Heaton said although the town is doing a lot of things better than most, his goal as mayor is to keep the town progressive and not stagnant.

“We have a lot going for us,” Heaton said, but it has come with a lot of work.

The meeting is a start to “reach out and find a group of young people to follow in our footsteps” and to find ways to make Bardstown and Nelson County more attractive, Heaton said.

Heaton said getting feedback to find what the town is missing and what it is doing well is a good start.

A few ideas were brought up by attendees, including having larger concerts more frequently and the lack of an indoor sports center with facilities such as a swimming pool and racket ball courts.

Huston encouraged attendees to keep thinking, adding that she hoped to meet two or three more times throughout the next year to discuss more ideas.