

# Cartoon, 5/18: Ideas Needed for City to Prosper

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A heartwarming thing about the coalition that started Prosper Lincoln is how hard participants are working to give everyone in the community a chance to put forward their ideas on how to improve the community.

Now is the time take advantage of the opportunity.

One easy way to pass along an idea is to go to the prosperlincoln.org website and type out your ideas. “Idea cards” also are being handed out by the many groups that have signed on to the effort.

Who knows? Your idea, or something similar, might be chosen. Imagine the idea transformed into action with the energy of a host of volunteers and Lincoln’s nonprofit organizations behind it.

The drive to collect ideas is the current phase of an effort that started last year, when the coalition of community groups, including philanthropic organizations, the University of Nebraska Foundation and the Lincoln Partnership for Economic Development, joined forces to produce the first Vital Signs report.

The second Vital Signs report was distributed with last Wednesday’s Journal Star. It’s also online at [Lincolnvitalsigns.org](http://Lincolnvitalsigns.org).

As Barb Bartle, president of the Lincoln Community Foundation, told a breakfast meeting of about 900 people last week, Lincoln has exceptional strengths. It has a highly educated population, a low rate of violent crime and a high rate of employment.

But in some areas, Lincoln’s vital signs are weakening. Household income has dropped 4 percent since 2008, when adjusted for inflation. One out of every five children lives in poverty. And, as is often the case, a strength can also be a weakness; the low unemployment rate means businesses are desperately searching for good employees.

The Vital Signs already has led to action. The first report helped trigger the effort to help South Downtown, or “SoDo.” The area includes the Capitol, business and two of the six census tracts in Lincoln that are in extreme poverty according to federal guidelines.

The Prosper Lincoln participants are guiding discussion and seeking ideas on three main topics:

\* Nurturing youth success from cradle to career.

\* Growing economic prosperity.

\* Enhancing quality of life.

Vital Signs and Prosper Lincoln were born in a spirit of collaboration. The effort will help target resources where they can do the most good and be used most efficiently.

Now is a good time for individuals in the community to become part of something bigger. A good way to get involved is to share your ideas. They're being solicited and accepted until July 1.