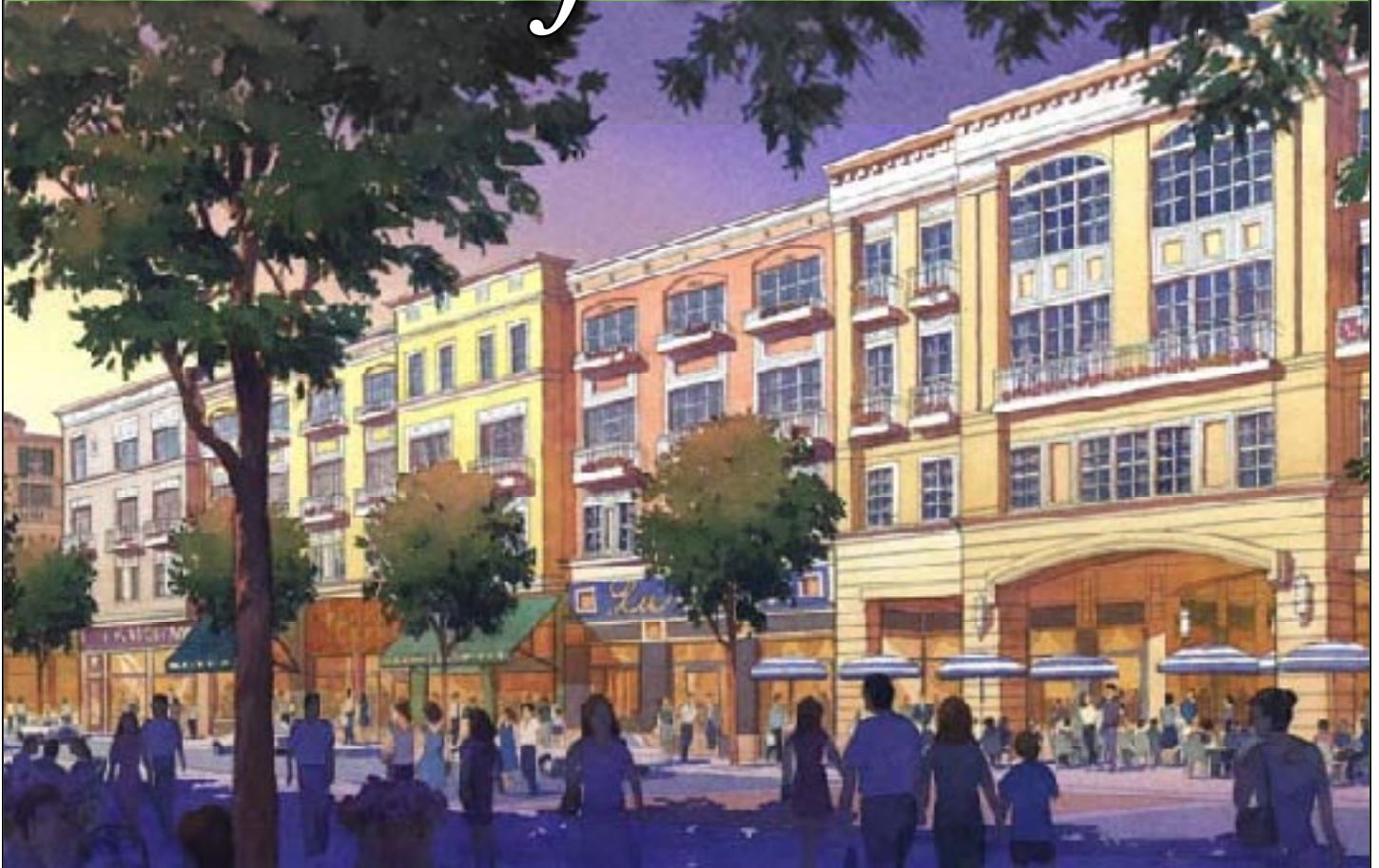


A Place of Our Own



Laurent, South Dakota

An overview by
Marvin T. Miller



Rendering of Liberty Harbor, NJ by Duany, Plater-Zyberk, Inc. (DPZ)

**“How do you build a town?” People would ask.
I answer, “You have to dream first.”**

— M.E. Barwacz

There is no place like home.

— Dorothy,
The Wizard of Oz

This is a concise overview on why we should build a town; not an office park, a campus, or even a subdivision, but a real town.

Our firm belief is that we can make the dreams of the deaf and signing community a reality.

My family and I want to build a place where a wide variety of people can be together in a dynamic fashion. We want to be able to walk from our homes to the town center so we can be full participants in our community. Being able to walk to our grocery store, pharmacy, church, and other places is important.

Let me share a personal experience that drove home the point of building a place we can call our own. My wife's grandmother was living with her daughter in a big and beautiful home. It was truly a marvel of a house, two houses in one with indoor swimming pool, in a beautiful and idyllic setting — lake front suburban area, on a cul-de-sac.

In that house, my wife's grandmother was able to move around freely. However, she was lonely. She had to wait until someone would come, pick her up, and take her to senior social events. She was dependent on my mother-in-law for her daily needs because she could no longer drive a car. The house, as beautiful and amazing it was, was located in a suburban setting where there was no sense of community. She could not walk to a grocery store, drugstore, restaurant or senior citizen hall.

It was not until she was admitted into the Veteran's Hospital elderly care program that she began to feel happy and connected with others.

I was stunned to see the dull and drab, sterile hospital environment she was living in and, yet... she was happy! She was happy to have a group of people like her to talk with and to have activities to participate in on a daily basis.

Money was not a major issue for her care, and she was a hearing person. Yet, her choices in lifestyles were limited — live with her family but in relative isolation and disconnected from all kinds of activities because she could not drive; or choose to live in an ugly and sterile environment, but have access to all kinds of activities and people to talk with.

At that moment, I made a promise to my wife and myself that when we reached the point in our lives when we lose our ability to drive, we would not trap ourselves with the lousy choice — of living in an isolated retirement community or burdening our children. We will live in a town that is fully accessible to us — physically, socially, economically, politically and spiritually.

The health benefits of a walkable community are numerous, not to mention the psychological benefits of knowing our neighbors and fellow community members. I want to be able to yell at those young kids who may be out of line. I want to be able to sit down and tell stories to young children at our town's park. I want to be able to sit on a bench and watch people walk by and start a conversation with whomever I see.

Laurent, South Dakota can be a reality. This is why my family and I moved to Sioux Falls, so we can be close to the town as it takes shape.

Together, we will make this happen.

Sincerely yours,
Marvin T. Miller

Mission statement of Laurent, South Dakota.

To create a town to call our own. A place that promotes a sense of belonging for everyone who calls sign language their language. To create and promote economic, political, educational, social, physical, and spiritual growth for all.

To create a place where the whole world can look, touch, feel and participate in a visual world, a world of sign language and signing culture.

To create a town that is compact, walkable, visually appealing, and welcoming — one that exudes the charm and warmth of the residents within.

— Proposed Mission Statement

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to my wife, Jen, for her steadfast support in making this proposal a reality after 3 years of development. My kids — Theodore, Stefania, Alexander and Warrick — thanks for putting up with your dad being gone several Saturdays. You're the best kids a father could ask for!

I want to thank my mother in law, M.E., and my friends for their support and their valuable help in providing feedback on Laurent, S.D. proposal: Ric Marcus, Amy Gerard, Erin Casler, Christine Kraft, Deb Skjeveland, Jodi Oates and Deb Kuglitsch.

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Why a place of our own? If we want to achieve social equality, we must first seek to empower ourselves economically — not the other way around. In the American deaf community, we do not view deafness as a handicap. The hearing society that we live in is inadvertently handicapping us.

If we hope to achieve political influence, and economic growth, have diverse job opportunities available for members of our community, and to remove barriers, we must build this town. If we expect to achieve greater satisfaction in our quality of life and be able to build better and stronger bridges between the deaf and hearing communities, we must approach this with a vision of a new kind of community that is healthy and vibrant. There is no other way to achieve this. If we want to take responsibility for our children's education — deaf, hard of hearing and hearing — we must start seeking ways to achieve that. Building a whole town will achieve all of the above and take us all beyond our wildest dreams.

Why a new town?

With a town of our own, we will be able to build natural bridges between deaf and hearing people. We will have financial incentives to pool our resources for the greater good of the community. We will be an economic force to be reckoned with — channeling dollars into efforts that benefit us as a whole.

The synergy generated from daily social interactions among the town residents will lead to many new and fresh ideas as well as driving the local economy with a shared destiny in mind.

Challenges and difficulties in our lives today.

We, as a community, have to stop renting space on the stage of life. We have to start owning our space, in partnership with interested parties — deaf, hard of hearing and hearing people. We cannot reject or continue to turn away many hearing people who have been our community's strongest supporters just because we do not have a place for them in our community. There is no place for them in our deaf clubs, deaf schools and deaf colleges. In a way, that is understandable because these are all we have. In order to break out of this cycle, we must build new places to accommodate the changing dynamics of our community. We lack control over our ultimate destiny because we have forfeited our participation in the hearing world. Why? It is hard! Because it is not fun to struggle each day to understand and be understood. A good number of deaf people and their families are perfectly capable of owning restaurant franchises today, but they do not. Why? No satisfaction. Too much of a struggle to communicate on a daily basis. They know that it will become a burden, rather than liberation.

It can be done.

At first people refuse to believe that a strange new thing can be done, then they begin to hope it can be done, then they see it can be done — then it is done and all the world wonders why it was not done centuries ago.

— Frances Hodgson
Burnett.

Thinking Different

“The significant problems we face cannot be solved by the same level of thinking that created them.”
— Albert Einstein



Village Voice Quote

“Fascinating... [author Nora Ellen] Groce accomplishes much just by pointing out that handicaps are something a culture creates, and thus the joint responsibility of us all.”

Playing with Monopoly money

Money is a crucial lubricant for the exchange of ideas, goods and services. Economic emancipation is true freedom. Capitalism is a proven model for raising standards of living. We need to start applying this to our lives.

How? Before we address the economic growth and empowerment, we need to consider how we view our place in the world. More importantly, why do we need to change that?

The deaf community in general, runs on an economy of goodwill and volunteerism. As Jodi Oates, a member of the community, put it, “Deaf people rob each other during fund raising activities for their organizations. Nobody’s really getting rich.” Goodwill does not last long.

Our community has a rich history of non-profit activities that generated a very healthy sense of close-knit community, and adding the economic development efforts and encouraging ownership in various business endeavors can enhance this.

For example, if we had more members of our community owning businesses, they would have additional motivation to donate money to good causes because they know their businesses will win through positive free publicity. Thus, both businesses and fundraisers experience a win/win situation.

A model to follow... Martha's Vineyard. Why?

Martha's Vineyard can serve as a model of integration for our unique sense of identity.

Nora Ellen Groce wrote a book, “Everyone Here Spoke Sign Language,” after she realized the unusual attitude an elderly Islander from Martha's Vineyard had towards the deaf. In an interview with one woman, Groce asked about a local handicapped deaf person, and the elderly woman responded, “Oh, no. He was not handicapped. He was just deaf.”

On Martha's Vineyard, the author found an unusual concentration of deaf people spanning from the early 1600's to the last surviving one in 1952. To illustrate this: In 1854, the U.S. deaf population average was 1 out of 5,728. On Martha's Vineyard, the ratio was 1 out of 155 deaf. In the town of Chilmark, one out of every 25 was deaf.

Children on the island learned sign language from birth, and parents were not upset at the birth of their deaf children.

“How would a bilingual community—in which ‘every resident... learns to talk with fingers as early as with his tongue, for he will have to do with the deaf socially and in business every day and every hour of the day’ (*Boston Sunday Herald* 1895)—actually function on a daily basis? The widespread use of sign language affected every aspect of Vineyard society. It was not simply a question of language usage; the attitude of hearing people toward the deaf and their ability to communicate easily and well extended into every aspect of Vineyard society. There was no language barrier and, by extension, there seems to have been no social barrier.” (*Everyone Here Spoke Sign Language*, page 75.)

Groce explains that in the Vineyard society, the deaf children born to hearing parents had the same advantage as deaf children born to deaf parents because there was already so much familiarity with deafness and sign language in the society.

The deaf population on Martha's Vineyard died out when the island became a popular “getaway” resort for mainlanders, thus diluting the heredity genes when the Islanders married off-islanders.

By looking to Martha's Vineyard as a model to follow in terms of integra-

tion, inclusion and prevalent use of sign language by as many citizens as possible, we have a precedent for the success of this new town.

The Signing Community: A Perspective

In an effort to better define our community and what makes it so unique, one person — John Lee Clark, edicurator of *The Tacticle Mind* literary magazine — came up with a better and clearer definition. His article appeared in the Spring 2002 issue of *CSD Spectrum*.

I am a signer. I am a member of the community many of you know as the deaf community and which I recognize as the signing community. This tender presents a perspective of our community and welcomes you to acknowledge, perhaps accept, signing community as a name and a concept with which to understand our community.

Before we can understand what signing community signifies, we must understand this: A community can connect an assortment of cultures sharing certain things in common; and a single culture can be represented in various communities.

We know this is true, for we have daily contact with large collections of people. Often, a person will be identified as a member of more than one community, and a person's role in one community can differ from that in another. Thus, we all carry a number of identities, some important and others less so. Take me, for example: I identify myself, before anything, as John Lee Clark, followed by signer, deaf-blind person, father and husband, writer, Minnesotan and so on.

When I became deaf-blind, I continued to hold roles in the so-called deaf community, yet I was not exactly deaf. This was how I came to perceive the name deaf community as hazy. Soon, I learned more about the inaptness of the deaf community designation.

The most observable problem with the name "deaf community" is how the word deaf misleads. Ours is a community that holds hand in hand not only signing deaf people and their specific cultures, but also peoples who are not deaf only or simply not deaf — such as the black deaf, deaf-blind, Children of Deaf Adults and many other groups, *only if they are also signers*. I bring up *only if they are also signers* for a significant reason: We do not consider non-signers as members of our community, even if they are deaf. It is, therefore, by virtue of signing, rather than deafness, that we are members of our community.

Granted, deafness is the most common dynamic for choosing to communicate in sign language. Deafness, however, is not the only reason; more and more Americans — both deaf and hearing — are learning American Sign Language for reasons having little to do with deafness itself. Again, it is with one's signing — not ones with deafness, that one signs up literally into our community.

Another drawback with the name "deaf" is its negative definitions: It describes a state of muteness and not hearing. Ben Bahan, in an article for Deaf Community News, tried

Vineyard Facts

- 35% of the marriages were deaf to deaf on the Island while 79% was the average on mainland USA.

- A large majority of the deaf earned above average income on the Island.

- Deaf people participated fully in the affairs of town and politics.

- Hearing Islanders often signed among themselves even when no deaf person was present.

Definition of Signers

Signer: (n) 1. a particular group of people who share a beautiful, three dimensional language. 2. a term measured by culture and attitude, not by an audiogram. 3. a member of a vibrant group of people with their own culture, history, folklore and humor. 4. a group of people who see vibration and vision as equally important senses.

to find a replacement with more positive connotations. He proposed “seeing person,” explaining that seeing expressed something we can do, as opposed to what we cannot do.

However, “seeing” — like deaf — is based on a bodily condition — a condition not all members of our community possess. Signing, on the other hand, is both positive and accessible; it is something we all can do. One benefit of applying the name “signing community” is that sign language is learned. While deaf people will always be preponderate in our community, others can — through signing — assume a range of roles in our community.

Our community in our organizations, events and in the arts is filled with evidence, indeed signs, telling us that we are much closer to signing than we are to deafness.

Audiograms tell nothing about who we are. Sign language tells so much about us; it is a gauging lens through which we understand and communicate with one another.

Clearly, deafness should not be looked upon as the foundation of our community, much less as the common link that makes us a community.

Signing is something everyone in our community shares. It is only right that signing is placed in our minds, in the heart of our community.

Our community is in our hands.

© 2002 John Lee Clark.

John Lee Clark is the EdiCurator of *The Tactile Mind* and can be reached at edicurator@thetactilemind.com.

Change through Natural Incentives

Changes can be induced through incentives — some natural and some artificial. An example of a natural incentive at work would be a deaf person owning a barber shop business in Laurent, South Dakota. A parent of a deaf child comes in, and since he’s learning sign language slowly, communication will be an issue. The barber recognizes that this person is a paying customer, and will greet him warmly with sign language. This promotes a natural exchange and a win/win situation for both: the barber ends up with money in his pocket and the new signer learns a couple of new signs. Scenarios like this can not happen at deaf clubs or schools because there’s no financial incentive involved to promote this type of natural exchange.

By building Laurent, we will see a tremendous increase in synergy and natural interaction between the deaf and hearing signers because they will play numerous roles — being a neighbor, serving on a city commission, working together for volunteer work, planning a parade or festival, buying goods/services from each other, and more.

Before we run to build our own town

Understanding town planning and suburban sprawl's effects requires some reading, and only a brief summary will be given here. Town planning in the United States has changed considerably in the last 80 years. Cities have shifted away from pedestrian friendly neighborhoods/towns to auto-oriented suburbs with bland subdivisions and huge parking lots everywhere, prompting author Jim Howard Kunstler to coin the term, "national automotive slums" to describe our current urban/suburban landscape.

When the interstate highway system was introduced in the 1970's, town planning had already changed considerably. Rather than founding new towns, designers planned new development on the fringes of existing towns. The art of building new towns was lost.

New Urbanism Primer: Returning to the old Neighborhoods

More land is consumed for awkward and segregated development than ever in the history of the United States.

A well written overview of problems with town planning today and the solutions available today was recently written by developer Rob Dickson. His article appeared in Albuquerque Journal (NM) on Friday, October 11, 2002:

There have been only two patterns of development in our history — the Traditional Neighborhood pattern and the Suburban pattern.

Traditional neighborhoods were the only pattern from the earliest settlements (including the Anasazi) until around World War II. Suburban development has been almost exclusive since.

The differences between the two are physical, not statistical. Both have places to live, work, shop, learn, worship, govern and play. But they operate in entirely different ways.

Traditional neighborhoods

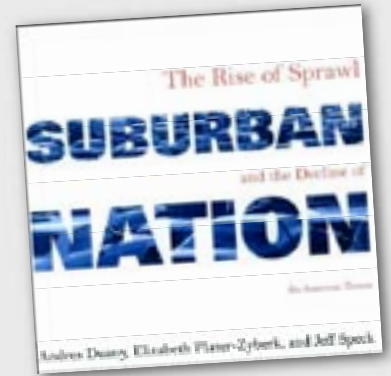
Traditional neighborhoods are walkable areas of limited size. They have a variety of housing types, usually grouped by street. They have adequate shopping and numerous workplaces. They contain most of the facilities for civic life — churches, schools, parks, post offices and the like.

They are built on a network of smaller streets, providing multiple ways to and from every destination. This is efficient for car movement and pedestrian movement.

Buildings generally front the sidewalk and street. This gives the enjoyable feeling of being in an outdoor room to the pedestrian, bicyclist, driver or transit rider. Streets, squares, plazas and parks are defined as public places of shared use by the buildings around them. Parking is on the street, or in the rear of buildings.

Traditional neighborhoods are human-scaled. They accommodate automobiles, without allowing their dominance.

Traditional neighborhoods of various densities aggregate to form towns and cities. Each neighborhood has a defined center and edge. Within neighborhoods there is a "transect" of densities — one street has large lots, one has smaller ones, one has townhomes, one has apartment buildings, and so on.



Must read books

Suburban Nation: The Rise of Sprawl and the Decline of American Dream by Andres Duany, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, and Jeff Speck

The Death and Life of Great American Cities by Jane Jacobs

A Better Place to Live by Philip Langdon



Which side of the road would you like to live on? Which is easier to travel from one place to another?



New live/work units at Kentlands in Gaithersburg, Maryland (www.kentlandsusa.com)

Traditional neighborhoods have a variety of housing prices, rental and sale. This is good for business (workers of all kinds nearby), and good for forming the bonds of civic life.

Traditional buildings, especially “Main Street” types, adapt to a variety of uses over time. There are traditional buildings in the United States and New Mexico (that have been) in continuous use for more than 300 years, with the same building operating as a shop, an office, a residence and a civic facility at different stages of its life.

Suburbs

Suburbs segregate living, working, shopping, playing and civic life into large “zones.” We call them subdivisions (usually segregated into specific price ranges), apartment “complexes,” office and industrial “parks,” shopping “centers” and “institutions.”

Moving from one zone to another requires a car trip. Because all trips are car trips, the roads are large. The street system is usually designed to provide only one way to and from a destination. This puts all the cars on the same streets at the same times. It’s ironic that suburbs are designed for cars only, yet don’t move them very well.

Buildings are set back from the street. Parking is in the front of buildings, making our public streets continuous car lots. Walking and cycling is virtually impossible. Transit is a chore. Not framed properly by buildings, suburban streets feel more like traffic “sewers” than centers of social and business commerce. The square and plaza have disappeared, and parks generally are the leftover land, not conveniently located.

Suburban zones, by their design, do not aggregate to form towns or cities in the historic sense — in the way that we generally think of cities and towns. Suburbs are car-scaled. Suburban buildings are specialized, and do not adapt well to other uses, if at all.

What do people want?

Nelessen & Associates of Princeton, N.J., has conducted more than half a million Visual Preference Surveys in hundreds of cities across the country. The results show almost complete agreement in the way people would like their cities and neighborhoods to look and operate. Tree-lined Main Streets, not strip centers. Smaller schools and parks within walking distance, not large facilities requiring a car trip. Mobility choices, not stuck in traffic. Shaded streets of front porches with work nearby, not endless subdivision streets of garage fronts and a long commute.

It is interesting to note that almost all print and television advertising uses Traditional Neighborhood street and building imagery. Images of suburban streets and building types don’t sell!

Why don’t we build them?

The answer lies in the “instruction manual” given to de-

velopers. We call it the Development Ordinance and Design Manuals, the Zoning and Subdivision Ordinance, the Building Code. These instructions require the suburban pattern. The traditional neighborhood pattern is illegal under today's rules.

Dividing our lives into "zones" was the well-meaning attempt of cities in the '20s and '30s to separate noxious industries from residential areas. Standardized codes created by the American Planning Association were created, and purchased off the shelf by most cities, including Albuquerque.

The problem is, these codes now require the separation of all business and shopping from all residences. The car trips required by this separation force the construction of wide, fast streets and large parking lots. And so, year after year, Albuquerque becomes more unwalkable, with more car traffic.

We have built a world where children, the elderly, the working poor and the disabled are dependent on others to get around, because they can't drive. Everyone else likewise lacks mobility choice, and must drive.

What can we do?

Traditional neighborhoods offer more choices. But Albuquerque doesn't allow the choice of traditional neighborhoods to developers, only the choice of the suburban pattern. Why not offer both choices? In cities where traditional neighborhoods are allowed and are being built, demand exceeds supply. Our customers want them!

Thankfully, our City Council has recently recommended making traditional neighborhood development (TND) legal. The specific ordinance and standards by which we do this have not yet been written. As a next step, it is vital that we recruit the best professionals within and without Albuquerque, and use the best practices learned by other cities in creating our new TND laws.

I am looking forward to working with the council and others in renovating our older traditional neighborhoods, building new ones and retrofitting suburbs to be more mixed-use, walkable and convenient.

Rob Dickson is the developer of The Lofts at Albuquerque High and other projects. He is a member of the National Association of Industrial and Office Properties, the Homebuilders Association of Central New Mexico, the Congress for the New Urbanism, the Urban Land Institute, 1000 Friends of New Mexico and the N.M. Wilderness Alliance.

For more information on town planning, sprawl and a return to traditional neighborhood design and new urbanism, please go to the Congress of New Urbanism web site at: www.cnu.org and click on About Urbanism then click on Tour. Direct link: <http://www.cnu.org/about/index.cfm?formAction=tour&CFID=2214946&CFTOKEN=95661159>



I'On Village (www.ionvillage.com)



Rendering by Lennertz, Coyle and Associates (www.lcaarchitects.com)



I'On Village (www.ionvillage.com)

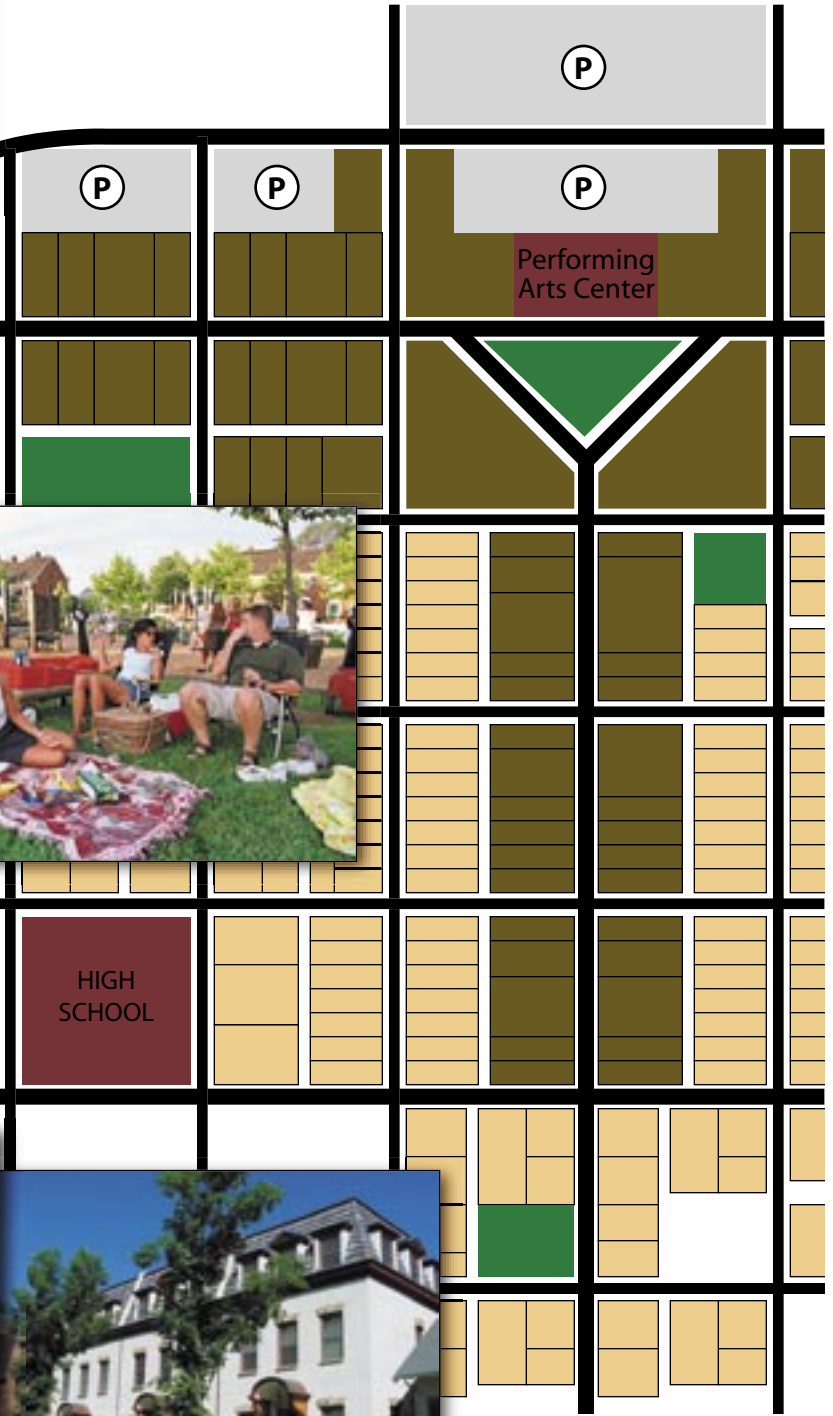
← to Mitchell/Rapid City

Main Street (Mixed-use)

The heart of Laurent. Backed with ample parking lots facing the Interstate for maximum visibility, the Main Streets will have 3-5 story buildings for retail, entertainment, dining, office space, and hotels. Residential lofts with balconies will be located above the retail/dining on ground floor. Marked as brown.



GAS



Parks

Sprinkled all over the town, they serve as community space and gathering places. Playgrounds, swimming pool, softball facilities, walking/biking trails and more. Marked as green spaces.



Townhomes/Rowhouses

These type of buildings are ideal for areas next to the Main Street — promoting higher density and more vitality. Ideal for single people, retirees and those who want small space and easy access to the town. Marked by small residential lots.



Kentlands, Maryland

A view of TND town with its new Main Street and park. Taken by Laurence Aurbach.



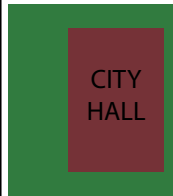
I-90

to Sioux Falls



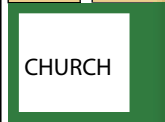
Churches/Civic Buildings

Space should be reserved in optimal locations for religious edifices and civic buildings — they serve as a key visual points in the town being architecturally significant.



Schools

Public school system buildings will be built in Laurent. Designs should integrate well within the neighborhoods and promote walking. Educational approach will be very innovative — integrating both deaf and hearing children in a total sign language environment.



ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



Laurent, South Dakota

A rudimentary drawing of what Laurent, S.D. could look like... a main street with 3-5 stories high buildings housing hotels, offices, apartments, restaurants, shopping and entertainment. Positioned as a tourist destination and armed with franchises, the town will be well positioned to bring in the dollars locally, as well as from interstate traffic.



Residential — Single Family & Sideyard Homes

Further away from the town center, the sideyard and single family homes become the norm as lot sizes gradually increase. Porches are going to be an important feature as well as privacy maximizing lot designs. Families are encouraged to build — within their means — the most beautiful and biggest house they can afford as nice homes become symbols of civic pride. This is a good investment in the town that will last for generations to come. Marked as light tan.





Successful New Towns

Seaside, FL

www.seasidefl.com

Kentlands, MD

www.kentlandsusa.com

I'On, SC

www.ionvillage.com

Prospect New Town, CO

www.prospectnewtown.com

More? See *TND Town Paper*

www.tndtownpaper.com



Community Feeling

Caroline Bennett, who has lived in I'On with her husband and toddler, Coleman, since September 1999, echoes the sentiments of her neighbors. Bennett came to I'On from a Mt. Pleasant subdivision, and was leery at first of the close proximity of the houses to the street and to each other. Just months later, she finds her viewpoint changed. "Now I see the point," she says. "The homes are within talking distance of passersby and each other, which allows for more intimate conversations with your neighbors, allows you to get to know each other so much better." – *Article on I'On in South Carolina.*

Our Town to be called Laurent

We will name our town of Laurent, South Dakota in honor of Laurent Clerc. He was a remarkable deaf man who brought sign language to America from France in 1815. Laurent Clerc, "The Father of the Deaf" established the first permanent school for the deaf in America at American School for the Deaf in Hartford, Connecticut and was the first deaf person to appear before congress. He lived from 1785 to 1869.

Development of a 24-hour town is highly encouraged. Streets that are occupied with people are safe streets because there are more eyes on the streets. This promotes even further economic growth and a sense of vibrancy similar to larger cities. 24-hour employment/retail centers should be sought after for this town.

A place for seniors

Who would want to live in independent living homes isolated from everything else? Seniors have to take shuttle buses to commute from their homes to places they need to be. With a traditional neighborhood designed town like Laurent, S.D., senior citizens will be able to fully participate in the wide range of activities the town will offer. The activities include walking to stores, cafes, restaurants, bars and parks. They would be able to continue to interact with everyone else — young and old.

There are numerous nursing homes/retirement homes for the deaf in the U.S., however, none of them are well integrated into city life — meaning walkable to all kinds of retail and services as well as parks and civic buildings.

The demand for this type of affordable living should be considerable.

A place for hearing people

For a long time, a wide array of hearing people: parents of deaf, children, siblings of deaf adults, ASL students, co-workers and those interested in our community have never had full access to the deaf community. In Laurent, they will. By working together, we will create a place that affords everyone opportunities to earn their living, become fluent in sign language, interact with all kinds of people, and set the stage for generations to come.

Laurent would be an ideal location for the establishment of a state-of-art interpreting training program (ITP) because the town itself would provide for many opportunities to immerse the students in a total sign language environment.

School: Our own. ASL and English as peer languages.

In Laurent, the residents would have a locally controlled public school system that uses an innovative educational approach for both deaf and hearing children. Rather than the current model of either placing children in residential schools for the deaf or mainstreaming the deaf into hearing schools, we would be looking at the schools being a model to be emulated nationwide in true integration, immersion in sign language and rich in a bilingual and bicultural educational approach.

Location requirements to maximize success

To maximize the success of the new town, we must control as many risk factors as possible to minimize the risks involved. If we want to have economic growth and political influence, we must select a location that is relatively isolated from factors that could prevent successful growth.

Urban Land Institute (www.uli.org) research has shown that a new town

must be at least a 15-20 minute drive away from an existing big city in order to escape the gravitational pull of the big city. Locating our town within or adjacent to Sioux Falls is out of the question.

If we do, we will lose our ability to recapture the dollars being funneled into our community, and we would have to pay considerably more for the needed land as well as having little or no political control over it.

For instance, Mr. Smith lives in our town and the nearest Wal-Mart is only a 5 minute drive away, so he will choose to shop at Wal-Mart over a local store because of low prices, the huge selection and convenience. The new town will lose the dollars to bigger competitors who are experienced in retailing.

Location requirements are as follows:

- At least 20-minute drive away from a big city
- Still close enough to the big city for air travel and big city amenities
- Located in a county with low population to ensure maximum political influence and economic impact
- Next to a major economic artery — an interstate highway in this case.

The criteria set forth above will ensure the healthy economic and political growth of our city; and in order to build the town the way we want to, we need to ensure we have a receptive local government (county commission, in this instance.) In order to have a receptive county government and neighbors, we will need to approach this with a “win-win” philosophy. We need to make sure the county and state as a whole will benefit from our significant investment in the area.

Why build a town next to an interstate?

If you think about it, America used to build new towns on major shipping lanes such as rivers, oceans, canals and railroads. The town’s economy was tied to the viability of the shipping/freight lanes. By the time the U.S. started to build highways, town planning was becoming a lost art. Today, when we travel by highways, we are forced to stop at disjointed, sprawling gas/lodging/food areas near exits. More often than not, we end up driving to each stop we need to make: gas, then food, and then lodging, before taking off on the highway the next day. Walking between these locations is often impossible, because no one wants to walk through parking lots.

Few places today would allow a traveler to exit from the interstate, park once and walk to lodging, restaurant, entertainment and shopping. There are some old towns near interstates, but they are often devoid of familiar franchises or have inadequate parking and therefore are uninviting.

This proposal will address those shortcomings. Our town will be new. The town will have plenty of parking in clear sight from the interstate. The town will have franchises to address traveler’s comfort level. Often, a traveler will have a few seconds to make up their mind whether to exit at a particular location to dine or to stay overnight. Laurent, South Dakota will address that.

Why South Dakota?

Many probably will ask: “Why South Dakota?!”

The answer is simple. The numbers game. In the state of South Dakota, there are only 754,844 residents. The 15th largest city in S.D. has only 4,565 people. Elsewhere, the bar is much higher. Minnesota has over several million people and their 15th largest city has over 47,425 people. *This will lock signers out of state level politics.*

With development in South Dakota, there is plenty of land to be developed. There are opportunities along I-90 where we could maximize our eco-

Size does matter

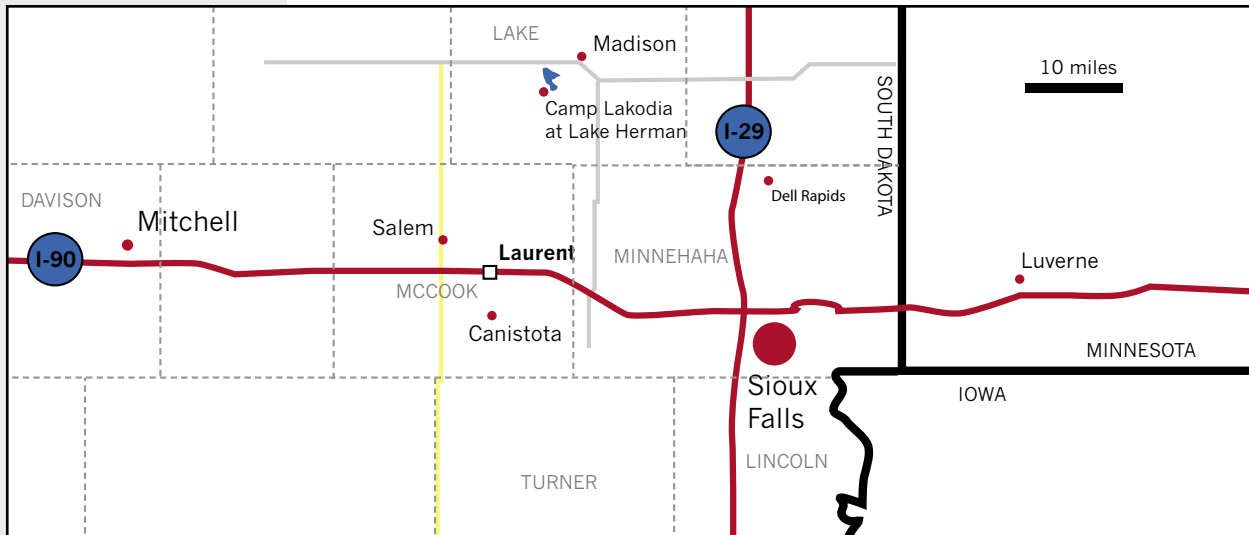
South Dakota: 754,844 pop.
15th largest city
Belle Fourche, 4,565

Minnesota: 4,919,479 pop.
15th largest city
Edina, 47,425

See table at end of proposal for more numbers.

Why would people and businesses move to South Dakota?

- No corporate income tax
- No personal income tax
- No personal property tax
- No business inventory tax
- No inheritance tax
- SDHDA low interest financing for first time home buyers
- Sunny 250+ days a year



conomic as well as political growth. We must ensure that we have local control, and that we have the ability to grow in county, regional and state levels.

We could work with individuals such as South Dakota Lt. Governor Dennis Daugaard whose father is deaf, as well as Senator Tom Daschle. We could identify the needs of this project and identify how they can be of help.

Possible location identified: McCook County, South Dakota

We have identified a location meeting all of the criteria listed earlier in this: an exit on Interstate 90 in McCook County, with a population of 5,503 (entire county). The nearest town is 5 miles away; Montrose with 328 people; 5.5 miles away is Canistota with 603 people and 7 miles away is Salem with 1,289 residents.

Interstate 90 at these exits has over 3.36 million vehicles passing by each year as of the 2000 statistics from South Dakota Department of Transportation. We would need to purchase land from several family farmers within 4 square miles for development of the town. Expected cost is \$800 to \$1,500 per acre for agriculturally zoned land, and higher for commercially zoned land near the interchange.

There are currently no significant gas, restaurant and lodging facilities nearby on the interstate.

By building a traditional town so close to the interstate, we can ensure the economic growth of our town. Franchises such as fast food restaurants, lodging and gas stations will be viewed as safe investments considering the traffic volume and the tourist value of everybody walking around using sign language.

McCook County is located next to Minnehaha county, home of Sioux Falls. The driving time from Sioux Falls is only 30 minutes — close enough for major needs to be met and far enough to ensure development of a strong local economy composed of both local businesses and franchises.

It is essential for us to set aside land for the street network, civic buildings, parks and rural preserve to enhance the appeal of the town. This will reduce the overall return on investment, but the result will be substantial.

Identify businesses appropriate for the town

Franchises are highly encouraged as a part of building the town. Franchises minimize the risk of start-up failures because of inherent training and investment requirements as well as research and knowledge of franchisors being shared on the local level.

Good return on investment potential

Relatively inexpensive land, well-located en route to the Black Hills, between Mitchell and Sioux Falls. Building the new town right will generate significant returns on property investment and development.

Businesses started locally should also be encouraged, and this could include grocery stores, hardware stores, lumber yards, cleaning services, professional services, doctor's offices, cafes, clothing stores, movie theaters, art galleries, museums, bed & breakfast, nursing home and even a state of art bowling center on the Main Street.

Market research: Is this achievable?

Let us conservatively assume there are over 1 million deaf people who use sign language as their primary language in this country. Add another 2 million hearing sign language users. We are assuming that this includes children of deaf adults, siblings of deaf adults, parents of deaf children and professionals and educators. The total would come to approximately 3 million people in this country. We will only need to capture one quarter of one percent (0.25%) of this market, and we will end up with a city of 7,500 people. *The town of Laurent would then be in the top 10 largest cities in South Dakota, thus increasing the strength of McCook County and the region, or any other area where we settle.*

The numbers do not factor in potential new signers and those from other countries who may find the idea of living in such a town attractive.

Primary economic engine for the town

The largest segment would be franchise owners and small business owners dependent on the interstate travelers and tourists making their rest stop in the town. Shopping, entertainment and tourism will probably be the biggest economic generator.

- Tourism
- Lodging, gas and food
- Conventions and tournaments
- TV/Cable Station
- Nursing home/ assisted living
- Independent living homes for elderly
- Small businesses
- 40 Lane Bowling Center (approximately \$5 million)
- 4-8 softball diamonds
- Manufacturing
- And more.

Dollars lost to uninterested community

The deaf community has been spending a lot of money, and almost all of the money has gone to people who are not interested or aware of our unique needs or interests.

For instance, when CSD, the world's largest non-profit corporation run by deaf and hard of hearing individuals, based in Sioux Falls, S.D., hosts the National Symposium on Childhood Deafness conference in Sioux Falls, over 400 people attend. If we figure approximately \$400 is spent by each person for lodging, meals, and entertainment, the conference alone — not counting what CSD spends on the conference — we have brought in over \$160,000 to the local economy. None of that will end up in the pockets of the deaf or signing community.

There are many national events and conferences hosted by other organizations such as Deaf Way II, National Association of the Deaf's national conferences and national softball tournaments. Many of these conferences pump far more money into the local economies wherever they are hosted, and none of these dollars comes back to the signing community. No permanent jobs for

Distances & Location

Exit 368 is ideally located on I-90 between Sioux Falls and Mitchell.

- 30 minutes to Sioux Falls, and 30 minutes to Mitchell.

- 30 minutes to Camp Lakodia in Madison, S.D.

- Current lack of gas, food and lodging facilities between Sioux Falls and Mitchell.

- Mitchell's Cabelas store is expected to draw 1.5 million visitors annually.

- Traffic carries a good percentage of travelers, hunters and tourists to the Black Hills and westward as well as thousands of long-haul truck drivers.

Franchises available for purchase:

(\$20k to \$100k)

Subway
7-Eleven
Jani-King (Cleaning svcs.)
Tastee Freez
Radio Shack
Gymboree
Mr. Goodcents
Two Men and a Truck
Pizza Inn
SuperCuts

\$100k to \$200k

Blimpie's
Carvel's Ice Cream
Baskin-Robbins Ice Cream
GNC's Living Well
Quizno's
Samurai Sam's Teryaki
Minuteman Press Printing
Mailboxes Etc.

\$200k to \$500k

Best Inns & Suites
McDonald's
Dunkin Donuts
Super 8 Motels
Arby's
Melting Pot Restaurant

\$500k and up

Benningans
Chilis
Panera Bread

Source: entrepreneur.com

deaf or signers are created because of the current tournaments and conferences.

Recapture the dollars now — start a bank or a credit union

In order to recapture a significant portion of the dollars lost to the people and corporations uninterested in our own community, we must build a town. As an interim step towards that goal, we should consider forming a national bank or a community credit union to ensure we start recapturing the dollars. We need to ensure that we are in the driver's seat for our own economic, political, social and spiritual growth.

By starting a bank, we might recapture a significant amount of money lost to other banks in fees, float (money generated in between investments or checking activity), and more. It could recapture the money lost and reinvest it in creating new job opportunities for deaf and hearing signers. The bank could play a key role in building the town by providing loan and mortgage dollars for the development of the town.

The bank should offer Small Business Administration's (SBA) guaranteed loans to members of the community as well as all other common bank/credit union services.

Some steps towards a new town

- Contact 4 or 5 town planning firms to gauge their interest and ability to work with us for this project.
- Host a series of town hall meetings to gauge community interest and be sure to include interpreters, CODAs, parents, and ASL students
- Take surveys before and after the presentations to gauge increase in interest level
- Develop a detailed plan for next 5 years
- Meet with community leaders such as National Association of the Deaf (NAD), Gallaudet, and others
- Meet with potential investors
- Establish a bank or credit union
- Negotiate and purchase land
- Work with McCook County Commission to adopt parallel traditional neighborhood zoning ordinance
- Survey the land and design the plan through 10-day charrette.
- Reserve land for public spaces and civic spaces
- Set aside farmland for preservation
- Identify the water and sewage systems to be built
- Identify the power needs of the town and whether to build solar power or wind turbines to supplement our own power in addition to McCook Electric Cooperative
- Identify the telecommunications infrastructure for town (fiber optics?)
- Identify construction companies to maximize job creation for deaf/hard of hearing and hearing signers
- Build a lumberyard in order to supply raw materials to the town
- Build a wide range of housing types: apartments, lofts, townhouses, row-houses, single-family houses, estate houses, etc.
- Establish a nursing home facility in the heart of town
- Establish independent assisted living for seniors in heart of town or nearby rowhouses — walkable to all services in town.
- Investors to start purchasing franchises and building them to the code in town for all types of business
- Traffic from I-90 will start to divert into town for gas, food, entertain-

ment and lodging.

- Plan a university district expansion to the town.

Concerns with building a new town

This will be a huge undertaking. There will be concerns raised which will be addressed as we go along.

Some may express the lack of privacy as a main reason not to relocate to such a town, and this is primarily because many of us within our community have been so used to living in isolation. The deaf community has had limited interaction with their neighbors because of difficulties with communication, and this new town will change all of that. Not all will be willing to make the adjustment. We only need to look at Gallaudet University as an example. Over 4,000 people work, live, eat, learn and play together — albeit on a limited scale — and they adapt considerably well. We do not see people stopping everybody to say, “hi” and chitchat. We see them do that only with people they know well, and even then, they develop an unspoken etiquette of passing by each other — a nod or a wink will suffice.

In the new town, the advantages of traditional neighborhood design will be realized because the philosophy of New Urbanism is to carefully define public and private spaces everywhere to ensure maximum privacy or maximum exposure. This is the reason why the porches are a must-have in our new town — they represent an effective transition zone between public and private spaces (from the street into their own home). The main floors of homes are raised to prevent passerbys from looking into the house directly. This is one of many examples of how privacy can be maximized.

Infrastructure costs are another major concern. We will need to identify ways and means to reduce these costs — at least up-front — in order to maintain a reasonable amount of return on investment.

The sky is the limit

“Build it and they will come.” — *Field of Dreams*

Creating a new place to live — a whole town — will address many of our concerns within our community. We can not achieve social equality or gain the ears and eyes of the world without doing something as remarkable as this — empowering ourselves in a partnership with hearing people to grow a solid economic base. *Once we achieve this, we can achieve everything else we have always dreamed of.*

The synergy of ideas created from daily chance encounters among those within our community alone will propel our community forward for a long time to come. The sooner we start, the sooner we will have a town we can rightfully call our own and generate unparalleled economic growth.

The location selected at an exit on interstate 90 in McCook County was chosen based on key criteria to maximize the political and economic growth. Another location can be selected as long as these key criteria are met in order to ensure the success of Laurent, South Dakota.

For the deaf and hard of hearing community

We will realize greater opportunities in areas of education, business, spiritual, social, physical, communication and intellect. We will enter new fields with vigor never afforded us before because we are taking steps to control our own destiny.

Federally chartered bank facts

- Once federally chartered, our bank can have branch office presence anywhere in the country.
- Non-profit organizations can own a bank
- Only 8% of total deposits need to be funded for start-up and ongoing operating cost of the bank (i.e. - if expected total of deposits will be \$50 million dollars, we will need to fund the bank with approximately \$4 million dollars and ensure that the amount remains the same by end of the bank's third year of operation
- Bank can have full internet presence with full transactional capabilities (i.e. NetBank.com) so our services would be available in 50 states regardless of the lack of an actual branch office presence.

What is a charrette?

It is a planning event that invites and includes the public, town planners, residents, developers, builders and just about everyone else interested. The event typically lasts 7-days, and they usually take all day in form of mini-seminars, training and breakout sessions where everyone gets to draw their ideas for the new town. For more information, see:

www.charretteinstitute.org

For parents of the deaf and hard of hearing

You will finally have a choice. A choice to live in a town that allows you to be part of an unique community — sharing the values and interests of your family and your deaf children. You will realize more opportunities to learn to be fluent users of sign language.

For hearing children of deaf adults

You will no longer be asked to “leave” the deaf community when you are all grown up or to remain as an interpreter. You will experience a multitude of opportunities to serve in many more roles within the signing community. As a neighbor, business owner, politician, educator, or performer. The list goes on.

For American Sign Language (ASL) students and hearing people

You will at last have a place where you can explore a unique and remarkable world without having to know somebody within our community first. You will experience newfound freedom to roam within the community and interact with anybody, learning as you go along. You are also welcome to live with us — carving a bold new future together. The door would be open to you.

Timing has never been better.

Thank you.

15th Largest City	Population	15th County Pop.	Largest City Pop.	2nd Largest Pop.	3rd Largest Pop.	State	State Pop.	Land (Sq. Miles)	PPSM
Soldotna	3,759	WP 6,684	Anchorage 260,283	Juneau 30,711	Fairbanks 30,224	AK	626,932	615,230	1.02
Powell	5,373	Big Horn 11,461	Cheyenne 53,011	Casper 49,644	Laramie 27,204	WY	493,782	97,818	5.05
Whitefish	5,032	Fergus 11,893	Billings 89,847	Missoula 57,053	Great Falls 56,690	MT	902,195	147,046	6.14
Rugby	2,939	Mercer 8,644	Fargo 90,599	Bismarck 55,532	Grand Forks 49,321	ND	642,200	70,704	9.08
Belle Fourche	4,565	Shannon 12,466	Sioux Falls 123,975	Rapid City 59,607	Aberdeen 24,668	SD	754,844	77,121	9.79
Portales	11,131	San Miguel 30,126	Albuquerque 448,607	Las Cruces 74,267	Santa Fe 62,203	NM	1,819,046	121,598	14.96
Garden City	10,624	Midkota 20,174	Boise 185,787	Nampa 51,867	Pocatello 51,466	ID	1,293,953	83,574	15.48
Carlin	2,161	Esmeralda 971	Las Vegas 478,434	Reno 180,480	Henderson 175,381	NV	1,998,257	110,567	18.07
La Vista	11,699	Dakota 20,253	Omaha 390,007	Lincoln 225,581	Bellevue 44,382	NE	1,711,263	77,358	22.12
South Jordan	29,437	Wasatch 15,215	Salt Lake City 181,743	West Valley 108,896	Provo 105,166	UT	2,233,169	84,904	26.30
Emporia	26,760	Lyon 35,935	Wichita 344,284	Overland Park 149,080	Kansas City 146,866	KS	2,688,418	82,282	32.67
McMinville	26,499	Coos 62,779	Portland 529,121	Eugene 137,893	Salem 136,924	OR	3,421,329	97,132	35.22
Gorham	14,141	Piscataquis 17,235	Portland 64,249	Lewiston 35,690	Bangor 31,473	ME	1,274,923	33,741	37.79
Littleton	40,340	Eagle 41,659	Denver 554,636	CO Springs 360,890	Aurora 276,393	CO	4,301,261	104,100	41.32
Prescott	33,938	Greenlee 8,547	Phoenix 1,321,045	Tucson 486,699	Mesa 396,375	AZ	5,130,632	114,006	45.00
Ardmore	22,711	Kay 48,080	Okla City 506,132	Tulsa 393,049	Norman 95,694	OK	3,450,654	69,903	49.96
Paragould	22,017	Crittenden 50,866	Little Rock 183,133	Fort Smith 80,268	North LR 60,433	AR	2,673,400	53,182	50.27
Clinton	27,772	Warren 40,671	Des Moines 198,682	Cedar Rapids 120,758	Davenport 98,359	IA	2,926,324	56,276	52.00
Edina	47,425	Blue Earth 55,941	Minneapolis 382,618	St. Paul 287,151	Duluth 86,918	MN	4,919,479	86,943	56.58
Olive Branch	21,054	Hancock 42,967	Jackson 184,256	Gulfport 71,127	Biloxi 50,644	MS	2,844,658	48,286	58.91
Williston	7,650	Essex 6,459	Burlington 38,889	Essex 18,626	Rutland 17,292	VT	608,827	9,615	63.32
Moundsville	9,998	Logan 37,710	Charleston 53,421	Huntington 514,475	Parkersburg 33,099	WV	1,808,344	24,231	74.63
Pasadena	141,674	Galveston 250,158	Houston 1,953,631	Dallas 1,188,580	San Antonio 1,144,646	TX	20,851,820	267,277	78.02
Jefferson City	39,636	St. Francois 55,641	Kansas City 441,545	St. Louis 348,189	Springfield 151,580	MO	5,595,211	69,709	80.27
Fond du Lac	42,203	Walworth 93,759	Milwaukee 596,974	Madison 208,054	Green Bay 102,313	WI	5,363,675	65,499	81.89
Redmond	45,256	Lewis 68,600	Seattle 563,374	Spokane 195,629	Tacoma 193,556	WA	5,894,121	70,637	83.44
Phenix City	28,265	Talladega 80,321	Birmingham 242,820	Montgomery 201,568	Mobile 198,915	AL	4,447,100	52,237	85.13
Sulphur	20,512	St. Landry 87,700	New Orleans 484,674	Baton Rouge 227,818	Shreveport 200,145	LA	4,468,976	49,651	90.01
Radcliff	21,961	Laurel 52,715	Lexington 260,512	Louisville 256,231	Owensboro 54,067	KY	4,041,769	40,411	100.02
Wyoming City	69,368	Livingston 156,951	Detroit 951,270	Grand Rapids 197,800	Warren 138,247	MI	9,938,444	96,705	102.77
Myrtle Beach	22,759	Dorchester 96,413	Columbia 116,278	Charleston 99,650	N Charleston 79,641	SC	4,012,012	31,189	128.64
Laconia	16,411	Coos 33,111	Manchester 107,006	Nashua 86,605	Concord 40,687	NH	1,235,786	9,283	133.12
Columbia	33,055	Anderson 71,330	Memphis 650,100	Nashville 569,891	Knoxville 173,890	TN	5,689,283	42,146	134.99
Alpharetta	34,854	Forstyh 98,407	Atlanta 416,474	Augusta Co. 199,775	Columbus 186,291	GA	8,186,453	58,977	138.81
Rocky Mount	55,893	Alamance 130,800	Charlotte 540,828	Raleigh 276,093	Greensboro 223,891	NC	8,049,313	52,672	152.82
Richmond	39,124	Vigo 105,848	Indianapolis 791,926	Fort Wayne 205,727	Evansville 121,582	IN	6,080,485	36,420	166.95
Blacksburg	39,573	Pittsylvania 61,745	Virginia Beach 425,257	Norfolk 234,403	Chesapeake 199,184	VA	7,078,515	42,326	167.24
Makakilo City	13,156	Kalawao 147	Honolulu 371,657	Hilo 40,759	Kailua 36,513	HI	1,211,537	6,459	187.57
Glendale	194,973	San Joaquin 563,598	Los Angeles 3,694,820	San Diego 1,223,400	San Jose 894,943	CA	33,871,648	158,869	213.20
Champaign	67,518	Tazewell 128,485	Chicago 2,896,016	Rockford 150,115	Aurora 142,990	IL	12,419,293	57,918	214.43
Elvira	55,953	Portage 152,061	Columbus 711,470	Cleveland 478,403	Cincinnati 331,285	OH	11,353,140	44,828	253.26
Altoona	49,523	Dauphin 251,798	Philadelphia 1,517,550	Pittsburgh 334,563	Allentown 106,563	PA	12,281,054	46,058	268.64
Port St. Lucie	88,769	Escambia 294,410	Jacksonville 735,617	Miami 362,470	Tampa 303,447	FL	15,982,378	59,928	266.69
Camden	2,100	Kent 126,697	Wilmington 72,664	Dover 32,135	Newark 28,547	DE	783,600	2,396	327.06
Binghamton	47,380	Dutchess 280,150	NYC 8,008,278	Buffalo 292,648	Rochester 219,773	NY	18,976,457	53,989	351.49
Hyattsville	14,733	Calvert 74,563	Baltimore 651,154	Frederick 52,767	Gaithersburg 52,613	MD	5,296,486	12,297	430.71
Manchester	54,740	Windham* 109,091	Bridgeport 139,529	New Haven 123,626	Hartford 121,578	CT	3,405,565	5,544	614.28
Waltham	59,226	Nantucket 9,520	Boston 589,141	Worcester 172,648	Springfield 152,082	MA	6,349,097	9,241	687.06
Westerly	22,966	Bristol 50,648	Providence 173,618	Warwick 85,808	Cranston 79,269	RI	1,048,319	1,231	851.60
Passaic	67,861	Atlantic 252,552	Newark 273,546	Jersey City 240,055	Paterson 149,222	NJ	8,414,350	8,215	1024.27

Figure 1. Population affects our ability to gain political influence on local, county, state and regional levels. In South Dakota, when our town grows to a population of 10,000 — we will have political influence. Chart is ranked by PPSM (Persons per square mile).



**A journey of a thousand
miles begins with first step.
— Chinese Proverb**

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