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IDENTIFYING NEEDS IN YOUR COMMUNITY

As part of Taking the Next Step, a group of Grade 12 students from a Francophone school decided to create an exciting project for their families and community. Since it was only the beginning of the school year, the teacher suggested they include some activities from the project as part of their cooperative education class as the class's objectives were aligned with their initiative.

An old park not too far from the school had become an abandoned wasteland after the playground equipment had been taken out. It was a busy yet uninviting spot (full of waste, graffiti on trash cans, etc.). New parks and playground equipment had been popping up in nearby neighbourhoods. This wasteland, owned by the city, was at a central location and next to the school.

The student group from the same class wanted to maximize the park's potential and transform it to meet the needs of the school (students, teachers and others), but also for residents. After a brainstorming session, the students decided to organize a few events to understand the needs of the community surrounding this abandoned wasteland. They then met stakeholders from community groups in the city (community centres, youth centres, organization for people living with disabilities, organization for retired people, women's groups, agencies serving immigrants, etc.), and went to city hall in addition to sharing a memo at school that was intended for students and employees alike. Meanwhile, the community centre offered its rooms to facilitate meetings, when required.



2

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The posted message informed citizens that an evening of discussion was going to be held in the multipurpose room of the community centre on Thursday of the next week at 7 p.m. The students also told the mayor how they wanted to redesign the park. The mayor told them she was open to their community initiative, but they would have to get their final plan approved before they could start.

The meeting brought together around 15 participants. The agenda was presented: presentation of the student group and everyone's interests, discussions around two questions presented to the participants, varia.

The student group prepared some questions to guide the evening of discussions. The questions were: What are the problems with the abandoned vacant lot? What needs could this space address?

During the meeting, two students from the group wrote down the ideas that came out of the discussions. From these notes, they were able to make a list of identified needs and make sure they weren't repeated.



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The needs identified during the meeting were:

- 1) Support citizens' health,
- 2) Reduce exclusion and loneliness,
- 3) Encourage intergenerational relationship building and social diversity
- 4) Keep the French language, Acadian and Francophone culture as part of everyday life.

The following is a list of every idea mentioned during the discussion that could address citizens' needs.

- Community garden
- Skate park
- Meeting space (socializing)
- Parking
- Sports court (baseball, basketball, tennis, volleyball, etc.)
- Open air training equipment
- Bocce ball court
- Pool
- Library
- Youth Centre
- Cultural space
- Request to add visual arts elements (painting, knitting, drawing, architecture, etc.)