Survey important as city officials plan for future

By Jan Schultz
The Imperial Republican

Imperial residents will get their chance to let city officials know what they think about housing, services provided in the community and other factors in an upcoming community attitude survey.

In the December utility bills residents just received in the mail, a flyer was included asking them to watch for the survey in January.

The survey is very important, said Leslie Carlholm, Imperial's economic development director.

Carlholm and city officials will draw up Imperial's Community Development Strategic Plan for future years from information gathered in the survey.

There will also be community meetings in March after the survey is compiled.

"We use all the information from the survey," she said.

A similar survey was conducted in 2005, and Carlholm noted all of the suggestions have been completed or are in the process of being done. (See accompanying info box)

The latest survey will query residents' opinions on availability of housing, city services and recreational opportunities, availability of goods and services here and on what the city's economic development efforts should focus.

In addition, residents can rate the health care services here and its school system.

Carlholm emphasized that all the information provided will be kept confidential, and results will be used only for aggregate purposes.

Realistically, Carlholm hopes for a 30% return on the survey, but encourages everyone to be involved.

"The more input we receive, the better it will reflect what the community's thoughts are," she said.

As an added incentive, those returning the survey by Feb. 16 will get a $5 credit on their utility account.

In addition, all survey respondents will be entered in a drawing for $50 in Chamber Bucks.

Migrant community
being contacted

Door-to-door contacts are being made with the migrant populations of Imperial in a separate effort to gauge their housing needs, Carlholm said.

NAF Multicultural Human Development Corporation staff are making the contacts with migrants, which include but are not limited to Hispanics. That surveying is being paid by United Migrant Opportunity Services (UMOS), Inc., out of their grant funds.

The door-to-door survey of the migrant population centers primarily on housing needs, Carl-holm said, but also queries them about their interest in business plan training in Spanish, serving on city boards and other service needs.

The information gathered on their specific housing needs will be incorporated into the city's Nebraska Investment Financing Authority (NIFA) housing study as the city forms a five-year

action plan.

While making the door-to-door contacts, migrant residents are also receiving folders of information on community services and some information from Chase County Schools.

Carlholm said the city has a partnership history with the NAF office out of North Platte. It assisted the city in gaining grant funds that were used in building Imperial's Pine Grove Senior Living Facility.

Accomplishments since January, 2006, Strategic Plan

- BUILT A NEW SWIMMING POOL facility in partnership with Chase County Schools to ensure future generations would have access to swim lessons, water safety and recreation.
- FACILITATED BRINGING the new Alco store to town to provide residents local access to clothing, shoes and many other items.
- REMOVED AND REPLACED the deteriorated downtown sidewalks.
- ASSISTED ELIGIBLE homeowners improve the appearance and energy efficiency of their homes by implementing an Owner Occupied Rehabilitation Housing Program.
- IMPLEMENTED an economic development program to provide technical and direct assistance to existing and new businesses.
- UPGRADED the North Broadway and 9th Street storm sewer system.
- UPGRADED the downtown water mains and services.
- INCORPORATED the existing soccer program into the city's recreation program.