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Seeing the Fitz Center Principles In Action

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Seeing the Fitz Center Principles In Action

Katie Dawson, 2023 cohort

The initial River Stewards orientation exposed me to the Fitz Center principles. These principles are a framework that guide leaders as they navigate through the community. The principles are as follows:

Community assets: Communities meet needs and solve problems with their gifts, strengths, and assets.

Social capital: Trustful relationships are necessary for community building and strengthening.

Constructive public conversations: Balanced inquiry and advocacy is critical in all dialogue.

Adaptive capacity: Change comes from learning together.

Widely shared vision: A collective community vision is more powerful than any individual vision.

Reading those principles on paper or hearing them verbatim doesn't amount to the intentionality of each principle and how it directly correlates to the work of a servant leader. As I've been involved through the River stewards program, I've heard from community partners about their work to revitalize Dayton. It's evident that the principles guide leaders throughout the community despite being unaffiliated with the Fitz Center. As the semester is coming to an end, I've reflected on times throughout minicourses where the principles came to life.

The principle of locating **community assets** was apparent as Hope Taft from the Little Miami Watershed Network discussed our local rivers and how they attribute to our sense of belonging in the community and benefiting our local economy through recreation. Her network ensures this

asset is maintained by cleaning the Little Miami river and advocating for its health. The

importance of **social capital** is evident through the 2022 cohort's senior capstone project.

Their installation of the little free library and the drinking fountain proposal in neighborhood parks was guided by community conversation and ensuring trust between stakeholders.

The Reimagining Symposium reflected the principle of **constructive public conversations**. Community leaders were able to highlight their proposed projects in Dayton and initiate feedback and conversations about the future of our community and what it ideally looks like.

I personally was impacted by the conversation between the River Stewards, the Sierra Club, and Guy Jones as our discussion reflected **adaptive capacity**. Learning from each other about the power of language and local advocacy of the river requires us to step out of our comfort zone and reflect on habits to decipher whether they attribute to the common good.

It was evident through the City of Dayton's Meg Maloney (River Steward alum) and neighborhood advocate, Jerry Bolwing III, how valuable a **widely shared vision** is throughout community work. Meg and Jerry collaborate to advocate for the superfund sites in Dayton to ensure health and safety amongst the residents that live in those neighborhoods. Their shared vision despite various backgrounds attributes to the success of the project.

By reflecting on these principles in action, it's evident how intentional and significant they are. As the 2023 cohort is navigating through the logistics stage of their project with the Dakota Center, we must refer to the principles to ensure we are modeling the Fitz Center values and leadership that we've seen throughout the Dayton community thus far.

