sustainability + equity

Engaging Underrepresented Communities on Issues of Sustainability in the Pioneer Valley

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DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE
at the University of Massachusetts Amherst

New England's Sustainable
KNOWLEDGE CORRIDOR
Our region. Our future.

Catalyst for Regional Progress
pvpc

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Community Dialogue
at Casa Latina in Florence

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introduction

Catherine Ratté
Pioneer Valley Planning Commission

A key component of any sustainable develop-
ment effort is meaningful community and civic
engagement. This document and all its accom-
panying elements is our contribution to civic
engagement and equity work in the Pioneer
Valley (and beyond). We hope that the summary
of our work related to the Sustainable Knowl-
edge Corridor Project, and the challenges and
insights that have grown from that work, can be
used by anyone interested in enhancing their
equity and engagement work.

Joseph Krupczynski facilitating a Community Dialogue at VOC Adult Literacy Program in Chicopee MA

We are very proud of all the tools, resources and processes that we have created and documented as part of this project. Within this report you will find:

- A comprehensive summary of our civic engagement and capacity building process and products
- Overview of project videos
- A resource guide with best practices
- An Engagement Tool-Kit with activities to enhance community dialogue
- Discussion Briefs on key subject areas
- Community resource Guides for Transportation, Housing and Education

The synchronicity of our regions' groundwork on engagement and equity work with the behind the scenes work of so many can't be overstated. Senator Dodd, Shelly Poticha and the Congress for a New Urbanism, and Angela Glover Blackwell and Policy Link, and so many others worked hard to secure funding from the new President Obama's HUD administration for regional sustainability planning which mandated robust, substantive and meaningful civic engagement work. Our region was extremely well prepared to succeed in securing one of the first HUD regional sustainability planning grants because our Regional Planning Agency (RPA) Directors and Commissioners, in collaboration with fair housing advocates, economic development organizations and new urbanists, were part of the broad coalition that secured these funds.

We were told that a strength of our application was our diverse and integrated approach to civic engagement, especially our involvement of the Department of Architecture at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. In addition, our inclusion of the United Way organizations as our community engagement partner was applauded.

University of Massachusetts Amherst Professor Joseph Krupczynski and his students, along with his collaborators, Dorrie Brooks, Samantha Okolita, Evelin Aquino and Natalia Munoz, have performed outstanding work. We were privileged to collaborate with Professor Krupczynski and his students in 2008-9 on the downtown Westfield Redevelopment plan. Based on that experience we knew he was the right person to realize our vision of a developmental and meaningful civic engagement/capacity building process. Dora Robinson at United Way Pioneer Valley and Jim Ayers at United Way Hampshire County whole-heartedly committed their organizations, staff and member agencies to this process, helping us to define and then reach populations too often left out of traditional planning processes. In addition, my Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) colleagues, Marcos Marrero, Danielle McKahn and David Elvin worked extremely creatively and effectively throughout the process.

While our UMass team, United Way partners, my colleagues and I focused on engagement of 'populations too often left out of traditional planning processes', my land use planning and transportation colleagues at PVPC engaged professionals, organization directors and sustainability advocates in our planning work. For information on our Advisory Committees and our more traditional engagement process, please refer to **Our Next Future** and the accompanying element plans at www.pvpc.org. In addition, the project website (www.sustainableknowledgecorridor.org) was an important resource throughout the project, providing links to the project's updates and draft reports. The site also provided access to important elements of the project's Bi-state plan which included the SKC dashboard of sustainability indicators and the on-line survey tool "MetroQuest."
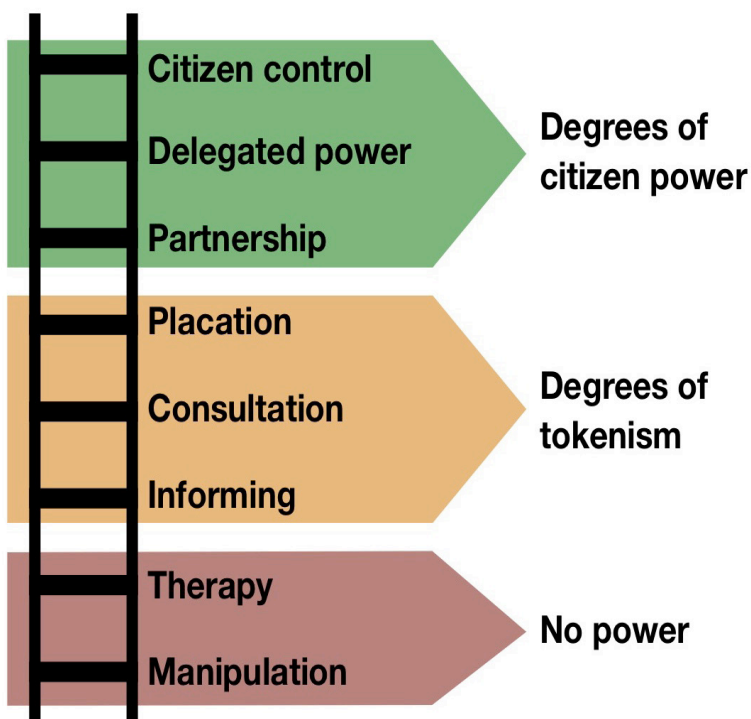
Arnstein's Ladder of
Citizen Participation
(1969)

Our work is guided by the ground-breaking work of Sherry Arnstein summarized in her "Ladder of Citizen Participation" (1969).

Our ambitious goals for this work was to get to the top three rungs of the Citizen Power ladder: Partnership, Delegated Power and ultimately, Citizen Control with our target audience. Which, as defined by HUD, were populations too often left out of traditional planning processes. We began the first year with an inclusive engagement process: first working with our United Way partners and the members of the Sustainable Knowledge Corridor consortium, to define our work in meaningful and direct language. This resulted in our Live, Grow, Prosper, Connect themes and became an important organizing structure for our work (see next chapter for details).

Concurrently UMass Architecture students, led by Joseph Krupczynski and Dorrie Brooks, conducted research on civic engagement best practices, which are documented in this report.

In addition to their research, the UMass team, working with the United Way member agencies, prepared a comprehensive outreach and engagement plan and designed and tested session plans and activities in student led sessions on campus.

Dorrie Brooks, the primary research assistant in the first year of the project, also prepared three subject area videos featuring Pioneer Valley residents describing their work on: 1) promoting food security by starting a farmer's market at a low income housing development; 2) working at a new energy efficiency business, Energia, in Holyoke, and finally 3) a Monson homeowner's response to the 2011 tornado as he decides to re-rebuild his home in a 'green' manner (images and links to these videos are included in this report). These short videos, shown at the start of our community dialogues, highlighted the kind of active engagement already underway in the Pioneer Valley and were a great model and catalyst for event participants.

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Marcos Marrero
Facilitating a Community
Dialogue at Casa Latina
in Florence MA

Maxwell Ciardullo, another UMass student working on this project, researched and analyzed the race and gender of elected officials in a sample of Pioneer Valley cities and towns and demonstrated how the governance of local cities and towns is not representative of the population of those municipalities–that women and communities of color are very under-represented in local governance. This was an important insight because from the outset our civic engagement goal was to not just engage individuals from groups too often left out of traditional planning processes, but also to create pathways for them into positions of power.

By the end of the first year we had engaged over 200 people at 24 sessions, and these new constituents' input influenced the development of our new regional sustainability plans. We had also achieved significant success organizing our civic engagement work and very effectively communicated the goals of the Sustainable Knowledge Corridor project. But clearly the most we had achieved with respect to citizen participation fell between the "Placation" and "Partnership" categories of Arnstein's ladder. This compelled us in the second and third years of the project to redouble our efforts to "empower" the communities with whom we were engaging with.

In Year Two we moved into targeted in-depth analysis of key power structures affecting people's lives, focusing on three areas identified by our new constituents: transportation, housing and education. Through these meetings we created our Sustainable Community

Resource Guides, which included clear information and concrete resources for anyone who wanted to make change in these key areas.

Year Two was also the beginning of our efforts to build capacity of our new constituents and our work sessions were focused on identifying and exploring how participants can best effect change within the key areas under discussion. By the end of the second year it became clear that we needed not only to explain leverage points for change within systems, but we also needed to build the individual capacity of people who wanted to effect change.

In Year Three we planned and ran three three-hour capacity building sessions with 28 individuals from underrepresented communities, primarily in the Springfield area. In order to plan for these sessions we recruited an Equity and Engagement Advisory Committee and thoughtfully determined how to offer a nine-hour skill-building course focusing on communication skills, public speaking, letter writing and power analysis.

Participants in the "Get Involved" Workshops came from a variety of organizations and affiliations; from neighborhood councils and non-profit organizations to activist organizations. Fortunately for us many members from the activist organization "Springfield No One Leaves" joined our efforts. They made clear that their agenda was not just to change systems from within, but rather to move beyond partnership to citizen control, critiquing corrupt systems of power and control and working to create new, just systems.

David Elvin Facilitating a
Community Dialogue at
Springfield YMCA

As the project concluded we recognized that our goal of catalyzing our new constituents into a 'position of power' in their community is an on-going process, and one that will require additional resources, efforts and programs. While there is more to do to advance Equity and Engagement in our region, we are proud of our accomplishments and grateful to HUD for supporting this work.

Through this project we learned that we have the human resources capable of doing outstanding Equity and Engagement work in the region, and we identified two specific areas for which we need additional funding to advance this work.

1. We need more funding to expand our capacity building workshops throughout the region, ideally funding an annual Equity and Engagement implementation budget for workshops, collaborators, interpretation, childcare, transportation and translation, and to develop additional videos and educational materials.

2. We need to continue to deconstruct power structures while at the same time building the capacity of people in positions of power (gate keepers): government officials, elected officials, business leaders and education leaders to prepare them to partner, delegate power and share control with other citizens to achieve a sustainable region.

Our greatest debt of gratitude is owed to the people who did come out and participate and start on their own pathway to power; to the people who showed us that they are already thriving in various ways and that together we can continue to collaborate to create a more equitable region which is really our only path to a sustainable region. There is no sustainability without equity.

Community Dialogue at ADP in Springfield MA

Priority Cards at Community Dialogue

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Engaging Underrepresented
Communities for the
Sustainable Knowledge
Corridor Project

engagement in action

The term "Sustainable Knowledge Corridor" is part of a place making effort to distinguish the Hartford-Springfield region of Connecticut and Massachusetts as a distinct area tied together by regional sustainability issues and solutions, and a hub of educational research, development, and practice. The area is home to over 30 colleges and universities, including the University of Connecticut, the University of Massachusetts, and numerous other public and private colleges and educational institutions.

Sustainable Knowledge Corridor Project (SKC)

What is the SKC Project?

The Sustainable Knowledge Corridor (SKC) is a project funded by a "Sustainable Communities" regional planning grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The grant supports the three regional planning bodies in the region–the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC), Capital Region Council of Governments (CRCOG), and the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency (CCRPA)–to collaborate on regional plans based around the concept of sustainability. The PVPC, which represents Hampshire and Hampden Counties in Massachusetts, then contracted with the Department of Architecture at the University of Massachusetts Amherst and the Center for Design Engagement, in collaboration with the local United Way affiliates, United Way Pioneer Valley and United Way Hampshire County, to coordinate the work of engaging citizens on issues of sustainability.

The HUD grant also came with a specific focus on engaging "populations too often left out of traditional planning processes." Our team understood that population to include people of color, low-income people, women, young people, English-language learners, new immigrants, disabled people, and urban core residents. While many of our sessions provided opportunities to better understand sustainability, the end goal was to engage these communities throughout the Pioneer Valley in order to capture their understanding of sustainability, learn from their day-to-day stories about how they live sustainably, and bring their visions of sustainability into the planning process.

What makes a Sustainable Community?

Our understanding of sustainability is that it must be community-defined. In our many meetings with community groups, responses to how these communities live sustainably were diverse and included; building community with neighbors, working to undo institutional racism, advocating for better transportation, creating more job training opportunities, adding more community gardens, and many other ideas. In order to structure conversations and solicit feedback, we designed our materials and processes to expand the typical definition of sustainability and make it more concrete for our audience. Traditional definitions often include the three "E's": environment, economic development, and equity. In practice, equity often does not receive the same attention as the first two E's. Our challenge was to re-establish equity as a key pillar in the understanding of sustainability. One way we achieved this was by breaking down the somewhat abstract concept of sustainability into topic areas like affordable housing, accessible transportation options, education and workforce training opportunities, and access to healthy food. The most important part of this process was to give participants permission to think outside of the environmental and economic elements of sustainability (with which many people are familiar) and to understand that equity–fair and equal access to opportunity–is equally as important to achieve a sustainable region.

Community Dialogues in
Cummington & Ludlow

Regional and Community Context

The Pioneer Valley is comprised of Hampshire and Hampden Counties and was home to over 621,772 people in 2010. Hampden County, with the urban core city centers of Springfield, Chicopee, and Holyoke, holding nearly three-quarters of the population. Springfield, Chicopee and Holyoke are Gateway Cities, historically thriving industrial centers that have experienced first-hand the country's transition to a service economy. They are all working to re-define themselves in the 21st century. Springfield was one of the destinations in the great migration for African Americans from the south to east coast cities from 1915 to 1960, and both Holyoke and Springfield are major destinations for Puerto Rican as well as other new migrants and immigrants. Springfield's and Holyoke's populations are increasingly becoming majority people of color, tend to have lower median incomes, and are too often identified with stereotypes of crime and poverty, rather than their diverse and resilient communities.

Hampshire County is home to the University of Massachusetts Amherst and four private liberal arts colleges. The town of Amherst, home to not only UMASS but also Amherst and Hampshire colleges, has been somewhat buffered from the consequences of the great recession by its college town identity. The small former industrial cities of Northampton and Easthampton have re-made themselves as arts communities and dining/upscale shopping destinations.

Hampshire County is 5% Latino/a and 2% Black. Hampden County is 21% Latino/a and 8% Black. The median household income in Hampshire County is roughly $58,000 compared to $46,000 in Hampden County. In this regard, both counties lag behind the state as a whole, where the median household income is $62,000.

The two county area contains a diversity of types of communities. The PVPC, in our Valley Vision Plan identifies these types as **Urban Core, Small Cities**, the **Valley**–which tends to be suburban, and two rural types: **Hilltowns** and **Quabog/Quabbin**. Regardless of type, all of these communities have the potential to be sustainable.

The urban core cities of Springfield, Chicopee, and Holyoke have lost population to out-migration to the suburbs and are in need of reinvestment in their downtown neighborhoods. The small cities like Northampton, West Springfield and Easthampton, have seen some sprawl coupled with a lack of affordability. The valley suburbs include municipalities like Hatfield, Southampton, Ludlow, and Longmeadow, which are also facing sprawl, the loss of farmland, and increased commuting times. The rural hilltowns of Cummington, Williamsburg, Russell, and others tend to be facing the loss of natural lands to fairly unregulated and unplanned subdivision development. Similar issues face rural Quabog/Quabbin communities like Pelham, Belchertown, Ware, and Brimfield.

What makes your community sustainable?

TRANSPORTATION

DID YOU KNOW:
The burdens and benefits of our transportation policy can shift to better support low-income families and communities of color. Increasing accessibility through transit systems that support the day-to-day travel needs of people without reliable access to a car, developing clean-running transit systems and assuring transit affordability are all critical to an equitable and sustainable region.

Identifying sustainable transportation choices and advancing Transit Oriented Development (TOD) throughout the Hartford-Springfield region are important strategies for the movement away from car-dominated travel patterns. It is clear that a decrease in single occupant vehicle trips, increased transit ridership, and the creation of mixed use development along transit corridors will promote widespread sustainable transportation choices (such as transit, walking, cycling and carpooling) for current and future citizens.

Why is this topic important?
Reducing single occupant vehicle travel is critical to sustainability. Fundamental shifts in transportation and land use (such as increased density and mixed land use) planning are necessary to support measurable change in the way people and goods travel sustainably through the region. One key strategy is Transit Oriented Development (TOD), which promotes a balance of jobs, housing, and retail development; encourages the use of bus and other transit opportunities; and reduces single occupant vehicle trips. TOD helps to limit sprawl, improve air quality, and provide access to goods, services and jobs in close proximity to residential areas.

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What makes your community sustainable?

LAND USE

DID YOU KNOW:
Low-income families and communities of color sometimes do not benefit from regional economic growth and development. Successful transit-oriented development often escalates rental housing prices making it difficult for existing local low-income residents to stay in their neighborhoods. The resulting land use pattern creates geographic disparities by income where middle and upper-income households have better access to jobs, services, and public amenities. Equitable land use planning should provide specific tools and actions to address land use issues and empower local governments to address this key environmental justice issue more effectively.

A sustainable land use plan for the region is one that details strategies for compact, mixed use growth in and around urban, town, and village centers, while promoting the protection of open space and natural resources outside developed centers.

Why is this topic important?
Proper land use planning is critical to the overall sustainability of the region. Encouraging higher density and transit-oriented development in key locations promotes walkable, livable communities. Compact mixed use development that allows residents to live close to where they work cuts down on traffic, commute times, and air pollution. In addition, access to open space and natural resources such as lakes and parks is important for the physical and mental health of all residents in the region.

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Regional Issues

The SKC project is focused around specific planning issues, which structured the initial engagement conversations. Below is a list of the issues and a short description of their relevance in the region. They will all be elaborated on in the summaries of engagement sessions below.

Transportation

The development of accessible and affordable transportation options are key to any sustainable community. In the Pioneer Valley, car travel is the primary mode of transportation and improving access to other options is a necessary strategy to advance equity and access to opportunity, and to promote economic development. Potential solutions include increased transit oriented development around the forthcoming Amtrak stations and the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority bus hubs, as well as development of bike and car sharing and "complete streets" initiatives.

Land Use

Sustainable land use strategies usually involve promoting smart growth through compact, mixed used city and town centers, as well as the protection of open space around these centers. This is particularly important in small towns and cities that are dealing with sprawl and in the larger cities, whose downtowns have fallen into disrepair. The specific challenge in this region is also how to incorporate social equity into this smart growth strategy so that low-income people and communities of color do not get priced out of the smart growth centers.

Housing

The recent housing crash has made it clear that a coordinated housing plan is an essential part of sustainability. Hampden County in particular was hit hard by the foreclosure crisis and while more people are in need of affordable housing, federal, state, and local governments have shied away from investing in this resource. In many Pioneer Valley communities zoning and market forces have created a lack of variety in housing types. The majority of the housing stock is single-family detached homes, which are out of reach for many families. In order to increase sustainability the region needs a much more diverse housing stock that fits the needs of each community, with regard to tenure, type, and affordability.

Green Infrastructure

Green infrastructure refers to practices that manage stormwater and wastewater in a way that mimics the natural environment. When implemented these practices result in less environmental hazards in the form of sewer overflows, water contamination, and erosion. It's likely these hazards are already distributed in an unequal way and sustainability planning must address this environmental justice issue.

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY HOUSING CHOICE

Housing affordability is a measure of the cost of housing and the ability for households to meet those costs. Housing is generally considered to be affordable if the household pays no more than 30 percent of its gross annual income on housing. Housing choice is a measure of a community's diversity of housing stock—in unit type, size of unit, occupancy type, and location.

DID YOU KNOW:
In our region, there are many households who pay more for housing than they can afford. This makes it difficult for them to take advantage of the full benefits of education, employment, personal health and community well-being. Many families are stuck in isolated and economically segregated areas in the region—both rural and urban—that lack access to essential factors for happy and successful lives. There is a regional need to transform these areas throughout the region into communities of opportunity to reduce social disparities and allow all residents to thrive.

Why is this topic important?
Access to affordable choices in housing—regardless of race, religion, national origin, age, ancestry, military background or service, sex, sexual preference, marital status, and disability—is needed to sustain an equitable and robust society. What it costs for shelter, and where one's home is located plays a substantial role determining life outcomes. When people live near financially stable employment and good schools, in a healthy and safe environment with cultural and physical amenities, and with access to affordable transportation, they

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

Development practices in our communities have typically entailed removing vegetation, constructing buildings, and paving large areas for roads and parking lots. With this approach, stormwater is often directed to run across an expanse of hard surface where it gathers pollutants, enters a drain, and then moves through pipes at high velocities and volumes to outlet at nearby rivers and streams. The unintended consequences of this development approach can harm both ecological and human health.

"Green Infrastructure" is the name for facilities that enhance and/or mimic natural processes, thereby reducing or eliminating the amount of stormwater and associated pollutants delivered to rivers and streams. Through green infrastructure, stormwater can be cleansed by soil and plants (infiltration), returned to the air by evaporation (evapotranspiration), and captured to irrigate plants or flush toilets (reuse). These methods can be employed through the use of rain gardens, tree filter boxes, porous pavements, green roofs, rainwater harvesting, and many other such facilities. Green infrastructure is contrasted with "grey infrastructure"—the asphalt, concrete, and pipes used to move water quickly away and out of sight.

DID YOU KNOW:
Cities are demonstrating that green infrastructure can save cities money and meet emerging Federal stormwater requirements. The City of Philadelphia reported saving $170 million after the first year of new stormwater standards.

Why is this topic important?
Introducing Green Infrastructure improves the condition of rivers and streams, but it is also critical to improving the quality of life for people in the suburban and urban environments. Benefits include:

• Reduced runoff of polluted urban stormwater and overflows of combined sewer systems, which can occur during large storm events when flows exceed the capacity of treatment facilities

• Cooperation across municipal agencies to identify how and where stormwater investments can combine to best effect with investments in sanitary sewers, roads, parks, and neighborhoods

• Multi purpose construction projects that result in attractive streetscapes with more areas for walking and biking, and enhanced livability with more urban green space

FOOD SECURITY

Food security means that every resident has enough nutritious, culturally appropriate food to eat every day to meet their health and nutrition needs. It is a basic human right. In addition, food security means identifying, developing, and implementing a plan to nurture and create a sustainable regional food system. Both of these definitions are intricately connected.

Why is this topic important?
Planning towards food security is critical to the overall sustainability of the region. Without reliable, healthy food, our residents live lives that are less rewarding and productive. Limited food access and food insecurity are inextricably linked to poverty and injustice. Community members who are struggling to feed themselves and their families can rarely find the resources or energy to address other needs, children who are hungry have difficulty learning, and communities without access to healthy food suffer from elevated levels of obesity and ill health.

ENVIRONMENT

A healthy planet can be defined as one in which the ecosystems involved in maintaining the relationships between land, water, air, light, and energy are complete, connected and stable. This includes the natural diversity of biological species and communities, and the ability of ecosystems to be resilient. The human impact on our environment often creates an imbalance in nature disrupting ecological integrity, and human enjoyment of our landscape. A sustainable environment plan strives to correct the imbalances created by humans to restore and or protect ecological integrity, and identify strategies for enhancing community character and quality of life.

Why is this topic important?
We all depend on the Earth's environment to provide clean air, drinkable water, healthy food and a stable climate. However, these environmental systems are impacted by the choices we make as we develop our built environment. Balancing environmental impacts while meeting the needs of society in an economically efficient way is an on-going challenge, but it is one we have to face in order to sustain our lives and our future.

CLIMATE ACTION

Record breaking summer heat, a destructive tornado, flooding from a tropical storm and severely crippling snow storms; they all happened in 2011. And these abnormally destructive events are only expected to happen more often. It's time for our communities to take action.

Climate action intends to make our communities better in two ways: by improving our response to extreme weather events and by reducing our contribution of air pollutants which lead to a poorer climate.

The recent storms in our region show the dynamic climate changes we can expect in the future. The scientific consensus is that recently-observed abnormal weather around the world is the result of global warming, which raises temperatures, increases water vapor in the atmosphere and alters normal weather patterns. We can do our part to stave off the worst impacts of global warming by reducing our greenhouse gas emissions, which is the pollutant that traps heat in the earth's atmosphere and is generated in large part by burning fossil fuel for energy, such as oil, coal and gas.

DID YOU KNOW:
Most sources of greenhouse gases also emit pollutants that are detrimental to human health, contributing to asthma and other chronic diseases. Communities that are exposed to greater traffic congestion and industrial activity often experience the greatest health burden. Monitoring and reducing fossil fuel emissions can help achieve positive long-term effects for the region and immediate improvements in the living conditions of urban communities and those living near industries or transit corridors.

Why is this topic important?
Proactively adapting to a warming climate can save lives and community resources. While we cannot reverse global warming, we can prepare our cities and towns to suit the changing conditions. Steps like modifying agriculture practices, improving storm water infrastructure, and preparing for heat waves, tropical storms and heavy snowfalls can protect our region for future generations.

It is also important to do our part to reduce our contribution to the continued warming of the planet. Not only is it a responsible approach, but as the costs of carbon-based fuel sources continue to rise, so will our costs for electricity, heat and transportation. Reducing overall energy use and transitioning to renewable energy sources such as solar, water, geothermal and wind power will improve our community's social, environmental, and economic sustainability.

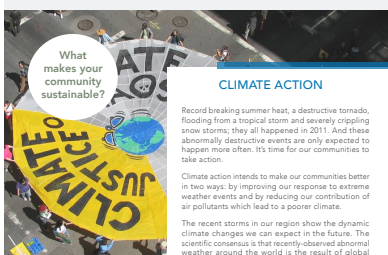**Discussion Briefs Covering Key Sustainability Issues**

Food Security

There is growing awareness of food security planning issues in the region, but many obstacles still remain. Hunger is increasing in communities of all types, farmland is being lost to development and food deserts prevent many in urban areas from accessing healthy food. The goal for the SKC process was to determine what solutions may create more affordable access to local food for everyone.

Environment

Many communities in the region are at risk of losing portions of their natural environment to increasing development. At the forefront are issues of habitat protection, water quality, and cleaning up the environmental hazards from the area's industrial past. Many communities are also concerned with public access to these natural areas and to parks.

Climate Change

Unprecedented extreme weather events in the region are evidence that our climate is changing. In addition to more extreme weather events, warmer summers are of particular concern in urban areas where temperatures are magnified by the urban heat island effect. Sustainability planning around climate change involves exploring alternative energy sources as a part of climate change mitigation, as well as protecting the people who may be most at risk for harm during storms and flooding as a part of climate change adaptation.

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Civic Engagement Strategy

Process and Values

Our key community liaisons in our first year of the civic engagement process were the two local United Way chapters, United Way Pioneer Valley (serving Hamden County), and United Way Hampshire County. In collaboration with them we developed contacts and initiated dialogues with their partner organizations in the area. Specifically, we wanted to discover what a "sustainable community" would mean to the community members served by these organizations through an accessible and flexible process.

Additionally, we recognized that the communities served by these organizations would allow us to achieve our goal of reaching residents and communities not traditionally engaged during planning processes. In order to guide our work as we designed our engagement strategy we created a set of values and goals with which we could measure the success of our evolving approaches. Those values are:

Be Accessible:
Frame/translate the goals and strategies of the SKC planning process so that they are accessible to a wide public audience.

Be Inclusive:
Develop engagement strategies that bring equity and social justice perspectives into the process and engage underrepresented populations who are too often left out of planning processes.

Build Capacity:
Facilitate mutual learning and develop long-term strategies for participants to be active in crafting an authentic, local vision for a healthy and sustainable community and region.

Be Innovative:
Develop new innovative tools to engage underrepresented groups and deliver on the principles outlined.

A key deliverable of this project was a summary of effective civic engagement tools and techniques and a best practices research report. Our research emerged from documents such as the Kirwan Institute's 2011 report, "Growing Together for a Sustainable Future: Strategies and Best Practices for Engaging with Disadvantaged Communities on Issues of Sustainable Development and Regional Planning," and case studies for programs that embodied accessible and inclusive frameworks (for example, Yampa Valley Vision and Heart of Biddeford, Maine), and organizations that use design innovation to build capacity through creative engagement (Center for Urban Pedagogy). This work is included in Chapter 3 of this report.

We
LIVE
sustainably when...

+ we have fair access to
   housing that is affordable
+ we have access to good
   schools, jobs and transportation
+ our communities are healthy,
   diverse and inclusive

How do you LIVE sustainably?

We
CONNECT
sustainably when...

+ we live and work close to a variety
   of transportation choices
+ there is equitable distribution of
   environmental burdens and benefits
+ our citizens are engaged in civic life

How do you CONNECT sustainably?

+ we steward and protect
   our natural resources
+ we promote clean, safe
   renewable energy
+ we support local farms and
   have access to healthy foods

How do you GROW sustainably?

We
GROW
sustainably when...

+ our economy is just,
   equitable and strong
+ we have an educated
   and trained workforce
+ we cultivate local leadership
   and foster innovation

How do you PROSPER sustainably?

We
PROSPER
sustainably when...

Themes

One of our key strategies to make the many issues of sustainability more accessible to the general public (and particularly underrepresented communities) was to develop four "themes" to organize and unite the disparate "element" plans that were at the center of the planning process. These four themes were **"Live," "Connect," "Grow"** and **"Prosper."** Each theme revolved around an essential issue of housing, transportation, the environment and economic development, but also broadened to include related issues to form a holistic vision of sustainability. These themes were the organizing framework for our engagement sessions and we created a set of twelve "priority cards" with simple titles/language for community members to select from and for our use in general discussions.

For our engagement sessions each of the priority cards were color coded to help communicate the themes clearly and help visually understand what category/topic was being discussed (Live was purple, Connect was blue, Grow was green and Prosper was orange). Although these themes were used as a grouping tool, they were left purposefully open ended so as to allow communities to discover the interconnectivity of issues.

For all sessions blank cards were available for "write-in" themes/topics. Key write-in themes included:

- access to health services;
- connecting to neighbors through community building activities;
- local control and greater participation in planning decisions; and
- addressing and combating racism in all its forms.

Project Themes:
LIVE / GROW / PROSPER / CONNECT

Housing that is affordable

Create diverse, affordable and accessible housing opportunities

Equal opportunities

Work together as a region to address inequity and assure equal access for all to jobs, housing, education and other opportunities in life

Diverse and inclusive communities

Welcoming and including all cultures and newcomers by providing unique programs and services dedicated to creating a diverse and healthy community

Expanded transportation options and services

We live and work close to a variety of transportation options (bus, bicycle, and safe pedestrian-oriented streets). Transportation service is expanded and more frequent

More parks and open space for recreation

Community members have access to open space for both active sports and leisurely recreation. The health of the community is connected to the health of our environment.

Safe and walkable communities

Provide places for people to gather, encouraging walking and interaction and contributing to the community's sense of safety and well-being

Priority Cards used during Year One Community Dialogues

The issues outlined on the priority cards were a key tool in constructive community consversations.

The **"Live"** category focused primarily on Housing but also included quality of life and diversity in communities. The cards were as follows:

- Housing That Is Affordable: Create diverse affordable and accessible housing opportunities.
- Equal Opportunities: Work together as a region to address inequity and assure equal access for all to jobs, housing, education and other opportunities in life.
- Diverse and Inclusive Communities: Welcoming and including all cultures and newcomers by providing unique programs and services dedicated to creating a diverse and healthy community.

The **"Connect,"** theme was focused primarily on Transportation, but this theme also included issues of how people connect in their communities, and topics of public space, parks and streets also were discussed. The cards for "Connect" were as follows:

- Expanded Transportation Options and Services: We live and work close to a variety of transportation options (bus, bicycle, and safe pedestrian-oriented streets). Transportation service is expanded and more frequent.
- More Parks and Open Space for Recreation: Community members have access to open space for both active sports and leisure recreation. The health of the community is connected to the health of our environment.
- Safe and Walkable Communities: Provide places for people to gather, encouraging walking and interaction and contributing to the community's sense of safety and well-being.

Access to local healthy food choices

All our neighborhoods and communities have access to healthy, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food that comes from local farms that are part of the regional economy

Clean, safe, renewable energy

As a region we work together to reduce our energy use and transition to clean, safe, sustainable energy sources

Protect the environment and natural areas

We work together as a region to protect our natural areas for all to enjoy and provide for clean drinking water and clean air

Employment opportunities

Residents can find good jobs with compensation that allow workers to support themselves and their families

A trained workforce

Our educational institutions provide students with the knowledge, skills, and abilities they need to succeed in the 21st century economy

Better schools

All our children receive solid educations in well-equipped schools meetings the needs of the whole child

The **"Grow"** theme was connected to issues of the Environment and food access and security. This theme covered topics typically associated with "sustainability" and "going green," such as renewable energy and environmental protection. But other topics included the issues of healthy people and healthy environment, which were often connected to access to healthy food. The cards were as follows:

- Access to Local Healthy Food Choices: All our neighborhoods and communities have access to healthy, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food that comes from local farms that are part of the regional economy.
- Clean, Safe, Renewable Energy: As a region we work together to reduce our energy use and transition to clean, safe, sustainable energy sources.
- Protect the Environment and Natural Areas: We work together as a region to protect our natural areas for all to enjoy and provide for clean drinking water and clean air.

Finally, **"Prosper"** was the theme that addressed issues of economic development and education. This theme not only had to do with the accessibility of jobs and industry in the region, but also with accessible education and vocational training to feed into the job market. The topics were as follows:

- Employment Opportunities: Residents can find good jobs with compensation that allow workers to support themselves and their families.
- A trained workforce: Our educational institutions provide students with the knowledge, skills, and abilities they need to succeed in the 21st century economy.
- Better schools: All our children receive solid educations in well-equipped schools, meetings the needs of the whole child.

Priority Cards
being used at an
Engagement Session

Tools / Materials

In response to the insights of our research on best practices in engagement, we created/ designed tools and materials to make "sustainability" more accessible to dialogue participants. Even before the engagement sessions began, we developed a set of "discussion briefs" (see pages 14 - 15) to help navigate the myriad topics. This set of documents was based on the element plans and addressed a number of regional issues with the intention of familiarizing the facilitators and community organizers with the issues that would be addressed during the community dialogues. The discussion briefs provided brief summaries on topics such as: transportation, housing, land use, green infrastructure, climate action, food, and environmental planning. Each single sheet, two-sided document defines the topic, addresses why it is important and discusses issues and trends. It also lists different individual and community scale actions that can be taken on the issue, and references additional resources. In two instances, adult education classes used these "briefs" to do vocabulary building and writing exercises as a way to familiarize themselves with the topics prior to our engagement session.

Throughout the events, other tools were utilized to transform the information from the themes and the discussion briefs into something more understandable/accessible. The introductory slide show, for example, was short, but communicated the essential information without overwhelming the participants. It was produced with the recognition that the background of the project and definitions of sustainable communities need to come across as relatable and relevant.

In the same vein, three short video case studies were produced and used to spotlight grassroots success stories. Each video profiled a person in the region who was already doing something sustainable within their community and served to make the solutions feel more personal and realizable. One video highlighted a community initiated farmers market, another a tale of re-building "green" after the 2011 tornado, and the another on the potential for the green economy to offer broad support for a community. At least one of the videos was shown at the start of each session and by introducing the topics with success stories of real local people, the meetings began on an empowering note. Videos can be seen at our YouTube channel: https://www.youtube.com/user/newenglandskc
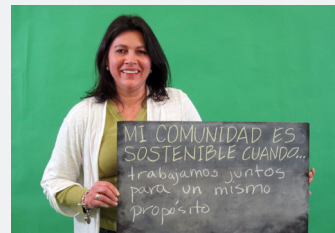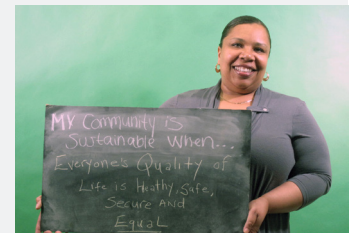
Another engagement tool we developed for the project was the "Sustainable Voices" portraits. For these voluntary portraits, which were taken at the conclusion of every community dialogue, participants held up a chalkboard sign that finished the sentence "My Community is Sustainable When…" These 95 portraits give "faces" to issues and ideas that grew out of the engagement sessions, and act as a powerful tool to document the engagement process and to communicate the community's and the project's message to a wider public.

Nathan Ramos: Questions of Equity and Energy

0:00 / 2:11

YouTube Page
with Video Profiles
https://www.youtube.
com/user/newenglandskc

"Sustainable Voices"
Nine of over Ninety
Participant Portraits

MY COMMUNITY IS SUSTAINABLE WHEN... We support local business and organizations

MY COMMUNITY IS SUSTAINABLE WHEN... CLEAN AIR AND WATER ARE ITS PRIORITY

MY Community is Sustainable When... Everyone's Quality of Life is Healthy, Safe, Secure And Equal

MY COMMUNITY IS SUSTAINABLE WHEN.... we go green and better living

MI COMUNIDAD ES SOSTENIBLE CUANDO... trabajamos juntos para un mismo propósito

MY COMMUNITY IS SUSTAINABLE WHEN... Housing is affordable for everyone!

MY COMMUNITY IS SUSTAINABLE WHEN... Public Transportation is affordable & accessible to everyday people!

MY COMMUNITY IS SUSTAINABLE WHEN.... EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

MY COMMUNITY IS SUSTAINABLE WHEN... I'm comfortable cycling in Traffic

RESOURCES

Vanpool Transportation in Western Massachusetts
http://www.vanpooltransportation.com/index.html

National Complete Streets Coalition
http://www.completestreets.org/

The Center for Transit-Oriented Development
http://www.ctod.org/portal/

Reconnecting America
http://reconnectingamerica.org/

The Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI)
http://www.rggi.org/

PVTA - Question/Commendation/Suggestion
http://www.pvta.com/contact.php

MassBikes Website
http://massbike.org

MassDOT Bike Paths Website
http://www.mhd.state.ma.us/default.asp?pgid=content/bikepaths01&sid=about

MassRides Commuters Website
http://www.commute.com/commuters

Pioneer Valley Planning Commission "Encouraging Bicycling" Website
http://www.pvpc.org/activities/encourag_bike.shtml

Pioneer Valley Bike and Rail Trails Website
http://www.pioneervalley.info/great-outdoors/bike-paths/bike-paths-rail-trails_id=6

United Rail Passenger Alliance Website
http://www.unitedrail.org/

Vanpool Ludlow to Boston
Contact: S. Parker; sparker@ile.mit.edu

Ride Buzz
www.RideBuzz.org

Zipcar - Car Sharing Website
http://www.zipcar.com

PVTA - Advisory Board Members

Agawam	Mayor Richard Cohen
Amherst	Chair of Select Board Stephanie O'Keeffe
Belchertown	Chairman Board of Selectmen Kenneth Elstein
Chicopee	Mayor Michael D. Bissonnette
Easthampton	Mayor Michael A. Tautznik
East Longmeadow	Selectmen Debra Boronski
Granby	Chair of Board of Selectmen Mark Bail
Hadley	Chair of Board of Selectmen Daniel Dudkiewicz
Hampden	Chairman of Board of Selectmen Richard Green
Holyoke	Mayor Alex Morse
Leverett	Chairman of Board of Selectmen Rich Brazeau
Longmeadow	Chairman of Board of Selectmen Mark Gold
Ludlow	Chair of Board of Selectmen Aaron Saunders
Northampton	Mayor David Narkewicz
Palmer	President of Town Council Paul E. Burns
Pelham	Chairman of Board of Selectmen William Martell
South Hadley	Chairman of Board of Selectmen Robert Judge
Springfield	Mayor Domenic J. Sarno
Sunderland	Chair of Board of Selectmen Scott Bergeron
Ware	Chair of Board of Selectmen Nancy Talbot
Westfield	Mayor Daniel Knapik
West Springfield	Mayor Gregory Neffinger
Wilbraham	Chairman of Board of Selectmen Patrick Brady
Williamsburg	Chair of Board of Selectmen Jeffrey Ciuffreda

PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION

RESOURCE GUIDE

WE WANT WALKABLE COMMUNITIES

BIKE PATHS!

INCREASE BUS SERVICES

ACCESS AND PROMOTE ALTERNATIVE MODES OF TRANSPORTATION

There are many ways to travel without driving yourself—depending on your destination and daily needs. In our region, carpooling and ride sharing (www.RideBuzz.org) is a common alternative. Walking and biking are also popular, thanks to a growing network of trails and bike lanes. Some employers operate van pools and car sharing arrangements.

Be Ready to Pay to Drive/Park
One of the best ways to reduce the use of single occupancy vehicles is to increase the cost of using them. Advocating for more expensive parking or higher taxes on gas that could be reinvested in sustainable developments is an easy way to improve transportation in your area. This means that you would also have to be willing to pay.

Live Close to Transportation Options
Choosing to live in a central location with access to mass transit can reduce your transportation costs, provide more options for travel, and reduce energy consumption. New York City produces 1% of the United States Green House Gas Emissions with 3% of the population because most people do not have to drive to access resources and employment.

Mobility Assistance for People with Disabilities
As our population ages, more people need mobility assistance because they are not able to drive, walk or ride the regular bus. Sometimes known as "paratransit," accessible vans like those operated by PVTA and local senior centers are a critical service for people with disabilities—helping them to remain active members of their communities.

Identify Small Ways to Drive Less
Reduce your driving by 5% a year by finding a different mode of transit for just one out of every 20 trips. When you do drive, find ways to take care of as many tasks in one trip.

Bicycle!
Bicycling is convenient, good for the environment, and good for your health. It also saves you money. When you travel by bike, you don't have to make extra time for exercise—and you are helping reduce traffic congestion and air pollution. Join the biking community using sites like http://massbike.org to find local trails and bicycle routes, biking events, shops, tips, and tricks.

Create a Car Sharing Program
Car-sharing services, like "Zip Car," provide 24/7 self-serve access to a car. Vehicles can be stationed near your home and reserved by the hour or day via smart phone, website or telephone. Car sharing is a green business idea that works: people save money and skip the hassles of car ownership—yet still enjoy the benefits of a car when they need one. Car sharing makes great sense in a region like the Pioneer Valley, where there are tens of thousands of college and university students—and limited parking. Smith College and Amherst College have already implemented these kinds of programs.

Use Car Pooling Programs
Do what you can to never be the only person in a car. Create you own car-pooling programs with coworkers and friends. Or use sites like www.RideBuzz.org where everyday people list the trips they are going on and offer to share the ride locally and long distances.

Vacation Locally
Instead of driving five hours away to spend your long weekend find local activities or vacation resorts. This will reduce the amount of emissions you expend, increase the amount of time you spend relaxing instead of traveling, invest you money locally, and decrease the cost of travel.

Be a Sustainable Traveler

ADVOCATE FOR ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF TRANSPORTATION

Support Transit Oriented Development
Transit Oriented Development (TOD) promotes a balance of jobs, housing, and retail development in a way that promotes the use of Bus and other transit opportunities that reduce the use of single occupancy vehicle trips. This kind of development limits sprawl, improves air quality, and provides access to goods, services, and jobs. For more information look into The Center for Transit-Oriented Development http://www.ctod.org/portal/W

Support Complete Streets
Complete Streets (http://www.completestreets.org/) is a national coalition that is working to transform our roads so that they support multiple forms of transit. 72% of trips one mile or less are driven because many people do not feel safe crossing the road or riding the bike in their community. Designing streets to encourage the use of less carbon intensive travel will improve safety, health, economic growth, lower emissions, provide choices, and reduce isolation / dependence.

Create Walkable Communities
A "walkable" community is a place where residents have access to goods, services, and employment without driving. Homes, shops and business are close together. There are nice parks, sidewalks and street improvements that make it easy and enjoyable to stroll. People who live in these areas generally have safer transportation choices, are more likely to be socially engaged, have better health and an improved quality of life. Walkable Communities are pedestrian friendly; they respect the fact that every trip begins on foot!

Form a Group
Find others who are interested in promoting public transportation, such as better bus service, passenger rail or car-sharing. Or you can support walkable-communities. Gather in your community and start planning special meetings to discuss how you can support alternatives to the car. Encourage people to bring food and drinks to make your events more social and draw others to join you. Groups already existing in this region include Massachusetts Smart Growth Alliance (http://ma-smartgrowth.org/), Pioneer Valley Advocates for Commuter Rail (http://mysite.verizon.net/vzeovxpk/), and MassBike (http://massbike.org/).
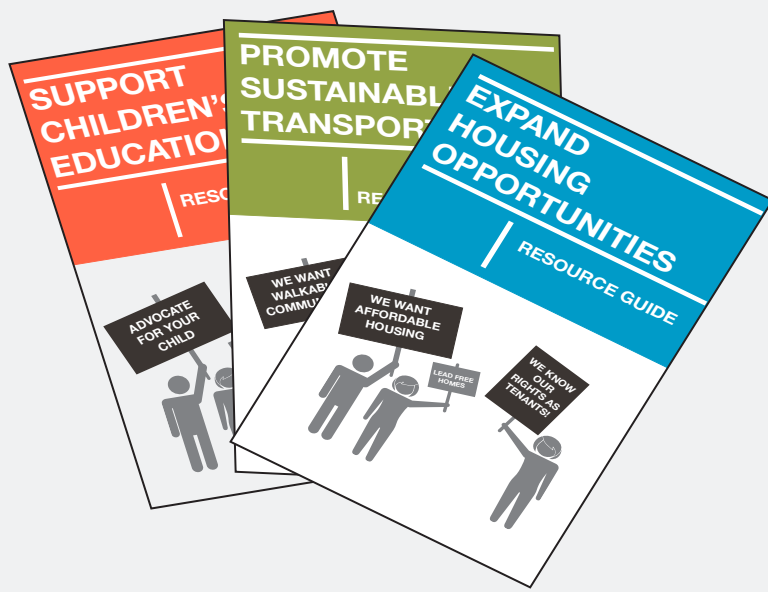
Attend Public Meetings and Events
Improving transportation choices might require changes in regulations and additional funding. Your organization can be a voice for transportation at select board meetings, city council hearings, town meetings and other forums. Let local decision-makers know what you want. It's true what they say about the squeaky wheel!

Contact the PVTA Advisory Board or PVTA Administrator
The Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTA) is the largest regional transit authority in Massachusetts with 174 buses, 144 vans and 24 participating member communities. The PVTA is governed by an Advisory Board that consists of a representative from each of the 24 municipalities in which PVTA operates (usually the Mayor, City/Town Manager or Select Board Chair). Advisory Board members approve the policies and budget of the PVTA. Daily operations are handled by the PVTA Administrator (Mary MacInnes) and her staff. Therefore, if you want to advocate for a major change in service, like adding a transit line in your community or concern about a change in bus fares, it is best to contact an Advisory Board member. But if you have an operational concern, such as a late bus or damaged bus stop, it is best to contact PVTA's Administrator.

DID YOU KNOW?

- US motorists drive 3 trillion miles per year, more than 2/3 by passenger car.
- That's 1/10 of the way to the nearest star
- That's a round trip to Neptune and back everyday
- That's 40 miles/day (US average)
- Up to one-half of all US Green House Gas (GHG) emissions are from cars and trucks

New England's Sustainable KNOWLEDGE CORRIDOR • United Way • pvpc

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SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION

Having a diversity of transportation options in an area opens up the doors of opportunity. However, transportation choices in the United States—and especially in the Pioneer Valley—are geared to toward the private automobile. Many people cannot afford to own a car and therefore can become isolated without public transportation. Furthermore, single-occupancy vehicle (SOV) travel as the main form of transportation is not equitable or cost-effective. It also has negative effects on our environment. Sustainable transportation seeks to reduce adverse impacts to the environmental while promoting social and economic resilience. It offers underprivileged communities more choices for transportation so they have equal access to resources and a better ability to participate in civic and economic activities.

LOCAL CONTEXT

Many towns in Eastern Massachusetts are fortunate to have reliable public transportation that improves access to housing, employment, education, and shopping. But many communities within the Pioneer Valley struggle because there is a lack of transportation choice. Advocating for increased services and sustainable developments in your area that limit sprawl and provide access to goods, services and jobs in close proximity to residential areas can help increase opportunities for yourself and your community. This guide has been produced to help community residents in our region make their voices heard to stand up for livable communities with better transit systems to improve the social and economic health of our region.

Learn How To Ride Your Bike Safely
Ride on the road not the sidewalk
Ride with traffic
Use a front light
Stop at red lights
Stay left on right turns
Merge before turning left
Do not ride in the door zone

SUPPORT CHILDREN'S EDUCATION
RESOURCE GUIDE
ADVOCATE FOR YOUR CHILD

PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION
RESOURCE
WE WANT WALKABLE COMMUNITIES

EXPAND HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES
RESOURCE GUIDE
WE WANT AFFORDABLE HOUSING
LEAD FREE HOMES
WE KNOW OUR RIGHTS AS TENANTS!

Sustainable Communities
Resource Guides

Engagement Sessions + Workshops + Resource Guides

A typical engagement session included a lunch or dinner meal that was shared by participants and student facilitators at the start of each session. After the meal, the opening presentation was followed by participant introductions (framed by the question "what does sustainability mean to you?"). The introductions not only increased comfort between the facilitators and participants, but also helped reveal key concerns of the group at large. Following the introductions participants were typically split into two to four groups and asked to prioritize their concerns using the twelve priority cards that were organized around the four themes: "Live," "Connect," "Grow" and "Prosper." The top priorities were to be laid out into a single row of three to four issues. On occasion, these were not always laid out into neat rows, and participants would sometimes stack and group priorities onto each other, claiming that two of the priorities were one and the same and needed to be addressed as a set (this was particularly true for the "Prosper" category). On other occasions participants would use blank cards to write in their own priorities in recognition of important issues that were not represented by the existing priority cards.

Once the top priorities were identified, the top three or four topics were subject to an "Obstacles and Solutions" discussion. Through this activity the major obstacles within the topic were listed and discussed, as well as possible solutions to overcome those identified obstacles. This allowed the community to become more aware of the topics affecting them, to discuss their own personal issues in an open environment, and to work together to brainstorm solutions to these issues. Additionally, by using the priority cards

to focus the topic of the community's conversations, it was easier to gather and refine the input for the regional plan (see pages 28-29 for info-graphic of findings). As the conversation continued, the facilitators took intensive notes both in personal notebooks as well as charting the obstacles and solutions on a large board for the participants to see, follow and reflect on.

The second year of community dialogues was focused on taking action and developing next steps for issues identified in the first year. These sessions explored actions that could happen at one (or all) of three levels: an individual action, through initiatives you could take on your own; community action, through work done by and with a community; and/or finally, policy/political action, action that would require organizing or civic activity to petition for governmental and policy change.

Through these more action-oriented dialogues it was apparent that there was a need for clear resources and information that would allow participants to continue to be active in working toward making sustainable communities in their neighborhoods. In response to this need we developed our "Sustainable Community Resource Guides." These guides cover Housing, Transportation and Education–key issues that were identified by dialogue participants. The guides are specifically designed for easy access and use by residents/citizens and provide concrete information, phone numbers, websites and how-to highlights to affect change in the areas reviewed. They are available on the project website: www.sustainableknowledgecorridor.org, and will also be available at local offices of United Way and affiliated organizations who participated in the project.

"Get Involved"
Capacity Building
Workshops

Capacity Building Workshops

In the third year of the project we continued to build the capacity for underrepresented communities and organized three grass-root leadership trainings. All the events were aimed at building the capacity for members of underrepresented communities throughout Hampshire and Hampden counties to be more civically engaged and work for healthier, sustainable and more equitable communities.
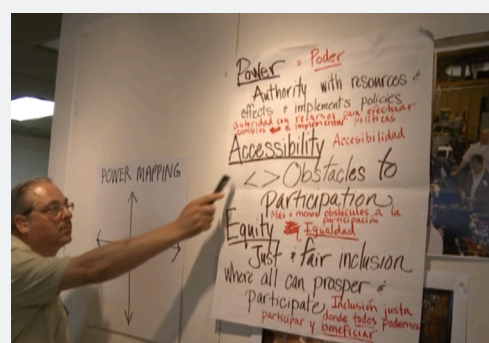
The "Get Involved" workshops supported concerned residents in developing and employing leadership/advocacy skills to address key issues in their neighborhoods–particularly housing (maintaining their homes/neighborhoods and exercising their rights as owners and/or tenants), and school advocacy (building the capacity to participate as a change agent in their child's education). These skills were also meant to be applicable for community-based work in transportation, food security and environmental justice concerns.

The workshops covered: how to analyze/map the power dynamics of any issue; communicate with elected and appointed officials; participate in public forums; how to work in partnership with others who care about similar issues; and how community voices can make a difference in improving the wellbeing of your family and neighbors. Participants gained an understanding of how to become part of the decision making process and influence change by participating with grass-roots groups, community organizations or even considering pathways to appointed and/or elected positions.

The workshops were well attended, and well received, and provided an engaging, empowering and effective end to our civic engagement activities. We also produced a short video entitled "Equity and Engagement" that reviewed the goals of our civic engagement work and highlighted the workshops. The video can be viewed on our YouTube page and through the PVPC website.

There is certainly more to do, but the engagement activities that have been the center of this project provide an excellent foundation to build on and support the next efforts to promote equity and engagement work in the region.

TOUSSAINT PASKINS
Program Coordinator
Gardening The Community, Springfield

EVELIN AQUINO
Equity Workshops Facilitator

Equity & Engagement
Video

POWER MAPPING

Implications and Insights:

As a result of our engagement activities some helpful insights have emerged on how to develop a community engagement plan with underrepresented groups. These insights are as follows:

Acknowledge the reason why underrepresented communities do not typically participate in planning efforts.

- historic discrimination
- language and cultural barriers
- lack of knowledge on issues & processes
- poverty/lack of resources, including time. Poor people's time is at a premium as their wages are low which means they have to work more hours to earn as much as a wealthier person who has a higher wage, so reimbursing people for their time might make participation possible.

Clarify why you are conducting an engagement process. Be clear on what outcomes participants can expect.

- Are you providing information/education or do you want specific input?
- Describe what happens to results and how they are used

Identify partners who have complimentary goals so that there is a likelihood of mutual benefit from the effort.

Balance your needs with the needs of the community partner by demonstrating a willingness to support their goals.

Flex to meet the logistical and organizational constraints of community partners. Meet them on their terms through:

- second language workshops
- peer-to-peer facilitators
- integration to existing programs

Interpret the input you gather. Subjective responses may need to be classified and analyzed to meet the input needs of a particular plan/project.

Assess progress openly and regularly with partners to show progress, revise strategies and gather feedback.

Sustain relationships beyond the duration of the immediate project. Be aware of opportunities for continued engagement and long-term relationship building.
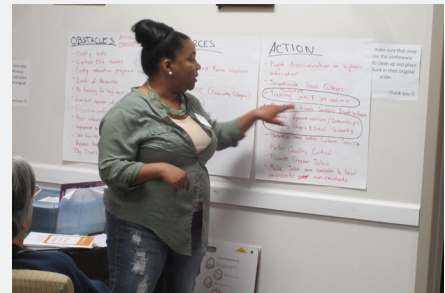
Community Dialogue Summary

Our Community Engagement events have taken place in a variety of communities throughout the region. The Pioneer Valley Planning Commission identfies the various types of communities in the region as: **Urban Core**, **Small Cities**, **Valley**, **Hilltowns**, and **Quabog/Quabbin**. Events took place in Springfield, Chicopee, Florence, Amherst, Holyoke, Ludlow, Chesterfield, Cummington, Monson, Easthampton, Westfield and Ware. Despite the differences in regional characteristics and demographics among these diverse communities, the top priorities chosen by participants were relatively consistent. Issues related to affordable housing were the highest priorities, followed by: job, training and education issues; transportation; and access to healthy food. In some of the more affluent communities, the priorities were more focused on global sustainability and resource conservation. In these communities, affordable housing was often regarded as a priority more suitable for urban settings than for small cities or the Hilltowns. In less affluent communities access to health services and combating racism were often part of the discussion. Overall we reached approximately 30 groups and over 300 participants.

The summaries that follow are organized by theme and region.



Chicopee

Springfield

Ludlow

Ware

Easthampton

Holyoke

COMMUNITY DIALOGUE LOCATIONS

List of Events (note: prefixes are referenced in summaries below)

(UMS)	UMass Sustainability Workshop / Amherst
(PVG)	PV Grows / Greenfield
(UWF)	United Way First Circle / Northampton
(CL)	Casa Latina / Florence
(VOC1)	VOC Adult Literacy Program / Chicopee
(SN)	Service Net / Florence
(HCC)	Holyoke Community College / Holyoke
(VOC2)	VOC ESOL / Chicopee
(LBG)	Ludlow Boys and Girls Club / Ludlow
(CDC)	Hilltown CDC / Chesterfield & Cummington
(SPG1)	Springfield Partners (Financial Literacy + Homebuyers group) / Springfield
(ECC)	Easthampton Community Center / Easthampton
(ADP1)	Springfield ADP (Transit Equity) / Springfield
(ADP2)	Springfield ADP (Food Security) / Springfield
(SPG2)	Springfield Partners (Healthy Communities Consortium) / Springfield
(SHI)	Southern Hilltowns Adult Education Center / Huntington
(WES)	Westfield Transition Group / Westfield
(SPG3)	Springfield Small Business Group / Springfield
(BMLH)	BayState / Mary Lane Hospital / Ware
(CC)	Carson Center / Ware
(ASC)	Amherst Survival Center / Amherst
(NE)	Nueva Esperanza / Holyoke
(MO)	Monson Long-term Recovery Group / Monson
(LU)	Ludlow Adult Learning Center / Ludlow
(NBA)	Not By Bread Alone / Amherst

SKC Engagement Events
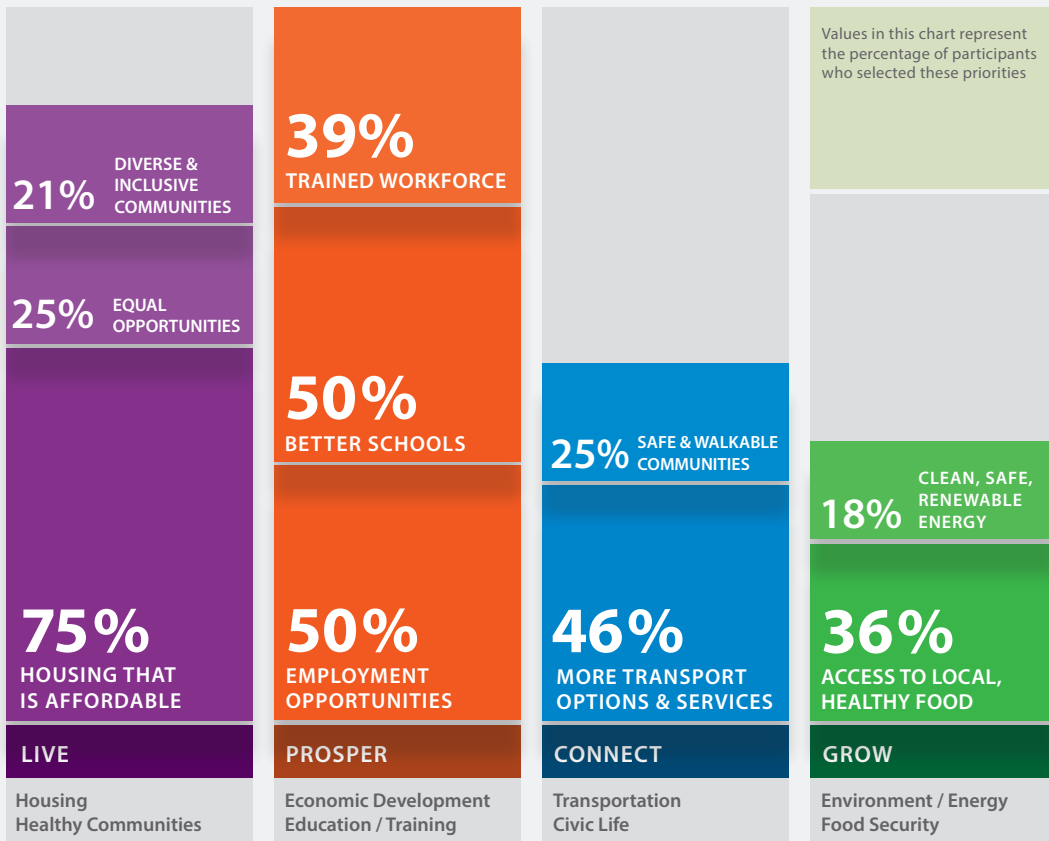Fall 2011 + Spring 2012
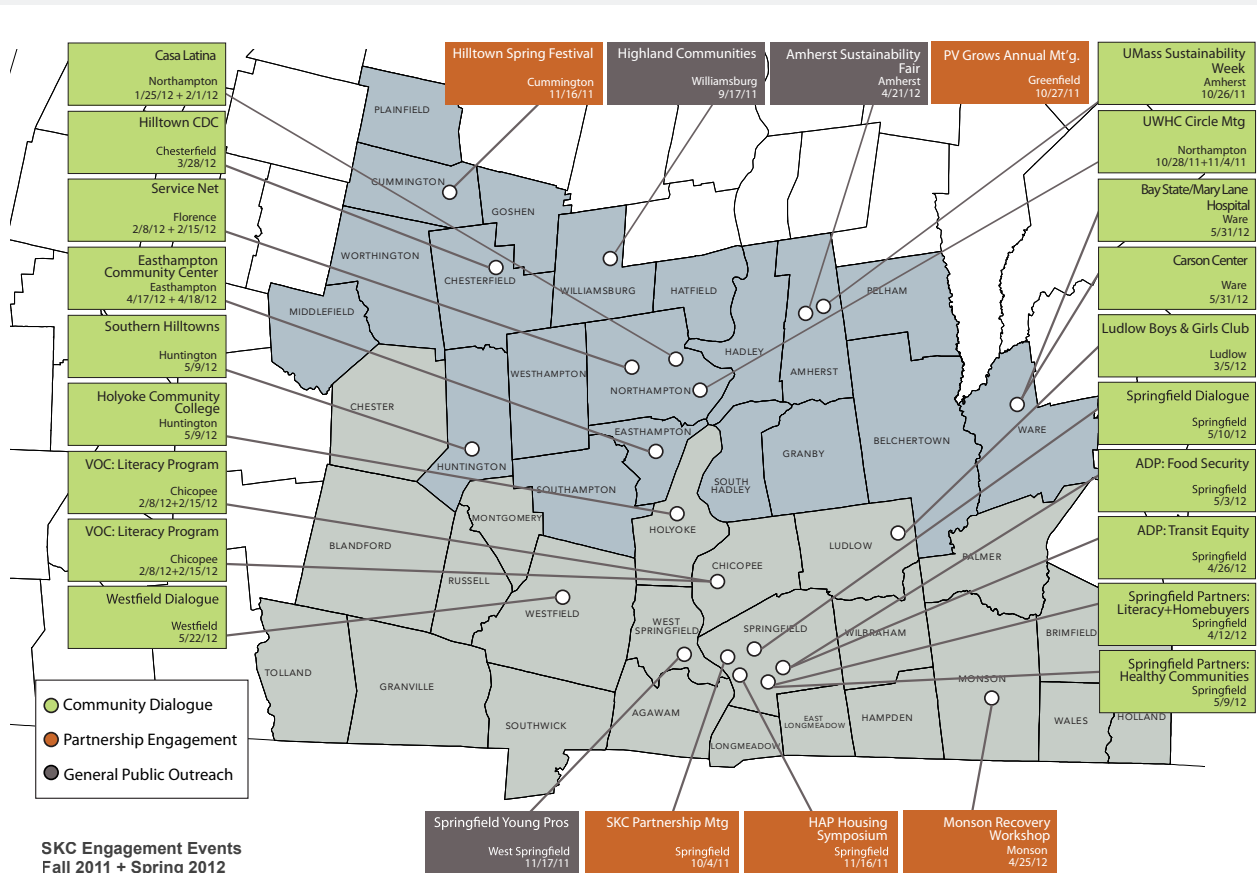
OUR COMMUNTIES ARE SUSTAINABLE WHEN....

ENGAGEMENT SESSIONS' RESULTS

SUSTAINABLE KNOWLEDGE CORRIDOR
COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

The **Sustainable Knowledge Corridor** is an exciting project to encourage healthy and sustainable communities. This summary presents the results of a series of community dialogues focused on housing, education, transportation, employment, health, and the environment. This participatory effort aims to create a sustainable future for Hampshire and Hamden counties and throughout the bi-state region.

Values in this chart represent the percentage of participants who selected these priorities

21% DIVERSE & INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

25% EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

75% HOUSING THAT IS AFFORDABLE

LIVE

Housing
Healthy Communities

39% TRAINED WORKFORCE

50% BETTER SCHOOLS

50% EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

PROSPER

Economic Development
Education / Training

25% SAFE & WALKABLE COMMUNITIES

46% MORE TRANSPORT OPTIONS & SERVICES

CONNECT

Transportation
Civic Life

18% CLEAN, SAFE, RENEWABLE ENERGY

36% ACCESS TO LOCAL, HEALTHY FOOD

GROW

Environment / Energy
Food Security

OBSERVATIONS + CONNECTIONS

LIVE: While "Diverse & Inclusive Communities" was not always selected as a top priority, many participants mentioned that diversity in communities is often dependent on access to affordable housing.
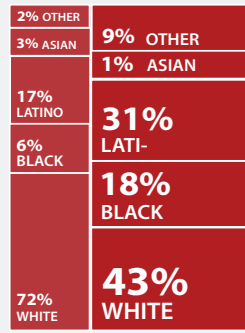
PROSPER: Nearly everyone saw the issues in this category as connected, explaining that better schools lead to a more trained workforce, which will hopefully mean more people can access good jobs.

IMPORTANT "WRITE-IN" PRIORITIES

HEALTH SERVICES: Equal access to affordable health care--particularly in local communities

COMMUNITY BUILDING: Connecting with neighbors and families to promote healthy communities

LOCAL CONTROL: Provide more opportunities to participate and contribute to local planning decisions

ADDRESSING RACISM: Develop local strategies to combat racism in all its implicit and explicit forms

CONNECT: Many people noted how poor bus service was keeping people from accessing jobs and healthy foods. Solving transportation issues are key to improvements in personal health & the local economy.
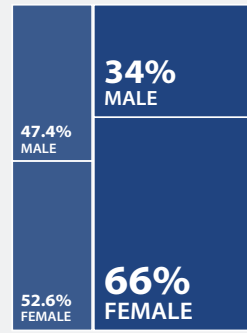
GROW: Community gardens and youth development were important parts of the Food Security conversation. Many participants also noted how successes in the other categories would have positve impacts on the environment.
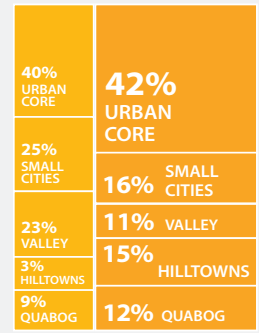
Engagement
Session Results
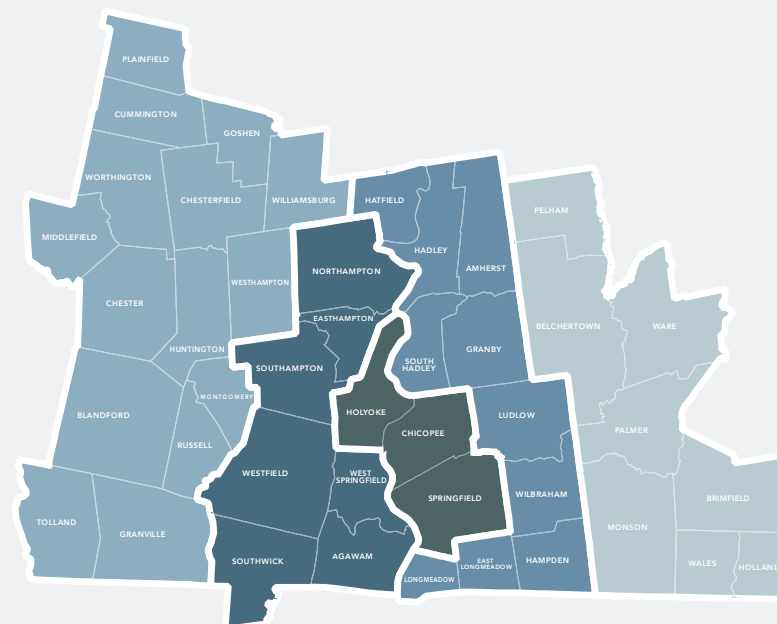Hand-out

AGE

REGIONAL
- 26% 55+
- 15% 45-54
- 12% 35-44
- 11% 25-34
- 17% 15-24
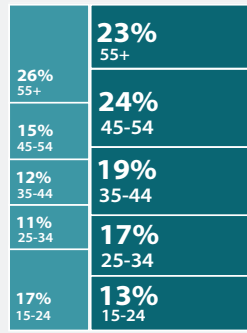
DIALOGUES
- 23% 55+
- 24% 45-54
- 19% 35-44
- 17% 25-34
- 13% 15-24

RACE / ETHNICITY

REGIONAL
- 2% OTHER
- 3% ASIAN
- 17% LATINO
- 6% BLACK
- 72% WHITE

DIALOGUES
- 9% OTHER
- 1% ASIAN
- 31% LATI-
- 18% BLACK
- 43% WHITE

GENDER

REGIONAL
- 47.4% MALE
- 52.6% FEMALE

DIALOGUES
- 34% MALE
- 66% FEMALE

LOCATION

REGIONAL
- 40% URBAN CORE
- 25% SMALL CITIES
- 23% VALLEY
- 3% HILLTOWNS
- 9% QUABOG

DIALOGUES
- 42% URBAN CORE
- 16% SMALL CITIES
- 11% VALLEY
- 15% HILLTOWNS
- 12% QUABOG

Demographic Information was provided by 176 of the 215 people who participated in the 22 Community Dialogues conducted throughout Hampshire & Hamden Counties

REGIONAL PRIORITIES

QUABOG/QUABBIN
Local Priorities
+ AFFORDABLE HOUSING
+ TRANSPORTATION
+ MORE JOBS

HILLTOWNS
Local Priorities
+ AFFORDABLE HOUSING
+ TRANSPORTATION
+ RENEWABLE ENERGY

SMALL CITIES
Local Priorities
+ AFFORDABLE HOUSING
+ TRANSPORTATION
+ LOCAL, HEALTHY FOOD

URBAN CORES
Local Priorities
+ AFFORDABLE HOUSING
+ BETTER SCHOOLS
+ TRAINED WORKFORCE

VALLEY
Local Priorities
+ MORE JOBS
+ BETTER SCHOOLS
+ LOCAL, HEALTHY FOOD

SOME COMMUNITY IDENTIFIED SOLUTIONS + ACTIONS

LIVE
• Develop tools to educate the wider public on the benefits of Affordable Housing
• Hold workshops on tenant rights, access to affordable housing, section 8 vouchers and alternative rental options

PROSPER
• Create more job training programs that meet the needs of the current job market
• Create programs for more parent involvement in schools • Support more culturally relevant school curriculum

CONNECT
• Establish a Regional Citizen Advocacy Group for Transportation
• Advocate for lower bus fares and push for more transit equity • Develop community-based car sharing programs

GROW
• Work with farmer's markets to have them accept EBT (food stamps)
• Start gardens at schools and in the community
• Develop educational programs on healthy cooking

For more information on this project please visit us at:
www.SustainableKnowledgeCorridor.org

Community Dialogue Summary / Themes

LIVE:
Housing + Quality of Life

Affordable housing was listed as a top priority more than any other issue during the engagement events. Many participants saw it as fundamental and some (HCC) even referenced their decision as based on Maslow's "Hierarchy of Needs". Across the region, there were similar discussions within each community in regards to obstacles. Tenant-landlord relationships, poor maintenance and communication, accessibility for people of lesser incomes, racial discrimination and profiling by landlords, lack of funding for affordable housing projects, and rising rents with no improvement in quality were some of the common obstacles listed. Even for those who could afford housing, there were usually associated issues of high utility bills or unsafe neighborhoods.

Lack of Affordable Housing:

The most mentioned obstacle to affordable housing was simply the sheer dearth of it. Regardless of whether a municipality has met the 10% threshold set by the state 40B law, participants consistently mentioned that the supply doesn't keep up with demand. An associated issue mentioned by many was the lack of, or difficulty obtaining, information and services (SN) for those looking for housing and related resources. Other obstacles often mentioned included stagnating wages in an increasingly tight rental market.

Section 8 Issues:

Section 8 vouchers and housing was mentioned numerous times as a common provider of affordable housing, but often difficult to acquire. People who fall into the lower middle class often "slip into the cracks" because the requirements to get into programs like Section 8 housing are ineffective. Participants mentioned Section 8 eligibility is mostly based on resident's W-2 forms, which does not take other family expenses well enough into account.

Funding Challenges and Consequences:

Consistently, at each event, participants believed lack of funding to be one of the major reasons why housing is not accessible for people with disabilities and for the elderly. At other meetings (VOC 1, HCC, SP), participants mentioned the dangers of abandoned homes in their neighborhoods and how these foreclosed properties should be turned into affordable housing.

Local Government Inaction:

Differences in obstacles emerged between the urban and more rural regions. In more urban areas, like Holyoke and Springfield, the city governments were implicated in the failure to provide affordable housing. Residents expect those governments to do more and see their inaction as a reflection of how low-income people are not valued by officials. Many found the lack of funding and support for middle and low-income families, especially those displaced by the 2011 tornado as a problem.

Opposition to Affordable Housing:

In less urban areas, participants identified the opposition to affordable housing as coming from local homeowners with NIMBY concerns (ECC, CDC). In some instances the upper-middle class group members feared losing small town appeal due to urbanization that could result from high-density affordable housing units (LBG, ECC, HCC, SHI). On the other hand, group members who were renters or low-income themselves, defended the need to make all communities a place to live and work. Some also mentioned that zoning and permitting processes discouraged multi-family buildings and thus kept suburban and rural areas more expensive (CDC).

Hilltown's "Rugged Individualism:"

Events in the Hilltowns furthered the discussion on sustainable values that may conflict with common "rugged individualist" ideals (CDC, SHI). Participants struggled to define a

balance between self-reliance and community orientation in the perspective of a sustainable life. Developments such as mixed-income, more integrative senior housing and a general stronger integration of different demographics were suggested to boost community alliances and awareness–but the challenge to achieve these in the Hilltowns was acknowledged.

Affordable Housing as a Positive Catalyst:
Across the region, many members of the community envisioned affordable housing as a catalyst for other sustainable means of living, which explains the less frequent prioritization of the other priority cards. Many participants expressed that the availability of Affordable Housing would solve most issues surrounding safety. Fostering responsibility and pride were also considered important steps towards establishing safe communities. Obstacles regarding public safety revolved around the lack of city investment in pedestrian infrastructure, such as streetlights. Holyoke and Springfield participants brought up the danger of walking in their communities at night due to gang violence and racial profiling by the police.

Political and Policy Solutions:
Although solutions were typically tailored to the context of the meeting, nearly all groups settled on political solutions to affordable housing issues. Whether re-writing zoning laws or securing meetings with their elected officials, they seemed to coalesce around the understanding that affordable housing is something that requires the participation of the government. Insisting that city governments fund the redevelopment of foreclosed homes into affordable housing through community land trusts or other non-profit entities was suggested. And stronger integration of affordable housing within middle and higher income areas was also suggested to break the division between classes.

Community Building Solutions:
Some suggested solutions were small, like commissioning a survey of homeowners with empty units to see if they were being prevented from renting those units because of lead paint. Initiatives such as community forums on the purpose of affordability were suggested to clarify misperceptions concerning the low-income community. Community initiatives such as creating Adopt-a-Block programs, community gardens, increased recycling and education programs were also common suggestions. These solutions are achievable for communities and would provide opportunities for neighborhood residents to organize themselves with the goals of protecting and maintaining their shared public spaces. Increasing pride in the community was viewed as a crucial part of defeating violence and increasing safety as well.

Safety Solutions:
Some safety solutions that were discussed included: increasing transparency in the police department, and providing opportunities for individuals and community members to ensure their own safety. Local hiring initiatives within the police department were perceived as better for the relations between police and residents (HCC). What was most clear is that participants were deeply interested in the issue and wanted a say in the solutions.

GROW:
Food Security + Environment + Climate Action + Green Infrastructure

This category, which included issues of food security, the environment, and renewable energy, did not garner as much attention from participants as other topic areas. But healthy and affordable food was prioritized the most often–in four different meetings and in rural and urban settings (VOC-ESL, Hilltowns, ECC, Ludlow). Environmental issues and renewable energy were prioritized more often in areas that were more rural and with audiences that tended to be white and/or in higher-income areas.

Energy Issues:
Within a few of the more affluent communities, the issues of Peak Oil and Renewable Energy were heavily discussed. At the Hilltown CDC event in Chesterfield, a solution mentioned for decreasing energy usage is to hold a competition in which Hilltown communities sign up for energy audits from Mass Save and compare energy savings each month.

Community Education:
Many participants noted that community education about sustainability was necessary. Some suggested that making recycling bins more available in apartment buildings and around the area might help that process. Participants in Ludlow mentioned that the DPW closes too early for residents to drop off their recycling and that by keeping the DPW open longer it will make the process easier.

Affordability and Incentives:
Physical home renovations for weatherproofing and solar energy are appreciated, but there is rarely enough money up front for such construction costs, even if it is known there will be money saved in the long run. For renters, landlords have little incentive to make such changes. Some Hilltown participants advocated for "going off the grid" and localizing renewable energy production. They also suggested that individuals could work to rehab their homes so they're more energy efficient. At the VOC, participants had similar ideas, suggesting that energy efficiency programs should be subsidized so that more people have access to them.

Obstacles to Healthy Food Access:
A number of different obstacles were mentioned to healthy food access. They included a lack of transportation options, high prices for organic food, a lack of time for food preparation because people are working long hours or multiple jobs, unhealthy eating patterns, unhealthy choices at schools, and size and space limits at food pantries. While school lunches are getting better, they still have a long way to go. It is noted that fast food, which is usually cheaper than any other out of school food, is the usual preference. A number of groups mentioned contacting their school districts to advocate for healthier food options in schools. (CL, VOC1, VOC2, ADP2, CC)

Healthy Eating Issues:
While some community gardens do exist, fresh produce is still not distributed widely enough and is usually too expensive. Many people do not have enough time to cook with fresh ingredients, particularly if they are cooking only for themselves. If there were more options for cheap healthy meals, residents would eat better. Overall almost everyone prefers and understands the benefit of eating healthy with fresh vegetables, but not many people have time or can regularly afford it. On the other hand, in some communities like Florence, Food Security was less of a priority because of the availability of local food choices due to farms in the area. A number of different groups were interested in starting community gardens to increase food access. In Easthampton and Ludlow, group members also wanted to improve transit to farmer's markets and push the markets to accept EBT (food stamps).

CONNECT:
Transportation + Land Use

Transportation was an issue shared by all regions and was often selected as a second priority. In urban centers such as Springfield, conversations revolved around the inefficiency of the PVTA bus system, and to a lesser extent the city school buses. Individuals in small-towns such as Easthampton, Florence and Ware shared similar experiences and frustrations towards the PVTA's lack of reliable service. In more rural areas such as the Hilltowns where there is limited or no bus services, participants believed even the bike paths were either inaccessible or not properly developed for use, thus encouraging an auto-oriented culture. Primarily, individuals noted the importance of transportation on access to healthy foods and employment opportunities, but those who relied on buses as the means of transport either found the service to be inefficient or infrequent for use.

Transportation and Access to Healthy Food:
Transportation seemed to be a major determining factor in terms of access to healthy foods in all regions. In urban centers, individuals who had access to a local corner store or bodega found the food to be unhealthy and had to travel long distances to get healthier food (ADP 2). In rural areas where bus service is not an option, individuals without a car or other means of transport find themselves isolated from healthy food options due to greater travel time to markets and farms (CDC, CC).

Transportation and Access to Work:
Individuals who depended on the bus system for travel to work stated that schedules were either infrequent or did not fit into people's work schedules. This was common for individuals in both urban centers as well as smaller towns commuting to work. Many complaints included inconvenient routes, incredibly long headways, missed transfers and late buses, and a lack of service at night and on weekends (ADP1, SN, ECC).

Springfield Issues:
Specifically within Springfield, many individuals found the need to transfer downtown as one of the major factors for its inefficiency, severely limiting access to healthy food, education, jobs, and recreation. Instead, those who had access to a car chose to drive to their destinations, while others occasionally opted to walk or bike despite feeling it was unsafe. (ADP1)

Biking:
When non-vehicular transportation was discussed, each region believed there needed to be a lot of improvement for it to be a viable means of transport other than recreation. In busy downtown areas such as Easthampton, participants believed vehicular traffic made it difficult for bicyclists to commute around town (ECC). Participants in the Hilltowns and Westfield stated that the car-oriented culture of the area led to neglect for bike paths (CDC, WES).

Alternatives:
Participants discussed some alternative transportation possibilities including mini-bus/van service with community-determined routes, car sharing and car-pooling services (CDC, ADP1, CC).

Organizing:
Continued organizing around transit equity is considered essential. It was noted that PVTA needs more funding ("they can't run their budget based on the fare-box"), but also needs to develop strategies and a more equitable/fair/affordable fare system (ADP1).

PROSPER:
Economic Development + Education + Leadership

This grouping of priorities, including employment opportunities, better schools, and a trained workforce, ended up in the top tier most often. However, in many groups, participants combined two or three of these priorities together, essentially viewing them as a continuum or so intertwined that they couldn't be separated. Many groups saw them as a progression: better schools produced a trained workforce, which was able to access more employment opportunities. The challenges of creating better schools with limited economic resources were acknowledged and discussed.

Connection to Transportation and Safety:
This grouping of priorities was also regularly connected to transportation and equal opportunities. In the more urban areas, better schools was also connected to safe and walkable communities (VOC, ADP) as parents described their children's trials with gangs and bullies at school. Young people also described some danger from traffic when traveling to or from school on foot or bike and the fear that bicycles would be stolen if left outside during the school day (ADP1).

Education Issues:
In discussion on education, a common obstacle was the physical state of the schools. Lack of state and federal funding has resulted in substandard and crowded schools, incongruent learning environments, and a lack of resources for bilingual education as well as language barriers. Ludlow residents were concerned with social obstacles within the school systems. There is much conflict over brand name clothing competition within the school, which can lead to bullying, especially towards low-income students.

Challenges for K-12 Teachers:
Within schools, there is often too high of a student to teacher ratio. Students who don't get the attention and recognition that they need are often left discouraged and maintain a negative attitude towards education. Communication between teachers and parents is also lacking in most communities, because parents no longer receive notice if their children are excelling or doing poorly in school. (VOC1, SPG1)

Education/Employment Challenges:
Often, students who drop out face difficulties in obtaining employment due to an increase in prerequisites for minimum wage paying jobs. Too many job applications request a high school diploma, or even a college degree. Higher education is too expensive for a lot of people in these communities. Some adult education students also explained that they greatly valued their opportunity to take classes, but that far more free and subsidized education programs were needed. Many participants agreed that there needs to be more job training for specialized fields such as plumbing and machinery and that there are not enough vocational schools that are accessible within each community. A number of students mentioned a dearth of specialized programs for professions such as nursing. (SN, SPG1, VOC2)

Education/Training Improvements:
Participants had a wide range of suggested improvements for schools, from bringing senior citizens into schools as storytellers to purchasing better technology for schools that don't have it. A number of groups also mentioned subsidized after school programming for young adults. Similar solutions were suggested for workforce training and increasing job opportunities. VOC students wanted more subsidized training programs and some participants at Service Net thought local businesses could partner with community colleges to design curriculum and subsidize classes so that graduating students would be prepared for jobs that would be waiting for them. The thread that unites solutions for all three issues is subsidies that make them accessible to low-income people.

Loosening Regulations:
Economic opportunities for local businesses are considered extremely difficult due to zoning and other restrictions. One group suggested reforming current zoning and business development rules and regulations in order to ease the process of starting local businesses. (HCC, SHI)

Institutional Racism:
Many participants felt that the institutionalized racism in society prevents jobs and housing opportunities for people of color with lower incomes. (VOC2, SP1, SP2, CC)

Dialogue with
Springfield's Healthy
Community Consortium
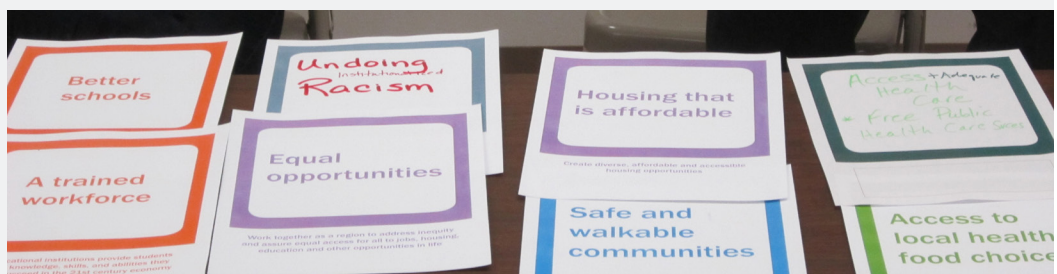
Community Dialogue Summary / Region

Urban Core
(Chicopee, Holyoke, Springfield)

In the urban areas, the top priorities were almost consistently Affordable Housing, Equal/Employment Opportunities, Trained Workforce, and Better Schools. Within these communities, institutionalized racism and its long term consequences was brought up as a key obstacle for many of these issues. Many participants expressed that these urban areas need substantial assistance, and that there are often many "red flags," but they are often left neglected until something serious occurs, i.e. when someone gets hurt. (VOC2, SPG1, SPG2,)

Affordable Housing:
Affordable housing was almost always brought up as the top priority in these urban areas. Many participants expressed their disbelief at the number of vacant buildings and the concurrent number of homeless people. Many attributed the issues with housing to the rising rents with no improvement in the quality of living, as well as the lack of successful communication between landlord and tenant. (VOC1, SPG1) Participants agreed that people working minimum wage jobs have to work over 70 hours a week, and still cannot afford their living expenses. Programs like Section 8 Housing are selective and difficult to get into. Gentrification is driving rent prices higher, forcing people out of their homes into a tough rental market. If affordable housing isn't available anywhere (and it should be in all types of neighborhoods), diverse and inclusive communities also cannot happen.

Equal Opportunities:
In these communities, the lack of equal opportunities and institutionalized racism were identified as some of the primary causes of poverty. Many saw these as primary factors in an array of community challenges: under-funded schools and students who feel discouraged to continue their educations, joblessness, and that vital resources–like access to healthcare and healthy foods–are missing in communities. (SPG1, SPG2)

Challenges in Education and Training:
Quality of education suffers because there are not enough teachers for each class, leaving less time and money to re-evaluate the curriculum and comprehension of the students. Some employment opportunities exist, but people lack the resources and education to qualify for the jobs, i.e. training for skill-related jobs, demand for a minimum of high school diploma. (VOC ALP)

Transportation Issues:
The inefficiency of the PVTA bus system was brought up numerous times throughout the meetings in these regions. Fares are rising, yet services have not expanded or improved. Many people still face long commutes to work and school due to the number of transfers/bus routes that back track. Transfer fares expire after two hours, and buses are infrequent enough that people have to arrive to work hours ahead of time in order to be on time.

Connecting Priorities:
Expanded transportation options, safe walkable communities, and access to local healthy foods were often considered as top priorities, and seen as inter-connected. Planetary sustainability priorities, like clean, safe, renewable energy or protecting the environment and natural areas, were not often chosen as top priorities for many of these communities and were usually considered secondary. Yet many participants acknowledged their significance and recognized their inter-connectivity (especially in regards to issues of environmental justice and health disparities). Some suggested that if the key issues in their communities were improved, that would help create a stronger and healthier community and improve environmental concerns as well.

Small Cities
(Agawam, Easthampton, Northampton, West Springfield, Westfield)

In the small cities, affordable housing was also a top priority. Attitudes toward specific priorities differed from city to city but as their geographic location would suggest, concerns in this region were a mix of those identified in the urban core and Hilltown regions.

Supportive Housing:
At the Service Net event in Florence, participants mentioned the difficulties in finding transitional and sober housing as well as outreach counselors to assist in the process, especially for tenants with a mental disability or a criminal history. There needs to be more programs like Section 8 Housing available, since it is usually limited and selective. The participants also mentioned that affordable housing needs to be integrated in all types of neighborhoods, and not just confined to certain areas. It was noted that housing in the area is sometimes catered towards college students and/or professionals, and this creates a burden for finding affordable units.

People over Resources:
Like some of the urban areas, this group mentioned that resources, not people, are often prioritized in the "greening process." The top priorities identified by groups in this area were similar to those of the urban groups, but the participants here found that accessibility to resources like local/healthy foods was easier due to the number of farmer's markets in the area and the convenience of the bicycle paths. In addition, participants noted that they would appreciate more local employment opportunities for people without high school degrees or people with disabilities.

Latino/a Community in Small Cities:
For Latina/os outside of the urban area their concerns bridged the overall concerns of both regions, with a concern for equal opportunities a high priority for them. At the Casa Latina event

in Florence the participants' main interest was in quality of life issues with a particular emphasis on strengthening the continuum of better schools, training and employment. Affordable housing, access to healthy food choices and better, more dignified, health services were important topics, and enthusiasm for community building and community education was clear.

Affordable Housing Challenges:
In Easthampton, which has a history of resistance to affordable housing, one of the top priorities was affordable housing. Concerns about affordable housing come from NIMBYism, and the fear that the community would turn into "urban projects." There is a perception that affordable housing is an indicator of low income and/or lower class. All participants felt the need for programs aimed at breaking the stigma of affordable housing by demonstrating its positive benefits to the community at large by showing the human side of safe and affordable housing.

Transportation:
While transportation issues in Easthampton, Florence and Westfield were similar to the Hilltown challenges (infrequent and limited bus service) transportation issues did not dominate the conversations and priorities in the small city dialogues. Yet, a recurring issue in many sessions was the conflict between car and bicycle traffic, and congested downtown areas that affect pedestrian flows as well.

Incentives, Education and Awareness:
Participants in Westfield noted that people are not making their homes more energy efficient because either there aren't enough incentives, or the ones that do exist aren't providing enough to balance out the cost. People aren't aware of some of the local alternative energy resources available to them and there should be more educational programs to promote them.

Valley

(Amherst, East Longmeadow, Granby, Hadley, Hampden, Hatfield, South Hadley, Long-meadow, Ludlow, Southampton, Southwick, Wilbraham)

The priorities for the Valley area seemed to be split by class. Often priorities were grouped together as tiers. Employment opportunities, trained workforce, and better schools were grouped together as one tier. Participants who were more well off focused on ways of bringing large businesses into the area to improve the local economy.

Education/Training/Employment Continuum:

Participants believed that if there was more of a push towards education and skill training in the community, employment opportunities for many people in the community could increase. Although one group worried that increasing employment opportunities and affordable housing in Ludlow would cause unwanted crime and turn Ludlow into a "city."

Location + Economic Development:

Some participants felt that the proximity of the Pioneer Valley to Boston and New York both helps and hurts the lure for large businesses. Helps through the intersection of I-90 and I-91 and lower taxes, and hurts because those urban centers have more to offer to prospective businesses.

Housing + Energy Connections:

Affordable housing was not a high priority for this group and housing issues were addressed in terms of energy efficiency, similar to the groups in the Hilltowns. Participants did discuss different options for local renewable energy for residential uses and its limitations due to affordability and accessibility.

Transportation:

Like in many of the other communities, the PVTA service was described as too infrequent and inconvenient. Additional and more flexible transportation options need to be available.

Gardening and Recycling:

Enthusiasm for community gardens was expressed and a desire for more organized programs/initiatives to support these efforts. The need for more communication with the DPW in order to improve town-wide recycling in Ludlow was described, in general more coordination and education promoting recycling and other "green" initiatives would be welcome.

Flyers Promoting Dialogues

Hilltowns
(Blandford, Chester, Chesterfield, Cumming-ton, Goshen, Granville, Huntington, Middle-field, Montgomery, Plainfield, Russell, Tolland, Westhampton, Williamsburg, Worthington)

Participants at the Hilltown events defined two characteristics of the area that that are important to understand sustainability in the Hilltowns: the large land area and broad distribution of homes and town centers, and the spirit of indi-vidualism and self-reliance that pervades the region. These characteristics are at the center of both the challenges and the opportunities the Hilltowns face to become more sustainable communities. Most participants agreed that local resiliency/resourcefulness will play an important role in the solutions they identified, but leveraging regional support from institu-tional resources (UMass, PVPC, United Way and the Commonwealth) would help them better meet their sustainability needs.

Transportation:
There aren't enough bicycle paths or public transportation, making accessibility around the HIlltowns difficult without a car. Schools are difficult to travel to; it takes an hour for some children to travel to school by bus. The region could use better communication and coordi-nation within the community with regards to better, cleaner transportation options.

Affordable Housing:
There isn't enough affordable housing due to lack of funding, zoning restrictions and by-laws against multi-family dwellings. Participants emphasized that energy efficient and low-cost utility strategies should be supported.

Loosening Regulations / Localize Resources:
Economic opportunities for local businesses are considered extremely difficult due to zoning and other restrictions. One group suggested reforming current zoning laws in order to ease the process of starting local businesses. Some participants proposed localizing resources to support small businesses and minimize fuel expenditure. In the Southern Hilltown meeting there was a strong sentiment that there should be less government interference, more private market solutions and a substantial reduction in regulations and taxes as a way of preserving the Hilltowns lifestyle and values.

Civic Engagement:
In both Hilltown events participants wanted to be more involved in decision making in their communities. Promoting greater civic engage-ment throughout the Hilltowns through more meetings and community conversations was endorsed. Incorporating civic engagement into education was also suggested as a way of promoting more community investment among youth.

Limited Opportunities:
Young people leave the Hilltowns due to lack of employment opportunities and affordable housing. Creating opportunities in both these areas would help keep the population age-di-verse.

Access to Healthy Foods:
While local agriculture allows for better access to healthy food, in some parts of the Hilltowns, it is extremely difficult to access healthy foods. Food co-ops and farmer's markets exist, but there are too few and the quantities that the co-ops distributed are too large and not timely (often enough). Participants mentioned instances where they would have to drive at least a half hour in any direction to find fresh food.

Renewable Energy:
Clean, renewable energy (such as wind farms) was met with mixed opinions. Some felt that renewable technology is not quite advanced enough to invest in yet (and some participants voiced their anger towards taxpayer money used for these technologies). On the other hand, some participants felt that clean, renewable energy works and should be made more afford-able/accessible.

Engagement Session
in Monson

Quabog/Quabbin
(Ware, Belchertown, Pelham, Palmer, Monson, Brimfield, Wales, Holland)

The most heavily discussed priority in this area was transportation. Participants from Ware mentioned that they had moved there because of the affordability of housing, but the lack of public transportation and a cohesive community makes living there difficult. Many of the participants also identified a need for more quality affordable housing options and recreation activities for their children. And as with many groups trying to navigate the current economic crisis, employment opportunities, job training and education were identified as high priorities.

Transportation and Related Issues:
Public transportation in Ware is sparse. One participant noted that when someone misses the last bus, they have to walk as much as 8 miles home. Lack of transportation affects access to resources within the community, including hospital services, schools, and jobs, and the poor are most affected by this isolation. One participant noted that the lack of good transportation (and lack of child care) prevents most single mothers from finding employment (and some participants noted that employment is often denied to single mothers because of schedules limited by transportation). Many young residents stated that they moved to Ware because of affo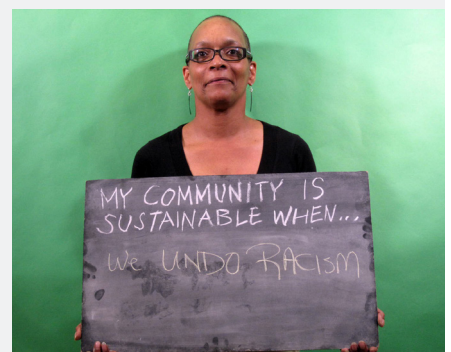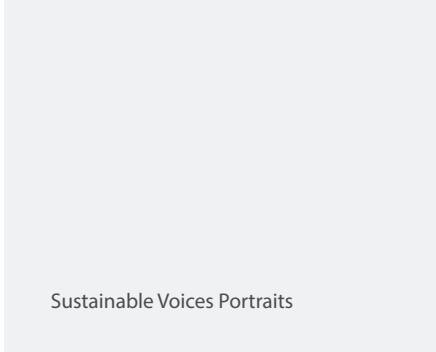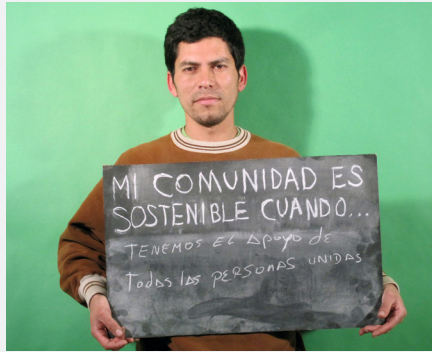rdable housing options compared to other cities in the Pioneer Valley, but eventually found that lack of public transportation services limited their options in terms of jobs, schools, and shopping. Participants discussed some alternative transportation possibilities including mini-bus/van service with community-determined routes, car sharing and car-pooling services.

Profiling and Stereotyping:
Some participants noted that they felt unsafe in their communities, mainly due to profiling/stereotyping (racial and class) by businesses and more established residents, as well as by some police officers.

Community Networking/Coordination:
Whether discussing housing issues, employment woes or transportation deficits, community networking (neighbor helping neighbor) was identified as an important way to work together to solve the challenges residents face. More opportunities to meet, talk and connect as a community would be welcomed in order to get the community to be more cohesive. The Community Benefit Advisory Committee at the Baystate Mary Lane Hospital also noted that a more coordinated effort among regional organizations would be useful to "get things done."

MY COMMUNITY IS SUSTAINABLE WHEN... SPREADING RESOURCES

MY COMMUNITY IS SUSTAINABLE WHEN... When our community becomes a community (WARE, MA)

MY COMMUNITY IS SUSTAINABLE WHEN... Protecting people is as important as protecting resources

MY COMMUNITY IS SUSTAINABLE WHEN... We CONSERVE Energy

MI COMUNIDAD ES SOSTENIBLE CUANDO... TENEMOS EL Apoyo de Todas las PERSONAS UNIDAS

MY COMMUNITY IS SUSTAINABLE WHEN... Transportation is more accessible

MY COMMUNITY IS SUSTAINABLE WHEN... we care about all of us!

MY COMMUNITY IS SUSTAINABLE WHEN... When we have transportation to outside cities as a catalyst to Education + Employment + Greatness

MY COMMUNITY IS SUSTAINABLE WHEN... Equality in public schools, as well as more activities (Free) for our children of today

MI COMUNIDAD ES SOSTENABLE CUANDO... Housing that is affordable

MY COMMUNITY IS SUSTAINABLE WHEN... THE PEOPLE have Power.

MY COMMUNITY IS SUSTAINABLE WHEN... SMALL BUSINESS PROSPERS

Sustainable Voices Portraits

MY COMMUNITY IS SUSTAINABLE WHEN... We use only what we need.

MY COMMUNITY IS SUSTAINABLE WHEN... We UNDO RACISM

Engagement Session in Chicopee

3

Best Practices for Engaging
Underrepresented Communities

an engagement resource guide

This report establishes a foundation on which we designed the community engagement process for the Western Massachusetts portion of the Sustainable Knowledge Corridor (SKC). It is the result of a review of case studies and peer-reviewed articles from planning, architecture and social science literature. The report, and subsequent conclusions, established the core values, best practices and preliminary framework for an outreach process that sought to engage under-represented communities within Hampden and Hampshire County.

The HUD Sustainable Communities Initiative providing funding for the development of the Regional Execution Plan states directly:

> "Successful applicants should be able to: Engage residents and stakeholders sub-stantively in the development of shared vision and its implementation early and throughout the process."
>
> U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Sustainable Communities Initiative

What is Community Engagement?

Community Engagement is a difficult phrase to define because it is increasingly applied to a wide range of activities carried out by organizations and individuals with conflicting standards and goals. At its simplest, community engagement means to work proactively to bring about the participation of a wide range of citizen voices in public policy or planning decisions. As we will see, this can lead to end results as limited as a well-considered public education campaign or as involved as a re-organization of an agency or community's governance system. Looking back at the history of community engagement we begin to understand how this range of meanings came about.

History + Contexts

In the late 1960s in cities like Chicago and New York activists influenced by earlier labor and housing movements sought to give greater voice to disenfranchised residents of urban housing projects by mobilizing them into powerful grassroots organizations. Many of the organizing tactics employed by community organizers in the 1960s and 1970s, including door to door campaigning and community meetings, are still used today by social justice groups, unions

and political parties. Community engagement emerged out of this era as a concerted effort by public agencies and non-profits to learn from community organizers and incorporate public participation in planning and policy decisions.

Community engagement differs from community organizing in that it is not typically led by community activists and does not advocate confrontation and protest as a strategy for policy change. Instead community engagement favors a careful process of cultivating inclusive dialogue between stakeholders. Usually this conversation is led by an outside arbitrator, professional designer, member of the academy or trained facilitator.

Community engagement is useful to planners and policy makers for a variety of reasons. Engagement helps to improve and inform plans and it establishes legitimacy for the elected officials responsible for the plans execution. As importantly, civic engagement also builds political will for plans and policies that might otherwise be viewed as mandated from above. As John Bryson and Barbara Crosby writes in Leadership for the Common Good , "...in order to marshal the legitimacy, power, authority, and knowledge required to tackle any major public issue, organizations and institutions have had to join forces in a 'shared-power' world."

A report by the Kettering Foundation on public participation explains that community engagement is bound up with larger relational dynamics between citizens and their government. Kettering researcher Byron White notes the distinction in attitudes towards government and large institutions at the micro and macro level. At the macro-level citizens are hyper conscious of power differences and view government agencies and large institutions as "bullies," but when engaged in specific or micro

processes, and allowed to form direct relation-ships with staff, the same citizenry becomes more appreciative of the work of professional policy-makers and planners.

On the other hand, while community engage-ment offers the potential for a vast improvement over traditional, unilateral decision-making, it does not automatically eliminate the power differential between the governing and the governed. In fact, done poorly, engagement can exacerbate tensions that exist between commu-nity residents and planning agencies. Within this context it is important to understand that power-sharing is the long-term goal of a good community engagement process.

Understanding Good Engagement

PolicyLink, a national research institute, has an excellent description of of civic/community engagement and its purpose:

> "Civic engagement is about process and results. It engages diverse constit-uencies in decision-making; promotes and sustains a platform for action and policy change and advances social and economic equity."

One of the largest misconceptions of civic/community engagement is that it is a series of actions or events conducted to help inform a single set of decisions over a discreet period of time. Most community engagement authorities we have reviewed have stressed that commu-nity engagement is not meant to be a short term effort. Instead it aims to change the way decisions are made in the long term by altering community and institutional relationships, establishing healthy and sustainable commu-nication channels, and devising collaborative working processes between agencies with power and the communities they affect.

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The Kirwan Institute's report "Growing Together for a Sustainable Future" calls this investment in engagement a new paradigm of regional devel-opment:

> "There is a real need in the planning field for understanding how to bring equity to the table from the outset, to engage with marginalized groups and advocacy orga-nizations as decision makers, not just as consultants, and for understanding how to incorporate equity concerns into regional planning."

Developed as a guide to best practices for the Sustainable Communities Initiative the Kirwan Report argues persuasively that the key to successfully transitioning to this new deci-sion-making process is building the capacity of both the regional planning agencies and disad-vantages communities and community organi-zations. This reciprocity was a critical take away for the SKC's engagement design process. The SKC process aims first and foremost to develop the capacity of planners to engage under-rep-resented communities while simultaneously developing the capacity of under-represented communities to participate confidently in sustainable planning and implementation efforts.

	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision. We will seek your feedback on drafts and proposals.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work together with you to formulate solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

IAP2's Public Participation Spectrum

How is success measured?

Once an agency has made a commitment to shifting to a more inclusive decision-making process, it is important to define the different levels of engagement that might be achieved. The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) provides a base framework for understanding the various levels and methods of engagement:

Note that the literature review revealed a wide debate on the adequacy of this framework because of its failure to acknowledge the distinct agendas and pre-existing power of community members, as well as the oversimplified directionality of the framework. In practice, most engagement processes utilize more than one strategy bouncing back and forth from informing to involving and collaborating.

The SKC partner planning agencies, like most regional planning agencies today, are already actively working with some groups at various points along this spectrum. A critical question for the SKC is what needs to be done to move towards a culture of consistent collaboration with under-represented communities so that the benefits of planning are more equally distributed and sustained?

Who participates and what do they get out of community engagement?

Both planning agencies and the communities they serve are more complex than much of the writing about community engagement acknowledges. When we speak about the history of planners or the culture of planning, we are talking about planning in the broadest sense, fully aware that actual planning agencies are made up of people with a range of backgrounds, skills, community affiliations and professional motivations.

Communities are even more diverse than planning agencies. What makes design of a community engagement plan for the Hartford-Springfield Region or any large region challenging is that it is invariably made up of many distinct communities. To achieve an equitable future for the region, planners have to acknowledge the differences between communities, all the while bearing in mind that each community is itself a diverse set of distinct individuals and subgroups who do not share a single perspective on any issue. Reaching out and engaging such a diverse region requires great political and cultural awareness.

In his research on community engagement social scientist Brian Head notes the reasons governmental agencies and communities participate in community engagement activities. Head argues that government agencies participate in order:

- share responsibility for planning decisions with the people effected by their decisions
- restore trust to the relationship between agencies and their communities
- explore and test ideas in a public setting
- open the door to new ideas
- minimize the potential for vocal opposition to plans

Meanwhile communities participate in order to:

- influence plans and policies
- achieve equity and social justice in their community
- aid members of their specific communities
- grow the power of local organizations and businesses

Knowing that this mix of positive and defensive motivations exists, Head and others recommend building an engagement plan around the positive reasons for participation rather than the defensive reasons-- restoring trust, achieving and testing new ideas, achieving equity, growing local power and improving local well-being.

The change we are talking about requires a re-direction of energy from within planning agencies like PVPC and CCROG to establish relationships with communities that have not traditionally participated in planning processes. To do this, agencies need to:

- Commit to the goal of shared decision-making
- Understand the barriers to participation and educate the staff about barriers to participation
- Work to reduce these barriers through patient effort and the commitment of resources
- Track progress made on reaching the goal of shared decision-making over time

Additionally, several of the case studies reviewed for this report stress the importance of breaking the process down into stages with clear, measurable results and windows for shared review and assessment. The alternative, trying to sustain long-term commitments with no short-term successes, tends to lead to doubts about the legitimacy of the process and commitment of the agency to achieving change in specific communities.

What are the barriers to community engagement & shared-decision making?

While acknowledging the motivations for engagement, a community engagement plan also needs to acknowledge and address the barriers that prohibit individuals and sometimes whole communities from participating. for members of the community.

Expectations:
The first and perhaps most challenging barrier to participation is the expectation of failure. As Byron White's concept of the hurdle of macro relational politics suggests, people will choose not to participate if they feel their participation will not lead to a direct outcome or if they perceive the process to be "bogus."

> **Solution**: Don't do it if it isn't genuine. Begin by initiating relationships with "gateway" organizations that can convey your intentions to the larger community (churches, NGOs, schools, social justice groups, civic groups).

Time Issues:
Time is in short supply and we all have an endless list of things we would rather be doing. Attending inconsequential meetings is not usually high on the list.

> **Solution**: be more creative in the design of an event, engage a popular intermediary to attract attention, or work the event into existing routines.

Money Issues:
For communities that face economic difficulty time translates into money. If participation requires that people sacrifice time that could be spent at a job or looking for a job, then participation declines even farther.

> **Solution**: Adjust to local needs. Offer multiple opportunities and well-considered locations and times. Offset costs (provide babysitting, transportation and food).

Distance Issues:
For rural communities driving = time = money. The same solutions apply as mentioned above, but with the additional suggestion of using internet-based tools in addition to in-person tools in order to increase rural participation.

Educational and Political Insecurity:
Community members often feel they lack the specialized knowledge required to participate. They may assume knowledge of zoning or ability to speak publicly are pre-prerequisites. In immigrant communities fear of political repercussion can inhibit participation.

> **Solution**: Make clear in announcements and in facilitation what you will be doing and how everyone's voice will be safely and respectfully heard. Again, provide a variety of ways of engaging, especially one-on-one and small group methods. Be patient and invest in capacity-building and "gateway" relationships.

Linguistic Barriers:
Failure to advertise in multiple languages and failure to do direct outreach to non-English speaking communities often leads to mistrust in the decisions reached by a planning process. Because language and culture are intimately connected, it is also important to understand traditional leadership structures and conventions of immigrant communities and not assume that simply translating a flyer to a second language will secure participation.
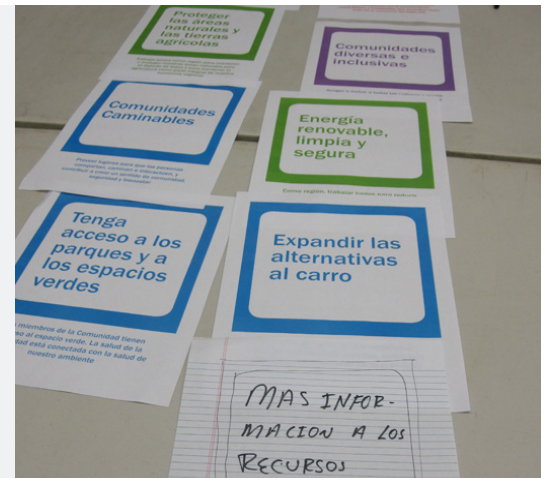
Priority Cards in Spanish

Physical and Elderly Disabilities:
Again, it requires a commitment of consideration and resources to provide for the special needs of physically challenged and elderly participants with respect to language, facilitation and interpretation. While disabled participants are often able to communicate very effectively on issues of access, they also need to be given the opportunity to participate and take leadership roles on other issues and should not be pigeon-holed. Likewise, elderly residents often have a wealth of time and knowledge to offer a process but are overlooked before the process even begins.

Youth and Participation:
It is easy to overlook the value of engaging youth in planning processes, but many examples exist of youth engagement leading to the development of powerful local leaders and stronger relationships with schools and neighborhoods. The time young people have to be present and aware of their communities makes them very useful and potent participants.

Authentic Local Representation:
For many community engagement processes it is possible to work with proxy organizations, NGOs or membership groups that represent the population with whom you hope to work. Such organizations can be tremendously helpful in framing issues, identifying potential leaders and collaborators and coordinating community dialogues. But it is important that these organizations genuinely represent the communities you hope to reach. The measure of authenticity here is whether the members choose their leadership. If an organization is purely a charitable or service organization then it may not accurately speak for or be accountable to the community it serves. In fact, a culture of paternalism may make some service organizations particularly unreliable intermediaries. To genuinely engage the community you have to be prepared to work hard to reach past the upper echelons of intermediaries to develop lasting relationships with the people directly affected by the planning decisions.

If there are no appropriate membership organizations to work with, then it may be necessary to work towards the creation of a Local Task Force made up of volunteers from the community who can act as representative advocates for the community in an on-going basis. This may take time to develop, but this strategy has been employed by several regional planning agencies with some success. It is important to have this Task Force nominated and elected by the community either within the context of a public meeting or through a public nomination process so that it also has community legitimacy.

Challenges for Planners

A different set of barriers exist for the planning agency seeking community engagement. Assuming that a commitment to engagement exists within the agency, these barriers also need to be addressed institutionally:

Issue Fragmentation:

Planning agencies typically break issues into distinct subject areas around which solutions, expertise and funding are organized within the agency. Planners invariably develop their own language and their own understanding of "issue turf" and may struggle to understand that community members do not see the world through a similar lens. There are a variety of ways to address this problem. Researchers Kevin Hanna and Ana Dale have written extensively on it and suggest reorienting the culture of a planning agency toward an integrated systems thinking where the long term goal is landscape integration and social equity. They recommend that planners reframe their specializations in a way that accounts for the impact of plans and policies on long term sustainable goals and benchmarks. In a sense this is precisely what is occurring in the region right now. The SKC project has the potential to help reorganize regional partners internally away from issue silos and into a structure that serves long term equity goals and sustainability planning.

Governance Fragmentation:

Similarly, local residents often have little patience for the boundary disputes of city, regional and state agencies. Citizens often view the "Government" as a single, large entity and are not as cognizant of the limits of agency or municipal authority. Given that we have already established that asking for public input and then not having the ability to follow through is counterproductive, it is strongly recommended that the regional planning agency actively solicit involvement at all levels of government and all impacted localities.

Specialization And Implementation:

While the goal here is to look at issues "holistically and systemically" and empower the community to participate in both short and long term decision-making, it is not accurate to say that all planning issues can generate the same level of useful public discourse. The literature and various case studies suggest that community engagement works best to shape general direction or visioning or to address specific targeted development plans or issues (ex. selecting TOD projects). Community engagement does not typically help to generate implementation strategies because implementation strategizing often requires specialized knowledge. In other words, it is best to aim to empower the community to set priorities and tell them how it is possible to meet the priorities. Then let the community re-evaluate and vote on the priorities and implementation strategy rather than to ask the community to make decisions in areas where they lack the ability to make informed decisions of science, policy or finance. While education is a major part of a community engagement process, there is a limit as to how much you can ask of volunteer participants.

Lack of Communication Skills:

Meeting the specific needs of diverse community participants is exhausting work. No single staff member is likely to possess all the communication skills necessary to build the variety of relationships required. And if such a staff member did exist, it would be dangerous to have so much responsibility resting on a single individual's shoulders. To develop a higher level of participatory decision-making the agency again needs to take the long view, investing in communication and facilitation training of staff while hiring a set of employees who are capable of communicating with the diversity of the community.

Report Back at
Community
Dialogue in
Chicopee

Resource Limitations:

Lastly, planning agencies have their own time and budget limitations that can inhibit a community engagement strategy. The only way to address this is to keep a long range view and make strategic decisions as to how best to invest resources in sustainable relationships with underserved communities. As stated previously it is important to be direct and clear with the community about the limitations of budget, time and resources from the onset of any planning process.

On the issue of resource limitations we want to note an interesting publicly-funded study done in the UK that compares the outcomes of small scale engagement efforts to large scale engagement efforts. In this study the authors argue that

an agency needs to be very clear as to its motivations for engagement and select the scale of engagement that best meets its purposes. They differentiate between educational outreach as a motivation versus "true engagement" (a simplified version of the IAP2 spectrum). "Large scale" is defined in the study as a meeting of over 100 people. The author compares the results of different types of proceedings and demonstrates that community engagement events become less generative as they grow larger. If the goal is to educate the community, sway public opinion or bring about a call to action, then reaching the largest number of people possible should be the priority. On the other hand, if the goal is to gather creative and useful community input than small, targeted events will yield better results. (Hyam)

Engagement Methods / An Overview

A vast amount of literature and numerous case studies exist touting the advantages of various community engagement methodologies. On first glance this body of literature is promising. Gradually, as you weed through it questions emerge about the veracity of the claims made about competing engagement methodologies. Studying the literature over the course of a year UMass Landscape Architecture Masters student Julie Meyer came to the conclusion that,

"Most claims about public participation and participatory design are of an anecdotal or advisory nature. There are too few documented, researched evaluations of how well claims are met in project outcomes, and even fewer across multiple projects or over time."

That said, a history of community engagement is gradually emerging and from this history certain trends are becoming clear. In reviewing various methods of engagement, consider the following questions in order to assess how robust the long term impact of the engagement will be on relationships and decision-making.

Consider:
- who designs the engagement event?
- who facilitates the engagement event?
- who participates in the event?
- how equitably does participation occur?
- how are different kinds of knowledge (expert and local) leveraged?
- how is public input acknowledged and incorporated into the plan?
- how does input lead to concrete action?
- how do long-term relationships build trust?

Traditional Planning Forum

Traditional models of community engagement in planning begin with the assumption that bringing stakeholders together in a public forum to discuss plans and public policies yields stronger public consensus. This type of engagement is relatively weak engagement because it leaves most of the control over the dialogue in the hands of the planning agency and presents the plans only after they have been developed by professional staff. Little is done to balance the playing field of power so that all members of the community can contribute to the process. In the IAP2 spectrum this would count as INFORMING and CONSULTING. The goal is primarily the ratification of the plan.

The Charrette Model

The planning charrette, a now widely familiar form of community engagement, came about as a response to the way traditional planning forums were facilitated. Charrettes are more intensive engagement experiences typically led by facilitators trained to lead with impartiality. The charrette aims to balance local and expert knowledge by drawing out input through creative brainstorming and decision-making exercises. Charrettes are better researched and planned events that typically invite a cross section of community members and skilled professionals to the process.

Charrettes are most useful in visioning processes because they bring about healthy dialogue between experts and regular citizens. They are useful tools for sustainability planning when used in conjunction with educational outreach efforts (before the charrette) and implementation workshops after the charrette. There are various schools of thought as to how charrettes should be organized. (see: www.charretteinstitute.org)

Charrettes are often criticized for becoming too much like parlor games that attract a very specific profile of community members (those who are already engaged in civic affairs), and for not directly leading to the adoption of concrete plans or sets of actions. While charrettes can lead to collaboration between stakeholders after the fact, such collaboration is entirely voluntary and incidental. Because power over final decisions still rests with the planning agency charrettes are not viewed as empowering to underserved communities.

Participatory Research & Design
Criticism of traditional forums and charrettes by development professionals working in countries where power differentials are often starkly apparent led to the development of a set of methods known as rural participatory appraisal (RPA) or, more loosely as Participatory Action Research.

Participatory research trains planning and design professional to engage with community residents one-on-one or in small groups. Typically this involves a great deal of field work where teams of planners go into the community and meet with residents in informal settings and on their own terms. They ask questions, record answers, draw maps and diagrams and pursue input in an investigatory manner. Participatory research is usually an iterative process. Researchers analyze the information they gather, revise their assumptions, represent their ideas graphically, and return to the community repeatedly to gather feedback on the evolving plan.

Participatory research is respected for its ability to capture local knowledge and evolve plans until they reach appropriate end results. It is more genuinely collaborative than the charrette model.

The downside of participatory research is that it is time consuming and depends on the training, abilities and commitment of the planners working in the field to respect the input of the community. While results can be transformational, it does not typically alter the existing decision-making structure unless it becomes a long term working method within an organization.

Like the charrette, participatory design describes a set of tools and strategies that many practitioners employ, the most complete outline of which is probably the IDEO system for Human Centered Design (see: www.designkit.org).

Visioning
Visioning is the lengthy process of leading a community through several phases of deliberation to achieve a single unified image of the community's future. Visioning was pioneered by planner Stephen Ames who recommends organizing the process around four simple questions-- Where are we today? Where are we going? Where do we want to go? How can we get there? The process typically involves presentation of data about existing conditions and scientific projections about the consequences of different courses of action, as well as professionally, non-judgmentally facilitated public hearings and outreach efforts. Visioning is a bit like participatory design in that it is an iterative process. Planners absorb and respond to input and revise the plan gradually under the scrutiny of the community.

Critics of visioning argue that it often achieves consensus by resolving to a vague set of conclusions that may not be achievable. It is also a costly process involving a great deal of planning and technical expertise. It deserves high marks for its commitment to collaboration and empowerment nonetheless.

Appreciative Inquiry & Asset Mapping

These two tools are not identical but share a criticism of the often conflict-oriented, problem-solving nature of most planning processes. Appreciative Inquiry is a four step process of community deliberation that helps communities visualize a positive future based on shared recollections of positive memories and past experiences. Asset-mapping is a similar process that focuses more concretely on graphically documenting positive aspects of the natural and built environment and community relations. Both tools are usually used in conjunction with other community engagement methods. They do not inherently bring about more robust collaboration or empowerment and do not obligate any long term change in planning methods.

Study Circles & Community Dialogues

Study Circle is a methodology for developing community dialogue on intractable problems. The aim of the methodology closely matches the aim of "community engagement" defined in the IAP2 spectrum which is to strengthen the democratic process by promoting thoughtful deliberation and shared decision-making between public institutions and the communities they serve. In the best examples Study Circles alter how communities deliberate civic issues gradually building a tone of respect and engagement within communities. It is an idea that sprang directly from community organizing. Study Circles have a lot in common with Participatory Research but rely on regular people rather than professional planners and designers to do the bulk of the organizing, facilitating and design.

Developed by the Topsfield Foundation, the study circle process provides straight forward tips and guides for how to create and facilitate a network of small study groups of community members willing to research and deliberate on a single issue of concern (see: www.studycircle.org).

Sustained Dialogue and Community Conversations are similar methodologies that have been employed to change relationships in fractured communities through patience and deliberation. A growing body of case studies demonstrates the great effectiveness of these slow cooking methods in building community capacity. They are especially successful when given institutional and political support. They should register as empowering and potentially structurally transformational. It is not clear if this process could be used effectively with regional sustainability planning at the initiation of a planning agency. But the recommendations and case studies should be examined for useful lessons for leadership and capacity building.

Community Polling Methods

If the goal is immediate community participation in decision-making than a number of existing democratic participation tools exist if the will is there to use them. Participatory budgeting, ballot referendums and citizen juries are three of the best known. They can be effective when combined with educational campaigns about issues that a planning agency seeks to address. Participatory Budgeting asks voters to determine fiscal priorities for their community through a ballot system that is similar to an electoral ballot. Citizen juries ask randomly selected representatives of a community in teams of about 20 people to deliberate and pass judgment on issues on behalf of the larger community. Juries are empanelled like a legal jury and are presented with competing arguments and information and are asked to deliberate and respond to the merits of competing arguments. They are more useful to the resolution of contentious issues than to long range sustainability planning, but the general concept of a focus group has merit to planning decisions and is not new. Citizens juries are not yet widely used in the United States. In Europe they are known as Citizen Panels.

Community Dialogue
in Springfield

A host of more specific tool sets are available
and are worth considering when designing
specific community engagement events. Two
rich collections of tools that provide overviews
and links to detailed resources include:

National Council for Dialogue and
Deliberation Planning Tool Exchange:
http://www.planningtoolexchange.org/
resource/ncdd-resource-center

People and Participation (UK based):
http://www.peopleandparticipation.
net/display/Involve/Home

Engagement Case Studies

YAMPA VALLEY VISION 2030

Overview: A citizen initiated, two stage, long-range planning process

Context: Rural NW Colorado

Scale: 1200 residents out of a population of 70,000 engaged over two years

Tools: Asset-mapping, appreciative inquiry, photo mapping by residents, small group deliberation & surveying

Lessons: Develop peer facilitators, focus on assets, show progress, be careful with language, use honest visualizations, use well-designed materials, publicly share outcomes.
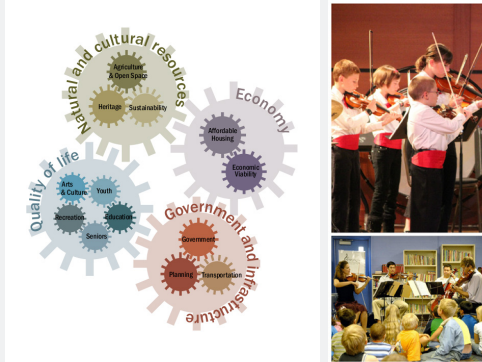
HEART OF BIDDEFORD, MAINE

Overview: A citizen initiated, two stage, long-range planning process.

Context: A mid-size coastal Maine community, also an Orton Heart & Soul Project

Structure: Story Collection (2009-2010); Neighborhood Forums (2010); Master Planning (2010-2011)

Tools: Video, audio and verbal storytelling collection; Community circle conversations; Best Practices Workshops; Traditional charettes

Lessons: Individual and collective narratives can guide planning towards a more appropriate, respectful and unique outcome, but the process of asking for and listening to stories does require an investment of energy and time.
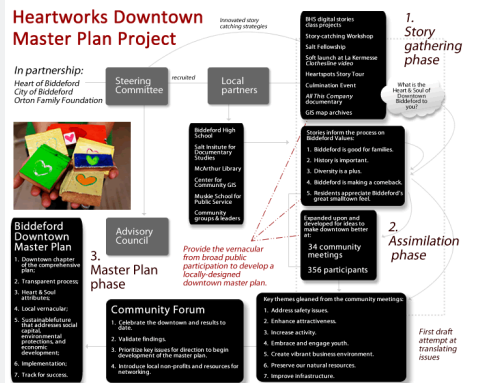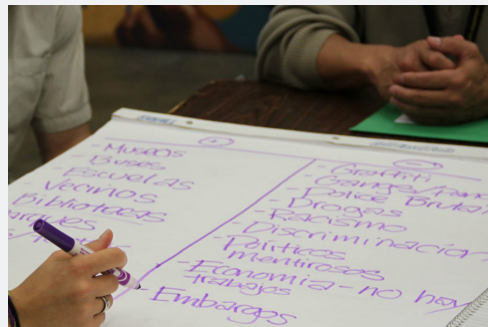
LOS ANGELES PLANNING SCHOOL

Overview: A citizen advocacy project working with Latinos who are disengaged from planning processes.

Context: Urban, Latino/a neighborhood in LA

Structure: Workshops involving as many as 50 residents per session

Tools: Hands-on and theatrical games and discussions

Lessons: Typically disenfranchised communities require both opportunities to be heard and advocacy education on planning issues to become empowered participants. Customized innovative engagement tools and methods borrowed from political organizing seem to have a higher rate of return than do traditional planning tools under these conditions.

CENTER FOR URBAN PEDAGOGY (CUP) ENVISIONING DEVELOPMENT TOOLKIT

Overview: A set of toolkits aimed at presenting information about zoning, affordable housing and ULURP.

Context: New York City

Structure: Interactive workshops using hands-on activities.

Tools: Affordable housing, zoning and ULURP guidebooks, accompanying charts and activities, an interactive online map

Lessons: Complex procedures can be made understandable through graphic design, hands-on activities promote better learning and reasoning.

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Farmers
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Food Systems
Partners   Actions

Forests could   ◦ Possible Winter
be productive   Farmers Market
CISA   ◦ More Community
Buy Local Organization   Gardens
Birkshire Grown   ◦ Add nut trees on
                     edges of Forest System
Permaculture Guild ◦ Legislation to Promote
Food Bank Farm   Slaughter Locally

                   — Bring Him to Speak
                      Holding Workshop

w/

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Actions
work   Local
         ◦ All the papers should
           be available at the
           Creamery
         ◦ Organize activities like
            Spring Festival/
             Cummington
         ◦ Pat Lucks
         ◦ Work with what
            expand

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Engagement Session in Cummington

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An Outline of Activities To Enhance Community Engagement

engagement tools kit

This toolkit provides an array of activities to engage communities on issues of sustainability. They include: **Entry Issue Tools** that introduce topic issues; **Teaching/Learning Tools** that provide information to the community in an innovative way; and **Dialogue Tools**, which encourage dialogue, focus, brainstorming and/ or reflection. Each of these tools can be adapted for new situations and topics. We encourage creative transformation of any of them to better meet your engagement needs.

Tool Name: **Sustainable Web**

Tool Type: Entry Tool

Time: 30 minutes.

Description: This activity is designed for a group to identify important issues and to understand how those various issues are interconnected.

Process: During the first step of the process participants write issues important to them on Post-It notes. These Post-It notes are placed on a large piece of paper in no particular order, but in an arrangement that allows enough space between each for writing and drawing lines.

In the second step participants take turns identifying a person, place or group that is affected by two issues. They then draw a line between the two issues on the large piece of paper and write the place or group they identified along that line.

After everyone has done at least one, or there are enough lines on the paper to spark discussion, participants have a conversation about what the activity shows, and how solutions can be found that help fix multiple issues for the various people identified as being affected.

Benefits: Identifies problems important to a community, fosters an understanding of interconnectivity, fuels discussion.

Challenges: Risks repetition and needs clear facilitation to not be confusing.

Tool Name: **Community Images Survey**

Tool Type: Entry Tool

 Time: 30 minutes.

Description: This tool asks participants to rate a selection of images of their communities to create a dialogue around what they envision in their community.

Process: A slideshow of contrasting images (5-20 images depending on time) from the community is presented and then rated by participants on a scale of -3 to 3, with 0 being neutral.

The images must be rated quickly (within 10 seconds) to get initial reactions without focusing too much on the details of the photograph.

The scores for each slide is then tallied and participants can begin to engage in a conversation about why they rated the images as they did.

Benefits: Allows for collective and individual voices to be shared; simple and engaging

Challenges: Requires preparation before meeting to gather photographs. Results may be skewed to the familar and conventional.
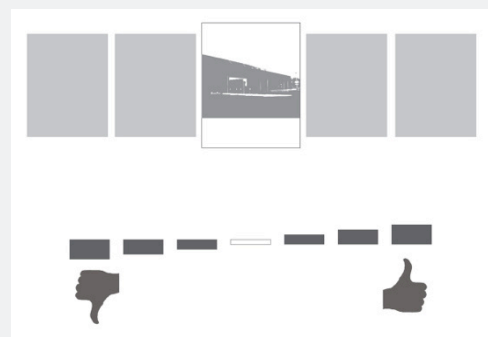
Tool Name: **Everyday Sustainability**

Tool Type: Entry Tool (as hand out)

Time: 15 minutes.

Description: This is sort of a "Mad Libs" activity, where participants both recognize those things they already do that make their communities more sustainable and imagine things they could do to make their communities more sustainable. For example:

I fixed my _____ instead of buying a new one.

I am going to try growing _____ outside my home.

I can make my home more energy/resource efficient when I _____.

Here are three things that would make my community more sustainable:

       1. _____

       2. _____

       3. _____

Process: Participants each get a paper and pen and fill in the blanks individually. Answers are read aloud.

Participants then place a star next to the things they already do, and circle those they hope to do. Match people up who have already done these things with those who are hoping to do them. (Beginnings of a skill/knowledge share.)

Benefits: Could be a quick warm up or could lead into a larger skill-based/knowledge sharing activity.

Challenges: The questions are quite specific, not open-ended and require participants who are already engaged (and taking personal actions). Doesn't emphasize connections between topics.

Tool Name: **Community Parts**

Tool Type: Entry Tool

Time: 10 minutes.

Description: The idea involves labeling body parts with sustainability topics, to get people to start thinking about the many ways that the issues affect them.

Process: Participants are asked to consider the terms listed and use them to label each body part. Discussion can evolve during the labeling, e.g. "I am labeling Food Security as Hands because I serve my family dinner with my hands," or "I am labeling Local Leadership as Heart because I believe it takes courage to lead a community."

As people tag body parts with different the topics, a discussion can begin about the overlaps, e.g. "Education and Jobs are both tagged as the brain. What kind of connections exist between those two issues?"

Benefits: A very open-ended exercise. Potentially a good warm-up.

Challenges: Some people may not feel comfortable or not understand connecting topics to body parts.

if my community is a body...
what are the parts that make it healthy?

what part of the body do these terms make you think of? why?

transportation	affordable housing	jobs
food security	local leadership	clean water
clean air	education	renewable energy
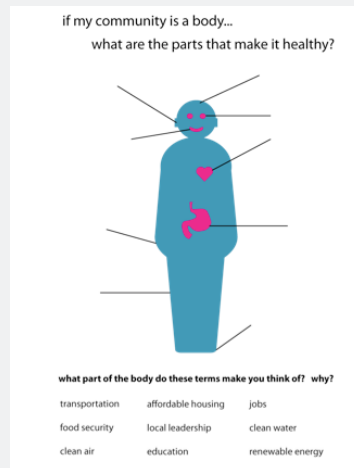
Tool Name: Photo Voice / Sustainability

Tool Type: Teaching/Learning Tool

Time: Varies

Description: Participants will be introduced to important issues of sustainability by becoming keen observers of their surroundings and learn to conduct personal/visual research. This tool should be part of a larger education/learning program on sustainability and is an ideal exercise between class assignment or for a field trip.

Process: After an introduction or learning session on a key issue of sustainability (housing, transportation, climate change, etc...), participants are asked to take photos of how the topic is understood in their community and select a single photo that represents their interpretation.

Participants will then bring in their printed photo into the next session and divide into small discussion groups where they will present their photos to each other and talk about how it exemplifies the topic area.

Benefits: This activity will generate active observation in participant's neighborhood/community, and allow participants to think about engagement through an artistic/visual lens. It encourages story telling, giving everyone a voice and making them feel included.

Challenges: Not all participants may have access to a camera/photo printing resources. Must be part of ongoing programming.

Photo Voice project
in Westfield

Tool Name: **Mapping Our Routes**

Tool Type: Teaching/Learning Tool

Time: 60 minutes.

Description: Mapping Our Routes is a tool designed to get people talking about their daily activities and how they are related to sustainability. Participants literally map their daily routes, using color markers and large format aerial maps.

Process: The activity begins with a discussion on the benefits and chal-lenges of local transportation. Then working with a large scale map, partic-ipants mark their paths using different colors for different types of trans-portation (bike, foot, bus, car). In addition, participants are asked to locate places of work, education and sources for food.

Participants then break into groups and discuss how the places on their routes connect local transportation to the other key issues for a healthy community: Food, Jobs and the Environment.

The groups consider the following questions to foster dialogue:
- What about your route works and what doesn't work?
- Are there transportation obstacles to your obtaining the food/jobs/ education that you need?
- Are there things about your route that help you in obtaining the food/jobs/education you need?

Benefits: Task-oriented. Encourages storytelling. Goal is to gather stories and generate questions. Good potential for a first meeting/warm up. Process can begin to generate questions about a specific place-based set of experiences.

Challenges: Task-oriented and aerial maps can be hard for some people to read.

Route Mapping Presentation in Springfield

Tool Name: Water Works

Tool Type: Teaching/Learning Tool

Time: 30 minutes.

Description: A diagramming process that illustrates the advantages of Green Infrastructure.

Process: Participants work together to construct a diagram that presents the layout of a Combined Sewer System. The exercise identifies water from four source points and delivers to one end point.

Sources:
A Toilet (Domestic sewage)
A Rain Spout (Building Run-off)
A Parking Lot Storm Drain
A Roadway Storm Drain

Destination:
Municipal Sewage Treatment Plant (MSTP)

Once the diagram is drawn or assembled, participants are asked to explain the flow of water through the system. Then they are given several additional elements that represent parts of the system that become active when storms occur:

New Source:
Surface Run-off

New Destination:
The Connecticut River System (an added branch before the MSTP).

The facilitator presents a map showing which communities in the region experience *Combined Sewage Overflow* (CSO) and a chart showing the amount of overflow reaching the river annually and the health impact of high bacteria levels in the river. (Note: a key equity issue is that older industrial cities experience the highest amount of CSO.)

Next, participants are asked to brainstorm ways of reducing the water levels in the Combined Sewer System. The key solution is to reduce the point sources, i.e. cut down on domestic waste, paved surface run off and downspout run off. How can this be done? Information on green roofs, bio swales, and permeable pavement are presented and discussed. To conclude the exercise, participants sort solutions into individual actions and community actions/policy recommendations.

Benefits: The active diagramming makes a complicated issue accessible and the data shows why this is an equity issue. The workshop also delivers information efficiently and leads to actionable goals.

Challenges: The workshop requires some knowledge of green infrastructure issues/solutions. It also does not sufficiently address the costs of implementing community-wide changes.

Tool Name: **Am I Food Secure?**

Tool Type: Teaching/Learning Tool

 Time: Individual / 30 minutes.

Description: This activity provides a basic definition of food security, as well as a survey to allow individuals to see which category of food security they fall under.

Process: Using a graphically accessible survey the participants answer a series of survey questions and tally the amount of "yes" responses to better undersatnd their level of food insecurity.

Benefits: Quick and easy exercise that can be done without much guidance and still provides clear information about food security

Challenges: The answers to the questions may reveal a level of poverty and hunger that may be uncomfortable for participants to discuss in a public setting.

Tool Name: **Understanding Equity**

Tool Type: Teaching/Learning Tool

 Time: 15 - 30 minutes.

Description: Each of the key issues of sustainability (housing, transportation, climate change, etc...) has multiple ways for them to be understood. This activity involves discussions of "conventional" and "equitable" ways to understand these issues/topics. Participants review key factors and group descriptions into two categories to better understand the social justice aspects of each issue.

For example: Transportation

Conventional Understanding
- Develop non-polluting transit.
- Decrease single occupant vehicle trips.
- Create mixed-use development along transit corridors.

Social Justice/Equity Understanding
- Increase accessibility to support the needs of people without reliable access to a car.
- Ensure transit affordability.

Process: Each description could be in card form, or sticky note, or written on large-format paper with participants connecting them. This could also be done meeting-style, with a facilitator writing as people call out items.

Benefits: Gets people thinking about equity issues of sustainability.

Challenges: Requires some knowledge of social equity issues to participate. May be too "teacher"oriented.

Tool Name: **The Three Es**

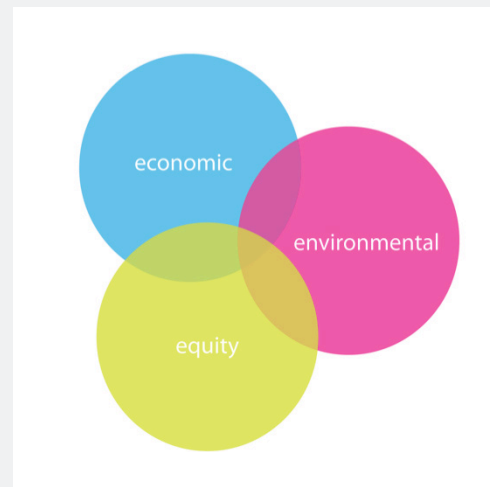Tool Type: Teaching/Learning Tool

Time: 30 minutes.

Description: A tool for education surrounding the 3 Es of sustainability as well as a chance to hear back from the community on what is important to them and why.

Process: The facilitator introduces the 3 Es of sustainability and offers brief explanations of what they encompass. Following, the facilitator asks the question "which E do you believe to be most important and why?"

Participants write their responses on post-it Notes and verbally present them while sticking their post-its in the appropriate section of the printed diagram (on the wall). After hearing all responses, the facilitator broadly discusses sustainability and emphasizes equity's role in it.

Benefits: Provides a chance to get varied feedback on what is important to community members. Also provides education on what "sustainability" means as well as the chance to translate this definition into personal significance. It is also very simple and easy to understand, and provides opportunities to discuss how the three Es are connected/related.

Challenges: There may be many similar responses, and activity may be too "teacher"oriented.

Tool Name: **Research and Development**

Tool Type: Teaching/Learning Tool

Time: 2+ hours (may require multiple sessions)

Description: This tool is both an internet use instructional session and a research session into issues regarding Environmental Planning and/or Green Infrastructure. Participants research issues, case studies and solutions regarding a local environmental issue/plan through the use of a variety of internet research tools.

Process: Working in a computer lab or with several laptops, participants are introduced to the key issues of Environmental Planning and/or Green Infrastructure through a variety of on-line resources and organizations. The first step is to research issues affecting their community and present their findings in a document. They then research a case study of a city with a successful Environmental or Green Infrastructure Plan and create a Presentation about it. Their findings are presented in Google Docs using various forms such as the document, presentation and spreadsheet.

Benefits: Would interest community members because it teaches both practical skills and facts about Environmental Planning and Green Infrastructure.

Challenges: Requires access to a computer lab and substantial curriculum development prior to session. Facilitator must be familiar with both the technology and the information being researched.

Tool Name: **We NEED, We CAN**

Tool Type: Dialogue Tool

Time: 20 - 30 minutes

Description: This tool acknowledges what is lacking in a community at the same time that it encourages envisioning of what can be. Participants respond to a printed sheet that has the phrase "For my community to be sustainable, we NEED" on the left side and on the right side is "When my community is sustainable, we CAN".

Process: The facilitator invites participants to write items on the large printed sheet as they think of them. This could also be done meeting-style, with a facilitator writing as people call out items. Once sheet is filled out, a dialogue about the relationship between what is needed and what be realized is initiated.

Benefits: Allows participants to develop action-oriented responses to challenges in their community and recognize that there are clear outcomes to changes they would like to see. This activity can also happen over time with the sheet on a wall during an event.

Challenges: Doesn't address the difficulties or complexities of achieving the goals described.

For my community to be sustainable, we **NEED**:

When my community is sustainable, we **CAN**:

Tool Name: **Obstacles and Opportunities**

Tool Type: Dialogue Tool

Time: 45 minutes

Description: This is a flexible activity that quickly allows individuals to identify obstacles to achieving a sustainability within their household, community, and city/region.

Process: Individuals are given a post-It note that they write an obstacle on. They then identify that obstacle within the four themes, each of which revolves around an essential issue of housing, transportation, the environment and economic development. They also locate these issues based on whether they affect only their city, community, or household.

Next, either individually or as a group, each obstacle is analyzed and opportunities to overcome these obstacles are identified. The opportunities are written on a different colored Post-It and placed within the appropriate theme and locality.

A line is then drawn connecting the obstacle to the opportunity. Multiple opportunities can be connected to a single obstacle and vice-versa.

Benefits: Flexible and can work with most groups; visually engaging.

Challenges: Requires active participation and there may be some confusion about where a particular issue should be located on the sheet.

Obstacles and
Opportunities
Session

Tool Name: **Post-it Jenga**

Tool Type: Dialogue Tool

Time: 30 minutes

Description: This activity helps participants to identify issues within their communities, identify allies they can turn to for help in addressing the issues, and how they can individually make a difference as they work to make community change.

Process: There are three rounds to the activity: identifying the issue, identifying allies, and identifying individual power. Three colors of post-its are used. During the first stage, participants write their issue on the same color post-its and share them aloud while placing them on the wall in a diagonally stacked pattern.

The facilitator asks participants to stop and take a moment to examine the shape created by the post-it notes. If this were your community, what would it say about it? Is it fragmented? Does it have many unresolved issues?

Next, participants complete the same procedure but this time they identify allies (people, places, organizations) that could help them to resolve this issue. The post-its are placed beside their respective issues. Again the facilitator asks to examine this shape. Is the community getting more stable?

Lastly, participants will identify ways in which they personally can help to resolve/change this issue. Post-its are placed in a similar fashion as previously. What does the final shape say about the structure of the community? Post-its are then collected and recorded.

Benefits: This exercise provides an avenue for "storytelling" which engages participants. It also provides a sense of empowerment at the realization and identification of the individual power one has to make change .

Challenges: There can be down time/waiting time while participants are writing on post-its. It can possibly cause a lack of group dialogue as individuals are presenting.

Post-it Jenga at UMass Sustainability Workshop

Tool Name: **The Right Question Project**

Tool Type: Dialogue Tool

Time: 60 minutes

Description: The Right Question Project (www.rightquestion.org) is a movement/process that creates a framework to formulate critical questions. Those critical questions can then be used as triggers for discussions with other community members, policy makers, planners, etc...

The purpose of this activity is to help build capacity within a community. An important part of building a sustainable community is to allow people to advocate for themselves when there are pressing issues at hand. People often want to be more involved in efforts to solve these problems, but may not know how or do so, or do not know what to say. This exercise addresses those issues, developing skills to think critically and build self-confidence.

Process: The facilitator asks participants to develop a list of questions that pertain to sustainability and are relevant to issues that are currently faced by their community.

Once the participants produce their own questions, they are called upon to improve their questions, and then finally to strategize on how to use their questions to advocate for change. By helping the community come up with questions that are relevant to their needs, they become a part of the process and are more confident to be at those tables where decisions are being made.

Building a level of self-advocacy is only half of this initiative. Developing these tools will also bring community members a level of responsibility and accountability as they advocate for issues that are pressing within their communities. The importance of community accountability should not be overlooked and the need to dialogue about this during the activity is essential. Here are some examples of how a community can hold itself accountable:

- By knowing how effective planning committees and policy makers are.
- By knowing what the best practices are to live more sustainably.
- By voting in an informed way for policy makers that support a more sustainable and equitable future.
- By showing up to meetings or submitting comments to contribute to the planning process.

Benefits: This activity builds capacity within the community and promotes self-advocacy and active participation. It also creates a tool set that is transferable.

Challenges: A certain level of information about the topic under review is needed to be able to formulate good questions.

Right Question Session at UMass

Tool Name: **Town Hall Meeting**

Tool Type: Dialogue Tool

Time: 60 minutes.

Description: This workshop is designed to get participants talking about issues that affect their communities in a 'real setting.' The group is broken up into two groups, representing opposing views. In addition, some of the participants will serve as the town committee and facilitate the questions/scenarios that will be discussed. The dialogue between the groups forces both sides to listen, think critically and work towards a solution.

Process:
The group is divided into two groups: 'oppressed' and 'oppressor.' (or "In favor of" and "Against"). In addition, a few participants are selected to the committee that will make the final decision on issues.

The committee presents a topic/issue (i.e., the city wants to take land from a park to add a bus stop). Each group then will have 10 minutes to think of their key argument and then present their case. The group "in favor of" is likely to raise issues of improved quality of life, better access to and from neighborhood, etc... The group "against" the decision is likely raise issues of affordability, possibility, etc...

The groups will each be given time by the moderator to counter each other's point(s). The discussion will go back and forth until the committee has heard enough to make a decision. The groups will then debrief and talk about the outcome, how it could affect them in real life, what else could have been done, etc... Afterwards, the groups can be switched around and another topic can be presented.

Benefits: The activity allows participants to build capacity around self-advocacy and communication skills. It also challenges partipants to think critically about the issues/decisions and provides useful feedback for moving forward on an issue that can be a real benefit for the community.

Challenges: Engagement in REAL conversation can become emotional and/or heated. There may be some difficulty in reaching solutions.

Tool Name: **Creative Writing Workshop**

Tool Type: Dialogue Tool

Time: 60 minutes.

Description: This workshop is designed to get participants engaged in the topic of sustainability through creative writing, and is particularly suitable for sessions with youth. The topic of sustainability will be approached by exploring the specific categories of housing, the environment, transportation, food security, education and/or economic development.

Process: Prior to a session a facilitator prepares a series of cards related to the specific categories under discussion. These cards should evoke the topic, for instance the "housing" cards, might say "my healthy home" or a "transportation" card, "my walk to work." These cards will be used as writing prompts.

As each participant arrives they select a card that they can connect with and/or respond to. The facilitator starts the session with a conversation about writing and the importance of good writing skills. As each individual introduces themselves they anwswer the question, "Why do I write?" Next, the facilitator discusses sustainablity with an emphasis on the smart use of limited resources and the inter-connectivity of all the topics.

Participants then have 10 -15 minutes to free write about their chosen card. They may write in any form that they feel comfortable in; a story, an essay, or a poem. After the writing session, small groups are formed to share the work and reflect on how each piece is connected? Are they connected? How can they connect? The activity closes with a discussion about why sustainability is an important topic for participants (and especially for youth, their future) and what concrete actions they can take. An optional activity before concluding would be a group writing exercise where participants attempt to merge their stories into one, emphasizing the interrelation of all the categories.

Benefits: It works to build interest in sustainability through a creative exercise, and might work particularly well with youth and/or a creative audience.

Challenges: The facilitator(s) must be well versed in writing workshops as well as sustainability issues (might best be co-facilitated by two people with the appropriate expertise). Participants must be interested in writing and comfortable sharing in groups.

Tool Name: **Design the City/Build the City**

Tool Type: Dialogue Tool

Time: 2+ hours (could happen over two or more sessions)

Description: A tool to explain urban planning and build capacity for civic participation.

Process: Part One / Design the City: The facilitator asks participants to offer up one thing they would like to see in the imaginary city that the group will set out to build. A co-facilitator either writes these ideas on sticky notes (or draws a quick sketch which they pass back to the participant to cut out from a piece of paper). The facilitator should offer suggestions to keep the ideas diverse enough to create a complex city.

The facilitator asks the group to spend 15 minutes laying out the elements of their city on a large table or wall area. They should be given pens, popsicle sticks and string to make connections and add transportation routes and waterways.

When the group is done the facilitator congratulates the group for doing what others have taken years to accomplish, then asks them to look critically at the decisions they have made to see what turned out well, what might not work and what issues caused disagreement in the group. The facilitator may introduce issues and ideas that may not have come up in the earlier conversations. Are there places for low skilled workers to find jobs? Did you agree on where the parks should go? Were you able to build a compact city?

Part Two / Build One Part of the City: The facilitator explains that designing the city is a lot easier than actually getting it built. The facilitator should select volunteers to position around the room to act as various permitting agencies in the city (architectural commission, planning commission, health commission, zoning commission, etc.). The facilitator then asks a volunteer to act as the "owner" of a new restaurant/bar that they hope to build in the city. The facilitator narrates as the volunteer acts out a series of steps necessary for their restaurant to become an approved construction project. (A script would need to be created for the facilitator based on local ordinance requirements.) The facilitator points out every point along the route at which the community has an opportunity to speak for or against the plan.

Afterwards, the facilitator asks the group to talk about things they would like to improve in their city and encourages reflection on what it would take to bring about these changes.

Benefits: This activity educates participants about a complex set of issues regarding the built environment. The session encourages dialogue, group processing, is highly interactive and builds political capacity to engage in real-world issues.

Challenges: Lots of preparation time required. Facilitator must be familiar with local ordinances and codes. May oversimplify complex choices and processes.

Tool Name: **The Checkered Game of Life**

Tool Type: Dialogue Tool

Time: 45 minutes

Description: A scenario-based card game that works to identify connections between individual and collective sustainability goals and obstacles. This activity also emphasizes economic balance and issues of social equity.

Process:

EQUITY DEFINED: Facilitator begins by reviewing the "sustainability triad" and explains the concept of "equity" and the impact of a consistently inequitable society.

THE PAST: Participants are asked to select five major milestones in their past. (This can be done individually or in small groups by consensus). This warms up the group and encourages a bit of sharing.

GOALS FOR THE FUTURE: They then are asked to determine the next five major milestones of their lives by selecting from ten suggestions or by making up their own on blank cards. Once "next" milestones are determined, the facilitator presents information about cost of living issues and encourages a group discussion about the choices one has to make between ideals and affordable realities. (This often leads to a good discussion about the advantages of living close to work or within transit range.)

OVERCOMING BAD LUCK: Next the facilitator asks the group to select at random a bad news card that will throw the economic balance out of whack (unexpected illness, baby accident, family crisis, etc.) Working individually participants offer suggestions of things they might do to try to stretch their budget and make ends meet.

A LOW IMPACT LIFE ASSESSMENT: Next the facilitator reveals a chart showing where these lifestyles fall on the "Low Impact Life Assessment Scale" and compares these numbers to the historic trajectory of Americans over their lifetime (showing our tendency to consume more resources as we acquire more wealth and family). The facilitator points out that many of the choices people make under economic duress lead to a lower impact lifestyle up to a certain point. Below a certain threshold sustainability is undermined by desperation.

COLLECTIVE SOLUTIONS: Finally the facilitator asks the participants to propose ways society as a whole could support the aspirations of the group to achieve a sustainable lifestyle. A list of key issues in sustainability (housing, the environment, transportation, food security, education and/or economic development) is presented to help participants consider various areas of public policy.

Benefits: The card-game aspect is appealing to people who might not want to join a traditional discussion and encourages group cooperation. The process also helps to reinforce the importance of civic engagement, political participation and equity. The session should move the conversation from vague to specific, individual to collective, and helps to identify issues shared by specific demographic groups.

Challenges: This activity requires advance effort to customize data to suit the demographic of the group---which should be consistent for best results (so may not work well in a very diverse group). Not all life choices can be represented in the scenerios, and can be frustrating if not all groups agree or propose sustainable solutions to their problems.

Tool Name: **My Community Is Sustainable When…**

Tool Type: Exit Tool

Time: Duration depends on number of participants.

Description: This tool is designed to get participants to think critically about what makes their community sustainable. Having them think of a personally important issue can become a powerful way to get people involved in the process and advocate for change.

Process: After a dialogue session regarding sustainability, each person thinks about what makes their community sustainable, and writes it on chalk board or large sheet of paper. The person will then have their photo taken while holding up their message.

Benefits: The portraits can become a powerful way to bring awareness to issues. The activity gives a "face" to sustainability, and the collection of images is a good way to demonstrate the diversity of participants and messages.

Challenges: You need camera equipment. (Although a simple point and shoot camera would work.). Not all people feel comfortable being photographed, and those photographed should sign a release form if the photos will be used to promote and/or document a project.

Trial Portraits with Students at UMass

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