

STRENGTHENING THE SIX PRINCIPLES OF SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

(According to the Northwest Policy Center of the University of Washington, USA)

The following six principles were developed through extensive research to explore the concepts of sustainability and innovative local initiatives, and to help communities think more holistically about the relationship between economy, environment and community well being.

1. FOSTER COMMITMENT TO PLACE

Actions that strengthen the reasons why residents feel strong affinity to their community, e.g., festivals and other activities that celebrate the uniqueness of a community and its landscape, provision of employment, training and affordable housing to enable people to stay: events that promoted discussion and actions about shared vision and long term orientation etc.

Indicators checklist:

- a. There are historic celebrations, festivals, fairs and community projects that build a sense of commitment to the community and its landscape.
- b. Forums exist where diverse members of the community can come together to develop a common vision, resolve conflicts and advance mutual goals.
- c. Living-wage jobs are available for members of the community within a reasonable distance from home.
- d. Education and training is available locally that provides residents with skills they need to gain, keep or create living-wage jobs.
- e. Adequate affordable housing is available for the more economically vulnerable members of the community.
- f. Residents, including businesses and landowners are committed to the well-being of the community, its residents and the environment that sustains them.

2. PROMOTE VITALITY

Actions that promote a state of dynamic, healthy progress and change that can be sustained over time, e.g., initiatives that encourage community participation, strong support for local businesses, business innovations, a healthy eco system etc.

Indicators checklist:

- a. Residents purchase goods and services within the community whenever possible.
- b. Local businesses are innovative, keeping pace with changing market demands and technologies, ensuring their continued vitality.
- c. Businesses 'add value' locally to renewable natural resources (fish, timber, farm products etc) to increase the local economic benefits from sustainable harvest levels.
- d. The natural systems (lakes, rivers, forests, prairies, farm lands etc) that enrich the community are ecologically healthy.
- e. Citizens from all segments of the community are welcomed and encouraged to participate in organizations and activities that help to strengthen the community and make it a better place to live.

3. BUILD RESILIENCE

Actions that strengthen the ability of communities to cope with change, and withstand and recover from crises, e.g., economic diversification, local ownership, biological diversity, strong local networking etc.

Indicators checklist:

- a. There is sufficient diversity in the local economy to help it weather downturns in individual businesses or economic sectors.
- b. Natural resource management practices maintain and promote native biological diversity, helping to maintain economic and ecological productivity over the long-term.
- c. Local organizations have the capacity to help the community define and advance its economic, social and environmental goals. Capacity includes effective leadership, broadened community involvement and access to information and financial resources.
- d. There is adequate infrastructure (water, sewer, transportation, telecommunications) to protect public health and the environment and to support desired social and economic development.
- e. There are adequate social support networks - both formal and informal - that help members of the community during times of need.

4. ACT AS STEWARDS

Actions that nourish the natural environment to improve its health and productivity, thus providing long term benefits for current and future generations, e.g., maintaining healthy ecosystems, waste management etc.

Indicators checklist:

- a. Water quality and quantity are adequate to meet the needs of human consumption, industry, recreation and fish and other wildlife.
- b. The air is clean to breathe.
- c. Homes and businesses practice energy conservation to reduce the economic costs and environmental impacts of energy production.
- d. Productive natural resource lands (including farm, forest and range lands) are
- e. protected from development to ensure continued economic and environmental benefits for future generations.
- f. Critical wildlife habitats and other environmentally sensitive lands (including wetlands, riparian areas and habitat for rare or threatened or endangered species) have been identified, protected and where necessary restored.
- g. Community members (both residences and businesses) are taking steps to reduce, reuse and recycle solid wastes.
- h. There are opportunities for dialogue between citizens and owners or managers of natural resource lands whose management has significant ecological, economic and social consequences for the community.

5. FORGE CONNECTIONS

Actions that encourage collaborative planning and action, and networking among residents, organizations, businesses and communities.

Indicators checklist:

- a. The community is involved in regional, watershed or ecosystem-based initiatives where such efforts are useful in addressing concerns that cross multiple jurisdictions.
- b. The community has built positive relationships with outside agencies and organizations that allow it to gain access to information and technical and financial assistance.
- c. Local businesses are aware and take advantage of markets beyond the community, and of outside sources of marketing assistance, technical assistance and financing.
- d. Businesses work together when it is in their self interest to do so.
- e. Schools, hospitals and other local public organizations cooperate with one another to improve their services, create new programs or acquire needed infrastructure for the community.

6. PROMOTE EQUITY

Actions that promote fairness among people within a community: between the community and the environment it inhabits; between the community and other communities; and between the present generation and future generations. Equal access to and opportunity to participate in community decision making processes is fundamental.

Indicators checklist:

- a. Each resident has similar access to and opportunity to participate in community decision making processes.
- b. Social, economic and political burdens and benefits are equitably distributed among all members of the community.
- c. Activities within the community do not impose unfair burdens on people in other communities within the region, state, country and other parts of the world.
- d. Community activities and decisions consider, and seek not to jeopardize the well-being of future generations.
- e. The community practices equity in relationships to the environment by respecting other forms of life and passing on a healthy environmental legacy to the future.

(Reference: Bauen et al (1996), Sustainable Community Checklist, Seattle: Northwest Policy Center, University of Washington)