Social Sustainability & Effective Outreach

Rocky Mountain Land Use Institute Conference
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Speakers

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Goals of Discussion

What is Social Sustainability?
- Ideas and definitions
- Changing demographics

Applied to Area Planning
- Strategies employed by city of Boulder
- Specific Commerce City redevelopment plan

Outreach & Engagement
- Alternative methods to consider
Social Sustainability is..

- Outreach and engagement
- Sense of community
- Healthcare
- Jobs that match the skills of residents
- Transportation/transit
- Education/lifelong learning
- Recreation

- Relationships
- Creative self-expression
- Aesthetic enjoyment
- Peace, safety and security
- Self-esteem
- Spiritual development
Why is this important?

Sustainable development...to enable all people throughout the world to satisfy their basic needs and enjoy a better quality of life, without compromising the quality of life of future generations...

Which really means:

“Sustainable development is the only thing that stands between us and an utterly miserable descent into ecological collapse, resource wars, worsening inequality and social implosion.”

Jonathon Porritt
Social sustainability helps to ensure a strong, healthy and just society.

“I’ve got it, too, Omar... a strange feeling like we’ve just been going in circles.”
Post Carbon Cities

Recommendations (APA December 2008 issue)

- Deal with transportation & land use
- Tackle private energy consumption
- Attack the problems piece by piece & from many angles
- Plan for fundamental changes-and make them happen

- Build a sense of community. Get people talking with each other, forming relationships, etc…
2008 Report on Colorado’s Obesity Problem

Poorer neighborhoods:
- Fewer grocery stores, expensive fresh produce
- More fast-food restaurants and convenience stores
- Unsafe parks or far from community recreation centers

Opportunities for healthier living through better community design:
- Develop community gardens in poorer neighborhoods
- Incorporate “walkability” into urban design
- Work to ensure safe access to streets for peds, bikes, buses and all other users
The first lower level is associated with Physiological needs (i.e. food, shelter, safety), while the top levels are growth needs associated with psychological needs (i.e. aesthetics, relationships, equity).

The higher needs in this hierarchy only come into focus when the lower needs in the pyramid are met.
Despite differences in demographics and socio-economic levels, all communities are facing similar issues.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators for Poverty, Obesity, Quality of Life; 2005-2007 data</th>
<th>Boulder</th>
<th>Commerce City</th>
<th>Colorado</th>
<th>U.S.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Median value of owner-occupied housing units</td>
<td>$453,000</td>
<td>$205,000</td>
<td>$230,000</td>
<td>$182,000</td>
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<td>Median family income</td>
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<td>$53,000</td>
<td>$67,000</td>
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<td>Disability status*</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino*</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
<td>51.5%</td>
<td>$19.6%</td>
<td>$14.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign born*</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>21.5%</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Percent of total population
What does the future hold?
Changing Demographics

- Aging of the community
- Increasing non-white Hispanic populations
- Many communities facing polarization of income – greater poverty and greater wealth – losing the middle class
Aging Issues

- 2000 to 2020 Colorado’s population 55-64 will more than double, increasing from 342,000 to 745,000.

- While many will remain in the labor force longer than previous generation, between 2010 and 2015, the number of persons leaving the labor force will exceed those entering.
Rates of Immigration

Source: US Census Bureau
Colorado Minority Populations

- White, non-Hispanic
  2005 74%  2035 projected to be 68%

- Hispanic Origin
  2005 18%  2035 projected to be 23%

- Minorities
  2005 26%  2035 32%
What does this mean for local planners or land use professionals?

- Walking the talk about valuing diversity
- Cultural competency or awareness training
- Mindfulness about people’s needs and values for public process
Boulder’s Approach to Community Sustainability

Advancing Social Equity, Economic Vitality and Environmental Quality
Community Involvement to Set Priorities

- Balance of Social, Economic, and Environmental Values
- Limits of Resources

Policies which Serve the Community as a Whole
Climate Action Plan
Example of Integration
Linking the Silos
Meeting Multiple Goals

Environmental
• Reducing Community Greenhouse Gas Emissions
• Increase Use of Renewable Energy

Economic
• Green Clusters / Alternative Energy Jobs
• Commercial & Industrial Energy Savings
• Connecting People and Businesses to Rebates & Tax Credits

Social
• Low Income Energy Savings / Weatherization
• Neighborhood Programs
• Education, Outreach and Marketing for all Sectors (Residential & Commercial)
Community Sustainability Timeline

- New BVCP sustainability policies
- Completed briefing paper
- CC formed sustainability committees
- Sustainability impacts added to CC memos
- Social Sustainability Strategic Plan approved

- 2000
  - CC goal committee formed
- 2004
  - Revised and expanded BVCP sustainability policies
- 2005
  - Developed impact assessment tools
- 2006
  - Community dialogue initiated
- 2007
  - Community dialogue phase 1 completed
- 2008
Social Sustainability
Strategic Plan Goals

- Promote engagement - city organization & community
- Expand and value diversity
- Improve neighborhood & community livability
- Address the needs of children, youth & seniors
- Expand collaboration with schools
- Develop a shared community vision of Community Sustainability
How do we incorporate social sustainability in community development?

- Public health
- Child care facilities
- Affordable housing
- Neighborhood pedestrian connections
- Facilities and infrastructure for people with disabilities and/or seniors
- Outreach and engagement
The connection between public health & land use

- An often overlooked indicator of social well-being (or lack thereof)

- In 2000 the nation spent an estimated $76 billion in direct medical costs related to physical inactivity alone.
Physical Activity

Safety
- Traffic safety
- Crime rates/police calls
- Graffiti
- Eyes on the street
- Cleanliness
- Bars, liquor stores, nightclubs
- Vagrants
- Lighting

Walkability
- Pedestrian access
- Pedestrian amenities
- Parking availability
- Connectivity, direct routes
- Variety of destinations
- Proximity of destinations
- Parks/public recreation spaces
- Aesthetics
- Convenient transit

Social Issues
- Social capital (sense of community, social involvement, participation in community activities)
- Linguistic or racial isolation
- Socioeconomic inequalities, segregation
Transportation

- Access & location
- Multi-modal
- Public transit
- Convenience and timing of service
28th Street Pedestrian Crossing

Before

Addition of shared bus/bike lane with pedestrian crossing between Safeway and dense multi-family housing

After
Existing conditions
Improvements to be completed this year

Pedestrian access to transit stop
Existing conditions

Improvements to be completed this year

Transit stop
Derby Redevelopment Project

Community “happens when people are in the street, when people are speaking to each other, and when there are activities that bring people together.”

Felton Earls, Professor, Harvard School of Public Health

1. Historic commercial district in Commerce City, Colorado
2. Ongoing redevelopment effort started in 2005
3. Included Sub-Area Plan, Zoning, Design Guidelines, Façade improvement grants
4. Capital Improvement dollars for infrastructure
5. Development of Health Impact Assessment by Tri County Health Department
Derby
Demographics of the community

- Over 52% of Historic Commerce City is Hispanic or Latino
- 34% of households earning less than $25,000
- City Council consists of 9 members, limited ethnic diversity
- Creates significant community consistency issues
Commerce City’s Derby District Redevelopment Plan

- Redefine Derby as a historic, healthy, walkable, mixed-use area
- 30 years, 4 studies on the shelf
  - This plan met unanimous City Council support
- Hundreds of public meetings, interviews, walking audits
- Transportation studies for 72nd Ave and streets in Derby
Health Impact Assessments (HIA)

- Any combination of qualitative and quantitative methods used to assess the population health consequences of a policy, project or process that does not have health as its primary objective.

- Developed by Tri County Health Dept. in conjunction with Derby redevelopment project in 2007.
HIA Recommendations for Derby

1. Phased program of capital funding for traffic calming improvements in Derby’s core
2. Develop Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan
3. Integrate the green space and open space elements
4. Establish Clean and Safe Initiative for Derby
5. Expand the collaboration with RTD to upgrade transit service and facilities
6. Promote affordable housing and universal design features
7. Develop an implementation plan for elements of the redevelopment effort that are within city control.
What made the Derby public process special?

Newly-renovated, city-owned Resource Center in Derby Core - free for use by community - required no city dollars to purchase, renovate or staff.
Work with Stakeholders

- Citizens of Commerce City
- Derby residents
- Local high school students
- Churches
- Business & property owners
- City Council
- Commerce City staff
Walkability is positively correlated with social capital, a measure of how much people feel they belong to a community and if their needs are being addressed.
Residential Density and Affordable Housing

- Significant affordable housing in area in disrepair, aging structures
- Potential for 1-2 blocks land assembly for mixed-use, affordable housing in Derby’s core
  - Challenges with zoning, cost, finding the right developer, timing
- Allow for non-conformity
Lessons Learned

- Engage community early in the process
- Develop relationships
- Have patience
- Be persistent over time to keep moving along
- Recognize that stakeholder’s priorities and goals for neighborhood are equally or more valuable than planner’s or official’s ideas
LETHAL MEETING

Planning board meeting kills seven

DRAWN-OUT STUDY SESSION BORES HALF-DOZEN TO DEATH; WITNESSES TELL OF TERMINAL TEDIOUSNESS

By MAYA PANZAROFF
Colorado Daily Staff In charge

A meeting of the Greater Boulder Valley Consortium of Concerned Citizens and Planning Specialists Working to Create a Nifty Place Board (GBVCCCP-SWCPNB) ended in tragedy last night as four board members and three interested citizens were killed during the “stages” preliminary to the drafting and adoption of changes to the Greater Boulder Valley Plan (GBVP), a document that keeps reality at bay and property prices unnaturally high, bogged down when ancillary ordinances defining remuneration to lessees ceding plots for right-of-way usage by county personnel implementing the well-known “no poopy” law were debated at terminal length.

Those opposing the ordi-

Artypants, nicely interpolating a bit of Shakespeare into the end of his quote.

Witnesses said things started to look bad at the five-hour mark, when people began nodding off and could not be awakened.

“Oh the humanity,” said Marty Lynn Shaver, a local activist who attends every civic meeting in town. “People were distracted, then bored, then asleep and then . . . they were
Town Hall Meeting Gives Townspeople Chance To Say Stupid Things In Public

NEW BEDFORD, MA—In a true display of democracy, a town hall meeting held at the New Bedford High School auditorium Monday gave the crowd of approximately 550 residents the opportunity to publicly voice every last one of the truest thoughts and concerns they normally only have the chance to utter to themselves.

Though the meeting was ostensibly held to discuss a proposed $300,000 project to replace the high school’s grass football field with synthetic turf, City Councilman Thomas Reed inadvertently opened the floodgates to a deluge of ill-informed, off-topic diatribes on inconsequential bullshit when he allowed those in attendance to demonstrate their God-given gift of language.

“I don’t want to have some kid’s ACL or ALS or whatever on my conscience,” said 43-year-old contractor Tom Wareheim, who apparently had not heard the portion of Councilman Reed’s opening remarks just moments before explaining that the risk of injury on grass and turf is virtually the same. “I also heard somewhere, I think from my cousin, that the fibers in that stuff can cause cancer.”

Citizens quickly lined up at the podiums to exercise their freedom of speech—for which countless Americans have died—to publicly drone on and on about everything from the root causes of the football team’s poor performance last year to whether high school students should be playing sports at all.

“Wow, I don’t know much about this turf stuff, but you all know me and you know what kind of business I run,” said hardware store owner Dan Schilling. “So, setting the opportunity to hear his voice echo painfully off the auditorium walls, I’ve been saying this to my wife for years, and she agrees with me. The garbage trucks in this town are way too loud and I came here tonight to see what’s being done about it.”

Schilling’s grievance instilled an undeserved sense of confidence in the rest of the crowd, emboldening others to abandon the practice of formulating cogent thoughts and instead allow streams of mind-numbing nonsense to spill coarsely from their lips.

“Who’s going to fix the roads?” asked 48-year-old Gordon Winters.

“Y’know, Gordon, I was fixing roads for years, and let me tell you, it’s not easy work,” replied Schilling.

“Is it really?”

“Yeah, it’s not easy work. But it’s not like I could just sit back and let the roads just fall apart.”

The audience hooted and hollered.

“Okay, let’s move on to another topic,” said Councilman Reed.

“Who’s going to fix the roads?”

And on and on and on.

Meanwhile, 15-second periods of silence, Winnebago thank you’s, and 30-year-old Laurel Hale, who seemed eager to prove to every citizen of New Bedford that she had the brainpower of an autistic dog.

“I’m just going to say one thing because I don’t want to take up too much of anyone’s time,” said Hale as her 6-month-old daughter poked at the microphone. “Hole then somehow managed to link the synthetic turf issue to the lack of places to sit in public areas, her inability to get the buttons at the crosswalk to work, and the apparent overabundance of cable television channels.

“Added Hale, “Also, Councilman Reed, you need to get us out of Iraq. Now.”

Over the course of the two-and-a-half-hour meeting, the only variation on the endless monotony of inconsequential concerns was the occasional tone of entitlement.

“This town used to be so different,” said 30-year-old Don Miller, as he was standing in a line which one person’s impassioned speech is so powerful that it leaves the rest of the audience in stunned silence. “Kids are different. Adults are different. People. People are different. What happened? How do we get back to the way things were? How, Councilman Reed?”

“I fought in Korea, and if God will I would do it again,” said 74-year-old Harold Schroyer, who immediately retook his seat.

With no conclusions reached about why the town has no zoo, which restaurant serves the best pizza, or what to do with the football field, Councilman Reed opted not to shoot himself and let his brains spray over the crowd, instead adjourning the meeting and thanking everyone who had taken the time to speak.
Outreach – some ideas

- Immigrant Advisory Committee and Human Relations Commission
- Using web / video
- Go to people instead of having them come to you – *Use organized meetings, Meetings in a Box*
- Interactive voting
- Takes more time and more resources
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- Spiritual development
Resources and Websites

Jean Gatza gatzaj@bouldercolorado.gov
www.bouldercolorado.gov
Link to Community Sustainability

Jessica Osborne
jreneosbourne@gmail.com

LiveWell link (HIA)
http://www.livewellcolorado.com/index.php