

REPORT: CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE by Todd Collart (9-27-2000)

A sustainable future depends upon Social Equity, Economic prosperity and Environmental Health. To achieve these ends a dialogue and consensus must be reached by increasing numbers of people. This can only be achieved through Civic Engagement. The purpose of this effort is to measure with selective indicators the strength and health of our means of civic engagement. Most specifically we will attempt to assess how effectively civic engagement can address the footprint of a number of issues.

By footprint we mean the scope or range of an issue affecting a given local. For example, if an issue spans several cities so might its solution. Therefore, it is less profitable to engage in discussions in one city and across the several cities. Another way of looking at this concept is to realize that if the other stakeholders are not involved in the discussion, then any solution derived will apt to be unsuccessful because the problem has not been fully outlined and all the parties to the solution were not included in the formulation of the solutions.

Definition - The constructive interaction of citizens

Why is civic engagement important

- Prevent or break down fear and suspicion of people we do not know
- Resolve problems
- Build relationships
- Establishes a cultural identity for a community
- Affiliation

Levels of civic engagement - Civic engagement can be superficial to intense and intimate

- Visual contact Verbal acknowledgement Casual conversation
- Debate and dialog Issue resolution

Circumstances : The context within which civic engagement occurs can vary

- Compulsory Voluntary Free For a Fee

Quality of civic engagement - Can be judged on many levels

- Number of opportunities
- Freedom to participate despite the number of opportunities
- The diversity of people participating by age, gender, race, income, education, etc.
- Are individual expectations met
- Does the range of the engagement extend broadly enough to address the issue

Types of engagement - The more types of engagement that can occur at once the better

- Visual Spoken Touching Written

Breadth of civic engagement

- Political jurisdictions:
 - District City/community County Region State
 - Country World

Geographic areas

- Viewsheds Travel corridors
- Neighborhood
- One on one
- Body of people with a common interest
- The footprint of the issue or problem

Vehicles for civic engagement

- TV Internet Telephone Radio Movies Schools
- Service organizations Religious organizations Newspapers and periodicals

Juries Festivals Recreation activities Petitions Voting

The Question: To what degree are able to have civic engagement over issues relating to Social Equity, Economic prosperity and Environmental Health? These three areas are chosen because they are essential to a sustainable future. Issues fall into these areas, but unless we are able to address them civic engagement is not achieving its highest potential. To measure the success of civic engagement in each of these areas we will choose a series of indicators within each area.