

## **Dissemination and Community-Based Education:**

The following activities helped to promote dialogue and reflection upon sustainability issues raised by the SOAR initiative, and facilitated community-based education in indicator design and/or dissemination:

March 5, 2000 - **Workshop on Designing Sustainability Indicators** with Maureen Hart held at CSUN focused on establishing linkages between faculty, students, and the Council. At the meeting, we discussed the usefulness of indicators within and between communities for land use decision-making: to raise awareness and inform people; to inform decisions; and to track progress. We also discussed how to facilitate a community-based process for indicator design that would include both those who own the data and those who make decisions based on the data.

March 13, 2000 - A **Kickoff Meeting** of CSUN faculty and students, and the Sustainability Council was held at a restaurant in Ventura County to further define the scope of the project. It became clear at the meeting that the dissemination and community education phase would begin after members of the academic team interview key informants from the Faulkner House group, along with a few others who opposed SOAR, and design a first set of indicators. At the meeting, participants suggested a number of ways to disseminate findings: 1) the Sustainability Council as a "sounding board" as we design/implement the project; 2) the Faulkner House group (and a few SOAR opponents) as a "reflective" cohort of "decision-makers"; 3) a focus group of members of League of Women Voters and other community-based policy advocates as a "reflective" cohort of "ordinary citizens"; and 4) an internet-based dissemination/feedback strategy, including brief policy statements and quick response surveys that would provide us with "feedback" on our efforts to reach the wider community. After the meeting, "The Bellagio Principles: Guidelines for the Practical Assessment of Progress Towards Sustainable Development" were sent to faculty and Sustainability Council members via e-mail. These principles serve as guidelines for the whole of the assessment process including the choice and design of indicators, their interpretation and communication of the results. (See Appendix)

## **August 23, 2000 - "Gauging Our Future - Indicators and Measures of Quality of Life in Ventura County"**

The conference goals were: 1) to promote the accurate tracking of various indicators that will inform the public and decision-makers if we are moving towards or away from a sustainable future; 2) to increase awareness of the various studies that measure the quality of life so that the public may learn that such studies can influence our quality of life, and may then come to expect a more coherent and integrated approach to measuring quality of life factors; 3) to suggest that researchers may form working groups that improve the quality of their individual projects and avoid duplication of effort; and 4) to serve as a follow-up to an August 1999 conference where the Sustainability Council solicited comments from a panel and the audience of nearly 100 people on what areas of Ventura

County life should have quality of life indicators developed for them. This input was used by the faculty and students of CSUN in the current indicators study.

At the conference, three reports were presented: 1) CSUN Quality of Life Indicators - Cassandra Rutherford (student); 2) Public Health- "Community Health Status Report & Program Review 2000 - Barbara Spraktes-Wilkins (research epidemiologist); 3) Ventura County Council Of Governments - "Benchmark Studies" Toni Young (Councilwoman City of Port Hueneme)

From the meeting came the suggestion that a sustainability indicator should focus on civic engagement, and that the Council should take the lead in its design as members have unique ways of addressing it. This indicator would include such things as voter participation, attendance at civic organizations, volunteer time, attendance at public events such as street fairs, use of parks, libraries, public places, and the general use of the community as a resource for personal enrichment and community connection. Here is where polling might be useful, and the design of that poll should necessarily try to establish linkages between social issues and the environment and the economy.

(NOTE: THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPING A SPECIFIC CIVIC ENGAGEMENT INDICATOR AROUND SOAR ISSUE IMPACTS ON OXNARD SUBSEQUENTLY PROVED DIFFICULT AND ABSORBED MUCH OF THE COUNCIL'S AND THE PROJECT'S TIME. WHAT FINALLY RESULTED HAS BEEN INCLUDED IN THE SET OF INDICATORS, THOUGH WE MAY HAVE DISCOVERED THAT THIS PART OF OUR EXPERIMENT AT DEFINING SUCH INDICATORS WILL PROVE LESS THAN USEFUL IN THIS PARTICULAR CASE.)

January 8, 2001. **Focus Group on Sustainability Indicators with the Ventura County League of Women Voters/Sustainability Committee**, Ventura, CA

Tim Dagodag provided an introduction to the project, including the sequence of objectives, the process of developing sustainability indicators, and the indicator design teams and, together with two CSUN students, Lisa Overly and Monique Wilber, presented selected indicators (Pesticide Use, Housing Density: Multi-Family Residences, Water Self-Sufficiency, Zone Changes and Permits: Higher Density, Travel Distance: Necessary Services, Traffic: Levels of Service, Redevelopment: Mixed Use Communities) and invited discussion by the eight participants from the League of Women Voters. (See Appendix)

January 31, 2001 - **A New Look At Our Future: Indicators of Sustainability Point the Way**. Knights of Columbus Hall, Oxnard, California.

The first public presentation of the "Quality of Life" indicators focused on the city of Oxnard and the effects of land control measures in three related areas: Land Use And Density, Public Health, Community Involvement." Over 40 people attended the event, with a welcome by a Oxnard Mayor Manny Lopez. The presenters of the indicators, as well as Santa Monica's Sustainable City's Director Dean Kubani, enabled the audience to

understand the complex purpose of sustainability indicators and to appreciate how such measures of the intangible quality of life can be used effectively in various forums. The discussion produced many suggestions of new indicators to develop and some suggestions about formatting or conceptualizing the indicators. This was the first showing of the indicators to the public, and their reaction was very positive. Mayor Lopez offered the Oxnard City Council meeting itself as a forum for showing the indicators on cable television.

As a result of the meeting, the Sustainability Council began to think about shorter versions of the program that could be presented to various groups and organizations, and to list forums of access that are available to people for civic engagement around an issue, like SOAR, at the regional level (special interest groups, open forums; regional boards of public agencies, public agency-sponsored forums on regional issues, and regional organizations), and the local level (local chapters of national organizations, community-based organizations; emergent groups). The group also noted the “audiences” and public venues for civic engagement including: the internet, phone trees, community cable-TV, school-based forums, public radio station KCLU, newsletters/publications of local organizations, and print media. Another discussion centered upon an internet-based dissemination/feedback strategy, including brief policy statements and quick response surveys that would provide us with rapid-response “feedback” on our efforts to reach the wider community. This would include an internet-based consensus panel, including brief policy statements and quick response surveys. The “wired” consensus panel may include selected members of neighborhood watch and neighborhood councils, advocates, activists, clergy, elected officials, interested residents who have responded to draft EIRs, etc.

March 29, 2001. **Moving Ahead: Plains, Terrains & Automobiles II - 2001 Smart Growth Conference, Oxnard, CA**, sponsored by the California Air Resources Board, Southern California Edison, The Gas Company, Ventura County Air Pollution Control District, and a number of co-sponsors, including the Sustainability Council and the CSUN Urban Studies and Planning Program. Speakers included Manuel Lopez, Mayor of Oxnard; Dean Kubani, City of Santa Monica; and Doug Adrianson, Los Angeles Times. This was the first public distribution of a selection from our set of the “Quality of Life” indicators. We produced a poster and distributed copies of a pamphlet of selected draft indicators, entitled “Indicators of Sustainable Development Project: Goals for Improving Quality of Life In Ventura County,” targeted to 300 professionals in attendance.

June 17-20, 2001. **Annual Meeting of the Pacific Division of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, University of California, Irvine**. We plan to distribute the Executive Summary at the annual meeting of the Pacific Division of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. The Pacific Division, and its affiliated societies, including the Pacific Coast Entomological Society, Western Society of Soil Science, and the regional chapters of the American Society for Horticultural Science, Botanical Society of America, Ecological Society of America, sponsor symposia that bring together a mix of scientists and educators from the western United States and Canada.

The design and dissemination process has yielded a set of indicators with deeper roots in community life, with the potential for promote local autonomy and sense of uniqueness, as each community develops its own set of indicators. To this end, we will continue to invite public participation in the refinement of indicators through mailings, website viewing, and surveys to determine support, critique, and validation for the indicator concept. We will also continue to disseminate the indicators and invite feedback through a press kit, posters, Power Point presentations, and on the Internet at websites maintained by the CSUN Urban Studies and Planning Program and the Sustainability Council of Ventura County. Through these efforts, we intend to promote the idea of ongoing monitoring, tracking, and interpretation as a relatively simple follow-up procedure.

As a result of these community education and dissemination efforts, we anticipate that Ventura County communities and their decision-makers will be better informed about livable community strategies, have a better idea about how to assess the problems of urban land use and development, and be able to determine what can be done to improve the quality of life. Publicity from the project will have enhanced the visibility and effectiveness of the Sustainability Council of Ventura County. The baseline assessment of sustainability indicators will also establish a sound basis for a broader effort to measure changes in quality of life throughout Ventura County. The publications resulting from the project will be of value to other communities around the nation in search of similar solutions.

The set of indicators are also well-suited as a discussion piece for neighborhood groups and non-governmental organizations as a way to inform dialogue on the usefulness of sustainability as a perspective on change after SOAR, and perhaps civic engagement. In Lamont Hempel's words, "Perhaps the most critical constraint on the development and use of sustainability indicators involves the role of ordinary citizens in their selection and interpretation. Deliberative democracy is, in many eyes, both a means and an end of the sustainable community movement. If deliberative democracy is conducive to the process of sustainability, and vice versa, it is important that citizens participate in the selection of indicators that will be used to evaluate their community and region. Although such involvement will sometimes lead to the inclusion of indicators that so-called "experts" regard as unscientific, irrelevant, or unreliable, to exclude such grass-roots involvement may reveal, as clearly as any indicator, a basic cause of unsustainability -- lack of civic engagement." (from *Sustainable Communities: From Vision To Action*)