Growing Together for a Sustainable Future: 
Strategies and Best Practices for Engaging with Disadvantaged Communities 
on Issues of Sustainable Development and Regional Planning
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Strategies and Best Practices for Engaging with Disadvantaged Communities on Issues of Sustainable Development and Regional Planning

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"The way we live in cities is at the crux of many environmental, economic, and social challenges...How do we find a new way?"^1

-Carl Anthony, Breakthrough Communities: Sustainability and Justice in the Next American Metropolis

I. Introduction & Background

Sustainable regional development in the United States faces many challenges. Distressed communities, fragmented open space, damaged ecosystems, and climate change are powerful reminders of the unsustainable development patterns and policies which have produced harm to both our society and our planet. Sprawling development and the continual movement of opportunities, investment, and people away from our city and traditional town centers diminishes rural and natural landscapes, while accelerating long auto commutes which increase CO2 emissions. In our distressed communities, continual disinvestment and the flight of resources and lack of investment produces extreme isolation for marginalized communities, resulting in segregation into distressed, unhealthy environments where residents are separated from the critical life- sustaining opportunity structures needed to survive and thrive in our 21st century society.

While farmland is being paved over for new housing and roadways, disadvantaged and marginalized communities can’t find access to healthy produce. A massive investment in new infrastructure is occurring for suburban growth, while existing infrastructure is neglected in our existing communities. New housing and commercial construction on the urban fringe contrasts sharply with existing neighborhoods pockmarked by vacant homes and abandoned businesses. Local development policy, jurisdictional fragmentation, and interregional competition interact with all of these processes, often working to promote unsustainable growth and unhealthy communities. The development model which has fueled our economy in past decades and shaped our communities, and nation, represents an unsustainable system which must be reshaped to produce sustainable development, livable communities, and an equitable, healthy society.

In 2010, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development awarded approximately $100 million in Sustainable Communities Initiative grants to promote coordinated regional planning that embraces and integrates the principles of livability, sustainability, and social equity. This groundbreaking program seeks to better coordinate housing and transportation while supporting more sustainable and equitable land use, infrastructure, and zoning decisions.

HUD sustainability grants represent an unprecedented infusion of federal support for regional planning that is sustainable and equitable. The impact of this “new way” forward and federal support cannot be overstated. Regional consortiums that were awarded grants will be able to utilize regional planning to align billions of dollars’ worth of capital investments- investments that will revitalize some of our nation’s most distressed neighborhoods, support healthy, livable communities, and make access to opportunity-rich areas viable for all residents in a region.
Public and civic engagement is critical to the twin goals of sustainability and equity. Civic engagement is essential for developing an informed and cohesive shared vision for regions while also building a constituency to support the planning process and proactively push for plan implementation. HUD has acknowledged the importance of civic engagement to the success of the sustainable communities initiative, stating:

“Successful (sustainable communities’ initiative) applicants should be able to: Engage residents and stakeholders substantively 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

With an explicit focus on equity goals, effective public and civic engagement in the sustainable communities program will require proactive and focused engagement with disadvantaged communities. These disadvantaged communities are often underrepresented or overlooked by traditional public engagement approaches. Planning for sustainable communities will require engaging and empowering disadvantaged communities to contribute and act as decision makers in the regional planning process, and increasing participation among traditionally marginalized communities who can develop ownership of sustainable regional planning plans and goals. Engagement with disadvantaged communities will not only benefit the sustainable communities planning process, but also potentially produce long-term benefits in capacity building in disadvantaged communities on issues of sustainability and development.

The HUD sustainability grants represent a new paradigm of regional development with which some practitioners and sustainability consortiums have limited experience. 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 organizations as decision makers, not just as consultants, and for understanding how to incorporate equity concerns into regional planning. Capacity must be built in both regional planning consortiums and disadvantaged communities and community organizations. Together these efforts can catalyze the regional planning field, expand the capacity of community organizations, and benefit the regional sustainability movement.

The following report provides strategies and best practices in engaging disadvantaged populations on issues of sustainable and equitable regional development. The report explores successful models and techniques for engaging disadvantaged and marginalized communities and illustrates equity concerns most relevant to marginalized communities. The goal of this report is to provide sustainable communities grantees and other regional planning entities a framework for engaging disadvantaged communities as part of the their efforts to support equitable and sustainable growth and development.
II. Sustainability, Equity & Engagement with Disadvantaged Communities

“The concerns of mostly white suburban environmentalists (protecting trees and birds) and the concerns of urban and rural people of color environmentalists (toxic pollution, occupational hazards, unemployment, abandoned lots, run-down properties, and lack of decent grocery stores) were linked. A social movement that put these ideas together began to emerge.”

-Carl Anthony, Breakthrough Communities: Sustainability and Justice in the Next American Metropolis

Given the pressing need for models of sustainable development, the sustainability movement has accelerated in both the United States and globally. Global challenges like climate change have added new urgency and awareness of the need for a new model for our communities, nation, and the globe. As planners, advocates, and policymakers look to produce more sustainable communities, we face multiple, interrelated challenges. We face environmental challenges in mitigating the environmental harms produced by certain types of development. We must address social, racial, and geographic inequities, as certain communities are deprived of investment and opportunity. And we must also work to create a vibrant economy, attract investment, and stimulate economic growth that is beneficial to all residents.

These objectives sometimes conflict with each other; perhaps the greatest challenge facing sustainable development is the need to balance these different interests. Indeed, balancing these interests is a fundamental premise behind the sustainable development movement. Sustainability advocates argue that development decisions must be guided by three goals, often referred to as the three “E’s” of sustainability: Environmental protection, Economic prosperity, and social Equity. While sustainable development ought to consider all three “E’s” in advocating for policies, these goals are not always given equal weight, producing unintentional conflict. Most notably, social equity is often the forgotten “E,” as many sustainability initiatives focus more on addressing environmental concerns, or balancing environmental and economic conflict, while ignoring or missing equity concerns.

Regional Sustainability: The Cost of Not Engaging Issues of Equity

Geographic and social inequities harm people beyond the marginalized groups and communities. They impact the health and vitality of the entire region, imperiling a community and region’s economic future. Inequities and disparities are more than just a representation of one group or community doing worse than others, they are a symptom of a greater challenge: the isolation or marginalization of a large number of a community’s residents. Disparities are an indicator that entire groups or communities are isolated from the critical opportunities and tools needed to succeed, thrive, and survive in our society. These residents face many obstacles to success and many are never able to meet their full potential, representing not only an individual tragedy but a societal tragedy. The high school dropout who falls prey to the challenges in the community could have been the community’s next business leader, educator, entrepreneur, community organizer, or political leader. This individual story is tragic, but an entire community of youth lost this way is a societal challenge that can prove disastrous to having economically vibrant communities and a sustainable future.
Inequities represent waste in our society -- wasted human capacity and human potential. As the economist Richard Florida states in The Flight of the Creative Class:

“Rising inequality is a deadweight drag on our economic competitiveness...The basic formula is simple: Those companies, regions and countries that reduce waste and effectively harness their productive assets have a huge advantage in the Darwinian competition that powers creative capitalism.”6

As we move further into our 21st century economy and learn how our economy is changing, the push for collaboration, innovation, and the education all of our children grows in importance. The economic future for regions will not look like the economy of the 20th century, a model of mass production or employment built around unskilled labor. The future will be based on innovation and a work force that is skilled with technical prowess and more advanced decision-making capability. Innovation is the road to regional and societal wealth in the 21st century. But, an innovation-based economy will struggle to succeed without an educated and skilled labor force, and civically engaged communities.

Our regions and nation face a difficult challenge. As we grow more diverse as a nation, we are finding growing levels of inequity and isolation for many disadvantaged communities. Not only are our regions becoming more diverse and inequitable, they are also increasingly important economic engines in a globalized world. Regional planning that does not account for this diversity, and internalize addressing inequity as a guiding principle for sustainable development, will lag behind. In fact, a 2006 Federal Reserve study found that a skilled workforce, high levels of racial inclusion, and improved income equality correlate strongly and positively with economic growth at the regional level.7

Engaging Equity Through Engagement with Disadvantaged Communities

If our communities are to succeed and be sustainable in the future, the old models of fragmented planning, development, and decision making must also be retired. Inclusive and sustainable regional development, planning, and decision making are the road to a more sustainable and economically vibrant future. Robust and sustained engagement with disadvantaged communities is critical to understanding and addressing issues of inequity, and essential to promoting true regional and sustainable development.
III. Engagement & Vulnerable Communities: Defining Civic Engagement

“What empowers a community — where ordinary people create better places, transform their own and others’ lives while solving the public problems of the day? Inclusive planning, for starters. In recent years planning has made great strides in mobilizing broad participation, incorporating a diversity of interests and stakeholder groups of different cultural and economic backgrounds and ages.”

-Ramona Mullahey, Youth Engagement in Planning, American Planning Association.

Citizen engagement, public participation, and civic engagement in the planning field emerged in the aftermath of urban renewal policies that proved damaging to many disadvantaged neighborhoods and as a byproduct of larger social movements emerging in the 1960’s. There are various definitions for the many engagement models and practices utilized to engage, interact, and define problems and solutions with the public. Engagement must be a two-way relationship, with information flowing back and forth between those administering the planning process and the public. As stated by Klein, planning administrators must serve the public with information and technical expertise, and the public must be able to directly influence the decision making and planning process:

“Decision makers must be in touch with good information concerning characteristics and trends of the community, but they must also be in touch with the aspirations, values, and visions of the citizens they serve.”

The concept of Democratic Planning captures many of the elements of contemporary definitions of civic engagement. Planning processes are not just shaped by planning professionals and are not top down. Technical concepts are “de-mystified” for local communities and planning activities engage full decision making by local citizens and communities. Engagement with the public is more than just passive information collecting, but should also seek to empower communities in terms of guiding the short-term planning outcomes but also in building greater civic capacity for long-term community health. This expanded and more substantial definition of engagement captures what is often referred to as “civic engagement.” As illustrated in the definitions in Figure 1, civic engagement goes beyond just traditional engagement activities with the public, instead utilizing every engagement opportunity to build long-term capacity, organizational leadership, and skills in communities. Civic engagement is not traditional public involvement but a longer term effort focused on relationship- and community-building, as summarized by the National Park Service.

“Civic engagement differs from public involvement in both concept and implementation. Public involvement, sometimes referred to as “consultation,” is a legal requirement of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) planning processes and typically ends when the planning process is complete. Civic engagement, on the other hand, is a sustained effort and activity. It moves beyond the short-term legal requirements of public planning to build and strengthen relationships between people in their communities over an extended time period.”
Civic engagement includes a very robust process for engaging communities, especially vulnerable or disadvantaged communities, while being results-oriented. Engagement is a move toward an asset-based model of development and community-building, recognizing the importance of supporting individual and community, institutional, or organizational capacity. The engagement process also can take many forms, and can include government-led engagement or citizen-led engagement, either in support of or in protest of a public policy, planning process, or decision.

Community engagement is a broadly defined concept, and in application is extremely diverse, with limited academic literature defining core engagement methods. As discussed by Sarkissian et. al.:

“There is no widespread consensus about the meaning or purpose of community engagement, despite a huge professional and academic literature and hundreds of manuals, checklists and models for practitioners. Engagement is generally believed to be "real" when participants can determine the outcome and therefore "bogus" when the outcome is determined elsewhere.”

More than one hundred engagement techniques and approaches have been documented to support community engagement and participation (see Figure 2). These wide-ranging techniques vary from small study groups to large-scale interactive community forums. Appendix A provides an overview of several of these facilitation and engagement methods. These various techniques illustrate that engagement activities lie upon a spectrum of public involvement which range from more passive information collecting and consultation to more intensive community-building, collaboration, and
empowerment. This spectrum of public involvement is illustrated in Figure 3, produced by International Association for Public Participation. Effective public engagement will be oriented toward the more proactive and empowering activities that help build community capacity and support long-term sustainability for planning initiatives.

![Figure 2. Alphabetic listing of “participation” mechanisms (references in parentheses).](image)

**Figure 2.** Various engagement techniques documented in practice and literature. Chart authored by Rowe & Frewer and directly reproduced from the publication: Gene Rowe & Lynn Frewer. “A Typology of Public Engagement Mechanisms.” Science, Technology & Y Human Values: Vol. 30 No. 2. Spring 2005. 251-290.

Engagement is a broad concept because of its wide application in supporting and addressing challenges facing disadvantaged communities, emphasizing both collaborative decision making, education and social, economic, or political development. As described in *Engaging Community for Sustainable Revitalization*

“The road to engagement has many unexpected twists and turns. So, for some funders and practitioners, engagement has an intangible, grasping at air quality to it. There are three reasons for this. First, engagement is both a philosophy and a strategy of social action. As a philosophy, its proponents are attempting to promote a new way of thinking about development that puts low-income and marginalized people at the center. But, increasingly, advocates are also elaborating engagement approaches into a wide range of alternative community revitalization techniques that attempt to strengthen residents’ social and economic resources. They are also considering ways to collaborate with others to address policy and other issues that constrain opportunity for lower income and other constituencies...”16
Engagement must be distinguished from consultation (or providing information) and simply seeking input or feedback. Engagement is rooted in understanding and sensitivity to community needs while also creating reciprocal processes for resident-led planning and decision making. Engagement seeks to leave a lasting impact, both in respect to the sustainability of the active planning process but also in regards to the culture of civic engagement found in the community. As described by Hashagen:

“It is necessary for the governance system to fully understand the dynamics of the communities...and be prepared to adapt and develop structures and processes to make them accessible and relevant to those communities...the term ‘engagement’ warns us against making assumptions about communities: it asks for a dialogue....Government will need to engage with communities as well as ask communities to engage with it.”18

Civic Engagement: A Pathway to Building a Civic Community and Social Capital

The overarching goal of civic engagement should be to build a civic community, one in which civic infrastructure is supported and community capacity is enhanced. Civic engagement activities are a pathway to developing this civic community. Engagement is an opportunity through policy and planning efforts to engage the community in ways which not only produce a better planning process and outcomes, but also is an activity which produces a critical investment in civic capacity for communities. This is critically important for disadvantaged communities that have traditionally not been fully included in planning and policy processes. As described by Lionel Beaulieu of the Southern Rural Development Center, building a civic community is critical to long-term community development and is a long-term process, requiring commitment by both leaders and community members.

“Building a civic-minded community takes time. It requires that people who have had little history of engagement in local affairs be given the opportunity to take part in local leadership opportunities. It means finding a mechanism that allows the ideas and issues weighing on the minds of all segments of the community to be heard and discussed. Moreover, it demands that local government, local people and local organizations work as equal partners in addressing existing opportunities and challenges. It is this sharing of leadership responsibility that will help generate a network of trust among these entities.”19

A civic community requires some history of engagement and for ample opportunities to have a voice in local leadership and decision making opportunities. In addition, communities must have processes to allow for diverse interactions and encourage discourse of diverse viewpoints. A civic community has an abundance of social capital; social capital represents the social networks and “institutions, relationships, and norms that shape the quality and quantity” of community interactions.20 Communities with greater civic participation and social capital have been shown to be healthier and more economically vibrant.21

While social capital is tremendously beneficial to all communities, research indicates that social capital is on the decline in the United States. Robert Putnam’s groundbreaking book Bowling Alone has
documented this diminishing pool of social capital in our nation.\textsuperscript{22} This decline is due to a variety of factors ranging from our contemporary lifestyle, changing family structures, technology, and our development patterns, namely urban sprawl and the lack of community cohesiveness, and isolation produced by sprawling development.\textsuperscript{23} For disadvantaged communities isolated from opportunity, this decline of social capital is magnified. The sustainable communities initiative and the engagement process which will accompany regional sustainability plans create an opportunity to foster civic communities and encourage greater social capital in disadvantaged communities.
IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

**Increasing Level of Public Impact**

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<th>Public participation goal</th>
<th>Promise to the public</th>
<th>Example techniques</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Inform</strong></td>
<td>We will keep you informed.</td>
<td>Fact sheets, Web sites, Open houses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consult</strong></td>
<td>We will listen and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.</td>
<td>Public comment, Focus groups, Surveys, Public meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Involve</strong></td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>Workshops, Deliberative polling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Collaborate</strong></td>
<td>We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.</td>
<td>Citizen advisory committees, Consensus-building, Participatory decision-making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Empower</strong></td>
<td>We will implement what you decide.</td>
<td>Citizen juries, Ballots, Delegated decision</td>
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© 2007 International Association for Public Participation

Figure 3: The Spectrum of Public Participation. Produced by the International Association for Public Participation and accessible online at: [http://www.sparc.bc.ca/Iap2-spectrum-of-public-engagement](http://www.sparc.bc.ca/Iap2-spectrum-of-public-engagement)
IV. The Benefits of Civic Engagement to Sustainable & Equitable Planning

“Too often we think that the sole forces shaping our cities and suburbs are impersonal market factors or technical expertise, forgetting that the most important aspects of our lives are often the outcome of other social, political, psychological, or spiritual dynamics.”

-Carl Anthony, Breakthrough Communities: Sustainability and Justice in the Next American Metropolis

There are tremendous benefits to be derived from utilizing effective civic engagement to guide planning processes, especially planning processes targeting issues of equity, a core component of sustainability. Successful engagement activities can help avoid unproductive conflict while building public will to support sustainable planning solutions. Robust and targeted civic engagement is critical for addressing the equity concerns and needs of disadvantaged communities, giving voice to traditionally voiceless constituencies while producing more informed and innovative ideas or solutions. Successful civic engagement also can produce long-term benefits, helping produce a civic infrastructure in communities that need to build capacity to address long-term goals of community development, sustainability, and equity.

Avoiding Unproductive Community Conflict

Civic engagement is a two-way process, sometimes led by the government and other times originating among the public or particular communities. This community-led engagement often is in protest or opposition to planning and development decisions, as impacted communities organize and “speak to power” to fight an unpopular, insensitive, or sometimes misunderstood planning decision. For potentially controversial decisions, assuming engagement can be avoided (for fear of conflict) will often inevitably produce conflict and public pushback. As summarized by The Regional Equity Demonstration project at Rutgers:

“The question at stake is thus not whether civic engagement is necessary or possible but rather how, when, and under what terms it occurs. Civic engagement is already a reality. Government mandates it by statute and needs it, as a practical matter, for legitimacy. Citizens engage themselves through protest, litigation, and other means available to them. The question of civic engagement is not if but how — not whether but for what purpose, through what mechanisms, and to what effect.”

Public opinion also expects and supports fair representation in regional planning processes. Focus groups have found widespread support among all demographics that a fair planning process with fair representation of all groups is an important role for government and regional planning. However, focus groups express skepticism that development and planning decision making wants true public involvement, as summarized below in research prepared for Smart Growth America:

“Respondents believe public involvement in decisions is usually, and often intentionally, limited by inadequate notice, impractical meeting locations and timing. Many say decision makers have
their minds made up before the public meetings...Participants across political perspectives and socio-demographics firmly believe that increased public participation in planning, increased efforts to inform the public early in the process, and increased efforts to fully engage the local community will be the best and most certain avenue to better decisions.27

This public expectation for fair and democratic processes in planning and intrinsic skepticism regarding the planning and development process creates a risk if planning activities do not embrace robust and transparent civic engagement processes. Well- planned, deliberate, and dynamic civic engagement activities can help avoid potential conflict by engaging communities fully in the process and giving the community voice in guiding (and owning) planning decisions.

Building Public Will and Sustainable Coalitions

Civic engagement and deliberations conducted with the community in the planning process not only produces engagement but also builds ownership, which increases the likelihood of successful plan implementations. Building public will can also encourage consistency in plan implementation over a long- term period, even when changes occur to political or public policy leadership. This ability to build a constituency is critical to the goals of the sustainable communities planning process. Building public will through civic engagement can also build a constituency to counter opposition to sustainable practices and policies.28 Research indicates that communities that have adopted more sustainable planning policies tend to have more participatory planning and policy making processes.29 While engagement and participation can increase the likelihood of a community embracing sustainability, this is not guaranteed. Engagement should not seek to induce Not In My Backyard (NIMBY) tendencies or competition between different communities and constituencies during the planning process.30 Careful framing and development of regional norms and collective goals across communities can help deter this fear of NIMBY tendencies and competition to undermine planning goals.31

Many models of sustainable growth and best practices are currently in use or are known in the planning community. What is critical to the wider adoption of these sustainable practices and solutions is a public embrace of these practices, and the public will to demand plans be followed and policies be reshaped. David Rusk, in his Building Sustainable Inclusive Communities, notes that this is a primary challenge for the sustainable communities initiative:

“The story is told of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt meeting with his new deal brain trust around some contentious issue. “All right, FDR finally said. “I’m convinced. Now go out and publicly force me to do it.” This is precisely the challenge the Sustainable Communities Initiative faces if it is to avoid falling far short of its vision. What is lacking is not sufficient “best practices” policy tools. What is lacking is the political will to use them.”32

Engagement can also help build the diverse and multidisciplinary coalitions needed to address regional sustainability concerns. Linking organizations and interests across multiple domains to work together on issues of regional concern, while effectively engaging with disadvantaged communities, creates an
opportunity to link equity advocates into greater regional sustainability efforts, broadening these coalitions across race, ethnicity, class and geography. The sustainability movement must openly embrace equity, and work to link together different interests, stakeholders, and communities as they shape development policy.

Though difficult, these linkages and collaborations are critical to successful sustainable development. For example, many of Chicago’s recent affordable housing initiatives in the region’s suburbs have been spurred by the business community.\textsuperscript{33} In Michigan, environmental advocates and racial justice advocates united to advocate successfully for more equitable transportation investments that would direct more spending to urban communities and limit road development in undeveloped areas.\textsuperscript{34} This kind of broad-based coalition brings together a sufficient number of different stakeholders so that attention to each of the three “E’s” of sustainability is properly balanced. After all, conflict between the three principles of sustainable development is not inherent; environmental protection and social equity can work extremely well in concert. Only by building diverse coalitions of business, environmental, and equity interests, is it possible to generate the public and political will essential to convincing policy makers to adopt an ambitious agenda for a more sustainable future.

Engaging Issues of Equity and the Needs of Disadvantaged Communities

Dedicating resources to civic engagement provides the best pathway to giving voice to disadvantaged communities and addressing equity concerns. Disadvantaged communities are directly impacted by equity concerns and residents of these communities have the most informed opinion of the various equity challenges and opportunities in their communities. As described by PolicyLink in their report, \textit{Building Communities of Opportunity Through the Sustainable Communities Initiative}:

\textit{“Social equity leadership as (a core principal) to both the application and planning implementation and governance: Plans tend to be stronger, yield more equitable results, and have greater community support when area residents, neighborhood groups, and small business owners are involved in their creation. Community members possess invaluable knowledge of neighborhood needs and assets, and have important ideas to contribute. The most inclusive processes engage residents from the beginning, before major decisions are made, and throughout the planning and development process. Community-based organizing groups often catalyze greater resident involvement and can help government agencies successfully engage diverse community residents.”}\textsuperscript{35}

Although civic engagement can empower disadvantaged communities, disadvantaged and marginalized communities remain the least likely to be actively engaged in public affairs and have high levels of social capital.\textsuperscript{36} The likelihood of communities being engaged in civic engagement is directly related to community assets and resources.\textsuperscript{37} Those with more resources, income, or wealth are more likely to be engaged and connected to strong social, institutional, and community networks. To effectively support
civic engagement in communities that are disadvantaged requires resources to meet this resource gap. As described by the Corporation for National and Community Service:

“…participation in civic life is fostered through a reinforcing cycle, where resources, engagement, and connections to social networks develop throughout an individual’s life, feeding into one another and thereby leading to greater civic participation. Addressing the growing gap in civic engagement, therefore, requires a strategic approach to providing the proper resources to those from disadvantaged circumstances, thereby introducing them to the positively reinforcing cycle of civic participation.”

Sustainability planning must work directly with disadvantaged communities to empower communities and fully address equity issues within a sustainable planning agenda. Disadvantaged communities face tremendous resource barriers to engagement; thus to effectively address equity and incorporate the voice of disadvantaged communities, resources must be targeted to promote civic engagement and build social capital in those communities that need it the most. In addition, engagement must try to encourage “innovative and collaborative” leadership development and be built upon a process of “purposeful” public deliberation, a process that weighs multiple options and has mechanisms for managing conflict with the goal of creating innovative and creative solutions.

**Building Community Capacity and Civic Infrastructure in Disadvantaged Communities**

One of the most important benefits produced by civic engagement is the ability to build community capacity and civic infrastructure in traditionally neglected disadvantaged communities. Communities are able to utilize civic engagement to be better organized, identify new solutions, advocate for policy changes, and other benefits. Community development is intricately connected to community action and engagement. Community-based decision making and leadership is enabled by providing technical and research-based information and facilitating interactions that allow the community to engage, deliberate, and respond. As described by Copeland Carson & Associates, this form of community-building positions communities for long-term improvement.

“…community-building is an essential foundation to sustain community development across the dynamic and largely unforeseen economic, political and other changes that influence a neighborhood’s future. The community-building process strengthens community capacity for revitalization creating a pipeline of constituents with the knowledge, skills, and commitment to engage in collective action for continuous community improvement.”

These activities produce a long-term benefit as engagement activities strengthen social capital within the community. Each $1 in civic engagement investment in Los Angeles communities by philanthropic organizations was found to produce $91 in benefits to communities, in addition to other non-monetary benefits. Entrepreneurialism is also tightly linked to civic engagement. A virtuously reinforcing cycle exists between the entrepreneurial community and a civically engaged community. Fran Rudoff outlines three of the long-term benefits and civic outcomes of civic engagement in the Grantmakers
Forum’s *Practitioners Perspectives on Building Civic Engagement.* Noting that civic engagement enhanced participants through improving: civic skills (the ability to critically think, collaborate, problem solve, advocate and resolve conflict); civic knowledge (developing a greater understanding of community needs and public sector policies or decision making models); and civic efficacy (knowing how to create and design community-led initiatives and influence policy makers).44
V. Strategies for Successful Civic Engagement

“Building a civically engaged community does necessitate some important shifts in how things get done. It means that the entrenched leadership is no longer at the helm of decision-making. Instead, all segments are actively engaged in guiding the future of their community. New and expanded leadership is not thwarted, but is overtly embraced.”

-Lionel Beaulieu, Creating Vibrant Communities & Economies in Rural America.

Embracing civic engagement with disadvantaged communities is essential to developing an effective planning process for regional sustainability plans. But successfully integrating civic engagement activities, especially with communities that face many barriers to engagement or have historically been marginalized, can be difficult. The following are considerations and strategies for successfully engaging with disadvantaged communities in a manner which would improve the outcomes of sustainable regional planning efforts and in a manner which cultivates long- term benefits such as building a civic community and social capital in disadvantaged communities.

Adopt a Participatory and Deliberative Process & Start with Issues of Community Concern:

The engagement process should balance both citizen- based and government- based engagement activities. Engagement activities should openly embrace “bottom up” or community- led activities and interactions. Engagement processes should be highly participatory in nature and not viewed as simple information sharing with disadvantaged communities. Community members should feel that their efforts and involvement is appreciated or valued and will potentially impact planning outcomes. Engagement activities should identify, explore, and focus on issues of concern for disadvantaged communities. These critical issues should be the starting point for engagements and discussions, and linked to issues of sustainability and equity. As described in Engaging Community for Sustainable Revitalization:

“...organizations with an engagement focus go one step further and also involve the community’s most marginalized and isolated in the earliest phases of issue identification with an emphasis on ideas or skills that they can initiate or contribute to resolve the concern. Instead of starting with a pre-determined solution to a community challenge, an engagement strategy would involve constituents in analyzing why the problem exists; exploring alternative solutions; building a shared vision for addressing it; and possibly creating a coordinated strategy to resolve it that builds on the resources of all involved.”

Traditional public engagement approaches, such as public hearings and passive information sharing, can actually escalate conflicts around planning and development. As described by the Funders Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities:

“Many residents first become active in land use issues to fight a project they fear will adversely impact their neighborhood. People are deeply protective of the places they live. Residents get
angry when the institutional mechanisms used for making such decisions are outmoded or broken and preclude meaningful citizen participation. Even unfounded fears are reinforced when residents feel they are not given a chance to participate until it is too late to change outcomes. The traditional public hearing process exacerbates the fears of many local residents, encouraging them to band together in opposition. Lack of information, superficial involvement in decisions, and conflicting interests fuel such opposition and can create political gridlock and lead to poor decision-making."447

Civic engagement should also help build local networks of engaged community members. These local networks can be powerful mechanisms for sharing information, technical skills, and scaling up smaller successful initiatives.48 Successful engagement must work to expand the web of stakeholders involved in the planning process, from traditional or formal stakeholders to non-traditional or informal groups, such as community networks, civic clubs, parent and education groups, youth organizations, religious leaders and citizens.49 Consortia should build extensive local networks for civic engagement, using multiple methods of publicizing activities and types of engagement activities to attract a diverse constituency. As described in Engaging Community for Sustainable Revitalization, the long-term goal of engagement is to build diverse networks which reduce social isolation for disadvantaged groups and communities.

“While engagement organizations work with institutions, they also work as informal levels of community to involve people who are socially isolated or excluded from community decision-making. This may involve convening people across racial, ethnic or other community demographic groups as well as building social relationships within them. The convening process is specifically designed to not only expand resident social networks but to build feelings of mutual trust, belonging, shared commitment and values, while reducing social isolation.”450

Build Trust: Share Information, Responsibility and Decision Making

Trust is essential to effective civic engagement with traditionally marginalized or excluded communities. Willingness to share power, responsibility, and leadership authority builds trust among the community and official decision makers. Committing resources, commitment to the process, consistency, and cultural competency encourages engagement and also builds good will and trust between communities and planning consortia.51 As summarized by PolicyLink:

“Authentic community engagement (should be encouraged), including convening and facilitation of a caucus or advisory committee with decision-making authority that involves resident leaders and community organizations who can ensure a community perspective throughout the planning process; and grants to support community participation.”52

It is critical for disadvantaged communities to act in more than just an advisory role, but to be actively involved in decision making processes. Public sector entities must also be transparent in sharing information, details on process, goals, and decision making approaches to planning initiatives. Conflict must be dealt with in an open and constructive way, promoting collaborative engagement and avoiding
adversarial engagement. Additionally, disagreements and conflicts should be discussed openly but with sensitivity to disadvantaged communities.

Trust-building also takes time, and the longer that engagement activities and relationship-building occurs, the greater the likelihood of trust being developed between consortium representatives and disadvantaged communities. Trust-building is also essential to the long-term goal of building community leadership (and potential future leaders to support the region’s sustainability planning efforts). As described by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation in their publication *The Collective Leadership Framework: A Workbook for Cultivating and Sustaining Community Change*:

“For collective leadership to emerge, it is critical to build trusting relationships. Attention must be paid to understanding and appreciating differences among all those who are in the group. To do that, each member needs to be able to understand and articulate his/her own area of competence and passion, communication style, and view of the community. Building trusting relationships includes helping each member find his or her own voice. This will help all members become comfortable communicating with one another in reinforcing and constructive ways. As members get to know and accept each other, they develop a strong sense of belonging. This sense of belonging supports individual risk taking.”

**Embrace Robust Civic Engagement: Emphasize Education and Effectiveness over Efficiency**

Robust engagement moves away from just soliciting information in a passive way. On the spectrum of engagement, activities should be more targeted toward community involvement, collaboration, and empowerment. Engagement activities should be seen as not only a process to inform decision makers but also as an educational opportunity for the public, enabling them to better understand planning concepts and issues pertaining to sustainability. Engagement processes must not overemphasize efficient participation (numbers of attendees at events) over indicators of empowered or effective participation (the ability of disadvantaged groups to organize or express their needs in the political process). As stated by Gallardo and Stein:

“To achieve equitable community participation, planners must consider the types of participation that should be utilized. Here one might differentiate between more superficial or symbolic participation versus more empowered or effective participation (i.e., actual control of resources and receipt of benefits, as well as contributions to planning and design).”

**Engagement Activities to Support Regional Planning: Collaborative Action & Planning**

For regional planning issues, a common engagement approach recommended by the National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation is a model of *Collaborative Action*. This model is intended to empower multiple communities to problem solve together in order to address complicated problems and take responsibility for solutions. The process utilizes dialogue and deliberation to generate collaborative action plans which also encourage collaborative activities among diverse stakeholders across a region.
Understanding which groups need to be represented, which groups are affected but have traditionally been excluded, and understanding existing power dynamics are critical issues to address in this process. Study circles and visioning are common facilitation techniques to achieve this goal. Visioning efforts which have been more successful have had the following characteristics:

- A visible “open door” philosophy to participation which is welcoming to all groups; clear communication and visible incorporation of public input into decision making.
- Partnership with educational institutions, non-profit representatives, and business interests.
- Easy interactive feedback mechanisms and easy access to public policy makers.
- Deliberate efforts to engage groups which are traditionally excluded or difficult to engage in participation processes and addressing barriers to engagement early in the process.
- The use of workshops and charrettes to enhance public knowledge and widespread use of traditional and new media platforms.
- The incorporation of mapping technologies to understand regional dynamics and discussion of regionalism in the context of globalization.

A similar model has been described as “collaborative planning” by the Institute of Urban and Regional Development at the University of California Berkeley. This model is seen as effective in building agreement among diverse stakeholders, assuring a fair and open process, and producing transformative education for the community or group learning. The model is dependent on interactive learning between multiple stakeholders, including interest groups (such as non-profits), members of the public, and various governmental actors (see Figure 4). As described by Innes and Booher:

“In this model, participants jointly develop a mission and purpose, lay out their interests (avoiding taking positions) for all to understand, develop a shared understanding of a problem and agreement on what they need to do, and then work through a series of tasks which lead to action or agreements that all, or most, believe will improve their ability to meet their own interests and, in the process, improve the collective welfare. They reach these results, not by argument, but by cooperative scenario building, role playing and bricolage — piecing together the ideas, information and experiences all members have to create new strategies that often can get the group out of some impasse that would otherwise have prevented action.”
Communications: Framing Communication for Effective Engagement

People use “frames” or schema to understand information in our complex world. These frames are built from experiences, information, and other implicit biases and help guide decision making, especially implicit decision making. Frames can be positive or negative and they way information is “framed” can be very influential in respect to how people respond. As described in The Kirwan Institute’s Talking About Race: Resource Notebook:

“Frames are most simply understood as a mental “default understanding” or world view of. They set the terms of a discussion and affect how new information will be encountered and incorporated into a debate, thus serving as “mental shortcuts that allow people to make sense of their world”. Research in social psychology suggests that the human mind requires these shortcuts to navigate the flow of information; new or contradictory information may be rejected rather than compelling the individual to reject or alter his or her prevailing mental frame. Frames are constructed by identifying and naming a set of core values—or principles—that are central to an individual’s ability to evaluate and understand the world. In this context, widely and strongly held frames have the power to set the terms of debate.”

Careful framing can assist in producing more conducive engagement around issues of sustainability, regional planning, and equity. Regionalism, smart growth, sustainability, race, and equity are complex issues, which can be difficult to have productive public conversations about. Although these topics may be difficult to broach, they are essential to having honest, inclusive, and productive dialogue. The following are strategies to frame issues of regionalism, smart growth, sustainability, race, and equity in order to better engage audiences and have more productive public engagement experiences.
• Do not discuss the region in the abstract, use it to illustrate concrete issues of mutual concern, such as the transportation system or water quality. Emphasize the role of regional coordination and planning to help communities realize mutual benefits and address mutual challenges.61
• Always emphasize the importance of public engagement and involvement to the planning process and planning outcomes. Describe solutions and plans being generated as not produced by government but the result of a public democratic process representing the interests and insights of the region’s people.62
• Connect human stories to policy issues and concepts that some may find too abstract.63 Describe development in terms of its impact on people and communities, be explicit and talk about real impacts on people. People relate to storytelling and narratives, use this to illustrate development patterns which are sustainable and healthy.64
• Emphasize the interaction between various issues, such as transportation and the region’s economic health, education, and housing or public services and planning or development decisions. Explain how sustainable planning can have impacts across these various topics which may be issues of concern for participants.
• Do not avoid talking about issues of race and social inequity, but do not overly emphasize racial or social disparities without also discussing the barriers to opportunity that make it difficult to thrive in certain communities. Simplistic discussions about racial and social inequalities will not resonate positively with audiences which may already hold implicit or explicit biases regarding those populations. Unless discussions of inequity are framed appropriately they may actually harden opposition toward disadvantaged groups among some members of the public.65
• When talking about community improvement and social or racial equity, emphasize fairness and opportunity. The opportunity frame is a positive frame which appeals to the core American belief that everyone should have a chance to achieve their full potential.66 As described in Action Media’s publication, Prosperity Through Regional Development. Focus Group Findings & Recommendations.

“Talk about opportunity—access to transportation and services, opportunity for jobs, opportunity for education, opportunity to live in safer neighborhoods, opportunity for prosperity. Mobilize public participation for more opportunity to be heard, and to raise the fundamental questions: who’s included, who benefits, who’s left out?”67

The opportunity frame resonates deeply with most Americans, across different social and political beliefs. As described by The Opportunity Agenda (a communications and research organization), the opportunity frame is particularly appealing to the public:

“It activates people. Most people believe strongly that everyone should have access to opportunity. When they look at their lives through the “opportunity frame” and realize the ways in which they or others around them are denied opportunity, they will act to defend their rights. And since the frame helps people talk about their issues in less controversial ways, it makes it easier for them to talk about their issue with family, friends, and the media.”68
Technology & Media: Integrate New Media, Mapping and Other Internet Based Methods

Engagement processes should integrate new media technology and data driven indicator systems, while being sensitive to digital divides and digital access barriers for disadvantaged communities. New media technologies allow for new ways to interact and engage with the public. Online tools allow for easier recruiting for engagement activities, more real time and cost effective information dissemination, provide follow up interactions from engagement activities, conduct on-line dialogue between community members, and build better connections among community members who may not be able to attend in face meetings or engagements. 69

Data- driven community mapping and indicator systems are additional technical tools to help engage with communities on issues of equity and sustainable development. 70 Maps are powerful communication tools. GIS maps using accurate and reliable data can identify critical intervention areas and can reach a large audience through good visualization and representation of community issues. Participatory mapping exercises are promising ways to increase community ownership, participation, and collaborative planning and development initiatives. 71 Participatory mapping projects create problem solving and information gathering opportunities with community members, which also can add value to deliberation. 72 There are examples of participatory research in environmental management, urban planning, and several other advocacy fields. 73 As more and more citizens participate in the process, issues and concerns can be clearly identified, leading to more targeted and accurate solutions. Well- designed community-based participatory research can provide the best opportunity for building community ownership of projects and initiatives. These initiatives allow for the collection of new and unique types of data. Handheld remote mapping or GPS devices will spur the growth of these initiatives.

Process is critical in assuring a productive participatory mapping exercise. Mechanisms for incorporating the results of the mapping process must be clear and clearly communicated to participants. The process should be community- led and facilitated with technical assistance and support from the public sector agency. 74 Participatory mapping projects can also be helpful in clarifying the perspectives of the community from the local population, often presenting a unique and different view of the community, than what is popularly believed in the wider region. Communities that may have an overwhelmingly negative external reputation may have critical assets and resources that can be identified through participatory activities with local residents. 75 Technology- based engagement must work to integrate best practices in community- building with best practices in community technology, through a process which seeks to first identify community needs and then pairs technology to address those needs. 76

Engaging through narratives

In addition to data and other empirical evidence, many people learn through narratives or storytelling. As described in Kitchen Table Sustainability: Practical Recipes for Community Engagement:

“...we have found that people relate more to stories than to date, “evidence” or directives about what to do. Stories are powerful. They help us make sense of our lives and allow us to make
meaning of past experiences. Stories encourage people to find and share their own stories. Spoken aloud, each story becomes a catalyst for others to tell their stories. When stories are shared, each person gains a new perspective. They glimpse their shared experience within the shared experience of the community.”

World Cafe’s are one popular method for stimulating storytelling or narrative development. Additionally, new media and other participatory processes facilitate the development of local narratives related to planning, development, equity and sustainability. As described by Foth, Klaebe and Hearne:

“By making new media techniques accessible, and providing guidance and training resources, communities can conduct their own hands-on workshops in digital storytelling, oral history and future scenario building in a self directed manner with peer support, and then present these outcomes in a virtual realm as exhibitable content for public viewing.

“Narratives not only support community meaning making about place, but also the construction of planning policy, development strategies, as well as the assembly and interpretation of empirical planning data. Urban phenomena (such as traffic, clustering of activities and environmental outcomes) emerge out of the interaction of complex systems of micro scale processes. New media approaches, guided by interpretive narratives, can model these dynamic systems in a more comprehensible and accessible fashion.”

Web- based and other interactive tools allow for and stimulate the development of narratives about “place” or community. Creating opportunities for group decision making and community- based learning and development of powerful narratives can inform planning processes as well as engage and educate the community about planning. In addition to participatory mapping technologies and processes, other new media tools, from Facebook, Flicker and Wikipedia to more informal local social networking web sites, can be powerful tools to further expand the engagement process and collect local narratives.

In respect to sustainable development planning and mapping analysis, mapping should be utilized to educate residents and encourage deliberation and problem solving among communities and other stakeholders. Sustainability data collection and analysis should address the intersection of opportunity and marginalized communities. As described by PolicyLink:

“Community data collection including needs assessments and social equity mapping to establish a baseline and set targets that include attention to poverty and racial concentration, social indicators, housing affordability, and mapping the location of opportunities for employment, quality schools, fresh food, parks and open space, health centers, and other amenities.”

The Kirwan Institute utilizes opportunity mapping and models to identify equity challenges and promote engagement with disadvantaged communities. Opportunity mapping seeks to identify solutions for connecting marginalized communities to critical opportunity structures, such as successful schools, safe neighborhoods, healthy environments, and sustainable employment. Opportunity mapping creates composite index maps based on numerous neighborhood indicators of community opportunity and
vitality. This mapping, research, and community engagement and advocacy model has several broad goals and outcomes. These goals could include:

- To raise significant attention and awareness to the structural and community barriers impacting disadvantaged communities. To identify policy solutions to remedy barriers to opportunity for disadvantaged communities. To provide an entry point for starting consensus-building or collaborative discussions among stakeholders.
- To provide a local resource to identify areas of greatest need in communities and assess “gaps” where need is not being met by on-going advocacy efforts, local initiatives, investments or policy initiatives.
- To utilize the mapping to inform and guide advocacy campaigns, policy advocacy, and community planning. To provide data, analysis, and recommendations to help build local organizational capacity in understanding challenges, needs and strategies for disadvantaged communities. To provide a collaborative framework to collectively organize the strategic planning of multiple stakeholders in communities.

While digital inclusion is critical in today’s society, disparities exist in respect to who has access to digital resources in the United States. Regional, age, income and race/ethnicity disparities still exist in relation to internet access in the U.S. (See Figure 5). The digital divide is still a prominent divide in many rural areas, most notably in poor rural communities in the South. Growing applications like handheld mobile devices, growing broadband services, and school-based digital resources provide promising resources to counter digital access issues and should be considered when designing engagement approaches. While significant disparities exist in home internet access between high- and low-income households in the US, smaller disparities exist in respect to cell phone or mobile device usage and overall internet usage for low-income households (See Figure 6). This data suggests growing low cost handheld devices and other technology may help sharply reduce digital isolation from disadvantaged communities in the future.
Figure 5: Analysis of internet usage rates by income and geography in the US; Chart not authored by this report’s author and reproduced directly from the following report Rural Broadband At a Glance, 2009 Edition. By Peter Stenberg and Sarah Low. Economic Information Bulletin No. (EIB47). February 2009. Original chart and report available online at: http://www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/EIB47/
Logistics: Creating a Welcoming, Interactive and Effective Engagement Process

Details are critical in successfully implementing engagement activities, from the location, layout, and format of meetings to facilitation techniques. Research by Sarkissian et. al. have identified the following factors that can increase the likelihood of engagement processes to fail to be effective:

- “inadequate influence in decision making for community participants,
- utilizing the engagement activities to justify existing actions or policy decisions,
- inadequate resources or failing to use a variety of engagement approaches,
- not focusing on local capacity building as a goal of the process,
- fear of challenging existing beliefs or power structures,
- not developing networks within communities of interest and not expressing respect for local knowledge and community member input, and
- too much emphasis placed on experts for supporting decision making.”

Different types of engagement processes are more appropriate than others, depending on the specific outcomes desired from the engagement. Small group discussions are useful for group learning, sharing experiences, or developing priorities or dialogue. Large group engagements are more suited toward energizing ongoing community dialogue, announcing an initiative, sharing information, or connecting stakeholders. Online or other technology- based engagements allow for detailed information sharing or
targeted information sharing with hard to reach audiences, follow up from formal engagement activities, and gathering input from a large sample of residents and stakeholders.

Establishing a set of ground rules for engagement events and setting expectations regarding content and process will increase the likelihood of an effective engagement event. Additionally, be aware of power dynamics within the community that may impact the engagement event. Be attentive to the norms and culture of the community and pay attention to the engagement process to assure that specific individuals or organizations are not dominating the discussion or any group- based decision making processes.87

Figures 7 and 8 provide an overview of additional considerations when designing engagement activities and facilitating engagement interactions. Figure 7 describes critical logistical concerns when inviting the public to an engagement activity. Figure 8 provides an overview of how to design and ask compelling and thought provoking engagement questions.

**CREATING AN OPEN ENGAGEMENT ENVIRONMENT: DRAFTING INVITATIONS AND PLANNING**

The invitation for pulling the community into the engagement process is critical. Invitations should clearly describe the purpose of the event, the process leading to the event, a clear theme to the events activities, expectations from those who participate, clear logistical information (time, location and agenda) and acknowledgement of the resources brought by those invited (and stating the importance of their participation).

Sample Invitation Language: Produced by Michael Herman of Michael Herman Associates.

- “Please join us for... Our purpose is simple and important....”
- “Because you care about... you have the skills, experiences and insights that are essential to make it better”
- “We need your deep engagement in the issues and opportunities surrounding the present and future of... toward the resolution of current issues and realization of untapped potential for...”
- “The work of this session will contribute and lead toward...”
- “Where there is agreement, we can move forward. Where there is difference we can seek understanding, common ground, and workable compromise.”

In addition, several other critical issues must be decided upon in the engagement event planning process, these include: room layout, follow up activities and resources (which should be announced), record keeping and documentation and identification of what critical data or information needs to be presented as part of the process.

Figure 8: Techniques for asking powerful questions for effective participation. All materials reproduced and adapted from the following report. “Eric Vogt, Jaunita Brown & David Isaacs. “The Art of Powerful Questions: Catalyzing Insight, Innovation, and Action.” Published by Whole Systems Associates and Distributed by Pegasus Communications, Inc. September 2003.
VI. Engagement with Community: Considerations for the Engagement Process with Specific Disadvantaged Communities

Of course not all disadvantaged communities are the same and engagement strategies need to reflect this fact. The following provides an overview of considerations when working with a variety of potentially disadvantaged communities.

Working in Impoverished Communities:

Low- income communities are not monolithic and represent a wide variety of racial and ethnic populations, cultural norms, languages, geographic characteristics, with distinct barriers to opportunity.  

Engagement with these communities must recognize these distinctions and integrate them into engagement approaches. While engagement should be a universal goal, targeted and tailor-made approaches will be needed to effectively engage with a diverse number of communities. Additionally, low- income communities may already be engaged through less formal engagement networks, but for active engagement these communities face tremendous barriers which must be understood and addressed in the engagement process.

Working with faith- based leaders and clergy may be an effective way to reach and understand diverse populations living in impoverished communities. As described in A Local Official’s Guide to Working with Clergy and Congregations. Public Engagement and Collaborative Governance:

“Working with clergy and congregations can be a strategy for reaching out “beyond the usuals” to include additional voices from the community. Congregations contain not only a diversity of religious denominations, but also additional diversities of race, ethnicity, culture, age and nationality; all representative of their local communities. In many communities, a significant number of residents are members of local congregations; working with such organizations can enable local agencies to connect with broader cross sections of the community.”

A first step recommended for engaging with disadvantaged or hard- to- reach populations is to first develop relationships and outreach with local clergy. To effectively work with clergy, relationship- building, trust- building and communicating respectfully is critical. Relationships must be seen as “two way” and beneficial to both the congregation and policymakers.

Although low- income communities may not be actively involved with formal community organizations, they may still participate in more informal social networks in the community. For policy makers looking to engage these populations, they must consider accessing these informal social networks to further engagement. Research has found that increased rates of homeownership are associated with higher levels of social capital. However, research also suggests that increasing levels of participation in neighborhood activities can also increase social capital. As stated by Brisson and Usher: “...programs that promote community participation and indigenous leadership and empower decision-making processes may provide more sustainable positive outcomes for families living in low-income neighborhoods.”
Working in Rural Communities:

The characteristics of rural communities vary significantly. Rural communities could be experiencing rapid growth or be isolated with persistent poverty, and this has significant implications for social capital and potential methods for engagement. Disadvantaged rural communities contain both assets which encourage civic engagement and barriers to engagement. Assets may include stronger social networks and ties within the community; barriers may include more entrenched political leadership that may be resistant to change or in expanding influence to other stakeholders. Isolated rural communities must focus on internally driven development (such as entrepreneurship) and the ability to successfully support internal community development requires social capital. Healthy rural communities with strong leadership have effective communication mechanisms, developed social capital, higher levels of community engagement, and more collaboration across and within communities. Rural civic involvement has also been show to be highly supportive of locally- focused farming and healthy rural agricultural economies.

Research has found more viable (economically healthy) rural communities have strong female leadership representation and strong personal or organizational ties to state and other external resource organizations. Persistently poor rural regions have higher levels of inequality in respect to access to capital, finance, and political systems. These factors undermine social capital and limit community development. The continued outmigration of skilled residents in these persistently poor rural regions also suppresses social capital. Nonprofit organizations can be tremendously beneficial in supporting social capital in rural areas, helping build linkages and create opportunities for competing interests to have dialogue. Distance matters in engagement within rural communities. Efforts to offset financial costs and access barriers in rural areas may greatly enhance sustained engagement and effective participation in the engagement process.

Successful community engagement in rural areas should focus on several goals: extensive encouragement of youth participation, cooperative relationship- building between rural communities, network development among diverse stakeholders representing various interests of rural communities, an “open door” policy or easy accessibility to public policy leaders involved in guiding the planning process, opportunities for real decision making for community participants, and open access to information or other technical resources.

Working with Immigrant Communities

Immigrant communities are an important and growing segment of our society. Immigrant communities are well- poised to embrace civic engagement because they have higher levels of social capital which may soften the impacts of some community challenges for communities often marginalized by traditional engagement processes. Several prominent barriers to civic engagement create challenges in engaging with immigrant communities. Impediments to engagement include: language, literacy and cultural barriers; limited experience with local political processes; fear of political repercussions for interacting with government or speaking out in regards to public policy; and limited time and
resources. The Collaborative Government Institute has identified the primary barriers to immigrant participation and these include:

- “Language, literacy, and cultural barriers may mean newcomers are unaware of opportunities to participate, or may find participation embarrassing or difficult, especially if they are promoted and conducted only in English.
- Lack of knowledge about local political processes and issues may make people feel unqualified to participate unless they understand that everyone has values and priorities to contribute and that everyone will be given understandable background information.
- Lingering fear of an oppressive government in their country of origin can make some immigrants wary of public meetings. They may believe that challenging government policies or speaking out will lead to trouble with the authorities or with people who have anti-immigrant sentiments.
- Too little time and resources to attend a meeting is a common refrain, especially for those newcomers working long hours at low paying jobs. Lack of awareness of opportunities for involvement can be a barrier to diverse participation.
- Fear of deportation or political repression in their countries of origin may make newcomers and their families wary of public participation, especially if it occurs in very public or official settings.”

Despite these challenges, engaging with immigrant communities is important, as described by the Collaborative Government Institute:

“Overall, engaging immigrants in the civic and political life of their cities and counties will create stronger and more successful communities for at least two specific reasons: 1. It will result in decisions that are more responsive to the full community’s needs and interests; 2. It will hasten the process of integrating newcomers into the broader community.”

Well-planned and inclusive engagement approaches can be successful with immigrant communities and informal relationship-building with communities can help build trust. Language access is critical to immigrant engagement activities as well as developing relationships and trust with key leaders in the communities. Collaboration with important institutions, such as schools and religious organizations and other “gateway” institutions, can be effective ways to interact and engage with immigrant communities. Creating a variety of engagement formats (small group interactions, one on one engagements, and larger engagement activities) is important. Additional training and leadership development and long-term engagement activities in immigrant communities can help break down obstacles to engagement and develop trust. In addition, the Collaborative Government Institute has identified several significant factors which will increase the potential for effective engagement with immigrant communities, these include:
• “Create a small focus group of leaders and residents from local immigrant communities. Have a facilitated discussion to identify community concerns, interests and engagement processes that would bring community residents together to discuss these issues.
• Introductory comments that welcome and express the importance of all participants to the meeting, and that include remarks by immigrant community leaders may help set a comfortable and productive tone.
• Good facilitation may be particularly important to ensure participation by those with less English speaking capacity or confidence to participate.
• It may be helpful to ensure opportunities for members of the same immigrant communities to speak together in their native languages at the beginning and at times during the meeting to ensure understanding and full participation.
• Provide opportunities for small group as well as large group participation.
• Be aware that in more stratified communities, some group members may be less willing to speak until others have already done so. Forcing the issue may create discomfort.
• Immediately address dynamics that create a less than safe place for participation (such as apparently prejudicial comments made about a particular group).
• Consider forms of recognition and appreciation for those who participate.”

Working with Disabled Populations

Several factors can limit the ability of disabled populations to participate in engagement activities, including barriers in respect to accessing the location and/or participating in the method of engagement, and fewer organizational groups represent the population directly (with disabled persons in leadership positions). Structured engagement which includes direct representation by disabled persons (not just representation by disabled interest groups) and direct efforts to address barriers to engagement in location and process will increase the potential for effective engagement. Technology, such as social media, social networking and 3D modeling, can help reduce traditional place- and location- based barriers to engagement for disabled persons. These technologies should be utilized to enhance but not replace traditional in- person engagement activities. Community visioning activities and participatory mapping can also be powerful engagement techniques to understand barriers to equity and inclusion for disabled populations.

Working with Children and Youth

Disadvantaged youth are far less likely to be civically engaged than their non disadvantaged peers. Engagement among youth has been shown to lead to many positive outcomes at the individual and community level. Research has demonstrated that youth involved with engagement activities are more likely to become community leaders, adopt productive attitudes about the community, avoid risky behaviors, and have better educational outcomes. As described by The Grantmakers Forum, youth engagement can provide multiple beneficial impacts:
“The impact of organizing on young people therefore, is multi-layered. It not only serves to fill the developmental needs of the youth leaders both individually and collectively, it provides young people with the tools to understand and participate in the institutions that impact their lives.”

An absence of household and community resources and trust limits engagement by disadvantaged youth, but faith- based institutions have been shown to have the highest rates of engagement among disadvantaged youth. These faith- based organizations and other institutions (such as educational entities) provide excellent entry ways into engaging with youth in disadvantaged communities. Volunteer opportunities, especially those coordinated by trusted community institutions, can enhance engagement with youth. Youth engagement should allow youth multiple avenues to be informed by planning issues and feel they have a new understanding of community challenges and have influenced planning outcomes. As summarized by Rebecca Mullahey in *Youth Engagement in Planning*:

“Youth engagement has taken many forms. Often youth will be involved in the initial visioning stages of the planning process, where young people participate as a constituent group. For me, however, the ideal planning process is when these goals are met: Young people have multiple opportunities to speak about the issues that concern them. They experience a sense of satisfaction about their participation. They know they have had real influence over issues that are critical to improving the quality of life in their communities. They become genuine partners in the planning, design, and decision making. When these goals have been met, the young develop the ability to put democratic citizenship into action and come away from the planning experience with an increased level of social responsibility to the common good.”

**Figure 9** provides an overview of general youth engagement approaches. Youth engagement is an important engagement focus, but youth engagement does take additional time, resources, and planning. Engagement with disadvantaged youth can be tremendously rewarding but can also be challenging and require additional commitment and focus. Partners for successful youth engagement should include schools and other youth- based institutions, in addition to parents. To effectively engage with disadvantaged youth, engagement efforts must work with local networks and organizations to connect with disadvantaged youth, allow for a prolonged engagement and time to build trust, and entail an asset- based focus which capitalizes on the aspirations of disadvantaged youth. Youth- produced media and extensive focus on new media and technology can also be successful in encouraging youth engagement. Youth engagement activities should seek to increase civic skills (developing critical thinking skills, cooperation and group problem solving), civic knowledge (understanding relevant issues and how public policy relates to community concerns) and civic efficacy (how to design community initiatives or how to work with policymakers).

Youth participants must be viewed as valuable participants in the engagement process and be prepared to work in partnership with adults who will listen and respect their opinions. According to the Urban Institute’s evaluation of successful youth civic engagement, several elements must be present to produce productive engagement. These include: a welcoming setting which is inviting to youth and
acknowledges their role, providing a variety of options for participation for youth, and openly supported by parents, educators or important youth organizations.

Activities are more likely to support youth involvement if they avoid complex information, are less formal processes, and do not include unspoken expectations. Feedback mechanisms, such as communication through new or traditional media, can help assure youth participants that their insights are being utilized. Youth are less likely to participate if they feel their voices will not be given credibility in the process, if they have transportation or time barriers to participating, if parents are not supportive of their involvement, if it involves issues which either seem too large to address or are not relevant to youth, and if they do not see their peers being involved.118

| Youth Service Activities: Volunteering, Community Service and Service Learning |
| Youth Media Engagement: Producing public art and development narratives. |
| Youth Informed or Led Research & Evaluation: Contributing to research activities. |
| Youth Civic Involvement: Youth planning group to directly influence planning policies. |
| Youth Organizing: Creating long term civic capacity among youth to address community issues. |
| Youth Governance: Youth representation on decision making bodies. |

Figure 9: General typologies of youth oriented civic engagement activities. Adapted directly from the following publication: UC Davis. “Engaging Youth in Community Change: Outcomes and Lessons Learned from Sierra Health Foundation’s REACH Youth Program.” November 2010.

Civic engagement with youth provides an emerging opportunity to add diverse voices to public dialogue. But youth engagement can also be a transformative interaction for youth in disadvantaged communities. Engagement can provide an empowering educational experience and also nurture crucial relationships with positive peers, mentors, and role models. 119
VII. The Civic Engagement Process: Where to Start?

“A prerequisite for sustained economic and community advancement is getting all relevant voices around a common table.”120

-Beaulieu, Ferrel & Teater, Mississippi: A Sense of Urgency. Rural responses to the new economy.

How can a regional consortium pursuing a sustainability plan, or anyone pursuing sustainable development goals, approach the engagement process with disadvantaged communities? The most inclusive and successful approach to civic engagement will engage disadvantaged communities early in the process, before decisions have been made, and sustain a long engagement process throughout the planning activities.121 The following section of this report provides a proposed process for addressing civic engagement with disadvantaged communities in the sustainable communities planning process, and has been adapted from the “model engagement process” developed by Cees Leeuwis (for more information on this “model engagement process” review Figure 10).122

**Step 1: Background research and relationship-building**

This early phase should also include the development of key community liaisons or stakeholders to help guide engagement with disadvantaged communities throughout the process. These partners can also act as facilitators with communities. Partners will not only assist in engagement with disadvantaged communities, but also integrate their expertise and activities into the planning activities for the region. Partners to work with to reach disadvantaged populations might include: community leaders, non-profit organizations, fair housing organizations, civil rights organizations, advocacy organizations, universities, faith-based organizations and institutions, and local media.123 These early partnerships can also identify mutually beneficial goals and potential collaborations for supporting engagement. As described by the Collaborative Government Institute:

“Building partnerships with organizational and community leaders can have other mutually beneficial consequences. These leaders may be able to help find funding for a public engagement process or in-kind support (such as a place to meet), provide facilitators and moderators for an event, or help spearhead actions that emerge from the civic engagement process. Involving these leaders in the planning and design stages helps to create culturally appropriate processes as well as build credibility for your public involvement efforts.”124

Preliminary research should also serve as an opportunity to interact informally with local leaders and organizations. Assessing various levels of community capital (human, social, political, financial, and built) will help determine levels of community opportunity or disadvantage and should inform engagement approaches.125 Community history is important and should be recognized in efforts to engage with disadvantaged communities and be assessed with preliminary research. In particular, historical power dynamics can be instrumental in undermining interest in participation by historically disenfranchised populations. Without understanding and openly addressing these concerns or beliefs, it will remain difficult to produce effective engagement.126
Task 1: Preparation
- exploratory analysis of conflicts, problems, relations, practices, etc. in historical perspective;
- selecting participants;
- securing participation by stakeholders;
- establishing relations with the wider policy environment;

Task 2: Agreeing upon a process design and process protocol
- creating an agreed-upon code of conduct and provisional agenda;
- reaching agreement about procedures, methodologies, etc.;
- process management and maintenance of process agreements;
- securing new process agreements as the process unfolds.

Task 3: Joint exploration and situation analysis
- group formation;
- exchanging perspectives, interests, goals;
- analysing problems and interrelations;
- integration of visions into new problem definitions;
- preliminary identification of alternative solutions and ‘win–win’ strategies;
- identification of gaps in knowledge and insight.

Task 4: Joint fact-finding
- developing and implementing action-plans to fill knowledge gaps.

Task 5: Forging agreement
- manoeuvre: clarifying positions, making claims, use of pressure to secure concessions, create and resolve impasses;
- securing agreement on a coherent package of measures and action plans.

Task 6: Communication of representatives with constituencies
- transferring the learning process;
- ‘ratification’ of agreement by constituencies.

Task 7: Monitoring implementation
- implementing the agreements made;
- monitoring progress;
- creating contexts of re-negotiation.

Figure 10: Figure depicting model engagement process” developed by Cees Leeuwis; figure reproduced from the following publication: Cees Leeuwis. “Reconceptualizing Participation for Sustainable Rural Development: Towards a Negotiation Approach.” Development and Change, Vol. 31, No. 5. (2000): 931-959.

Preliminary research can be achieved through interviews with community leaders or the development of an ad hoc planning committee representing various disadvantaged communities in the region. Preliminary work should also include developing an extensive database reflecting the civic organizations and civic infrastructure for the various disadvantaged communities. This process can also be aided by working with other critical community stakeholders such as faith-based organizations, clergy, educational entities, and non-profits, who work in, represent, or serve disadvantaged communities. Relationship-building with various community representatives early in the process will help establish and build trust between communities and the planning process.
Step 2: Set civic engagement goals and equity metrics to be used in the planning process

Work with stakeholders to help define starting definitions for key concepts. Define civic engagement for this process and equity metrics, as well as who should be included as disadvantaged populations. For example, disadvantaged communities can cover more than just race, ethnicity, or class and could include the aging population, the disabled, immigrants or communities with language barriers. Developing common definitions with stakeholders from the community will help avoid oversight which might lead to conflict in the planning process. Social equity metrics must also be integrated into the goals of sustainable communities initiative planning activities. Equity issues are more likely to be addressed if openly identified early in the planning process. For example, what goals will address the equity concerns in the planning process? Ideally, outcome- based goals (e.g. identification of new policies for disadvantaged communities) as well as process- based goals (e.g. identifying types of engagement to occur with each community) should be utilized to assure equity concerns are integrated into sustainability planning. Defining civic engagement activities should also identify exact methods in which community deliberation and input will be integrated into planning decisions and the planning process. Additionally, administrative processes should be defined clearly, to clarify how disadvantaged communities will contribute as decision makers in the planning process, and to enable clear communication of this process to community members.

Step 3: Conduct early or pre-engagement activities

Identify barriers to engagement facing particular disadvantaged communities and the mechanisms needed to resolve these barriers in the engagement process. This can be achieved through pre-engagement activities. The goal of these pre-engagement activities is to organize and collectively engage a variety of stakeholders to better understand the challenges and necessary responses for engaging with specific disadvantaged populations and communities. The pre-engagement process could include smaller facilitated engagement activities with stakeholders, or small group work which would help build trust and ownership in the planning process among participants. Activities could also include utilizing small grants to host engagement activities with neighborhood organizations, community development organizations, and critical service delivery organizations who serve disadvantaged populations. Additional pre-engagement activities might include the use of community indicators or other data driven systems (such as mapping or GIS systems) to help understand, analyze, and engage with communities.

Step 4: Designing and implement a multi-faceted engagement plan and process focusing on disadvantaged communities

The engagement process should include the development of an engagement plan which outlines goals, objectives, materials, and engagement processes. This plan should be developed in collaboration with partners and stakeholders from disadvantaged communities and be informed by the preliminary community engagements and research conducted early in the planning process. The engagement plan should have three broad goals:
1) To fully engage disadvantaged communities in order to assure their participation, experiences, and voice inform and guide the planning process and outcomes.

2) To break down racial, ethnic, class, geographic and other barriers between all communities in the region.

3) To encourage capacity-building, foster education, and stimulate continued civic engagement on issues of regional sustainable development among the region’s disadvantaged and marginalized communities.

The engagement plan should include targeted and multi-faceted engagement activities with specific disadvantaged populations. This approach will utilize a variety of techniques to engage these communities, including non-traditional approaches to public engagement, utilizing technology, interaction with youth in the communities, and coordination with key stakeholders who serve these communities. The plan and approach should be informed and vetted by representatives from various disadvantaged communities in the region. Individuals who help administer the engagement process (e.g. facilitators and other active stakeholders) should include ample representation from disadvantaged communities. These representatives can provide a “bridge” to the community and help establish trust in engagement activities with community members. The plan should also be informed of any particular cultural sensitivities, community concerns, or potential conflicts which may surface in the engagement process. Assuring sensitivity in addressing these issues and having pre-established processes for resolving conflicts will produce a more productive engagement with the community. The plan should also allow flexibility to integrate engagement outcomes and results of ongoing interaction with communities into planning decisions and processes.

**Step 5: Prepare follow up engagement infrastructure, processes, and other activities**

Provide for follow up and ongoing engagements with communities after the regional planning activities have been completed. These ongoing activities would encourage keeping the infrastructure of engagement process active, informed, and continually engaged. These follow up activities could include monitoring planning outcomes, or attempting to maintain an ongoing engagement process with communities for future planning needs and implementation challenges.

**Conclusion**

The sustainable communities initiative presents an unprecedented opportunity for our regions to embrace new models of planning and development which are truly sustainable, balancing equity, the economy, and the environment. The benefits of this integrated systemic approach to planning and development will produce not only more equitable communities, but also produce more economically vibrant and sustainable regions. Through widespread engagement, especially civic engagement with disadvantaged communities, this process can sow the seeds for long-term community capacity and development of social capital, helping build public will and public desire for sustainable planning models and encouraging their implementation.
VIII. Appendix A: National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation (NCDD)’s Engagement Streams Framework: Typologies of Engagement Approaches and Definitions of Common Engagement Techniques. Tables and information below reproduced directly from publication available on the NCDD’s website at: www.thataway.org

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exploration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Primary purpose:</strong> To encourage people/groups to learn more about themselves, their community, or an issue, and possibly discover innovative solutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key Features:</strong> Suspending assumptions, creating a space that encourages participants to delve into their private and public experiences, and understand the complexity of their own and others’ perspectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Important Issues:</strong> A group or community seems stuck or muddled and needs to reflect on their circumstances in depth and discuss collective insight.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Examples of Issues:</strong> Strengthening democracy, understanding a community of practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organizer’s Strategy:</strong> To encourage new insights and connections to emerge by creating spaces for people to share both their thoughts and their feelings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key Design Questions:</strong> How can we ensure that people feel safe expressing what inspires and troubles them? What kind of techniques or rituals will stimulate listening and sharing: without making people uncomfortable?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Methods:</strong> Conversation Cafés, Intergroup Dialogue in the classroom, Wisdom Council, Wisdom Circles, Open Space, Appreciative Inquiry, Bohm Dialogue, Socrates Café</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conflict Transformation</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Primary purpose:</strong> To resolve conflicts, to foster personal healing and growth, and to improve relations among groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key Features:</strong> Creating a safe space, hearing from everyone, building trust, sharing views and listening to all storytellers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Important Issues:</strong> Relationships among participants are poor or not yet established and need time, issues can only be resolved when people change their behavior or attitude, expand their perspective, or take time to reflect and heal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Examples of Issues:</strong> Political polarization, Jewish-Muslim relations, race relations, values-based conflicts, healing after crises or trauma.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organizer’s Strategy:</strong> To create a safe space for people with different views to talk about their personal experiences and feel heard. Often, to set the groundwork for deliberation and action.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key Design Questions:</strong> How can the issue be framed so that all sides are brought to - and feel welcomed at - the table? What are people’s needs relating to this issue, and how can divergent needs (empathy, action, respect?) be met effectively? If a conflict exists, how overt and volatile is it? How, if at all, will you transition people to what is next?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Methods:</strong> Sustained Dialogue, Intergroup Dialogue in communities, Victim-Offender Mediation, Public Conversations Project Dialogue, Web Lab’s Small Group Dialogue, Compassionate Listening</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
## Dialogue & Deliberation Engagement Streams

### Decision-Making

**Primary purpose:** To influence policy decisions and improve public knowledge.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Features</th>
<th>Important When...</th>
<th>Examples of Issues</th>
<th>Organizer’s Strategy</th>
<th>Key Design Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Naming and framing, weighing all options, considering different positions (deliberation), revealing public values, transforming real issues</td>
<td>The issue is within government’s or any single entity’s sphere of influence</td>
<td>Budgeting, land use, health care, social security</td>
<td>To involve a representative group of citizens in thorough conversations about complicated policy issues involving large numbers of people. Should public opinion be informed in the process side-by-side with citizens? What kinds of materials need to be developed or obtained? How can we ensure that this process influences policy?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Methods:** National Issues Forums, Citizens Jury, Deliberative Polling, 21st Century Town Meeting, Citizen Choicework, Consensus Conference

**Notes:**

### Collaborative Action

**Primary purpose:** To empower people and groups to solve complicated problems and take responsibility for the solution.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Features</th>
<th>Important When...</th>
<th>Examples of Issues</th>
<th>Organizer’s Strategy</th>
<th>Key Design Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Capacity-building, enhancing assets, developing and implementing action plans collaboratively</td>
<td>This increases our capacity to intervene across multiple public and private entities, and anytime community action is important</td>
<td>Regional/national, inter-institutional, industry, youth violence, responding to crises</td>
<td>To bring people into collaborative arrangements involving diverse stakeholders, sectors, organizations, etc., involved in the problem</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Methods:** Study Circles, Future Search, Appreciative Inquiry, Charrettes

**Notes:**

Resource developed by Sandy Heitkamp and the National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation [www对话对话.org](http://www.dialogue.org)
### Characteristics of Well-Known Dialogue & Deliberation Processes

#### 21st Century Town Meeting
**Focuses On**
- Decision-Making

**Size of Group**
- Hundreds to thousands in 1 room of a small town

**Session**
- Full day meeting

**Participant Selection**
- Open, random for representativeness

**Description**
AmericanSpeaks! 21st Century Town Meetings enable the general public to give those in leadership positions direct, substantive feedback on key issues. Each meeting engages hundreds or thousands of general, interested citizens at a time, utilizing innovative technology to effectively and quickly summarize citizen input. (www.americanspeaks.org)

#### Appreciative Inquiry
**Focuses On**
- Exploration & Collaborative Action

**Size of Group**
- From 50 to 2,000

**Session**
- From 1-hour interviews to 4- to 6-day summits

**Participant Selection**
- Internal and external stakeholders

**Description**
Appreciative Inquiry is a change method that encourages stakeholders to explore the best of the past and present in their organizations and communities. It involves, in a central way, the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a group's capacity to appreciate, anticipate, and then engage positive potential. (www.appreciativeinquiry.org)

#### Bohmian Dialogue
**Focuses On**
- Exploration, can also be used for Decision-Making

**Size of Group**
- Small group

**Session**
- No set length or number of meetings

**Participant Selection**
- Open or invitation

**Description**
Created by late physicist David Bohm, Bohmian Dialogue is focused on attending to and discussing individual internal dynamics—assumptions, beliefs, motivations, etc. The idea is to reduce friction among these inner dynamics, leading to a state of flow in the conversation in a way that further the dialogue. (www.nlb.org/archives/e-tactics/bohm.Dialogue.htm)

#### Charrettes
**Focuses On**
- Collaborative Action

**Size of Group**
- A small team of professionals and a much larger group of stakeholders

**Session**
- Intensive work sessions last 1-3 days, typically some last 1-2 weeks

**Participant Selection**
- Participants represent a range of stakeholder groups, but others with a stake in the issue are encouraged to attend

**Description**
A charrette is a collaborative and consensus-building design methodology that incorporates input from all stakeholders (the developer, relevant government agencies, and the community). A “charrette brain” of experts and stakeholders is used in an continual feedback loop to prepare and refine a plan for development with the goal of reaching consensus among the stakeholders. Charrettes combine modern design studio and town meeting, helping overcome mental and create meaningful master plans. (www.charretteoflife.org)

### Characteristics of Well-Known Dialogue & Deliberation Processes

#### Citizen Choicework
**Focuses On**
- Decision-Making

**Size of Group**
- Multiple small groups

**Session**
- 1 session, ranging from 2 hours to an all-day meeting

**Participant Selection**
- Open recruit for representativeness

**Description**
Public Agenda’s Citizen Choicework helps citizens confront tough choices in productive ways. Participants work through values conflicts and practical tradeoffs, and develop a sense of priorities and direction. Key principles include: participation, and unbiased discussion materials that start where the public starts. (www.publicagenda.org)

#### Citizens Jury
**Focuses On**
- Decision-Making

**Size of Group**
- Small group

**Session**
- Five-day meeting

**Participant Selection**
- Random selection

**Description**
The Citizens Jury process is a method for gathering a microcosm of the public, having them attend five days of hearings, deliberate among themselves and then issue findings and recommendations on the issue they have discussed. (www.jefferson-center.org)

#### Consensus Conference
**Focuses On**
- Decision-Making

**Size of Group**
- Large group

**Session**
- 2 weekends for participants to prepare, 2-4 day conference

**Participant Selection**
- Random selection

**Description**
Consensus Conferences, developed in Denmark, typically involve a group of citizens with varied backgrounds who meet to discuss issues of a scientific or technical nature. The conference has two stages: the first involves small group meetings with experts to discuss the issues and work towards consensus. The second stage assembles experts, media and the public where the conference main observations and conclusions are presented. (www.statens.org/06102a)

#### Conversation Café
**Focuses On**
- Exploration, can also be used for Decision-Making

**Size of Group**
- Single or multiple small groups

**Session**
- 1 or more 90-minute sessions

**Participant Selection**
- Open public, to encourage representativeness

**Description**
Conversation Cafés are hosted conversations which are usually held in a public setting like a coffee shop or bookstore, where anyone is welcome to join. A simple format helps people feel at ease and give everyone who wants to a chance to speak. (www.conversationcafe.org)
### Characteristics of Well-Known Dialogue & Deliberation Processes

#### Compassionate Listening
- **Focuses On:** Conflict Transformation; can also be used for Exploration
- **Size of Group:** 2 to 200 people, usually fewer than 30
- **Session:** 30 minutes to 3 days, depending on how many people are involved
- **Participant Selection:** Open to whoever is drawn; often listeners are brought in to hear the stories of oppressed or oppressors
- **Description:** Compassionate Listening, listeners use reflection and skillful inquiry to help speakers deepen their own understanding and awareness. Listeners engage in non-judgmental questions that are non-adversarial and an ability to remain open when witnessing strong feelings and divergent viewpoints. The process can help soften hearts and create the safety necessary for honest, respectful dialogue and sustainable solutions. ([www.compassionatelisting.org](http://www.compassionatelisting.org))

#### Deliberative Polling
- **Focuses On:** Decision-Making
- **Size of Group:** Up to several hundred people in small groups in 1 room
- **Session:** Weekend-long meeting
- **Participant Selection:** Random selection
- **Description:** Deliberative Polling combines deliberation in small group discussions with scientistic random sampling to provide public consultation for public policy and for electoral issues. Members of a random sample are polled, and then some members are invited to gather at a single place to discuss the issues after they have examined balanced briefing materials. Participants engage in dialogue with competing experts and political leaders based on questions they develop in small group discussions with trained moderators. ([http://icdd.stanford.edu](http://icdd.stanford.edu))

#### Future Search
- **Focuses On:** Collaborative Action
- **Size of Group:** 50 to 80 people
- **Session:** 3 days
- **Participant Selection:** All inclusive (attempts to bring in all involved)
- **Description:** Future Search is an interactive planning process which helps a group of people discover a set of shared values or themes (common ground) and agree on a plan of action for implementing them. ([www.futuresearch.net](http://www.futuresearch.net))

#### Intergroup Dialogue
- **Focuses On:** Exploration & Conflict Transformation; can also be used for Collaborative Action
- **Size of Group:** Single or multiple small groups
- **Session:** Regular weekly meetings of 2-3 hours
- **Participant Selection:** Open; recruit for representativeness
- **Description:** Intergroup dialogues are face-to-face meetings of people from at least two different social identity groups. They are designed to offer an open and inclusive space where participants can foster a deeper understanding of diversity and justice issues through participation in experiential activities, individual and small group reflections, and dialogues. ([www.umich.edu/~igsp/](http://www.umich.edu/~igsp/) & www.oapwc.washington.edu/owwc/ideas)

### Characteristics of Well-Known Dialogue & Deliberation Processes

#### National Issues Forums
- **Focuses On:** Decision-Making
- **Size of Group:** Up to hundreds in 1 room or small tables
- **Session:** One-hour meeting
- **Participant Selection:** Open; recruit for representativeness
- **Description:** National Issues Forums offer citizens the opportunity to join together to deliberate, to make choices with others about ways to approach difficult issues and to work toward creating reasoned public judgment. NIF is known for its careful issue framing and quality issue guides which outline 8 or 4 different viewpoints. ([www.nif.org](http://www.nif.org))

#### Open Space Technology
- **Focuses On:** Exploration; can also be used for Collaborative Action
- **Size of Group:** Up to hundreds in 1 room, then break up in smaller groups multiple times
- **Session:** From 4 hours to ideal of 3 days
- **Participant Selection:** Varies
- **Description:** Open Space Technology is a self-organizing practice that invites people to take responsibility for what they care about. In Open Space, a marketplace of inquiry is created where people offer topics they are passionate about and reflect it from one another. It is an innovative approach to creating whole systems change and inspiring creative & leadership among participants. ([www.openspaceworld.org](http://www.openspaceworld.org))

#### Public Conversations Project Dialogue
- **Focuses On:** Conflict Transformation; can also be used for Collaborative Action
- **Size of Group:** Small group
- **Session:** Multiple 2-hour sessions
- **Participant Selection:** Involves all sides of an existing conflict
- **Description:** The Public Conversations Project helps people with fundamental disagreements over divisive issues develop the mutual understanding and trust essential for strong communities and positive action. Their dialogue model is characterized by a careful preparatory phase in which all stakeholders/stories are interviewed and prepared for the dialogue process. ([www.publicconversations.org](http://www.publicconversations.org))

#### Socrates Café
- **Focuses On:** Exploration
- **Size of Group:** 9 to 30 people
- **Session:** 1-2 hours
- **Participant Selection:** Whoever is in the class or at the meeting, or whoever responds to the flyers or articles
- **Description:** Socrates Cafes and other forms of Socratic Dialogue encourage groups inside and outside the classroom to engage in reactive philosophical inquiry. The Cafe consists of spontaneous yet rigorous dialogue that inspires people to articulate and discover their unique philosophical perspectives and worldview. They invite diverse viewpoints and require engaged and empathetic listening. They don't force consensus or closure, but are open-ended and can be considered a success if there are more questions at the end than there were at the outset. ([www.philosopher.org](http://www.philosopher.org))
### Characteristics of Well-Known Dialogue & Deliberation Processes

#### Study Circles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus On</th>
<th>Size of Group</th>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Participant Selection</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative Action</td>
<td>Up to hundreds</td>
<td>4 to 6-hour sessions</td>
<td>Open, recruit for representativeness</td>
<td>Study Circles enable communities to strengthen their own ability to solve problems by bringing large numbers of people together and facilitating dialogue across divides of race, income, age, and political viewpoints. Study Circles combine dialogue, deliberation, and community organizing techniques, providing a toolkit for understanding, exploring a range of solutions, and serving as a catalyst for social, political, and policy change. (<a href="http://www.studycircles.org">www.studycircles.org</a>)</td>
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#### Sustained Dialogue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus On</th>
<th>Size of Group</th>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Participant Selection</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conflict Transformation</td>
<td>Small group (5-10 people)</td>
<td>Numerous 2 to 3-hour sessions</td>
<td>Open, recruit for representatives among conflicting groups</td>
<td>Sustained Dialogues is a process for transforming and building the relationships that are essential to democratic political and economic practices. OD is not a problem-solving workshop. It is a sustained interaction to transform and build relationships among members of deeply divided groups so that they may effectively deal with practical problems. It is biased towards a constructive or conciliatory phase including a deliberative “sense-making” stage and an “acting together” stage. (<a href="http://www.sustaineddialogue.org">www.sustaineddialogue.org</a>)</td>
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#### Victim Offender Mediation

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<tr>
<th>Focus On</th>
<th>Size of Group</th>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Participant Selection</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conflict Transformation</td>
<td>Small group (5-10 people)</td>
<td>Multiple 1 to 3-hour sessions</td>
<td>All participants (attorneys in all nations)</td>
<td>Victim-Offender Mediation is a restorative justice process that brings together the victim of a crime and the person who committed the crime to talk about what happened, the effects of the crime on their lives, and their feelings about it. They may choose to create a mutually agreeable plan to repair any damages that have occurred as a result of the crime. Some practices allow victims and offender to be joined by family and community members or others. (<a href="http://www.voms.org">www.voms.org</a>)</td>
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#### Web Lab’s Small Group Dialogue

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<tr>
<th>Focus On</th>
<th>Size of Group</th>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Participant Selection</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conflict Transformation</td>
<td>Small group (5-10 people)</td>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>Open</td>
<td>ODG is a structured discussion tool that fosters intimate, non-confrontational exchanges. By limiting group size and length, each member’s voice is valued, encouraging a sense of bargaining and an investment in its success. ODG offers participants the ability to genuinely connect with one another and to create a collection of people with a common cause who live in a variety of settings. (<a href="http://www.welllab.org">www.welllab.org</a>)</td>
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### Characteristics of Well-Known Dialogue & Deliberation Processes

#### Wisdom Circle

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<tr>
<th>Focus On</th>
<th>Size of Group</th>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Participant Selection</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exploration</td>
<td>Small group (2-12 people)</td>
<td>One or more 1- to 3-hour sessions; ongoing monthly sessions are ideal</td>
<td>Usually used with an existing group</td>
<td>A Wisdom Circle is a small group dialogue designed to encourage people to listen and speak from the heart in a spirit of inquiry. By opening and closing the circle with a simple ritual of the group’s choosing, using a talking object, and inviting silence to enter the circle, a safe space is created where participants can be trusting, authentic, caring, and open to change. Also referred to as Council process and Listening Circles. (<a href="http://www.wisdomcircle.org">www.wisdomcircle.org</a>)</td>
</tr>
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#### Wisdom Council

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus On</th>
<th>Size of Group</th>
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<th>Participant Selection</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exploration</td>
<td>10-12 people initially (and sometimes periodically), than entire community</td>
<td>Several day session with group of 12, followed by informal large-group dialogue</td>
<td>Initial 10-12 are randomly selected from community; broader segment is open to everyone</td>
<td>Wisdom Councils are microcosms of larger systems like cities and organizations that engage in a creative, thoughtful exploration of the issues affecting the system. A structured facilitation process is used called “Dynamic Facilitation” – a non-linear approach for addressing complex issues that allows shared insights and aligned action to emerge. The outcomes of the Wisdom Council, which are reported back to the community, can inform further dialogue and self-organizing action and change throughout the larger system. (<a href="http://www.wisdomcouncil.org">www.wisdomcouncil.org</a>)</td>
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#### World Café

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus On</th>
<th>Size of Group</th>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Participant Selection</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exploration</td>
<td>in a room at tables of four</td>
<td>Single event ranging from 90 minutes to 3 days</td>
<td>All participants</td>
<td>World Café is a form of dialogue between five or more people, usually meeting in small groups of four or five others at the same time remaining part of a single, large, connected conversation. Small, intimate conversations link and build on each other as people move between them, creating new insights into questions or issues that really matter in their life, work, or community. (<a href="http://www.theworldcafe.com">www.theworldcafe.com</a>)</td>
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IX. Appendix B: A Review of Public Participation and Consultation Methods


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Description of Method</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
<th>Recommendations for Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Citizen Juries</td>
<td>group of 12-20 randomly selected citizens who are representative of their community, with most members being involved in a specific issue</td>
<td>creates informed, active, engaged citizens; provides self-selection and development; provides opportunities to introduce new perspectives and challenge existing ones; careful examination of the issue</td>
<td>no bias; power of making decisions is clear; recommendations are made</td>
<td>scheduling organisation should be clear and invite those who are interested in addressing, how much time is spent on specific issues, and whether it can be followed through on the issues. The public should be involved in the evaluation process. Better for focused issues that can be covered in one meeting. The development of the agenda should be overseen by an advisory board made up of key stakeholders.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Citizen Panels</td>
<td>smaller group of 10-15 citizens meet monthly for four times a year to discuss and develop their ideas</td>
<td>promotes understanding of issues and decision-making process; promotes communication between government and government, and local government and community; provides feedback to government and community</td>
<td>problems defined by local authority; not a tool for collective participation; decision-making process is less accountable because they are not in direct line to government.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Planning Cycles</td>
<td>similar to a citizen jury in form and function, but includes a larger number of citizens and is designed to address specific issues</td>
<td>small number of individual cases and local authority; allows for direct involvement of citizens in the decision-making process; promotes understanding of issues and decision-making process; promotes communication between government and government, and local government and community; provides feedback to government and community</td>
<td>problems defined by local authority; not a tool for collective participation; decision-making process is less accountable because they are not in direct line to government.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Focus Groups</td>
<td>one-time discussion of a particular topic involving 15-20 individuals selected to meet specific criteria in order to represent a particular segment of society; one-time face-to-face meeting that encourages open discussion among participants</td>
<td>successful focus groups may lead to consensus-building and feelings of ownership among participants; good venue for learning about needs of a particular group; remain largely informal, as participants can discuss issues in relaxed atmosphere in a good way to gauge the opinions of the public</td>
<td>can be a tool for encouraging discussion and deliberation, but needs to be used with caution because of the problems associated with it.</td>
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<td>Consensus Building exercises</td>
<td>process designed to help people reach a consensus by focusing on the issue. The facilitators are used to help people reach a consensus in an unstructured approach</td>
<td>helps people to reach solutions they can all support; provides time for people to understand each other and their differing views</td>
<td>typically used to bring stakeholders together to reach consensus over an issue. Round tables are one approach where traditionally adversarial groups are brought together.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Method</td>
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<td>Surveys</td>
<td>select information from representative sample of citizens; some questions are asked of over individual surveyed; there are a variety of survey (paper, phone, interview, telephone)</td>
<td>can reach large numbers of people if time and questions are returned, can be used for longitudinal studies (e.g., monitoring change over times)</td>
<td>the list may not be representative or comprehensive; questions need to be somewhat simple and straightforward; the information gathered then can be simplistic and superficial; survey results are often not comparable; the effectiveness of surveys are affected by the rate of non-response; fundamental decisions have to be made before the survey begins and cannot be changed; once survey has been implemented</td>
<td>because this is a time-consuming process, it is not a good method if quick results are desired and can be used during the beginning phase of a study (caution in choosing issues that need to be addressed)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public Hearings</td>
<td>form of public meeting limited in size tends to involve only interested citizens; usually experts and interested citizens presentations are made</td>
<td>potential to inform citizens; potential for improved decision-making; potential to minimize conflict</td>
<td>may be dominated by special interest groups; feedback obtained from this format needs to be treated carefully because it may not be representative of the community; does not generate a sense of ownership; excludes the inarticulate and perhaps disenfranchised groups</td>
<td>have a “pre-orientation” phase which allows the public time to become familiar with the issues</td>
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<td>Open Houses</td>
<td>the public is invited to drop by at any time at a set location on a set day(s); walk-ins are encouraged; people can speak with staff, view the displays set up in the room and break into small discussion groups</td>
<td>relaxed atmosphere; enables staff to tailor responses according to the needs/questions of the public; allows for sensitive topics to be discussed; develops links for the future</td>
<td>potential for lack of clarity; resource intensive</td>
<td>suitable for confrontational issues</td>
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<td>Citizen Advisory Committee</td>
<td>can be made up of a variety of different organizations (e.g., from governmental to public) intended to represent the broader public</td>
<td>if committee is balanced; deliberations can be fruitful; their advice should influence decision-making process; should also produce informed citizens, boost trust in institutions and reduce conflict</td>
<td>not a representative group of people</td>
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<td>Community Planning</td>
<td>participation on a broader level to set policy agenda and to discuss: citizen’s wishes for community and services provided; make sure all of the options are represented; develop an understanding of issues and find a shared vision for dealing with them; foster connections/partnerships; between different organizations; - educational role</td>
<td>allows for underlying assumptions to be dealt with in a deliberative manner; emphasizes consensus building; collaboration and cooperation; formal outcomes are a community plan but emphasis is on reaching a common understanding of issues and finding a shared vision for dealing with them; facilitates connections/partnerships between different organizations; - educational role</td>
<td>may set false expectations that public bodies are unable to meet</td>
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<td>Listening</td>
<td>similar to community planning but input sought is about broader “vision” for community services and plan about specifics on how to achieve the vision</td>
<td>emphasis on consensus building, collaboration, and cooperation; formal structure is a way to reach people that want to be involved in the decision-making process; understanding of issues and finding a shared vision for dealing with them; fosters connections/partnerships between different organizations; educational role</td>
<td>may set false expectations that public bodies are unable to meet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
X. Appendix C: References - Literature and Resources Cited


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