Tools For Sustainable Community Development

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Description of the community

Taskers Chance community is geographically located between the major highways of I-270 North and Route 15 North, I-70 North and South, Route 40 East and West of Frederick, Maryland. The development is in the city limits of Frederick, Maryland

Taskers Chance is within the city limits Frederick City, Maryland located off of Route 40 West. The community consists of 205 single family homes, 519 town homes, and a retirement community. We have a diverse ethnic community of: Whites, Blacks, Indians, Africans, Hispanics, and French along with various faiths. We have a community swimming pool and tot lots placed in each section of housing. The community is easy to access from the major highways of I-270, Route 15, and Route 40 to Washington, DC, Leesburg, Virginia, and Baltimore, Maryland. The Taskers Chance community is accessible to several strip malls on Route 40 that have three grocery stores, fast food and upscale restaurants, Kmart, Kinko's/FedEx, gas stations, and the Fredericktown Mall.

Community vision

Taskers Chance has adopted a vision for its community: The Taskers Chance Community strives to provide a safe and sustainable environment by continuing to value its residents. This vision works in conjunction with the overarching vision for the state of Maryland. The state of Maryland vision is "In addition, the Maryland Preservation Plan contains state-wide goals for managing growth byencouraging neighborhood revitalization, stimulation of economic development through heritagetourism, increasing public awareness and appreciation of heritage resources, encouragingprotection of historic resources, and pursuing the technological, financial, and legal toolssufficient to preserve Maryland's historic resources. (Protecting and Preserving our Heritage)

Analysis of the community problem

Frederick County, Maryland is the largest county in the State of Maryland with 669 miles of land.Over the last ten (10) years Frederick County, Maryland has seen an increase in its population, housing, and businesses. Frederick County is an attractive place with a reasonable cost of living in housing, rents, restaurants, shops and malls. However, due to the growth in the area this has brought on additional traffic. The county and city is faced with having an old infrastructure of roads and streets. This poses a problem along with additional automobiles that are putting more wear and tear on the roads and streets.

Another concern is the quality of air and the environment in Frederick County. With the increase in traffic that will add to pollution from gas emissions will cause harm to the air and environment. Frederick County has not experienced poor air quality days this past year, but Montgomery County, Maryland and Washington, DC during the summer months have experienced poor air quality. This comes from the volume of cars that commute into those areas that bring on pollution. "Code Red days are called when there is a significant threat of unhealthy air due to pollution and weather conditions. People are warned to limit their outdoor activities, with children, senior citizens and asthmatics especially at risk." (Baron and Saylor).Poor air quality takes place during the summer months. On August 11th and 30[th]of 2010 these days were Code Red and there were nine (9) days of Code Orange in the Washington, DC. In

Frederick, Maryland on August 10, 2010 were an Orange Code day only and no Code Red. (Clean Air Partners).

Interventions

A practice and intervention for Frederick, Maryland would be to model another town or city on how they have implemented their infrastructure programs that has reduce traffic congestion, pollution and the wear and tear on the roads. Collecting data and results will show the successes and failures of the program. It will also provide information on how the community has accepted and adopted the new program that has benefitted them. By modeling such a program would provide evidence that the program has worked and can be used by other counties. One such county that has implemented a program on their infrastructure is Washington State's King County. (Local Governments Can Influence). King County is one of the first counties in the U.S. to develop a program on sustainability due to their environment. By putting into place a sustainable program has helped the county to achieve the needed results on having a better transportation system. They have put in several initiatives to help the environment especially in the area of fossil fuel and greenhouse gas emissions. This is a community that should be considered when needing to model on how they have been successful.

Action steps

In order to carry out the practice or intervention an exploratory team will need to be established that consists of local businesses, personnel from Highway and Transportation, along with the Office of Environmental Sustainability and community representatives. This team would develop a program that will have an impact on the community. The action steps that are developed from this meeting will set a clear agenda on the critical needs to be addressed first.

A good resource that works well for the community is talking to everyone by networking. In networking the information will allow for the citizens that don't have internet service to receive information from other neighbors. This tool is very effective especially for senior citizens that don't use the Internet. Another alternative is to advertise by posting a notice in the Frederick libraries. People of all ages go to the library for books, use of the internet, seek informational resources and meetings. Frederick's citizens visit the library during the day hours to read various newspapers, magazines, etc. along with attending meetings of interest to them. This allows them to keep inform of current issues due to them not having cable television or Internet access.

Another action step to be considered is to seek funding for community projects that will assist the community at the local and federal levels. Local resources can be helpful in funding small projects. There are several organizations that do provide funding such as the Ausherman Family Foundation in Frederick, Maryland that provides a grant named Social Entrepreneurs Grants. "These Social Entrepreneurs have ideas and the passion to carry out a transformative endeavor that could dramatically improve at least one aspect of community life, but thus far has been unable to find sufficient financial support to bring the endeavor to fruition". (Ausherman Family Foundation). Another source of seeking grant funding is the local bank "Bank of America in Frederick, Maryland that has the National Programs and Partners. "Part of our philanthropic objective is to sustain community efforts and provide funding flexibility so nonprofits can allocate funds in order to best serve their clients and build their organizations to meet the long-term needs of neighborhoods."

There are other funding sources available such as theMicro-grants programs. I would recommend this as a choice for the community Taskers Chance in Frederick County, Maryland to consider. I like the feature that the micro-grant can engage creative community betterment efforts and generate real accomplishments citizens can take pride in. (Establishing Micro-grant Programs p. 1) People need to have pride in improving their community. It shows that they can put their stamp on the beginning and outcome of the project. It will make them more appreciative that they are working together to accomplish a common goal of sustaining and improving the environment they live in. This effort is not only for adults but good for children (boy and girls scouts, boys and girls clubs of America, etc.) to get involve and have a self-awareness of the importance of sustaining their community. Another important feature of the micro-grant program is that grass-roots groups don't have to be federal tax-exempt status such as my community Taskers Chance.

The U.S. Department of Transportation grants programs. DOT offers several grants to aid communities in having safer transportation and better highways. The Surface Transportation Program (STP) (23 U.S.C. 133) is one of the main sources of flexible funding available for transit or highway purposes. (U.S. Department of Transportation). This is another resource that the community can consider that funds transportation and highways. This can help to alleviate or reducing traffic in the county due to funding transportation for bus services.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has a grant program named the Environmental Education Grants. This is a good resource that provides information to educate the community. The Grants Program sponsored by EPA's Office of Environmental Education (OEE), Office of External Affairs and Environmental Education, supports environmental education projects that enhance the public's awareness, knowledge, and skills to help people make informed decisions that affect environmental quality. (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency)

Another good source to seek funding from is the AmeriCorps. "AmeriCorps offers grant funding that assists in the areas of the environment and critical areas."(AmeriCorps). The community can look at this opportunity for the environment on traffic, roads and highways expansion. This is important to help the community to maintain a safe clean air environment. The web sites provide valuable information on how to apply, eligibility, and grant cycle dates and some of them give guidance on training and tools. This is helpful in situations that a community or individual is not able to hire a grant maker to write the grant. In most cases, Taskers Chance will need to seek guidance from these web sites and pay particular attention on how to apply since they will not be able to hire a grant maker.

Evaluate the success of the practices and interventions

The importance of evaluation plans for community improvement efforts is to direct the group on how to meet its objectives. There are steps that will help the group to move forward and implement the evaluation plan. The steps are:

1. It guides you through each step of the process of evaluation
2. It helps you decide what sort of information you and your stakeholders really need
3. It keeps you from wasting time gathering information that isn't needed
4. It helps you identify the best possible methods and strategies for getting the needed information
5. It helps you come up with a reasonable and realistic timeline for evaluation
6. Most importantly, it will help you improve your initiative!

(Developing, 2009)

By implementing the steps everyone's time is used appropriately. The evaluation process can be the key to the success or failure of implementing the program. Everyone that is involved in the evaluation plans will be focus on completing the assignments. If the evaluation has been performed correctly it will identify issues and concerns that will need to be resolved. The evaluation plans can be refined to modify the community's program.

Local codes

Communities and local governments are knowledgeable on the issues that impede them. They are able to work together on addressing sustainable issues and to implement programs to protect their environment. The communities and local governments are at the grassroots level. They have the capability of identifying the problems along with being able to get the participation of the citizens. "Today's sustainable communities will require new and increased levels of civic engagement and participation of citizens as joint partners with our local governments." (Reid, p. 28). They are able to move sustainability issues faster at their level. "Sustainable governance is a process in which all community sectors and individuals willingly collaborate to create respect for people and place." (Reid, 29). Oftentimes when dealing with the issue of sustainability at the federal level it is "difficult without agreement among the many individuals and groups whose support is essential for major policy advances". All of these conditions contribute to environmental policy gridlock. (Kraft, p. 1483).

Frederick County, Maryland can benefit by using the contents of Mobility & Transportation 4.1 Transit Oriented Development. The code example for them to utilize is located in Montgomery County, Maryland Transit-Oriented Mixed-Use Zone. I'm familiar with the Montgomery County Ride On bus. The Ride On bus service travels throughout the major locations in the county. The bus transit service has centralized pick up and drop off locations that are linked to the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) stations that has the metro rail system. Also, customers can take WMATA bus or metro rail routes to Washington, DC as well. This is helpful to customers to being able to get off the bus and onto another mode of transportation. (Sustainable Community Development Code. p. 34). The second code for zoning that can be considered for Frederick, Maryland is the City of Portland Public Transit. Following the city of Portland's code would be viable to Frederick, Maryland to establish a zoning code. Frederick, Maryland can tailor their zoning by extracting information that will fit their needs.

Barriers that might impede the interventions

A barrier that can have an effect is not performing a community-based assessment and planning process. Research must be performed through various means of collecting information that is aimed at the issues of the community. All avenues of collecting the information such as internet, libraries, contacting other counties by email and making telephone calls to gather the information is vital. The team must have an understanding of the community issues and how it has worked in other communities.

The community needs to be made aware of the practice or intervention. This will have an impact on the community on the program that will be implemented in the future. How the program works will be of importance to the community. It is important to establish and maintain good relationships with the community to continue to get their buy in.

Characteristic of implementation of the interventions

Frederick County, Maryland has seen an increase in the growth of housing and businesses. Frederick County is an attractive place with a reasonable cost of living in housing, rents, restaurants, shops and malls. However, due to the growth in the area this has brought on additional traffic. The county and

city is faced with having an old infrastructure of roads and streets. This poses a problem along with additional automobiles that are putting more wear and tear on the roads and streets.

A practice for Frederick, Maryland would be to model another town or city on how they have implemented their infrastructure programs that has reduce traffic congestion, pollution and the wear and tear on the roads. Collecting data and results will show the successes and failures of the program. It will also provide information on how the community has accepted and adopted the new program that has benefitted them. By modeling such a program would provide evidence that the program has worked and can be used by other counties. An important characteristic for the community is to incorporate accountability and responsibility in its sustainability plan. "A sustainable city will also need to acquire accountability and responsibility for increasing consumption patterns." (Characteristics of a Sustainable City, p. 1). By showing accountability and responsibility the city will be able to provide documentation when questioned on how it has implemented its programs. This can help the city when needed to apply for funding or grants in the future.

The second characteristic to include is "responsiveness and proactiveness" (Characteristics of a Sustainable City, p. 2). The city needs to be more observant and responsive to the volume of traffic congestion and air quality. The streets department can deploy staff to areas to determine the most volume of traffic or put in traffic recording control boxes. Increasing bus service during the daily hours would help local citizens to drive less and saving gas. In order to do this would mean to increasing bus services that offers more locations can help to reduce traffic.

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