

Best Practices for Maximizing the Benefits of Public Participation

Board of Water and Soil Resources
Workshop on Public Involvement and Citizen Advisory Committees



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Overview



- Participation – what? why? how?
- Common best practices
- Innovative approaches
- Q&A

Thinking about participation

What is participation?

- Engagement with the public and stakeholders around issues of joint concern
 - Many different issues
 - Many potential participants
 - Wide ranging perspectives and motivations
 - Can involve 2-way or 1-way communication

Potential participants:

Local government
Regional, state, and federal agencies
School districts
Advocacy groups (e.g. recreation, environment, neighborhoods)
Businesses
Developers
General public
Others?

Thinking about participation

Why do we do it?

- Comply with a mandate
- Gather information and insights about issues and concerns
- Seek input or buy-in on plans, policies, and projects
- Build relationships with participants
- Promote public and stakeholder education

Thinking about participation

Why do we do it?

Leveraging agency resources – by building capacity of stakeholders and the public to address issues of concern

External

Building support for implementation – participants with a “stake” in a plan, policy, or project will work to see it carried forward

Collaborative

Responding to stakeholders and the public – developing clearer understanding of participants’ concerns enhances the agency’s capacity to respond

Internal

Thinking about participation

How do we do it?

- Consider a broad definition
- Many methods of participation – both formal and informal
- Method should be matched to the purpose and participants
- Education is a key focus – about issues but also process



Thinking about participation

How do we do it?

Methods	Comply with a mandate	Gather info & insights about issues and concerns	Seek input/ buy-in on plans, policies, & projects	Build relationships with participants	Promote public and stakeholder education
Public hearing	●	○	○		
Open house	○	●	●	●	●
Advisory committee	●	●	●	●	●
Website	○	○	○		●
Newsletter	○				●
Community outreach	○	○	○	●	●

Common Best Practices

- Long history of public participation practice
- Wide range of approaches
- Key considerations:
 - What is your goal?
 - Who are your intended participants?



Common Best Practices

Participation broadly defined

- Think about participation broadly – it's not just about public meetings
- Use multiple methods

Participation methods:
 Advisory committees
 Websites
 Newsletters and mailings
 Press releases and relationships
 Training and educational seminars
 Outreach at public events and with key groups
 Focus groups
 Other?

Common Best Practices

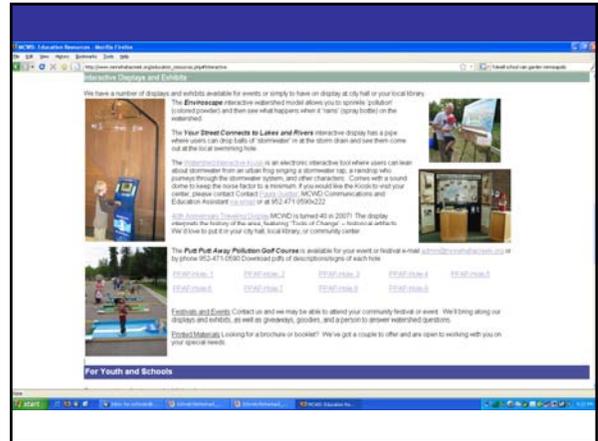
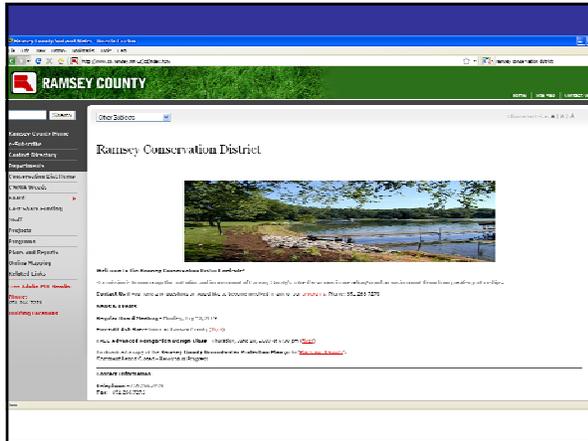
Participant recruitment

- Think strategically about recruitment
- Lack of interest among potential participants is key challenge
- Understanding role of agency is helpful in motivating participants – make issues relevant
- Consider interests and limitations of various participants
 - Local governments, other agencies, homeowners, developers, school children, new and diverse residents...

Common Best Practices

Participant recruitment

- Reach out to participants on their own turf
- Use websites, newsletters, and mailings to reach people at home or work
 - Provide publicly understandable information
 - Websites must be carefully tested
 - Provide specific information about how participate
 - Facilitate collection of comments or questions
 - Connect with media
- Meet with stakeholders and public at community events, conferences, organization meetings, etc.



Common Best Practices

Ongoing participation

- Focus on long term and strategic engagement
- Advisory committees can be very effective
- Opportunities for ongoing collaboration and "social learning"
- Be strategic in selecting participants
 - Committee members take information back to neighbors, organizations, etc.
- Document participation outcomes for members and others
- Use websites to store information for committee and others



Innovative Approaches



- Emerging innovations in participation practice
- Many take advantage of new technologies
- Often most successful when used in combination with existing best practices
- Remains important to consider purpose and participants

Innovative Approaches

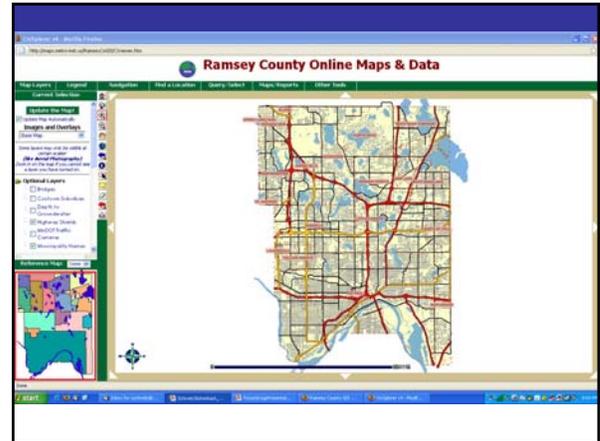
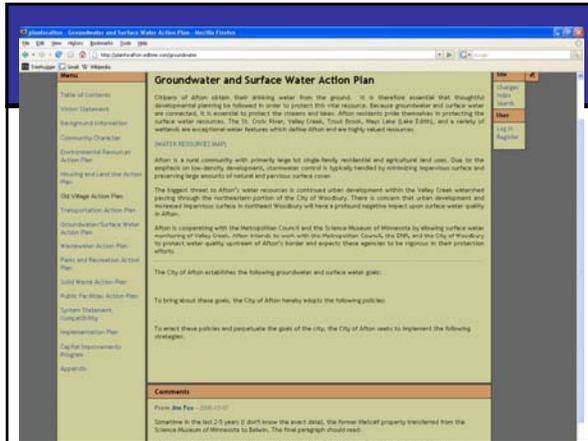
Use technology

- Use technology to enhance existing participation efforts
- Can provide information and solicit input
- Can promote interaction among participants
- Potential challenges
 - Internet and technology access
 - Cost and staff capacity
 - Moderating online discussions

Participation technologies:

- Websites
- Interactive mapping
- Wikis
- Blogs/discussion boards
- Keypad or cell phone voting
- 3-D and 2-D visualization
- Edited photos





GuelphQuest Online

Choose Guelph's Future!

Like many cities in our area, Guelph is expected to continue to grow over the next 15-20 years. How will we get the type of city we want in the future?

What's your plan?

Can you design a future Guelph that is both comfortable and affordable? Will it be more green? Will air quality improve? What benefits will you see? What do you see when you look at the future results?

Get involved!

As part of the City of Guelph's Local Growth Management Strategy, we want to hear from you. Please participate in our survey when you are finished to give us your feedback. Thanks and enjoy!

Head on ahead to the future!

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1 - user selects priorities
2 - evaluates impacts of users' choices

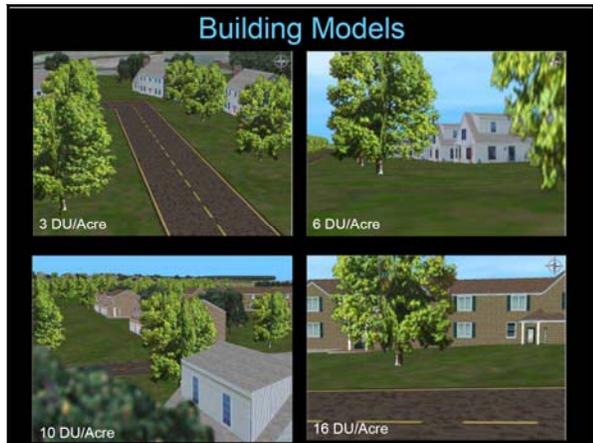
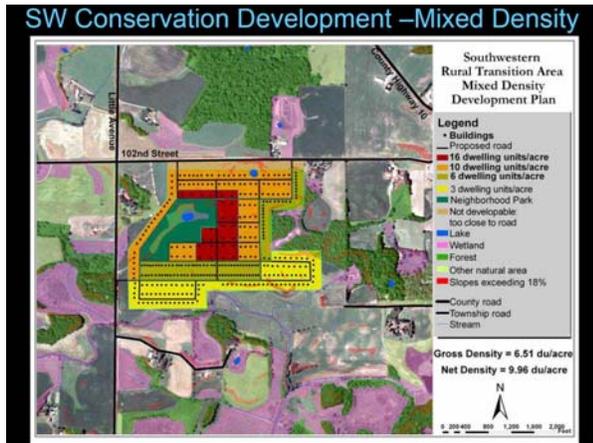
3 - tool maps and summarizes future impacts of choices

Innovative Approaches

Use visualization

- Use visualization efforts so participants can better evaluate scenarios, impacts, and outcomes
- Technologies available for enhanced visualization
- Tours of similar projects are invaluable
- Promote demonstration projects for long-term public education and engagement





Innovative Approaches

Engage children and youth

- Seek opportunities to partner with schools or educational programs
- Children and youth are a key conduit in reaching adults
- Examples
 - Projects
 - Classroom visits
 - Curricula

Summary

- Participation – what? why? how?
- Common best practices
- Innovative approaches
- Q&A

Thank you!

Questions or comments?

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