

Report from a Community Activist: 20 Years of Projects & Learnings

presented by
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ABSTRACT: A community's physical design has significant impact upon physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, and economic well-being of its citizens. With a background of extensive community-based research and activism, Dr. Beine will present highlights of key accomplishments, learnings, tools to evaluate communities, recommendations and opportunities for synergy while working to improve your communities.

My entry into advocacy: Sidewalks

Rx "Go for a daily walk" → "Go play in traffic"

Overview

Missing community infrastructure
Rationale for change: Economic Development
Strategies for Change
Tools for You!!!
Funding Sources

Infrastructure – often missing:

Sidewalks & handicapped ramps
Greenspaces & Parks
Bikeways
Public gathering areas
Small grocery stores

Poor Community Design = Health Hazards

Healthy, Livable Communities = Economic Development!!!

Economic Benefits:

More desirable for locating businesses
Higher quality of life
– individuals & businesses
Improved health and well being

Lower medical costs
– individuals & businesses
Improved productivity

Strategies for Community Change: Vision, Passion and Persistence

Form an Advocacy Group
Collaborate / Network
Evaluate community
Determine needs & prioritize
Maintain what is already there
Change ordinances for new areas
Change ordinances for re-design
Retrofit essential infrastructure
Seek funding where possible

Educate community, leaders, & city staff:
*Economic costs
-people / families
-businesses
-community
*Economic benefits
-health savings
-productivity

Tools for Healthy Community Assessment and Creating Change:

1 Tool: You
Community Advocacy
Website Resources
Books, Journals
Community Surveys
Consultants
Demographic Data Analysis
Visual Preference Surveys
Photoshop – "A picture = 1,000 words."

Evaluate Transit Options
GIS – Geographic Information Mapping
Local Ordinances & Plans
Community's Budget
Analyze CIP Budgets
Analyze Existing Infrastructure
Calculate Adverse Financial Consequences
Calculate costs to Retrofit Infrastructure
Tally Community Infrastructure

Funding Sources: - *“Who’s going to pay for this?”*

General tax dollars
Grants
Benefactors

Special taxes or levies
Assessments on properties
Improvement districts

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References / Resources: (partial listing – many more are available)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention www.cdc.gov

“Opportunities for Creating Livable Communities” AARP Public Policy Institute www.aarp.org/ppi

National Complete Streets Coalition www.completestreets.org

Project for Public Spaces www.pps.org

Smart Growth www.smartgrowth.org

Walkable and Livable Communities Institute www.walklive.org

Institute of Transportation Engineers www.ite.org

National Recreation and Parks Association www.nrpa.org

The National Center for Bicycling and Walking

<http://www.bikewalk.org/index.php>

<http://www.bikewalk.org/thepractice.php>

Safe Routes to School Guide www.saferoutesinfo.org

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Fodor, E. Better Not Bigger: How to Take Control of Urban Growth and Improve Your Community. New Society Publishers, Gabriola Island, B.C., Canada, 1999.