

“Community Planning in Turbulent Times: Staying on Top when the Bottom Falls Out”

**National Association of Planning Councils (NAPC)
2009 Conference, Austin, TX, March 2 -4**

Conference Notes

Making the Census Work for Your Community

Speakers: Representatives from the U.S. Census Bureau

- The American Community Survey (ACS), a nationwide survey that collects annual population characteristics and demographic information, is replacing the Census long form that was collected every 10 years.
- The Census long form surveyed about 1 out of 6 households (about 16 percent of the total population.) The ACS surveys about 3 million addresses annually, or about 2.2 percent of the population.
- The Census long form data was a point-in-time survey while the ACS is a continual survey process. Every month households are surveyed. For annual estimates, twelve months of data are combined. For three or five year estimates, 36-months and 60-months data sets are used.
- The ACS has tradeoffs between reliability and timeliness. Comparison of data will require careful understanding of methodology so “apples are compared to apples”
- Refer to the ACS Compass Products for educational materials
http://www.census.gov/acs/www/UseData/Compass/compass_series.html

Community Planning 101

Speaker: Ben Warner, Jacksonville Community Council (Florida)

- Community planning as performed by planning councils is nowadays defined by values more so than a specific organizational structure, collaborative partnerships, funding streams or functional areas.
- Visit NAPC’s [website](#) to see the values discussed.

“The Perfect Storm” – Community Engagement

Speaker: Phil Dessauer and Jan Figart, Community Service Council in Tulsa, OK

- Phil and Jan have identified different forces driving demographic, social and economic changes, drawing attention on the need to plan ahead with those forces in mind.
- They identify eight big forces: 1) lack of living wages for the huge population of unskilled/lowskilled persons and the growth in income insecurities, 2) current and growing workforce shortage, 3) rapid aging of the population, 4) growing challenges to assure healthy lifestyles and access to quality health care, 5) continued growing immigration, 6) Rapidly changing environmental conditions, 7) increasing uncertainty on our future supply of energy, and 8) growing challenge to the American culture.
- Check out their report and other Perfect Storm presentations on their website
http://www.csctulsa.org/the_perfect_storm.htm
- Phil and Jan recommended the book “The Tyranny of Dead Ideas” by Matt Miller.

Drivers of Change and What They Mean for Human Services and Local Communities

Jerry Friedman, American Public Human Services Association.

- Human Services is a counter-cyclical business: when times are tough and funding is lowest, the needs are greatest. Tough times are an opportunity for transformation.
- We need better measures of poverty.
- For more of his ideas visit his blog <http://www.aphsa.org/blogs/RUPRI.asp>

After the Election...

- Discussion on free-ranging topics.
- Debate on role of councils – facilitating discussions vs. making sense of data/world, creating spaces of dialogue vs. “telling the news,” can both roles be played effectively?
- Planning with a scenario in mind rather than longitudinally
- Generational divide in the work force – need for mentoring younger generation and opening spaces for the youth to voice their opinions and be part of the process as part of a succession planning strategy.
- Recognizing assets from all age-groups,

The economic crisis and the way forward

Speaker: Heidi Shierholz, Economic Policy Institute (Washington, D.C).

- Heidi, labor economist, made the following main points: 1) Since 1973, productivity in the U.S. has increased while median wages have not, the result a decline in “good jobs”, 2) poverty has stagnated since 1973, 3) the growth in GDP has gone to the highest 10%, specifically the highest 1%, and over one-third of all wealth generated has gone to the top one-tenth of one percent. By contrast, the bottom 90 percent shared 9.1 percent of the income growth, 4) mobility has declined, 5) health benefits have declined.
- A conversation around the current economic crisis needs to start with the ongoing, 35-year decline in middle-class income and poverty that was untouched by national growth in GDP. No trickle down.

Unemployment right now

- Unemployment/economic downturn hits people differently by race and ethnicity -- much more dramatic increases in unemployment among black and Hispanic workers: In January 2009, unemployment for whites was estimated at 6.9 percent, 9.7 percent for latinos, and 12.6 percent for African Americans.
- The current recession has resulted in 5 million job losses, over 11 million unemployed, and the trend lines are still getting worse. These figures do not include the "discouraged worker" who has given up and is no longer actively seeking work.
- In January 2009, 22.4 percent of the unemployed has been unemployed for six months or more. In January 2007, there were 1.6 job seekers for every job opening; in December 2008, there were 4.1 job seekers per opening.
- Underemployment -- including unemployed, marginally attached workers and the involuntary part-timers -- is 13.9 percent.

So what do we do about it?

- The tough and contradictory choice individuals are facing is between increasing savings/paying down debt and increasing spending. Families need to lower debt and increase savings, while the economy needs increased spending.

- How long will recovery take? We don't know. Credit crunch recessions tend to be sharp and short-lived; real estate recessions tend to be more mild but take longer to recovery. We have both at the same time; we don't know how long it will take to bring the economy back. Past recessions have taken 25-47 months to get back to peak-level employment. From March 2001 it took nearly 4 years to get back to peak employment. Most likely, working families are in this for the long haul.
- Learn more about Heidi's work and EPI's readings on the economy on their website http://www.epi.org/economic_snapshots/

Tapping the Mature Workforce—Baby Boomer Retirees Seeking Encore Careers in Nonprofits

Speaker: Martha Blaine, Community Council of Greater Dallas (Dallas, TX)

- In the coming years there will be 77 million people reaching the traditional retirement age: 76% of them intend to keep working, 57% of nonprofit EDs are age 50+, 75% of current EDs plan to leave their position by 2011 and nonprofits will need to recruit 640,000 new senior managers
- 50% of retirees from the for-profit and governmental sectors want jobs in the nonprofit sector. How will nonprofit organizations plan for the expected exodus of current leaders, and train and attract new leaders?
- The report "Tapping Encore Talents" from Civic Ventures explores some of these areas. http://www.civicventures.org/publications/surveys/employerssurvey08/employsurvey_fln_web_oct9.pdf
- NAPC is gathering and publishing information about what some NAPC communities are doing in this area. New report: <http://www.communityplanning.org/images/2-16-09%20NAPC%20Mature%20Workers%20Consolidated%20Report.pdf>

Developing New Strategies in Bad Economic Times

Speaker: Patrick Linnane, The Planning Council (Milwaukee, WI)

- Discussion from all participants.
- A lot of funders are realigning funding to basic needs leaving non-basic needs non-profits hanging. How can non-profits build reserves during bad times? Entrepreneurial changes needed.
- Entrepreneurial changes might mean: getting rid of low-performing initiatives, merging when making sense, lobbying to secure funding, sticking to one's knowledge base, expanding knowledge strategically, adapting outcomes measurements to reflect the change in funding level, situating the organizations between the different players without duplicating efforts nor competing, combining non-profit work with revenue generating activities.
- Non-profit mergers: sometimes they happen out of tragedy. Some mergers make sense while other don't, they should happen with caution.
- The current economic downturn might mask the need to eliminate low performers.
- Revenue generating activities: The Dupage Federation on Human Services Reform has established a Language Access Resource Center. They offer interpreting services, interpreting training, and translations for fees – all of which help them make money for other aspects of their work.
- Planning work should engage business aggressively since they are the ones that create job employment. Councils must convince businesses that investing in the communities through partnerships and funding is more than a marketing tool for them – it really impacts welfare of the community as a whole, and the long-term health of workers as both workers and consumers of products.

Increasing Effectiveness in Public Policy Development, Research, and Analysis

Presenting to Affect Public Policy

Speaker: Dr. Phillip Huang, Austin/ Travis County Health and Human Service Department

- Presented the “System Dynamics Modeling” methodology as a new way to use data to affect policy. He is currently using it in the health field. The presentation was specifically about different scenarios with different prevalence of obesity as a result of different combinations of “upstream and downstream” interventions. The methodology allows estimating which intervention is most cost-effective.

Mapping Data to Track Indicators, Target Solutions and Maximize Impact

Speaker: Jim Walker, Envision Central Texas

- Jim presented the Central Texas Sustainability Indicator Project <http://www.centex-indicators.org/index.html>
- Jim showed maps of socio-economic trends at the neighborhood level in Austin, at the Travis county level, and at a regional level. He recommended planning councils to tap into the resources of universities with graduate students who have mastered GIS mapping skills. “Do not try to learn ArcMap in one day - get a graduate student who can do the job well.”

Using CLICKS to Chart Trends and Save Time

Speaker: Frances P. Deviney, Center for Public Policy Priorities

- Check out the community level information on kids on <http://www.kidscount.org/cgi-bin/cliiks.cgi>

Mapping Data using Accessible, No-cost Tools for Assessment and Pplanning

Speaker: Sean Moran, Capital Area Council of Government (CAPCOG)

- US Census Bureau – Led on the Map = maps showing where workers are employed and where they live : <http://lehdmap3.did.census.gov/>
- Users with Google Earth can view CAPCOG's geospatial data by downloading KMZ files.

Using visual Imagery to describe the world

Speaker: Sunni Brown, BrightSpot Information Design

- Sunni displayed ways in which illustrations, graphics recording and digital cartoons are applied for meeting mappings, facilitation, strategic visioning, systems & solutions mapping.
- Check out her work at <http://sunnibrown.com/>

Data Displays – 30 examples in 30 minutes

Speaker: Ben Warner, Jacksonville Community Council

Different ways to display data in an effective and engaging way

1. Tactical Technology Collective http://www.tacticaltech.org/	9. Mapping Worlds http://www.mappingworlds.com/
2. Visual Literacy Periodic Table of Visualization http://www.visual-literacy.org/periodic_table/periodic_table.html	10. Dataplace http://www.dataplace.org/
3. Many Eyes http://manyeyes.alphaworks.ibm.com/manyeyes/	11. Policy Maps http://www.policymap.com/
4. Graph Jam http://graphjam.com/	12. Instant Atlas http://www.instantatlas.com/
5. Gapminder http://www.gapminder.org/	13. Every Block http://www.everyblock.com/
6. So Many a Second http://smas.studioludens.com/	14. My Apartment Map http://www.myapartmentmap.com/
7. Widgenie http://www.widgenie.com/	15. Chris Jordan http://www.chrisjordan.com/
8. Swivel http://www.swivel.com/	16. The Mega Penny Project http://www.kokogjak.com/megapenny/
	17. Infosthetics http://infosthetics.com/

Community Planning in a Digital World: New Methods of Community Engagement

Speakers: Taylor Willingham from Texas Forums, Silona Bonewald, League of Technical Voters

- Taylor et al talked about the myriad ways that digital tools can be used for collaborative work.
- Social Networks: Twitter and Facebook are effectively being used in the professional realm as tools for civic engagement, organizing, and voluntarism.
- Blogs are currently being used as places for hyperlocal news, citizen journalism and placebloggers. Positive news about what is happening in communities is often submitted by unusual suspects. Example of letter submitted by fourth grade students in the Northfield.org Blog <http://northfield.org/>. Many blogs are hosting weekly podcast with local news. Blogs as forms of citizen participation might work best in communities that are already civic-minded.
- Wikis - present an opportunity for collaborative work. One of the most basic wikis is google.docs.

Other recommended sites:

<p>Mind Mapping Software</p> <p>Mind Manager http://www.mindjet.com/</p> <p>Mind Mapping http://freemind.sourceforge.net/wiki/index.php/Main_Page</p> <p>FreeMind (Open Source and free for Windows, Mac and Linux)</p>	<p>Knowbility – Organization focusing on barrier-free IT to support independence of people with disabilities http://www.knowbility.org/main/</p> <p>Search engine for blogs: http://technorati.com/</p> <p>Training in Plain English http://www.commoncraft.com/</p>
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