How to Engage the Public and Build Support for Community Planning Projects

Held on Friday, December 12, 2014, 9:00 am to 12:00 pm

Audubon Society of RI, 12 Sanderson Road, Smithfield, RI

3 AICP CM credits offered

This workshop provided information and tools to enhance the public engagement and consensus-building process for community planning projects. The process for building support for village growth was discussed, and techniques such as identifying and engaging stakeholders, describing community values, shared fact-finding and game-playing exercises to explore alternatives applicable for other community planning projects were presented. Case studies highlighting the most effective techniques were used.

Target Audiences: Planners, local officials, developers, state agency personnel, and other interested parties.

Speakers: Peter Flinker, Dodson and Flinker; Nate Kelly, Horsley Witten Group; Scott Millar, RIDEM.

Presentations & Materials

Agenda

Attendee List

Speaker Biographies

Public Engagement & Consensus-building (Peter Flinker)

Planning for Growth in Exeter- A Case Study (Scott Millar)

Consensus Building Planning Worksheet

Questions? Please contact Jennifer West at jennifer@nbnerr.org or 401-222-4700, x 7413.

This workshop was a product of a Rhode Island Statewide Planning Challenge grant, and was free of charge.
How to Engage the Public & Build Support for Community Planning Projects

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AGENDA

8:30 am  Sign-in and light breakfast

9:00 am  Welcome  
Scott Millar, RI Department of Environmental Management  
Jennifer West, Narragansett Bay Research Reserve

9:10 am  Public Engagement and Consensus-building  
Peter Flinker, Dodson & Flinker

9:50 am  Planning for Growth in Exeter: A Case Study  
Scott Millar, RI Department of Environmental Management

10:15 am  Break

10:30 am  Game-Playing Exercise

11:15 am  Interactive Group Exercise

11:50 am  Wrap up and Evaluations

12:00 pm  Adjourn
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ATTENDEE LIST

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Speaker Biographies

Peter Flinker, AICP

Mr. Flinker is a both a registered Landscape Architect and member of the American Institute of Certified Planners. A partner with Dodson & Flinker, Landscape Architects and Planners, he maintains an active portfolio of projects with public and private clients, including design of new communities, downtown revitalization, planning for greenways and open space conservation, and sustainable design for schools and other public facilities. He has developed numerous training programs and award-winning publications in the areas of Smart Growth and Sustainable Development, including the Rhode Island Rural Design Manual and the Urban Environmental Design Manual.

Scott Millar

Mr. Millar is the Administrator of the RI Department of Environmental Management’s Sustainable Watersheds Office. He has over 30 years of environmental management and policy experience. In his current position he leads DEM’s smart growth initiative. Mr. Millar’s Office provides technical and financial assistance as well as training to encourage communities to use their land use authority to prevent and restore impacts to the environment. Mr. Millar has managed and edited six guidance manuals to demonstrate how innovative land use techniques can work effectively in both rural and urban settings. Mr. Millar also has over 20 years of community experience as a planning board and conservation commission chair as well as coordinating the preparation of his community’s comprehensive plan. Mr. Millar graduated from the University of Rhode Island with a BS in Natural Resources Science and a MS in Wildlife Biology.
Why is Public Participation Important?

Traditional process governed by Robert’s Rules of Order often creates winners and losers.

Because planning and zoning decisions directly affect people’s property values and quality of life, losers get mad, then get even.
Why is public participation in village planning so important?

1. Village planning is personal – changes can have a direct effect on property values, neighborhood character, and quality of life.

2. Existing residents and businesses unwilling to risk what they have – even if the alternative is demonstrably better.

3. People worry that increased density will create problems:
   - increased traffic and parking shortages.
   - Loss of open space and impacts to natural resources
   - Increased noise, light pollution, etc.
   - Loss of neighborliness
   - Influx of strangers from different social, racial or economic groups.

4. Where to live or locate a business is one of the most important economic decisions most people have to make.

5. Bottom line: it’s hard for anyone involved to stay objective.
Organizing the Public Participation Process

- In-house by Planning Board and staff.
- Steering Committee with Consultants
- Consensus Building Approach – Stakeholders at the center
Empowering Leaders Around the World to Collaborate, Negotiate, and Resolve Conflict

- ENERGY, ENVIRONMENT & LAND USE
- COMMERCIAL AGREEMENTS
- INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
- SOCIAL POLICY & CULTURAL RESOURCES
- CORPORATE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
- ORGANIZATIONAL GOVERNANCE & STRATEGY

CBI IN ACTION

CBI HIGHLIGHTS

Consensus Building Institute: www.cbuilding.org
Getting Started with Public Participation

- Identifying and reaching out to stakeholders and decision makers.
- Mapping out problems and opportunities and identifying potential conflicts.
- Describing community values and vision.
- Shared fact-finding
- Exploring alternatives
- Choosing a preferred alternative

For each step there are simple things that can be accomplished with minimal expense:
Identifying and reaching out to stakeholders and decision makers:

- Make a list of everyone responsible for making decisions about the project as well as those affected by those decisions.
- Talk to people one-on-one about their issues and concerns.
- Host informational table or display at public events
- Ask to make brief presentation at a neighborhood cocktail party or barbeque.
- Make a brief presentation to town council.
- Visit local political committees
Mapping out problems and opportunities and identifying potential conflicts

- Take a map of the town or project site and circle problem areas and opportunities for revitalization or development.
- Note potential conflicts between uses, people, or things.
- Identify the key naysayers and explore why they might be against it.
Describing community values and vision:

- Ask people to identify by name or on a map places they care about that should be protected or enhanced.
- Ask people to identify places or things they’d like to change or replace.
- Ask people what they’d like to see for this place in the future.
- Use visual preference surveys to gauge opinions on the relative importance of things to be protected, or the character of potential new development.
- Ask people to send in photographs of features they like or dislike.
- Develop a draft vision statement, map or diagram quickly so people have something to react to.

A visual preference survey doesn’t need to be anything more fancy than a series of photos. People can vote with dots to indicate which they like or dislike.
Shared fact-finding:

- Develop an on-line database of all previous reports, maps and other documents related to the project.
- Identify which facts are accepted and trusted, and which need more work.
- Seek agreement on which facts are most important for making good decisions.
- Involve the public in collecting additional information.
- Use free mapping tools from Google and Bing.

Google Maps “Street View”
Little Compton, RI
Exploring alternatives:

- Ask simple questions: What are possible solutions to specific needs or problems? Where should future development go? Are there many possible locations or just a few?
- Sketch out ideas on maps with markers, or have people use dots to identify preferred locations.
- Show photographs of similar projects.

Workshop participants used dots to vote on preferred village sites in Exeter.
Choosing a preferred alternative:

- Explore the feasibility, costs and benefits of different scenarios and share with participants.
- Evaluate which alternative best supports the values expressed by residents.
- Have people vote on their preferences with keypads or dot-polling at a public meeting, or on-line polling from home.
- Include key decision makers and stakeholders in the discussion.
Case Study:
Village of Turners Falls, MA

A planned mill-village on the Connecticut River
Downtown Turner’s Falls Vision Plan Area
**Downtown Turner’s Falls**

**VISION PLAN**

- **Identifying Stakeholder Interests**
  - Meeting #1: Kick-off Project, review existing conditions, problems and opportunities.
- **Shared Fact-Finding**
  - Meeting #2: Review of consultant research and analysis; draft vision statement; prepare for charrette.
- **Exploration of Alternatives**
  - Public Charrette: Sharing information, gathering public input, reviewing alternatives and developing a shared vision.
- **Group Deliberation**
  - Meeting # 3: Debrief on charrette, revise vision statements, review plans, visualizations and recommendations.
- **Test Consensus**
  - Meeting #4: Review draft Downtown Livability Plan
Working Group Process and Public Workshops
TF Livability Plan VISION MAP

THEMES

DEVELOPMENT & REDEVELOPMENT
Opportunities for Housing, Business & Community Use

Improving the PUBLIC REALM Streetscape, Parking, Civic Spaces and Connectivity

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, MARKETING & BRANDING
Ave A Existing (Schematic Diagram)
Ave A Existing (Schematic Diagrams)

Example Block 2
EXISTING Aerial

Example Block 2
EXISTING Streetview
Ave A Improvements (Schematic)

Example Block 2
POTENTIAL Aerial

Sidewalk extended into parking to create plaza with seating, plantings and public art

Example Block 2
POTENTIAL Streetview
Public Participation Tools

• Listening Workshop
• Visioning Workshop
• Design Charrette
• Game-Playing Exercises
• Visual Preference Survey
• Keypad Polling
• On-line Polling
Listening Workshop
Focus is on exercises that help participants provide information about a place, express their values, and talk about what they want it to be in the future.

May include:
- SWOT Analysis
- Heart & Soul Mapping
- Visual Preference Surveys
- Other Opinion Survey
- Small Group Discussion Questions
- Dot Voting

Voting with dots in Easton, Mass.
Visioning Workshop

• Presentation and discussion of existing conditions.
• Brain-storming exercises to define preferred future alternatives.
• Results can take the form of a Vision Statement and/or Map that guides future planning.
The North 40 Property

VISIONING

Townwide VISIONING WORKSHOPS

DODSON & FLINKER
Landscape Architecture and Planning
Brovitz/Community Planning & Design
Town-wide Workshop Maps
Conservation and Recreation

- What features of the site should be preserved the way they are?
- What are preferred future uses for open space areas?
Housing

- What type(s) of housing is appropriate for the site?
- Where are the best locations for housing?
- What proportion of that housing should be market rate and/or affordable or age-restricted?
What other community and/or recreational uses should be considered?

Where should these uses be placed?
Access and Connectivity

- How can we improve access to the site on foot, bike and car?
- Where should new streets, sidewalks, trails and other entrances or connections be made?
## I. Open Space Uses

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## II. Housing Uses

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Cottages and Townhouses:
  - 33 Attached Townhouses
  - 44 Attached and detached cottages
Design Charrette

- Intense planning and design exercise
- Usually a specific site or project area
- Professionals working collaboratively with stakeholders
- Often last for multiple days to allow for multiple feedback loops as ideas are generated, evaluated and revised.
National Charrette Institute (NCI): www.charretteinstitute.org
Provides education and training for charrette design and facilitation and certifies trained charrette facilitators.

NCI “Charrette System” – Recommended Five-day Process:

1. Open public meeting: vision and values
2. Generate alternative plans and scenarios
3. Second public meeting to evaluate alternatives.
4. Synthesis of alternatives into a preferred plan.
5. Exploration of details and economic, design and political feasibility.
6. Presentation of results at final public meeting.
First Day Work Session
Second Day Alternatives

Third Day Synthesis
Game-Playing Exercises

• Games are user-friendly.

• Games help people think outside the box.

• Games are less threatening.
Downtowns:
Regional Services
Regional Commercial Districts
Regional Road System
Local Road System
Local Centers
DOWNTOWN [DT]

Downtowns contain a mix of commercial, residential and civic uses. They represent the core of our cities and larger towns and typically draw people from throughout the region for jobs, shopping, entertainment and culture.

NEIGHBORHOOD [NE]

The neighborhood is a self-contained part of a larger city or town. It is primarily residential, but may include some shops, restaurants and service businesses.

CORRIDOR [CO]

A corridor connects multiple neighborhoods within a city or town, and may continue through several towns. Often following historic streetcar routes, it is lined with residential, commercial and mixed-use buildings, as well as government and community uses.

MAIN STREET [MS]

Main streets act as the focus of activity for the surrounding town. They typically have a walkable street with parking at the curb, lined with 2-5 story mixed-use buildings.

TRANSIT STATION DEVELOPMENT [TS]

Transit stations provide access to public transportation systems, whether rail, bus or plane. They can be in historic village, town or city centers, or in suburban areas serving commuters.

COMMERCIAL/ MIXED-USE [MU]

Commercial/mixed-use – Areas devoted to commercial uses are typically found at interstate interchanges and other areas that are easy to reach by automobile. They feature big box stores and chain restaurants, but can also include a mix of residential and office uses.

TRADITIONAL VILLAGE [TV]

Traditional villages are self-contained centers with a mix of residential, commercial and civic uses. Often laid out before the arrival of the automobile, they typically have small lots and buildings close to the street, connected by a network of shady sidewalks, parks and other community amenities.

NEW VILLAGE [NV]

New villages are laid out according to the historic town-planning principles. They are designed to work the same way, providing for a mix of residential, commercial and civic uses within a compact, walkable center. As with the traditional village, beautiful streets, sidewalks, parks and other public spaces allow for a high quality of life in a small area.

HAMLET [HA]

The hamlet is a cluster of homes, businesses or community uses surrounded by open space. They are often located at crossroads of local roads and serve the surrounding rural neighborhood or town.

SPECIAL ECONOMIC DISTRICT [SD]

Special economic districts include ports and harbor facilities, college campuses, casinos and other uses. They typically are located to take advantage of a unique location on the waterfront, at a junction of regional highways or in an isolated campus setting.

OFFICE/INDUSTRIAL PARK [OI]

The office or industrial park provides for business uses that do not easily fit into a village, town or city center. Typically this includes a need for large structures, parking lots and storage areas, as well as good access to regional highways.
GROWTH CENTERS GAME
State of Rhode Island
Prepared by Dodson & Flinker
December 6, 2013

CENTER TYPES + TOD

TOD: Transit Oriented Development
Railroad
Major Roads
Lakes & Pond
Town Boundary
Major Rivers
DT: Downtown
NE: Neighborhood
CO: Corridor
MS: Main Street
MU: Mixed Use
TS: Transit Station
HA: Hamlet
NV: New Village
TV: Traditional Village
OI: Office/Industrial Park
SD: Special Economic District
Case Study: Exeter Growth Challenge Game

Playing with the question: “how could the growth we’re going to get anyway be reorganized to allow for development while protecting our rural character and natural resources?”
A Vision for Exeter

Do we need a village? Where is the best location?
Buildout Analysis predicts more than 3000 new homes, more than doubling existing population.
Using GIS, the map of the town was transformed into a game board.
Exeter Chip Set - Growth Challenge Game

Trails / Bikeways (green marker)

Open Space (green marker)

Park (green marker)

Conservation/Rural - .25 du (dwelling unit) / acre or 5 homes per 20 acre

Rural Residential - .5 du / acre or 10 homes per 20 acre

Town Residential - 2 du / acre or 40 units per 20 acre

Residential-Compact - 8 du / acre or 160 homes per 20 acre

Mixed Use - 8 du / acre + 10 jobs / acre or 160 units and 200 Jobs / 20 acre

Village Commercial - (Zero lot line Retail) 4 du / acre + 40 jobs / acre

Highway Commercial - (Highway Commercial/Big Box) - 20 jobs / acre

Employment Area - (Office/Light Industrial) - 10 jobs / acre

Public Facilities / Service (School, Police, Fire, Gov’t) - 10 jobs / acre

Neighborhood Commercial (small – one acre) - 5 jobs / acre

Worst Thing!

Major Roads (black marker)
**BANK (Chips to Swap)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>CR 5</th>
<th>RR 10</th>
<th>TR 40</th>
<th>RC 160</th>
<th>MU 160/200</th>
<th>VC 80/800</th>
<th>HC 400</th>
<th>EA 200</th>
<th>PF 200</th>
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<td>= 1/4 VC</td>
<td>= 1/2 HC</td>
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**Residential**

- RR: Residential
- TR: Residential
- RC: Residential
- MU: Mixed
- VC: Mixed
- HC: Employment
- EA: Employment
- PF: Employment

**Mixed Homes and Jobs**

- RR: Residential
- TR: Residential
- RC: Residential
- MU: Mixed
- VC: Mixed
- HC: Employment
- EA: Employment
- PF: Employment

**Employment**

- RR: Residential
- TR: Residential
- RC: Residential
- MU: Mixed
- VC: Mixed
- HC: Employment
- EA: Employment
- PF: Employment
Swapping is Simple…

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200 & \quad 200 \\
\text{PF} & \quad \text{PF} \\
200 & \quad 200
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“Housing Hot Spots” identified by compiling the results of all game boards
Preferred locations for future village development
A Vision for Exeter
Three Phase Process

• Phase I
  – Community Visioning to Build Consensus

• Phase II
  – Assessed Village Development for Exeter

• Phase III
  – Ordinance Preparation/Adoption
Interviewed 60 Community Stakeholders
Survey Results

• Exeter defined by rural character
• Growth is inevitable
• Manage growth to preserve rural character
• Expand tax base
• Commercial development must fit Exeter
How important is this place to the “Heart & Soul” of Exeter?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Little Importance</th>
<th>Great Importance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐ 1</td>
<td>☐ 5</td>
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</table>

97%
How important is this place to the “Heart & Soul” of Exeter?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Little Importance</th>
<th>Great Importance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>86%</td>
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</table>

86%
How appropriate is this for Exeter?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not Appropriate</th>
<th>Very Appropriate</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>5</td>
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</tbody>
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0%          0%          6%          30%          64%
Existing Development
Future Growth

Doubles at Build-out
The Map & Chip Game
(Where might we put the inevitable growth?)
Potential Village Sites
(Based on Map & Chip Game Feedback)
Phase I Conclusions

“If you could change one thing about Exeter what would it be?”
Phase I Conclusions

- Develop a game plan for growth
- Create a village with business, residential and recreational uses
Vision for Exeter

- Natural areas will be protected
- Our working farms and forests will be maintained for the future
- Environmentally appropriate and sustainable economic growth
- Individual property rights will be respected
- The rural character and quality of life will be preserved
- Rural design and architectural guidelines will be used for growth
- The negative impacts of increased traffic will be minimized
- Property taxes will be as low as possible
- Balanced housing needs will be achieved
- There will be an efficient delivery of town services

**Village Style development patterns will be encouraged**
Phase II

- Advantages/disadvantages of villages
- Assess potential village areas
- Define village development in Exeter
- Techniques to prevent sprawl
Village Core 8du/Acre

Cottage 12du/acre

Village Edge 4du/acre
Existing Site
500 Acres; Four Owners
Conventional Development
100 Four-Acre (minimum) Lots; No Open Space
Conservation Development

100 One-Acre Lots; 400 Acres Permanent Open Space
Village Development with Transfer of Development Rights (TDR)
200 Half-Acre Lots; 900 Acres Permanent Open Space: How?
Village Development with Transfer of Development Rights (TDR)

100 Acre Village Footprint;

900 Acres Permanently Preserved Open Space
Projected Annual Revenue and Municipal Expenses for Residential Development Scenarios

- A. Conventional Development
- B. Conservation Development
- C. Village with ½ Acre Lots
- D. Village with ¼ Acre Lots
- E. Village with 1/8 Acre Lots
Which development option do you think is best to achieve Exeter’s Vision?

84% Village Growth
Do you think the town should use Transfer of Development Rights to shift development from farms and forest to Village sites?

Yes  78%
Stakeholder Meetings

• Local Organizations

• Town Political Committees

• Friends/Neighbors
Consensus Building Worked

- Village Ordinance Adopted
- TDR Ordinance Adopted
- No Opposition
Questions?
## CONSENSUS-BUILDING PLANNING WORKSHEET

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROJECT DEFINITION</th>
<th>What is the issue or problem that needs to be resolved? What is the study area or scope of the project?</th>
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<tr>
<td>IDENTIFYING STAKEHOLDERS</td>
<td>List the types of people or groups that will be affected by decisions or actions that come out of the project. What is the position/interest of each stakeholder?</td>
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<td>SHARED FACT-FINDING</td>
<td>What information is needed to make informed decisions regarding the issue or project? Are data-sources trusted, and if not, how will they be developed?</td>
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<td>CONVENING STAKEHOLDERS</td>
<td>Given the nature of the project, what is the best way to bring stakeholders together (e.g., open meetings, appointed committee, working group, neighborhood meetings, one-on-one outreach, etc.)?</td>
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<td>EXPLORATION OF ALTERNATIVES</td>
<td>What is the minimum number or range of alternatives that should be explored?</td>
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<td>DELIBERATION AND DECISION-MAKING</td>
<td>Who makes the final decision regarding the plan, policy or project, and how will stakeholders be involved in deliberation and decision-making?</td>
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