

The Wolfeboro Civic Profile

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Civic Profile is a process by which communities take stock of where they are today and develop an action plan for how they want to operate in the future. Whether the issue is a quality school system, an air pollution problem, lack of adequate affordable housing or solid waste disposal, the need for effective problem-solving skills is the same. A community must have strong leaders, from all sectors, who are able to work together with informed involved citizens to reach agreement on issues. The Civic Profile assists communities to develop their problem-solving ability. It is a self-evaluation tool that draws heavily on the collective wisdom of the participants and is not a test or a comparison between communities. It provides a method for citizens to affirm community strengths, identify concerns and problems, and then to help a community structure collaborative approaches to meet these challenges creatively, set directions for the future, and manage change.

The National Civic League, along with several university studies have identified those qualities that make a community work that help communities plan for the future and survive such dramatic change as extreme population growth, plant shut-downs or military base closings. These qualities make up the ten components of the Civic Profile and are the “tools” of the community self-assessment:

Community Information Sharing: Getting the right information to people who need it so they can make better decisions for themselves and for their communities.

Community Vision and Pride: Developing a positive self-image around what makes a community special and unique and taking proactive steps to keep it that way.

Civic Education: Doing all that is possible to help a community’s citizens “learn the ropes” so that they can contribute to the life of the community.

Citizen Participation: Developing opportunities for people to volunteer for important work in visible, active ways, and making their entry an easy one.

Community Leadership: Ensuring the on-going development of active business, non-profit, and governmental leadership that is results-oriented, looks to the future, and takes appropriate risks.

Cooperation and Consensus Building: Designing ways and forums for sharing ideas, opinions, hopes, and fears in collaborative atmospheres, attempting to achieve common goals, and when there is a disagreement, to discover ways to resolve it.

Regional Cooperation: Working toward region-wide policies and programs to deal with problems and challenges facing a community and its neighbors by crossing traditional boundaries to offer and seek cooperation.

Intergroup Relations: Promoting communication among diverse community groups to form coalitions, understand different views, discover ways to resolve conflicts, and to prevent unnecessary escalation.

Volunteerism and Philanthropy: Creating opportunities and an atmosphere for individuals, groups, and organizations to give to the community in time, knowledge and skills, and dollars, and to honor one another for our contributions.

Government Performance: Seeking the best from government in effectiveness, efficiency, responsiveness, accountability, fairness, and creativity.

To assist cities and towns to strengthen their Civic Infrastructure (those skills, institutions and systems that communities use to solve problems, govern themselves and decide their futures), the Commission on New Hampshire in the 21st Century adapted a program from the National Civic League for use in New Hampshire, which they called the Granite State Civic Profile. This was the model that was adapted for use in Wolfeboro.

SPECIFIC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR WOLFEBORO

The Wolfeboro process began when the selectmen, after a presentation by UNH Cooperative Extension, voted to undertake a Civic Profile. A core group of interested citizens were identified by the selectmen, from this group they formed a Civic Profile Steering Committee and identified six goals that they hoped to achieve through the Wolfeboro Civic Profile. They were to:

- Develop a fundamental community consensus around a shared vision for the future of Wolfeboro that can be built upon by other groups.
- Achieve greater effectiveness in conducting our business in a more cooperative and collaborative fashion.
- Invite active participation in the community from those not currently involved in order to enfranchise a broader range of our citizens and to expand our leadership pool.
- Learn to share information in more effective and productive ways to facilitate the decision-making process.
- Develop more effective ways to coordinate with various groups working within Wolfeboro so that our efforts complement each other.
- Achieve a renewed spirit and sense of community in Wolfeboro.

From the Civic Profile itself, the Committee expected that other goals for the community would likely be identified.

PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT

From the very beginning of the process, the Steering Committee was concerned about including the broadest cross-section of the community as possible in the Civic Profile. It was important to include not only the usual leadership, but also people who don't usually participate, community activists, and those people in the community who could prevent action on the recommendations. No group or individual was limited from consideration as a potential participant. It was to be an inclusive, rather than an exclusive process. Each member of the steering committee submitted a list of names which represented, to that individual, a cross section of the community.

The full Steering Committee then went through all of the names to try to guarantee that balance was achieved. Again special attention was paid to those people who do not usually participate. Letters were sent to each person on the list who lived in Wolfeboro. An open invitation was extended to all residents, summer and year round, through the local media. Out of the 300 invitations that were mailed out, almost 30% Indicated that they would attend the forum. The week before the Profile, reminder postcards were

sent out to attendees. This postcard not only reminded the participants about the meeting but it also told them what they were to bring to the pot-luck supper.

THE PROCESS

Participants met for two sessions to evaluate Wolfeboro's Civic Infrastructure. The Profile began with team building and an over-view of the entire forum. The participants developed a mosaic of what Wolfeboro is like now and a vision of what they would like Wolfeboro to be in the future. The participants then went into randomly selected small groups of approximately 10-12 people each, which were led by people from the community who had been previously trained to lead the small group discussions. Each of the eight groups discussed one of the ten (10) components of the Civic Profile. For each component, the group was asked to evaluate two questions:

How is Wolfeboro doing now?

What should Wolfeboro be doing in the future?

After reaching consensus on the 3-5 most important points from their discussions, the small group facilitators reported their findings and the other participants had the opportunity to comment on the reports. Key Civic Issues emerged as common themes.

Next, the participants split into small groups, based on their individual interests, to develop recommendations on methods to implement potential solutions to the Key Civic Issues. Each group was asked to define the following:

Critical steps to implementation

Resources needed

Principal leadership (group or individual)

Potential obstacles with potential strategies to overcome them

Timeline for implementation

Action step coordinator

At the conclusion of the second day's work, reports were made to the entire group identifying for all of the participants what had been determined for each issue. Task groups then formed to begin work on each issue.

THE TEN COMPONENTS

Community Information Sharing

How Are We Doing Now?

- The media generally covers issues fairly
- The media is active and supportive of the community
- The residents feel they receive a reasonable amount of information
- There is no civic organization for the dissemination of information

What Should We Be Doing in the Future?

- The minutes of all major committee meetings should be taken and made available to the media and to the taxpayers
- Community notices should be published in both the *Granite State News* and the *Wolfeboro Times*
- Planning Board agenda items pertaining to possible variances, etc. should be published in the newspaper prior to the meeting date

Community Vision and Pride

How Are We Doing Now?

- Lack of planning in the area of business and economic development
- The master plan needs to be updated
- The community needs to develop some pride and vision
- There is overdependence on summer residents

What Should We Be Doing in the Future?

- Make a decision as to the type of community we are (tourist, retirement, industrial, etc.)
- Be more diverse economically and culturally
- Review zoning with regard to housing
- Learn more about our history and traditions

Civic Education

How Are We Doing Now?

- There is public apathy
- There is a lack of information dissemination by the public and private sectors
- There is a lack of education in the public schools

What Should We Be Doing in the Future?

- More public education including the school system
- Increase voter participation, make it easier to register and get more candidates to run for office
- Decrease public apathy

Citizen Participation and Volunteerism and Philanthropy

How Are We Doing Now?

- We have had some viable programs and good ideas
- Good ideas have historically enjoyed success
- There is a lack of activities for young adults (18-24) and year round activities are not as well supported
- There should be some mutual bonding with other lakeside communities, i.e. LRCT land and water LWA water testing
- There is a lack of communication between groups, whatever they may be
- Some groups choose to work quietly
- Improved media coverage WASR and Granite State News

What Should We Be Doing in the Future?

- Communication between groups -- establish a base and show a need
- Protect resources at all costs (i.e. lakes, green space, wetlands), investigate N.H. Charitable organization
- Coordinate public and private funding, establish a United Way type fund that will go beyond crisis response
- Establish goals for a base and set-up a volunteer hotline

Community Leadership

How Are We Doing Now?

- The town is recently better organized...continue the improvement process
- The benefits of open, respectful (and non-violent) communication are being realized
- A large pool of volunteer workers and leaders exists
- The tendency to beat upon office holders reduces enthusiasm for candidates to step forward and serve
- The Chamber of Commerce, Service Clubs and non-profits are involved in more timely communications with the town; the town is doing better at responding and helping to find solutions

What Should We Be Doing in the Future?

- Improve information dissemination to the citizens
- Establish an annual community (business, services, government) goal setting/updating/revising process so that all may maintain a more "whole town" perspective
- Publicize and utilize the current Master Plan
- School District, Hospital and Town are the largest employers -- should some services be privatized?
- If possible, do it better but at a lower cost

Cooperation and Consensus Building

How Are We Doing Now?

- Wolfeboro has many groups **by age** and interest, all are talking . each other; there is no neutral ground to share ideas

- The town meeting and school meeting have long hours and are at bad times which discourages citizen participation
- Citizen participation is low because of two paycheck families. There is no energy left for public affairs because they are stressed and tired. Also, there are many single parent families and the children would be without a parent present if they participated.
- The public gets the information after the fact and you are labeled a “kook” if you speak up and ask questions
- Wolfeboro looks good now but there are problems with enforcing any type of uniformity
- People in Wolfeboro care about the town and residents

What Should We Be Doing in the Future?

- Establish a neutral ground upon which Wolfeboro can share ideas
- Handle more community issues by ballot instead of warrant article
- Establish a Community Council to get representatives from all groups to talk to each other
- Get more involvement in the community
- Increase the ethics in government, i.e. law enforcement, railroading, and real estate “deals”
- Enforce leash laws and J-walking regulations
- Determine what type of business and industry we want
- Increase the amount of skilled trained pool of workers
- Establish a Job Bank and network it to business and industry

Regional Cooperation

How Are We Doing Now?

- A hub of commerce and services for the region
- Non-profits cross town lines very well (e.g. churches, VNA, WACC, South Carroll County Red Cross, Habitat for humanity, YMCA, Carroll County Mental Health Clinic, Meals on Wheels, Hospice, Lakes Region Conservation Trust, etc.)
- Public safety and fire mutual aid cooperation also excellent
- Youth activities (hockey, W-T Little League, Babe Ruth, Scouts and Kingswood teams) also good examples of inter-town cooperation
- Lakes Region Planning Commission and Household Hazardous Waste collection as working examples to build upon

What Should We Be Doing in the Future?

- Maintain and build upon the above listed areas and:
- Restore the cooperative spirit to the Governor Wentworth Regional School District
- Establish a regional recycling center
- Encourage non-profits to plan fewer but more focused fund raisers, consider a United Way type unified annual appeal and thereby reduce the “never ending” impact on small businesses
- Establish a periodically convened Regional Forum of governmental and community leaders
- Enact additional “helpful” legislative mandates (mutual aid, schools, solid waste, etc.) as examples of where it has worked
- Review social, fiscal and economic costs and benefits of Country Commissioners’ proposed private prison

Government Performance

How Are We Doing Now?

- There is not enough information included in annual report
- Town officials do not always provide all of the available facts and information
- In general, most people believe that services are provided equitably
- Excellent response to service complaints by some departments but lack of response by others
- Concern over lack of house/street numbers relative to safety

What Should We Be Doing in the Future?

- Taxpayers should be represented at all state, regional and local meetings relating to town issues
- Consider expanding Board of Selectmen from three members to five members
- Ordinances should be more clearly written and enforced in a consistent manner
- A safety services commission should be formed and should study the number of personnel needed and evaluate other safety service issues
- A new form should be designed for use in developing a pool of community volunteers. It should include interests, expertise, etc., and should be sent to all residents and the names should be rotated to ensure the same people are not used all the time
- Hold major committee meetings at times most convenient to taxpayers

RECOMMENDATIONS

KEY ISSUES

After reviewing the ten components of the Civic Profile, the participants came to consensus on the KEY ISSUES that exist in Wolfeboro. Those KEY ISSUES are: Citizen Participation, Communication and Planning (including economic development, regulatory and housing).

PLANNING--INCLUDES ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT REGULATORY & HOUSING

Critical Steps to Implementation

- Establish goals conduct research to determine what the community wants
- Adjust the regulatory climate to allow for the attainment of the goals
- Identify sources of financing and involve bankers
- Explore new creative ideas
- Do it

Resources Needed

- Financing
- Leadership
- Creativity
- Media support
- Town government involvement

Principle Leadership

- Successful retired business person and a paid coordinator
- Input from planner, business community, interested citizens and service organizations.

Potential Obstacles

- Cost
- Special interest groups
- Apathy
- Neighborhood organizations
- Regulations and restrictions
- Maintaining momentum over time

Timeline

- Tomorrow, community survey tabulate results publish results of the meeting
- September 1991, think and plan
- September 1992, Master Plan partially update through land use inventory and economic development
- 1993 before there are any implementation or changes to the regulations etc.

Action Step Coordinator

- Town Manager
- Town Planner

- Selectmen
- Don Huges
- Paul Kimball
- Andy Miligan
- Steve Durgan

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Critical Steps for Implementation

- Ask for volunteers
- Identify diverse groups
- Be specific in what is wanted
- Personal leadership

Resources Needed

- Meeting place
- Facilitators
- Purpose
- Funding
- Goals
- Organizers
- Agenda

Principle Leadership

- Will emerge from the cause
- Charismatic
- Experienced retirees
- Perseverance

Potential Obstacles

- Funding
- Apathy
- Disillusionment
- Lack of compatibility
- Failure to network with other sources

TimeLine

- Establish a community forum if the other two groups agree that it is important
- Do this before the end of the summer so summer people can be involved

Action Step Coordinator

- Sandy McBeth
- Dot Auderer
- Tod Blodget

COMMUNICATION

As it relates to Government and safety information, social/medical services, community activities calendar, education and day care, volunteer information, civic groups, religious activities and art and cultural activities.

Critical Steps to Implementation

- Use of the public library
- Reception/information desk at Town Hall
- Information sharing council
- Good use of the media
- Better use of the Chamber of Commerce
- Welcome wagon

Resources Needed

- Funding for town directory and reception/information desk
- Publicity
- Volunteers
- Computer use

Principle Leadership

- Town government
- Chamber of Commerce
- Media
- Service and religious groups

Potential Obstacles

- Lack of funding
- Follow through
- Attitude of openness
- Bureaucracy

Timeline

- By October 30, dialogue with Chamber, Town, Media, Service and Religious groups
- By January 1, decision to go forth by the above four groups

APPENDIX

PARTICIPANT LIST

Howard Baker, Jr.
Larry Keniston
Todd Blodget
Gordon Kimball
Jeb Bradley
Paul Kimball
Lillian O. Brookes
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