

Community partnerships and place-based collaborations

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Best Practices in Community Engagement Panel
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Columbia University. Environmental Stewardship.

Toughest environmental planning issues to resolve?

Democracy

Not science

Little trust: we're here from Washington
and we're here to help?

Right

Get a vision

- Then test it
- Let go of what you thought it was
- Get another vision
- Keep it going

Ask this: What is sustainability?

- Taking care of the needs of the present without compromising the needs of the future?
- Does it reach beyond the traditional scope of a project?
- Who pays?
- Who benefits?
- Are existing systems adequate?
- How do you project risks and costs?
- *No easy answers – a work in progress*

Lose the linear thinking

- Define community
- Loop it
- Networks not hierarchy
- Keep it drafty
- Verify
- Revise
- Repeat

Case Study 1

- Air Force Range expansions in the 1990s
- Adopted broad principles
 - Good neighbor
 - Place-based context
 - Transparency and public participation

- ITR
- Alaska

Use the grandmother test

- If she won't buy it, no one else will

Case Study 2: Higher Education

- Columbia University
 - Environmental research at core
 - 24 environmental degrees, plus a major
 - “Global warming” coined here
 - El Niño
 - RV Langseth
 - Ocean currents role in climate change
 - IPCC
 - Asthma research and public health
 - Campus expansion
 - Advisory committee not trusted
 - Hundreds of public meetings and tours
 - Package of commitments

Manhattanville Full Build



Sustainable Campus Design

- LEED for Neighborhood Development pilot program
- Commitment to at least LEED Silver certification for all academic and residential project
- Research facilities designed to achieve Lab 21 standards
- Memo of Understanding with the Environmental Defense Fund
- PlaNYC Challenge initiative partner



Illustrative Open Space Design

They asked for it....

- Sustainability framework
- IPM/rats
- Transportation values, mixed use, local schools, clinics, markets
- Open design v. gates and walls

Clean Construction

Why practice Clean Construction?

- EIS & other commitments
- Community impact
- NYC Local Law 77
- Commitment to a stringent Clean Construction program
- Organizational alignment across various University departments



Responding to public comments

Public Space & Revitalization

- **Enliven and activate West 125th Street as the gateway to the West Harlem Waterfront Park**
- **Widen sidewalks and view corridors on east-west streets leading to the waterfront**
- **Two acres of open space with 38 trees in the large square**
- **Avoid the construction of gates that would block pedestrian access to and through the area**
- **Maintain historic 12th Avenue viaduct and promoting development of an open air public market near the waterfront**
- **Provide accessible open spaces and promote north-south pedestrian movement through the campus**

New Secondary School

- **Columbia-assisted public secondary school for math, science and engineering on a site provided by Columbia adjacent to the Manhattanville campus with priority given to high performing students from the neighborhood**
- **Columbia's role in the partnership is to lend its academic expertise to the development of curricula**

Utility Improvement Program

- **Replacing outdated 19th century sewers and water mains with new systems with increased capacities, constructed to today's industry standards to benefit the community at large**
- **Constructing a separate stormwater system that would divert all stormwater out of combined sewer system and reduce sewage overflow**

Reality House **Sustainable** Deconstruction

- Month long “**green**” salvage training program during the summer of 2009 to deconstruct the 3rd and 4th floors of Reality House at 637 W. 125th Street
- Utilized 35 men and women from two local job training programs
- Approximately 40 tons of surplus materials removed and 90% donated both locally and internationally
- Managed in partnership with the Institution Recycling Network (IRN) as a national model
- IRN has hired NEW for an upcoming project on Governor’s Island



Some takeaways....

Find outside opportunities for community partnering

- Surplus furniture and equipment
- Food banks and shelters
- Local job /contractors
- Look for ways to build bridges including other partners
- What are the big issues in the neighborhood?
- *Address those*

Don't give up

Acknowledge you work for them

They pay you

You need them

Local residents are your local experts

Consultants will never know as much

*Value the local knowledge base and it will value
you*

Transformative

- If you get it right, it's transformative and empowering
- New bonds are created
- New partnerships formed
- Communities are your new best friend
- Restores faith in government
- Until someone forgets
- Then you reboot

For more information on Columbia and its
stewardship initiatives....

- www.environment.columbia.edu

