

THE BELMONT CIVIC PROFILE

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1995

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 method for citizens to affirm community strengths, identify concerns and problems, and then to help 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 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 component; 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 by University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension for use in Belmont.

SPECIFIC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR BELMONT

The Belmont process began when the Board of Selectmen, after a presentation by UNH Cooperative Extension, decided to undertake a Civic Profile. The Board of Selectmen identified a core group of interested citizens who would be the Civic Profile Steering Committee. The committee identified six goals that they hoped to achieve through the Belmont Civic Profile. They were to:

- Develop a fundamental community consensus around a shared vision for the future of Belmont that can be built upon by other groups.
- Achieve greater effectiveness in conducting 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 citizens and to expand the 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 Belmont so that our efforts complement each other.
- Achieve a renewed spirit and sense of community in Belmont.

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 decided to include the broadest cross-section of the community as possible in the Civic Profile. In addition to current community leadership, an effort was made to include 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 excluded from consideration as a potential participant. It was to be an inclusive, rather than an exclusive process. The Steering Committee identified over 350 individuals who would be contacted directly to participate in the Civic Profile.

The 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. Out of the 350 invitations that were mailed out, 24 % indicated that they would attend the forum. Two weeks before the Profile, reminder notices were sent out to the attendees. This notice not only reminded the participants about the meeting but it also told them what they were to bring to the pot-luck supper on Friday evening.

THE PROCESS

Participants met for two sessions, Friday evening January 20 and all day Saturday January 21, 1995 to discuss Belmont's Civic Infrastructure. The Profile began with team building and an over-view of the entire forum. The participants developed a mosaic of what Belmont is like now and a vision of what they would like Belmont to be in the future. The participants then went into randomly selected small groups of approximately 8 people each, which were led by facilitators from the community who had been previously trained to lead the small group discussions. Each of the ten 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 Belmont doing now?

What should Belmont be doing in the future?

After reaching consensus on the 5-7 most important points identified by the group, the small group facilitators reported their findings to the entire group 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, each small group reported their findings and recommendations to the entire group. Task groups formed to begin developing an implementation follow up plan of work for each issue.

BELMONT MOSAIC

WHAT IS BELMONT LIKE NOW:

The following perspectives on Belmont were identified at the first session on Friday evening.

- Divided
- Town in trouble
- Great place to grow up
- Growing/growth
- Lack of youth recreational facilities
- Overcrowded schools
- Lacks an industrial base
- Needs a plan for residential growth
- Belmont has supportive people
- There is a good spirit of volunteerism
- There is the image that the things that should be done can't be done
- There is a lack of participation and communication .
- There are a lot of different opinions
- Belmont has huge potential
- There is a diversity of people
- There are a lot of personal (individual) agendas
- Lack of community wide activities
- Growing from rural to urban
- There are a lot of self employed citizens
- There is a lack of leadership
- There is a lack of common goals
- There is warm congeniality between the churches
- Undeveloped infrastructure
- Belmont is a frustrating place to live
- There is a great group of kids in Belmont
- Great teachers
- Great parents
- Good community support for the Fire Department
- Youth sports has great support
- Lots of older folk
- The citizens have pride in the community
- Belmont is quiet but never dull
- Nice "Old Home Day"
- Viewed as an expensive place to live
- There is a core group of active people
- Belmont has a great location
- Lots of talk but little action
- A safe place to work and live
- More programs like D.A.R.E etc. are needed
- Belmont does not have a community beach
- People are unaware of the natural resources
- The people care about the community and each other

WHAT DO WE WANT BELMONT TO BE LIKE IN THE FUTURE:

After describing how Belmont is presently perceived the group then shared what their vision was for the community.

- That Belmont have a new High School
- Stronger local government with new people
- Use the old mill
- An expanded industrial base
- A better image especially by other communities
- More help for the elderly
- A new police facility
- More community awareness and vision
- Better communication and understanding
- More room in all the schools
- Kindergarten
- Belmont should be a good example for others
- A face lift for the town hall
- A town paper to promote better communication
- Pride in the visual appearance of the town
- Use tourism to help the town economically
- Revise the tax structure
- Increase the involvement of youth in the community
- Continued support for youth education
- Stronger primary education
- Increase personal tolerance
- A face lift for the entire Main Street
- Revisit the Profile in three years
- Preserve open space/agricultural land coupled with development
- The town in a comfortable financial position
- Regulate individual dumps and debris on peoples property
- Transfer station
- Recycle
- Assess towns needs and how to achieve them financially
- Encourage public employees to live in town
- More youth involved in Civic Profile
- The town have its own juvenile officer
- Better qualitative and quantitative media coverage
- Better peer outreach in the school
- Better water quality downtown
- Study development and its impact on the town
- Better system to trace and follow up on lost animals
- Determine big city facilities (development) versus rural character

THE TEN COMPONENTS

Friday evening, after developing the mosaic for Belmont, the large group broke down into ten smaller groups to address the ten components to successful community. What follows is a report of the findings of those ten work groups.

COMMUNITY INFORMATION SHARING

HOW ARE WE DOING NOW?

- We need leadership
- We are not communicating well
- Professionals are being forced out because of conflict of interest
- Not a lot of community support

WHAT SHOULD WE BE DOING IN THE FUTURE?'

- There should be a "fact sheet" about Belmont available at the town hall
- Belmont should have a welcome wagon
- There should be an effort to section the town into neighborhoods and make contact in those neighborhoods

GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

HOW ARE WE DOING NOW?

- Presently there are too few people involved in government and there is low meeting turnout
- The meeting facilities for the selectmen is too small
- There is a lack of communication presently with residents
- Belmont has quality town employees

WHAT SHOULD WE BE DOING IN THE FUTURE?'

- We should establish goals and objectives for the future
- There should be accountability for elected officials
- Establish policy for the future
- Better communication and information exchange with residents
- Annual "progress reports" from the government to the towns people

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

HOW ARE WE DOING NOW?

- People do not understand how time consuming an office may be, this reduces the pool of available leaders
- Examples of present leadership/volunteers work: fire station, ball field, elementary school playground, 4-H and fair grounds, all youth groups, churches cooperating, food bank, Senior Citizens group and Old Home Day
- Government is improving in sharing "turf"
- All real training is "on the job" training
- People expect results but there is a conflict between fiscal and physical demands which reduces the ability to reach long term goals
- Risk taking can be rewarding when you use hard work and preparation to have things go the way you want them to go at a cost to ones personal family life, ones employment and at a cost to ones health

WHAT WOULD WE LIKE TO SEE IN THE FUTURE?

- Actively encourage people to attend and get involved with town government
- All three sectors (public, private and non-profit) should have results oriented plans which should be considered if possible
- Hope that qualified people will take the risks for the good of the town
- Leaders in all three sectors need a flexible agenda which will allow them to accomplish their long term goals which will benefit the town
- People need to improve in getting along and working together on common goals
- We need to inform people about how town government functions and get people reacquainted with town government and with Belmont's potential

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

HOW ARE WE DOING NOW?

- This forum this weekend
- Concern for Belmont pride (people from Belmont are put down by others) low self-esteem, outsiders think this is a low-income town
- Volunteer effort (helping the needy, helping the fire department, will to defend Belmont)

WHAT WE WOULD LIKE TO SEE IN THE FUTURE?

- Need to attract industrial base
- More information being distributed by the town (town business, town newsletter or some other method to get information out, town paper)
- Coordinated networking system
- Resource center to tap volunteers and business

VOLUNTEERISM PHILANTHROPY

HOW ARE WE DOING NOW?

- Fire station (volunteer spirit of people - volunteer fire fighters)
- Old home day (forum for citizens to gather for activities)
- Core of people who serve
- Active baseball and scouting organization involving adults and children
- Business support of education

WHAT WE WOULD LIKE TO SEE IN THE FUTURE?

- Communication
- Adopt-a-Program (using themes to encourage households, group, individuals to volunteer to a given project i.e., family pick up of trash on a road)
- Industrial/educational coop to be further encouraged and recognized
- Talent search committee
- System developed to record/report/monitor participating volunteers noting projects
- Town newsletter/quarterly
- Recognition for volunteers (awards, recognition at town meetings, old home day, etc.)
- Recognition of donations, contributions, projects completed

VISION AND PRIDE

WHAT ARE WE DOING NOW?

- Lack of communication between residents and government
- Our leadership now is good--but we should see more faces
- Need of goal planning for all facilities needed in community
- Not enough youth involvement in town meetings, historic classes on what Belmont used to be

WHAT WE WOULD LIKE TO SEE IN THE FUTURE?

- A town paper/newsletter would possibly increase our involvement
- Possibly a clean-up-day for our town
- In need of an industrial base

CAPACITY FOR COOPERATION AND CONSENSUS BUILDING

WHAT ARE WE DOING NOW?

- Work being done on the school issue
- Trying to address the problem with meetings
- Good fire department
- Central location

WHAT WE WOULD LIKE TO SEE IN THE FUTURE?

- Industrial incentive
- Plan growth
- Stronger leadership to take action
- Work for the good of the community and work together
- School education

INTERGROUP RELATION

WHAT ARE WE DOING NOW?

- Apathy
- Lack of community leadership
- Wrong information causes problems
- Lack of proper future planning

WHAT WE WOULD LIKE TO SEE IN THE FUTURE?

- To hire people who have management skills and know what they are doing (town management)
- Better communication (news coverage (positive))
- Meetings to part-time residents

REGIONAL COOPERATION

WHAT ARE WE DOING NOW?

- Only modest intercommunity/interregional cooperation at best. Most efforts at town level only
- There is an attitude that does not foster cooperation beyond community level
- Some efforts are working; regional fire service, waste management, interaction with Lakes Region Planning Commission, lakefront sewer system, cooperative education system

WHAT WE WOULD LIKE TO SEE IN THE FUTURE?

- Need for better communication & cooperation between towns and regions especially to address youth problems (drugs, alcohol) economic development, recycling, dog track and Rte. 106 development and youth endeavors
- Need for regional youth recreational opportunities due to lack of local facilities
- Cooperation can be a two edge sword, sometimes beneficial, sometimes not. Need to study appropriateness and make a commitment to long term cooperation

CIVIC EDUCATION

WHAT ARE WE DOING NOW?

- Uninformed poor public attendance
- Uncoordinated but diversified school activities
- Interactive church communities
- Positive interactions of schools, fire department and police department
- Lack of value based civic leadership
- Active volunteer community organizations

WHAT WE WOULD LIKE TO DO IN THE FUTURE?

- Economic development initiative
- Govern in public interest not self interest w/shared visions, values and goals
- Improve town communication/understanding/participation and recognize contribution and support
- Improve damage - beautification
- Coordinated effort for civic education in schools

RECOMMENDATIONS

KEY ISSUES:

After reviewing the ten components of the Civic Profile, the participants came to consensus on the KEY ISSUES that exist in Belmont. The six KEY ISSUES identified by the group were: Image Pride Values, Economic Development, Communication, Leadership, Citizen Participation and Youth Opportunities/Education. The group then divided into nine small groups to discuss the KEY ISSUES and their work produced the following results.

- I. IMAGE/PRIDE/VALUES.....Action Step Coordinator
Bill Jacques/Ken Knowlton

Critical Steps To Implementation

- Self image/esteem (no neg) respect
- Community interaction
- Positive publicity/P.R. person
- Physical image
- Coffee shop
- Concerts
- Community center
- Age Blend
- Work with town officials

Resources Needed

- Money/grants
- Motivation/people/time
- Notification/press
- Planning ahead
- Outside resources (state, UNH, Government)
- Representative town government/5 selectmen by district

Principal Leadership

- Enthusiasm
- Educated
- Respect of people
- Positive attitude
- Desire/motivation
- Good listener
- Non judgement
- Good role model

Potential Obstacles

- Community apathy/negativity
- Lack of reward
- Lack of resources

- Attitude to work for the common good
- Lack of information

Timeline

- Self image from the start
- Community interaction (from start 5-10 years)
- Positive publicity (p.r. person within a year)
- Physical image

II. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.....Action Step Coordinator
John Thomas

Critical Steps to Implementation

- A plan with goals which we want to reach
- Implementation following a plan
- Assess what we don't have
- Expansion/retention of present businesses

Resources Needed

- Land - finances available services (water, power, sewer, etc.) human resources with coordination
- Input from existing businesses/industry to identify their needs
- Networking and communication with outside assistance so that we know what is available under the present structure
- Need to know what other towns are offering interested businesses and who we are competing with
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Principal leadership

- Need local, active economic council with a head leader
- Representation from business and youth/general community
- Cost/share needs to be looked at
- Need to lobby
- Need to be involved with Lakes Region Economic Commission
- Present & future political leaders need to be involved

Potential Obstacles

- Be sure we know what we have to offer
- Understanding of magnitude of job
- Planning board needs to understand economic development & feelings of community
- Cooperation between all the boards
- Elected officials avail themselves of state training programs
- Need vehicle for businesses to come to town with information
- Resolve problem with present businesses before bringing in new businesses
- Accurate commitment from state
- Political mind-set of community
- Adequate power supply
- NH tax base

Timeline

- Issues need to be addressed with timelines set which are progressive
- Develop economic council with present available resources
- Zoning and Planning Boards need to aggressively work together now for road map, and obtain positive mind-set
- Needs to be a forum to look at immediate results

Critical Steps To Implementation

- Newsletter/media
- Organizing self directed project management team

Resources Needed

- Money/sponsors/donations/grant writers
- Volunteers
- Equipment/supply/mail
- Post office

Principal Leadership

- Open to all

Potential Obstacles

- Money
- Commitment
- Post Office

Timeline

- Town meeting or election day
- Quarterly newsletter will be out
- Meeting whenever we need them in the month
- First meeting January 30th at 6:30 in the computer room

Critical Steps To Implementation

- Create a study committee to study future government Forum and needs
- All government meetings minutes kept in a way so all can be informed by separate clerk
- Promote leadership in the youth
- Continue to train our leaders
- Steering committee should report this Civic Profile to the whole town

Resources Needed

- Volunteers
- Budget for study committee
- Recording clerk for minutes
- A warrant article to create and fund a study committee

Principal Leadership

- Steering committee
- The board of selectmen
- People here today

Potential Obstacles

- Lack of funds
- Reluctance to change
- Refusal to undergo training
- Inferior facilities
- Lack of communication

Timeline

- Appoint a study committee by this year's town meeting
- A 5 year plan to fix up town buildings
- Change minutes system by April 1, 1995
- Report on the training system by 1996 town meeting
- Study committee
- Steering committee report on Civic Profile at this years town meeting

Critical Steps To Implementation

- Evolving citizens
- Getting the community to feel good about projects
- Committee to recruit new faces
- Starting one project at a time
- Coming together with new ideas

Resources Needed

- Organizations/business involved
- Newcomers fact sheet
- Dedication
- Equipment
- More pot luck dinners/meetings like this one

Principal Leadership

- Community leaders attending meetings
- Coordinators
- Volunteers
- Non-biased leaders, positive attitudes
- Respect for others opinions

Potential Obstacles

- Cost factors
- Apathy
- Not enough volunteers
- Lack of interest

Timeline

- Newspaper - organized first distribution at town meetings
- Database sheet (design, publicize, distribution)
- Fact sheet (community volunteers, data, be distributed)

VI. YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES/EDUCATION.....Action Step Coordinator
Bob Reed/Rebecca Rinkhaus

Critical Steps to Implementation

- Development of existing resources
- Planning
- Study of mill
- Cooperation between school and community
- Recreation commission/director

Resources Needed

- Money
- School facilities
- Community involvement/people power
- Support of town fathers (selectmen)

Principal Leadership

- School board
- Selectmen
- Recreation director
- Business community
- Legislative representatives
- School staff

Potential Obstacles

- Lack of money
- Lack of facilities
- Lack of planning
- Lack of support

Timeline

- Pass school
- Establish a core group
- Approach leadership
- Research the development potential of existing resources (i.e., mill, river, lake, Seavey land)
- Establish survey of what we have and want
- Establish plan
- Present to town
- Hire director
- Write grants - get grants, complete plan

APPENDIX

PARTICIPANT LIST

Bob Atherton	Doralyn M. Harper	Sandra St. Lawrence
Melissa Atherton	Al Hart	Gerd Stewart
Randy Bell	Bill Jacques	Kevin Sturgeon
Claire Bickford	Steve Jesseman	Melissa Sweeney
Sherry Bickford-O'Connell	Ken Knowlton	John Thomas
Richard Bilodeau	Karen Kurz	John Udall
Robin M. Cannon	Robert Lemay	Mike Vincent
Rich Casarano	Brenda Long	Brian Watterson
Patricia Crockett	Richard Long	Frederick Welch
Kenneth Dehart	Heidi Loring	Fred Wheeler
Mary Lou Cronin	Sue Macrae	Nikki Wheeler
George Condodemetraky	Alan Macrae	Thomas White
Susan Condodemetraky	Michael P. McCarty	
Kenneth Dehart	Mark Mooney	
Jack Donovan	Ruth Mooney	
Vickie Donovan	Gloria Moulton	
Kathleen Dube	Pat Normindin	
Cristine Dungleman	Bob Normindin	
Polly Eastman	Dorothy Pearl	
Ken Ellis	Rodney Pearl	
Cheryl Ellis	Bob Reed	
Marshall Ford	Joe Rhodes	
Richard Fournier	Sue Rhodes	
Steve Fournia	Leslie Roberts	
Senator Gorden	Sue Roberts	

FACILITATOR LIST

Christine Fitzlag	Joanne Foote	Bill Jacques
Joshua Mazzei	Rebecca Rinkaus	
Damian Rudzinski	Maria Spirdakis	

STEERING COMMITTEE

Cathy Sweeney	Robert Morrill	Brian Watterson
Robert Atherton	Gloria Moulton	Harold Watts, Sr.
Roberta Bilodeau	Robert Reed	
Richard Casarano	Leslie Roberts	
Kenneth Knowlton	Suzanne Roberts	

EXTENSION STAFF

Jerry Howe	Ralph Winslow	
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