Guides to Our Approach

The Central Minnesota Regional Planning Project is a Community-Driven, University-Assisted, Partnership Pursuing E^2: Economic and Environmental Vitality …

… became the tag line to help those who were to be engaged, or who would hear about the work, understand that the project was seeking a balanced approach – to balance and include both economic and environmental vitality.

The Mission was also a way to help others understand the planning work:

The Central Minnesota Sustainable Development Mission is to create a community-driven, university-assisted, partnership around planning sustainable regions that will integrate the disciplines of Housing, Transportation, Natural Environment (Land Use) and Economic Development, with viable strategies through HIGHLY involved civic engagement.

From the initial stages of writing the proposal, the Notice of Funding Available (NOFA) required that all applicants align their work with the HUD/EPA/DOT Livability Principles and Mandatory Outcomes:

HUD/EPA/DOT Six Livable Principles
1. Provide more transportation choices (HLP1).
2. Promote equitable, affordable housing (HLP2).
3. Enhance economic competitiveness (HLP3).
4. Support existing communities (HLP4).
5. Coordinate policies and leverage investments (HLP5).
6. Value communities and neighborhoods (HLP6).

HUD/EPA/DOT Mandatory Outcomes

A1. Creation of shared elements in regional transportation, housing, water and air quality plans tied to local comprehensive land use and capital investment plans.

A2. Aligned federal planning and investment resources that mirror the local and regional strategies for achieving sustainable communities.

A3. Increased participation and decision-making in developing and implementing a long-range vision for the region by populations traditionally marginalized in public planning processes.

A4. Reduced social and economic disparities for the low-income and communities of color within the targeted area.

A5. Decrease in per capita Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) and

transportations-related emissions for the region.

A6. Decrease in overall combined housing and transportation costs per household.

A7. Increase in the share of residential and commercial construction on underutilized infill development sites that encourage revitalization, while minimizing displacement in neighborhoods with significant disadvantaged populations.

A8. Increase proportion of low and very low-income households within a 30-minute transit commute of major employment

centers in urban, suburban, and rural settings.

B(5) Increased proportion of affordable housing units located close to walking trails, parks, green space, and vital amenities such as hospitals and schools.

B(8) Decrease in the rate of conversion of underdeveloped land into utilization across the region.

B(11) Increased proportion of the local population adequately prepared to participate in the core economic growth sectors of the region.

We also crafted regional guiding principles as part of the grant application process to align the work with the desires and wishes of the five-county region:

Region's Guiding Principles

1. Think regionally and inclusively (RGP1).
2. Consolidation of effective data (RGP2).
3. Capitalize on assets, current plans and work in progress (RGP3).
4. Balance redevelopment / development preservation opportunities through effective land-use planning (RGP4).
5. Consider regionalization of services (BMPs or our region, drive opportunities) (RGP5).
6. Connect more people to well-paid jobs (RGP6).
7. Connect active living opportunities to the region (RGP7).
8. Connect broadband technology to entire region (RGP8).

Valued Resources

We also understood that the work would not be easy. The nation, even the state, was very divided on a number of issues. Engaging in civil discussion was going to be essential to crafting a well-vetted plan. We needed all perspectives and opinions – but we also needed to gather these in a way that honored everyone's contribution. The following were valued resources in helping us create a safe place for dialogue.

Art of Hosting. Four members of the core team participated in "The Art of Hosting" training supported by the Bush Foundation. In their written materials, the Art of Hosting is characterized as a "*training unlike any training program you've ever experienced. It is a response to a world that is becoming increasingly complex and fragmented, where*

solutions and innovations lie not in one leader or one viewpoint but in the bigger picture of collective intelligence. [It is designed] to enhance the way you invite, design, open and old inspired and meaningful conversations in your work, communities and life. You will:

- *Learn valuable approaches and tools for engaging community stakeholders in meaningful conversations.*

- *Develop a shared understanding of collaboration and how to nurture ongoing conversation*

- *Explore and identify new strategies and approaches for furthering your work in communities and systems.*

- *Use art, music, movement and poetry to work creatively and imaginatively with each other on issues that matter to all of us in our communities."*[1]

INCOMMONS. InCommons was used later in the project to help host online conversations. On it's home page, InCommons was described as *"a new and growing community-based initiative that connects people – face-to-face and online – so they can find and share credible tools, knowledge and resources to solve problems. It's based on the idea that lessons learned in one community become starting points for communities and individuals addressing similar issues in other towns and cities in the region. InCommons hopes to bring this idea to life through community gatherings and online share of sources and solutions."*[2]

Speak Your Peace! Videos and posters from the Duluth Superior Area Community Foundation's project "Speak Your Peace!" were used to help establish the norm for positive dialogue. Speak Your Peace*! "is not a campaign to end disagreements. Rather it is a campaign to improve communication by reminding ourselves of the basic principles of respect!"* [3]	

Nominal Process & Group Expectations. PowerPoint slides were used to also establish the process to be used for discussion. They reminded the participants, "Use Go-Arounds; Everyone has a chance to speak once before someone speaks twice; respect other's contributions; no side conversations." At the last workgroup session,

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[1] Art of Hosing brochure. March 21-23, 2012. http://www.artofhosting.org/home/
[2] About InCommons. Retrieved August 2, 2012 from http://www.incommons.org/about
[3] Speak Your Peace! Retrieved August 2, 2012 from http://www.dsaspeakyourpeace.org/index.html

92% of the participants rated the use of the nominal process as effective. There was only one written comment that, "the nominal process broke down quite a bit."

Minnesota Public Radio's (MPR) Ground Level. MPR became a partner in the project in early 2012. As stated on it's website, œMPR News is following the effort through our Ground Level project, using the Ground Level Blog as a means to encourage central Minnesota residents to join the conversation about the project. This page serves as an entry point for residents to get involved."[4] The conversation regarding economic engines was very successful with more than 200 unique visitors œwatched" some portion of the online dialogue; there were 32 who posted. The Affordable Housing conversation included posts for 19 individuals. The online discussions, combined, engaged 19 community members for the first time in the community dialogue about the future for central Minnesota.

BaseCamp.com The software, Basecamp.com, was intended to be used for consortium conversations and posting of large documents. It became a useful tool for storing large documents. However, we learned that sending individualized e-mail messages was the most effective strategy for sending out invitations to workgroup and consortium events.

The Advisory Board

The job of the Advisory Board is to represent the Consortium to ensure that:

1. Consultants are meeting expectations to build consensus through transparent and accurate information.

2. Ensure that the step-by-step process is honored.

3. R5DC expends funds per the HUD agreement.

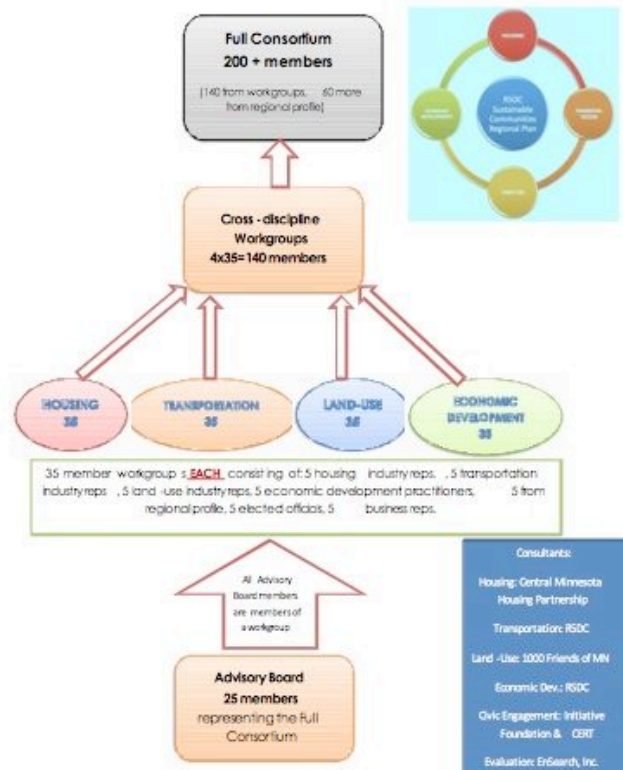4. Provide recommendations to maintain the timeline.

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[4] Central Minnesota 2035. Retrieved August 2, 2012 from
http://minnesota.publicradio.org/projects/2012/03/resilience/

5. Review communications plan and evaluate effectiveness.

6. Review progress of work plan outcomes and measurable.

7. Problem solve when necessary. Make recommendations to the Commission if necessary.

8. Ideas are shared openly and respectfully. (Ideas that compromise/violate the HUD agreement, work plan and intended outcomes will not be considered).

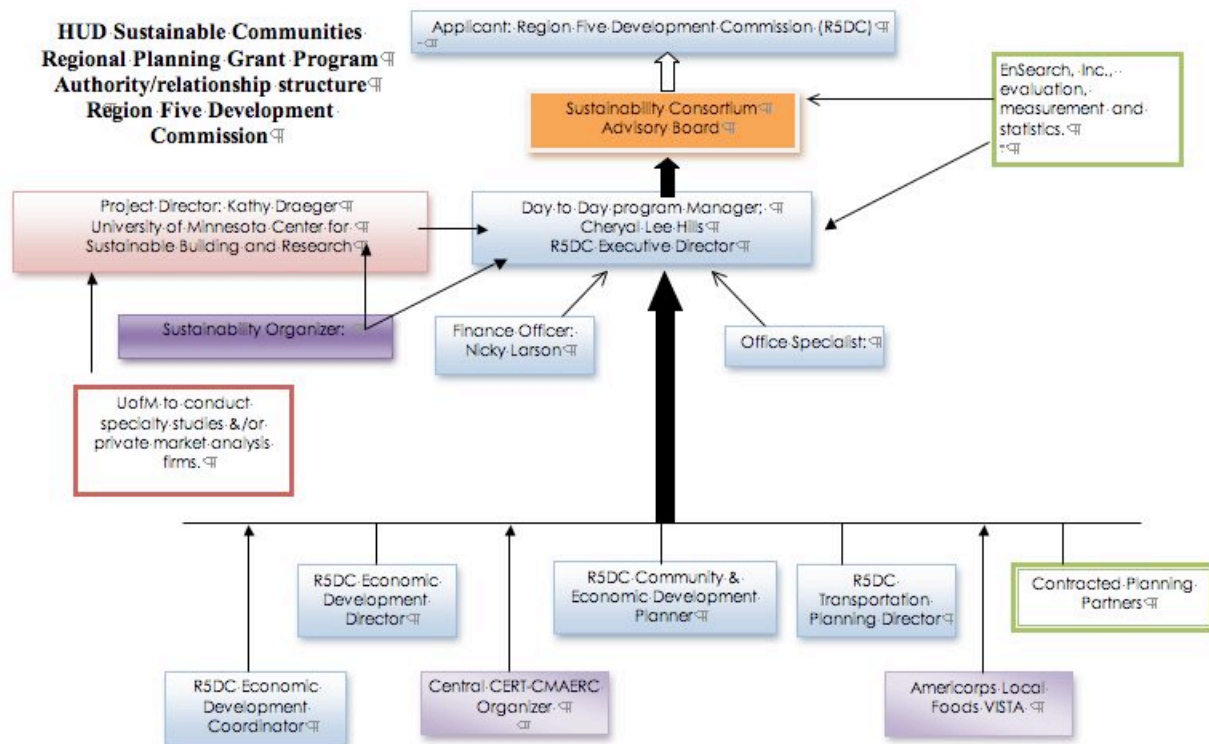9. Recommendations are made to the Commission through a collaborative process.

The relationships and authority lines for the Consultants, Advisory Board, and Consortium were established in the grant-writing phase.

The final authority for approval of the plan was to be the Region Five Development Commission. The authority and relationship structure presented at the first advisory board meeting was drawn to show that the effort was to be community **driven** with support and assistance coming from the University of Minnesota's Center for Sustainable Building and Research.

The team of consultants and advisory board members were carefully chosen to bring a cross-section of perspectives and skills from the private, public, and non-profit sectors as well as expertise in the areas of land use, economic development, transportation and housing.

AGENCY	INDIVIDUAL	Discipline
Region Five Development Commission	Cheryal Lee Hills	Regional Unit of Government
R5DC	Joe Schulte	Economic Development
R5DC	Jake Huebsch	Transportation
R5DC	Tad Erickson	Land Use - Hazard Mitigation
R5DC	Anne Hanson/Judy Jones/Melissa Radermacher/Nicky Larson	Support team
Clean Energy Resource Teams	Angela Headlee	Civic Engagement consultant - Energy Non-profit
University Of Minnesota	Kathy Draeger/ Jean Coleman	Scenario & policy consultant - Higher Education
Central Minnesota Housing Partnership	Deanna Hemmesch	Housing consultant - Housing non-profit
EnSearch, Inc.	Stacey Hueftle Stockdill	Evaluation consultant, statistics company
Envision Minnesota	Phil Hunsicker	Environmental consultant, land use non-profit
Initiative Foundation	Don Hickman, Dan Frank	Civic Engagement consultant, Foundation
USDA	Mike Monson/Tom Leech	Economic development - Energy, local foods
MnDOT	Steve Voss	Transportation
Crow Wing County Administrator	Tim Houle	Transportation – County government, HRA & TAC member
DEED	Joan Danielson/Connie Ireland	Economic Dev. – State Agency
Hunt Utilities Group	Bob McLean	Land Use –Private sector firm
Central Lakes College	Larry Lundblad	Economic Dev – Higher Education institution
SEH	Heidi Peper	Land Use – Private sector firm
Brainerd Housing Redevelopment Authority	Jennifer Bergman	Housing - non-profit
Rural Renewable Energy Alliance - RREAL	Jason Edens	Economic Dev. - Energy non profit, social justice agency
Resilient Living Council (Happy Dancing Turtle)	Lynn Hunt	Housing - Energy non profit, social justice agency
Community Education	Judy Jenson	Economic Development – Government sector
Todd County Public Health	Katherine Mackedanz	Economic Development – Government sector