

“Dashboard Will Help Track Sustainability Goals”

by Georgette Frazer

The Sustainable Marshfield Committee is welcoming ideas from community members on a new project, the Marshfield Sustainability Dashboard.

When the committee was formed two years ago by the city of Marshfield, it was charged with creating a plan to move our city toward sustainability. Not an easy task. First, we needed to define what sustainability meant to our community, next we evaluated our current situation and set some goals. Now, we wish to set up an assessment procedure to chart our progress toward those goals.

This is where the Sustainability Dashboard comes in. We'd like the community's input on it. It's a visual diagram that we'll use to "scan" our movement toward sustainability. The Dashboard Report will include this visual diagram as well as several supporting documents that will give more detail about the Dashboard's underlying indicators and measurements.

One way to think of sustainability is to focus on the community's assets, and how to preserve them for future generations. We want our children and grandchildren to have a quality of life that's similar (or perhaps better) than our own. There are three categories of community assets: (1) human assets (or human capital); (2) natural assets/capital; and (3) social assets/capital. Our proposed dashboard is intended to address the most meaningful and appropriate measurements in each of these areas.

As presented in the first draft of the dashboard, human capital includes these topic areas: (1) security; (2) basic needs; (3) opportunity and access (including education and transportation); (4) arts, culture and values. Natural capital is divided up into (1) Earth (which would include such areas as waste management); (2) air; (3) water; and (4) energy. Social capital is what "drives" our community: (1) individual action; (2) NGO -- nongovernmental (civic) -- organizations; and (3) government. A final category of indicators contain the areas where a number of community elements interact: (1) climate change; (2) economic development; and (3) wellness.

We'd like to have your opinion on whether we've covered the community's main preservation concerns with these topic headings. We also will be "drilling down" in the future to determine what measures will best represent each topic and to set reasonable goals for each measure, and want your ideas for those tasks, too.

We're just at the beginning of this project, but it's a good time to lend your voice. Please e-mail me at georgette@firstaffirmative.com if you have questions or comments about the Sustainability Dashboard, or come to one of our monthly meetings, held at 5 p.m. the second Tuesday of each month in the Executive Conference Room of City Hall.

Georgette Frazer is a member of the Sustainable Marshfield Committee.