

University of Wisconsin-Cooperative Extension
“Promoting Agriculture and Business Competitiveness and a Sustainable Environment”

INDICATORS OF COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY January 1998

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I. ECONOMY AND INDIVIDUALS:

A. Energy - *The following indicators illustrate the energy usage patterns of a community. Energy efficiency can have an effect on overall community sustainability.*

Energy use per capita

Energy expenditure as % of gross community product

Energy use of industry per capita

Energy consumption by industries in the community per person

Commercial energy consumption per year

Electricity and natural gas use per person per year

Gasoline consumption per capita versus state average

Does the community consume a disproportionate amount of gasoline

Home heating fuel source

What are the major types of fuel sources and are they sustainable

Energy conservation programs *¹

Energy used from renewable sources

Energy use 1995 versus 1970

Change in energy usage

B. Health - *The following indicators illustrate the status of community health, the level of access to adequate health care by individuals in the community, and the ability to recognize external and internal pressures on sustainability that are manifested as health issues.*

Population with access to primary health care by diversity

Access to initial person who can identify health problems

Hospitals doing epidemiological studies *

Number of hospitals that are looking at human effects of pollution

Health Department ability to do epidemiological studies

Community based epidemiological studies

Mortality rate by neighborhood

High risk neighborhoods

Population living in industrial areas by diversity

C. Housing - *The following indicators illustrate the accessibility of housing for a diverse population in the community. Adequate and affordable housing is an indicators of social and economic stability.*

Yearly % increase in number of dwelling units

Population affording median home sale price

Median rent as % of per capita income

Occupancy rate of housing units

Home ownership rate

Rate of real estate development in community

¹ * = Indicators of a community's organizational capacity to achieve sustainability
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Is development rate outstripping the community's ability to manage growth

Population affording median rental units

Housing set aside for low-to-moderate income

Community support for low-income houses

Distribution of affordable housing throughout community

Is the affordable housing concentrated in a certain area

Homeless people per capita

People using homeless shelters in a year / homeless in the community

Need for shelters

Homeless shelters in community

Access to shelters

Waiting time for subsidized housing

Access to affordable housing

Number of rehabilitated affordable housing units

Dwellings in need of major repair

Longevity of housing resources

D. Individual Wealth- *The following indicators illustrate the effect of comparative levels of wealth, and disparities in the distribution of wealth within the community. Broad disparities in individual wealth can undermine consensus building capabilities because all individuals in the community are not represented in the community's decision making processes.*

Median per capita income

Per capita gross community product vs state average

How wealthy is the community compared with the state

Range of income by diversity (ethnic and gender)

Difference between the incomes of people in the community

Income distribution by diversity (ethnic and gender)

Population with income >125% poverty level

Real Cost of living

Cost of living derived from generic prices

Hours employment required to support basic needs

Average time it takes to cover cost of living in community

Average household savings

Effective buying income per capita (cost of living versus income)

Community's ability to live on average income

E. Population -*The following indicators of demographic trends illustrate community commitment and ability to respond to the effects of changing population. Is there sufficient diversity of age, race and culture in the community to allow a community to react effectively to external and internal forces by drawing on a broad human resource base to plan for future change.*

Median Age 1990 vs 1970

Is the population distribution changing

Age distribution and diversity in community

How is the population changing

Trends in aging population

Is the population getting older or younger

Population flux

Are people coming and going from community (positive or negative migration)

Ethnic diversity of the population and distribution by gender and age

Crime rate per capita

Unemployment rate 1970 vs 1995

Real unemployment (people out of work, less reported unemployment)

Size of non-working force

Unemployment rate by diversity (ethnic and gender)

Differences between employment opportunities by ethnicity and gender

F. Transportation- *The following indicators illustrate the impact that transportation related issues can have upon the quality of life, economy and environment.*

Communities served by public transportation

Number of communities in community accessible through the present public transportation system

Commuters using public transportation

Carpooling rate

Percentage of population carpooling instead of driving alone

Businesses cooperating with Park-Ride program

Number of businesses that support transportation conservation programs

Public expenditure on public transit

Street miles with designated bike routes

Percentage of streets that support alternative forms of transportation

Population within 50 miles of daily air passenger service

Weekday commercial flights in and out of regional airport

Number of flights available to people in community

Community population with 5 minute commute of shopping center

Percentage of the population that can easily get to shopping

II. BUSINESS:

A. Business Diversity - *These indicators illustrate how well balanced the business community is, the variety of sizes and kinds of businesses, and growth rates in the business community proportional to the growth rate of the population.*

Different types of businesses and or industries

Breadth of economic base.

Employment by the top 5 employers (% of population)

Is the community driven by one industry.

Employers in different size categories by employees

Diversity of kind and size of businesses

Rate and types of job growth vs community population

Pressures on job market, index of job placement relative to community

Changes in employment and businesses moving into the community

Wages paid in community also spent in community

Wages spent outside community

Number of people who work, shop, and live in community

Size of community's residents and working population

Residents' retail purchases made locally

Gender and ethnic diversity in business community 1970 vs 1995

Net job growth by diversity of types of jobs

Is business growing and what types of business are causing growth

Prevailing real wage rate for full time employees in community 1970 vs 1995

B. Business Growth - *These indicators illustrate if the business community is growing in way that is consistent with overall community goals and community trends*

Rate of economic development occurring in community

Number of business permits issued per year

Small Business Startups per 1000 population

Office vacancy rate

Amount of space available for growth.

Value of residential and business properties / gross state product

Property value with relation to state income.

Residential property value per capita

Average value of housing in community

Business loans in low & high income areas

Equity in business growth

Products and services local businesses buy from local business

Local businesses interdependence

Square feet of building space reused versus new construction

Recycling of space versus new development

Manufacturing building permits issued per capita versus state average

Retail building permits issued per capita versus state average

Service building permits issued per capita versus state average

C. Stability of Businesses - *These indicators illustrate if the business sector of the community supports sustainable growth.*

Public funding for infrastructure maintenance and investment

Community government dedication to infrastructure development

Commercial and residential property tax base versus state average

Retail sales per capita 1970 vs 1995

Manufacturing output sales per capita 1970 vs 1995

Service output sales per capita 1970 vs 1995

Net change in employment in year vs state average

How is the community's workforce changing

D. Tourism - *These indicators illustrate trends in the tourism sector of the economy and show the income from tourism balanced against income from other sources as a measure of business diversity.*

Annual visitors to community

Income from tourism per capita

Number of requests for visitor information and change in the rate of requests

Growth of tourism, seasonality of tourism

Change in tourism attractions

Are tourism resources being lost or gained

Population employed by recreation and travel industry full time

Seasonal employment in tourism industry

Annual pay full time travel workers versus other industries in the community

Tourism Bureau *

Is tourism actively promoted

III. AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES:

A. Farming- *These indicators illustrate the patterns of agriculture within the community and measure the level of diversity of the farming community.*

Farms and acres of farm land

Farms / Cows 1970 vs 1995

Changes in livestock distribution over time

Gallons milk produced 1970 vs 1995

Change in milk production in the community in the past 25 years

Acres of active agricultural land

Per capita ratio agricultural land versus total land 1970 and 1995

Change in proportion of land used for agriculture

Agriculture land used for agriculture 1970 vs 1995

Top 3 crops in community 1970 vs 1995

Community acreage in urban land use

Acres in conservative tillage

Amount of agriculture land taken out of production

Soil loss per year 1970 vs 1995

Soil erosion rates per acre of crop land

Priority watershed programs *

Number of programs that monitor or protect the watershed in community

B. Forests- *These indicators illustrate the sustainability of community forest lands and the local forestry industry.*

Acres of active forests

Volume of saw log harvest 1970 vs 1995

Volume of the secondary timber harvest 1970 vs 1995

Wood processing volume vs saw timber harvest

Amount of harvest processed in the community

Forest lands used for forestry 1970 vs 1995

Forest acreage damaged by fire 1970 vs 1995

Wood lot Management Programs *

Number of programs that promote sustainable forest utilization

C. Pest management - *These indicators illustrate the potential for ecological damage from improper pesticide use and disposal.*

Consumption of pesticides per acre

Integrated pest management training and programs *

Acreage damaged by pests 1970 vs 1995

Agricultural chemical collection sites *

Capacity for proper disposal of agricultural chemicals

IV. EDUCATION:

A. Primary and Secondary Education (K-12) - *These indicators illustrate how well the education system prepares youth to participate successfully in our society.*

Schools that pass local building, fire and health standards

Upkeep of educational facilities

Operating expenditure per student vs state average per student

Diversity of teaching staff (including post-secondary schools)

Minority and gender representation in the teaching field

Average years of school completed by diversity

Tuition net cost as a percent of disposable income

School tax by adults / income vs state average

Cost of primary education to adults in the community

English Speaking graduates from non-English speaking households

Efficacy of the community's education of non-English speaking students

Average teacher salary versus state average

Competitiveness of salaries for teachers

Student / teacher ratio

Degree of individual attention given to students

School dropout rate by diversity

Students earning GED equivalents

Schools in community offering community-based learning and service

Schools in community with work force training programs

Environmental education and nature classes in the schools *

B. Post-Secondary Education - *These indicators illustrate community flexibility in preparing a person to successfully pursue a profession.*

Students going on to pursue post secondary education

Training institutions providing technical training for students

Employers participating in apprenticeship programs *

Service organizations that support programs for schools

Organizations developing volunteerism in youth

Taxes invested in technical education

Affordability of post-secondary education

Community members enrolled in higher education

C. Adult Education- *These indicators illustrate whether adults have adequate opportunity to re-educate themselves in response to community changes.*

Adult population in community attended the community's school system

Adult environmental education classes *

Adult literacy rate

Adult population involved in continued learning

Persons being retrained

Ability to respond to changing job market

Libraries in county

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Community opportunities for personal education

Library usage rates by age distribution and diversity

Is library usage consistent with the population of the community

Libraries on-line vs total libraries in community

Community access to new ideas and technologies

D. Cultural Education- *These indicators illustrate community support for cultural and aesthetic enrichments that improve the quality of life for community members .*

Geographic, historical, or cultural sites in community

Acknowledgment of community heritage

Population participation in cultural exchanges

Publicly sponsored art programs per year

Art shows and performances in public parks

Public nature programs per year*

Community sponsored recreational activities

V. ENVIRONMENT:

The following indicators illustrate the quality of the environment in the community and can help to identify potential threats to health, natural resources and biodiversity.

A. Air Quality

Air particulate matter exceedences

Does the community have air particulate matter above the recommended amount

Good air quality days per year

Ozone alert days per year

CO2 emissions as % of 1990 emissions

B. Land Use and Biodiversity

Wildlife habitat restoration programs *

Rare species identified in community

Wildlife endangered

Population perceiving pollution as a priority

Metro area that is open space

Residences per acre in community 1970 vs 1995

Change in the residential density

Suburban residences per acre in community

Distribution of acres of land per capita for different land uses

Diversity of land use in the community by distribution

Rate of development occurring within urban area

Miles of adopted highway and litter bags collected per mile*

Acres multipurpose land available for recreation

Acres of wilderness versus acres of public land

Acres parks and protected land per capita

Recreational trail miles

Public park acreage per 1000 population

Acres of wetlands 1970 vs 1995

C. Water Resources

Gallons of water used daily per capita

Number of citizens with water below standards

Drinking water supplies abandoned

Wells showing groundwater contamination

Fish species with consumption restricted

High risk population for fish consumption

Does the community have a population risk of eating polluted fish

Miles of rivers and streams not meeting water standards

Beach closings per year

Fishable, swimmable miles of river, acres of lakes

D. Management of Societal Wastes

Septic tanks per capita unsewered

How many people does each septic tank serve

Underground fuel tanks

Toxic chemicals released or transferred

Toxic chemicals released from local activities

Integrated solid waste management programs *

Composting sites

Tons solid waste per capita

Tons Recycled materials per capita

Waste landfilled versus amount recycled

Recovery rate of recycled materials

Municipal recycling programs*

Commercial recycling programs *

Businesses cooperatives for recycling and waste disposal

Utilization of sewage sludge

Agriculture and household hazardous waste collection programs *

Hazardous waste sites cleaned or being cleaned

Environmental justice awareness programs *

Is the community aware of environmental racism and justice

E. Citizen Involvement *

Nature and environmental groups (student and adult)

4-H and FFA Groups

Snowmobile groups

Hunting clubs

Fishing clubs

Community garden programs

IV. GOVERNMENT:

A. Citizen Involvement * - *These indicators illustrate local government commitment to citizen participation, access to influence in the decision making of government bodies and continued learning by public officials.*

Open meetings per capita per year

Official announcements about local issues per capita

Public meetings available through public access TV

Multilingual access to government

Does the community support and provide information in a diversity of languages

Diversity of community government members versus diversity of community

Is the community government representative of the local population

Diversity of school board versus diversity of community

Voter registration rate

Registered votes by age distribution and diversity

Are the voting rates consistent with community age and ethnic diversity

Voter education programs

Does educate itself about voting and the election issues

Community associations and citizen groups per capita

Number of associations available for community involvement

Local chapters of state and national organizations

Number of chapters of larger citizen organizations present in the community

Consumer cooperatives per capita

Does the community support local producers

Community crime prevention groups

Are citizens involved in ensuring the safety of the community

B. Effectiveness of Public Services - *These indicators illustrate the how well community government provides basic services.*

City human services expenditures per capita

Goals and measures for government budget

Are there defined outcome measures for local budgets

Average Fire and EMS call response time

Community ability to cope with emergencies

Recent land use plan *

Zoning board meetings per year

Level of regulation of growth in community

Acres zoned for subdivision of community

Is level of subdivision in conflict with other land uses

Public, private projects for the public good 1995 vs 1970