

Carbon Reduction and Community Outreach

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Resilient Communities Project

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Introduction

Community outreach and engagement is vital for the success of any city's environmental mission. Establishing environmental efforts and activities that are community-driven will both help the City of Rosemount meet its environmental goals, and will boost civic pride and engagement that will make the efforts sustainable. Starting these outreach and engagement practices will help to foster strong relationships within the community, and can lead to long-term environmental leadership and stewardship among the citizens.

One thing that was clear from the interviews conducted at the United Methodist Church was that the citizens of Rosemount have the willingness and the capacity to implement meaningful changes in their lives, but they need outside sources for direction. Specific bridges our group found in these interviews were financial incentives for environmental actions, and a concern for future generations. The community outreach efforts described here will help to give that direction based on these bridges, and to engage a broad range of people across the community and across all levels of environmental interest.

Have A Booth At Events

Outreach Action:

Have an interactive booth at popular community events like Leprechaun Days, school events, or church festivals to raise awareness on both environmentally friendly lifestyle options, and what the City of Rosemount is already doing.

Rationale:

One of the items discovered in the interviews conducted was that some citizens do not know that Rosemount is a Star City, or a GreenStep City. Both of these of measures to be proud of, especially the Star City designation, and could be used to both build civic pride, and engage the public with the City's efforts. Going out to where people already are- at events like Leprechaun Days- will help to reach a larger audience in a fun and positive atmosphere with information about the two programs, and what citizens can do to become more green. Being in a populated location, with games or activities to draw people in, will help the outreach become more impactful and successful.

5 Step Plan

Step One: Have A Booth At Major Events

Think about which community events have the most people. If it is possible to have a booth at many different events throughout the year, try to visit as many as possible. Be intentional about trying to reach out to different types of groups to reach as much of the population as possible. This could be school events, local clubs, or library events.

Step Two: Make It A Game

Having a game or activity at the event draws people into the booth, but it is especially important to have it be directed at children. One of the main ways of involving parents is having the kids get involved- not only are the children becoming invested at the environment at a young age, they can encourage their parents to take action as well. Additionally, enticing kids to spend time in the

booth with force the parents to spend time as well. If you are visiting multiple events with similar audiences, think about switching up the games.

Step Three: Give Away Prizes

Even if they are inexpensive, physical takeaways will help community members remember what they learned at the booth. This could be reusable water bottles, or as small as refrigerator magnets. Having 'swag' is also another good way to attract people, especially parents, into the booth.

Step Four: Have Informational Pamphlets that are Relevant to the Event/ Audience

When people have been drawn into the booth, give them information on the programs. Our interviewees stated the main reasons for environmental action was financial incentives and concern for future generations, so include these things in your pitch or in the pamphlets! Consider having pamphlets aimed at the kids as well.

Step Five: Give Them A Goal

Give the adults a challenge, whether verbally or through the informational pamphlets, to become more green or be further engaged in the community's efforts. Don't let this booth be the only time they think about what they could be doing!

Additional Considerations:

As a bigger action, the City of Rosemount could consider sponsoring some of these events as a GreenStep City or as a Star City, in order raise more awareness.

Make Information More Understandable

Outreach Action:

Provide better ways for general population to understand the numbers behind all of facts of carbon reductions, or energy consumption that are being provided.

Rational:

One important way to provide better community outreach is to provide citizens with information that they can understand. It is not a difficult task to give residents, and or local business owners numbers about how much carbon dioxide was emitted by the city per year. The difficult part is getting people to understand what that means. Saying that there was an x% reduction in emissions would be a good start, but there should also be a larger picture to the information. Breaking down the information from how much CO₂ was emitted on a countrywide scale, statewide scale, and finally a city wide scale can help the citizens understand a bigger picture of how much they really contribute to the larger picture.

The same approach could be used for energy use within households, or businesses. People often do not know how much energy is in a kilowatt hour. People probably do not even know how many kilowatt hours of energy they use per month. They only know how much money they spend on electricity. People should become more aware of how much energy they use.

Three Step Plan

Step 1: Provide Semi-Annual reports (or e-newsletters).

Getting the information out to the public is important. If they see that the city is making strides on energy efficiency, or local programs, or even the fact that Rosemount is trying to become a more sustainable city, citizens will talk, and create discussion about sustainable initiatives within Rosemount. This would be a great place to talk about how much energy the city used over the past allotted time period since the last report. Information could be given about the average household consumption, and business consumption and one or two ways of reducing total kWh used, along with a link to either a website that you have

created, or that the local electricity provider uses (in your case Xcel). Xcel energy has a wonderful page on how to reduce energy consumption, and ways that you can reduce your overall footprint.

Step 2: Provide a Visual Display in Public

Providing a visual display of the current real time usage of electricity, water, garbage produced, CO2 emitted (or mitigated) on a screen in a public area for people to see goes a long way. The university implemented something like this in many of their buildings to show students how much energy is really being used to cool/heat/light buildings (information about this program can be found at UMN It All Adds Up). Although it does not immediately promote action, it makes people begin to think about the resources needed to provide the types of buildings that they have access to. This type of display is not limited to a graph/bar chart or resource consumption. This could be done with a variety of things, like putting in a cistern and collection “grey” water from the rooftop of a building, and then showing how that can be reused on the landscape. It can be difficult to quantify how much of a resource is being used until there is a visual explanation for someone.

Step 3: Promote Programs That Help Rosemount Reach Their End Goal

There are many programs that citizens could be involved in that would help offset their emissions. Xcel energy has a program called “Windsource” which allows customers to opt-in to getting some of the energy they use from renewable energy. It is a very easy process, and can be completed over the phone. Xcel energy lets customers purchase blocks of energy (by the 100kWh) that can help power your home, and offset some of your carbon footprint by using wind and or solar energy as a supplement. Xcel also says that you can make all of these beneficial changes to the environment for less than a price of 1 latte per month. Having the city work together with the utility company to make energy efficiency upgrades, and or promote sustainability could go a long way in educating, and providing benefits to the public.

https://www.xcelenergy.com/Energy_Solutions/Residential_Solutions/Renewable_Energy_Solutions/Windsource_for_Residences)

Host a 5k or Fun Run

Outreach Action:

Hosting a run through the city action both brings people, including families, together in the community, and can raise money for an environmental action the City has planned. Make sure to have your booth at the end to give environmental information out where the water/refreshments are.

Rationale:

One of the major items that we discovered from the interviews was how little information that the citizens knew about the sustainability programs such as GreenStep Cities and Star City Cities. Little did the interviewees know about the programs they had no idea that their own city was considered both a GreenStep City and Star City. Both of these programs are looked very highly upon in the sustainability world but we would like the average citizens of Rosemount to, as least be aware of these programs. One great way to bring awareness to these programs is to host a 5k run. Many organizations hold runs that bring awareness but as well an activity that many enjoy to do which is running. By holding this run each and every year will continue to raise awareness in the city of Rosemount.

Four Step Plan

Step One: Promote the 5k run/walk.

One way to make this 5k run both successful and educational is to promote the run to as many groups of people in the city of Rosemount. Being able to reach out and have schools, churches, and businesses will help spread the word out to the community.

Step Two: Have local sponsors such as community based businesses.

The city must look at local businesses to both promote and help finance the run/walk. By having local businesses sponsor will give the event a greater sense of pride for the city. Local sponsors will help finance items such as recyclable water cups number signs for the runners and walkers.

Step Three: Have Informational Pamphlets that are Relevant to the Event/ Audience

Once people are completed with the run a great way is to give them a pamphlet to see what the programs are achieving. The key is to making the pamphlet educational but as well as easy to read for all ages. An example that many of the interviewees are interested in seeing be a driving force on being more sustainable is to see finances being a driving force. Finance is a huge incentive and by providing how much money one can save on sustainable choices will have a huge impact on the participants of the event.

Step Four: Set a goal for the community and their future goals for the 5k run.

Before the event is over the participants/ sponsors should set goals for future run. Possible goals could be increase the number of participants to have more people of the community of Rosemount be aware of these programs.

Economic Localization

An important factor in the planning of Rosemount's future must be economic localization. In a world which seems to appreciate globalization, localization shows signs of being a strong alternative. A community with high percent of local businesses can expect to be healthier than other communities and local ownership means the community gets more back for every dollar spent in the business in forms of tax, wealth, jobs, economic development and tourism. Maximizing local self-reliance is also supports a wealthy community. This doesn't mean that things can not be imported, however the community is better off when local resources are used (Shuman, 2010, p.3). The U.S government defines as small business as a firm with less than 500 employees and account for 50% of the private-sector jobs. If unpaid labor, such as at-home parents, family care for elderly, is counted 80% of the economic activities are done by local firms or entrepreneurs in a typical community (Shuman, 2010). This could be hard to believe since most retailers, which are the more visible firms, are big brand companies such as Wal-Mart, worth to remember is that retail only accounts for 7% of the gross domestic product. Small firms are common, and getting more common out there, but they are worked against with double taxing, both corporate taxes and individual taxes on dividends and stock gains. (Shuman, 2010). Of course local firms can't be profitable in every sector, but the community should look for a firm size that matches the size of the community.

A common argument against local firms is the price point of goods produced locally and that consumers aren't willing to pay more than they have to. However, this is shown to be wrong, Shouman writes that what consumers look for is value, and if they know how and where a good is produced they are willing to pay more for it. So, what have all this to do with Rosemount and community outreach? Paula Horrigan talks about placemaking in the book *Community Matters* in which she talks about the Rust to Green (R2G) project in upstate New York. R2G is a project in which the city of Utica and Cornell University have started a cooperation to change Utica from a post-industrial and dying into green and growing. She says: "Placemaking, one of R2G's core informing theories and practices, offers an alternative approach to the expert model. It regards the activity and process of making places as "copractice" collectively shared by

all people- professional and nonprofessional alike.” And placemaking is what Rosemount can do with local businesses to get more people engaged in and for their community. In the article *The health and wealth of US counties: how the small business environment impacts alternative measures of development* the authors discuss ways how a community was affected by a Wal-Mart establishing in the neighborhood. The study showed that communities with more local businesses had greater level of population health (Blancharda, Tolbertb, Menckenb 2011). Another on the topic of how a community is affected by Wal-Mart describes how the social capital is lost and how fewer people are engaged in organizations such as non-profits, political organization and churches. It also showed that: “Wal-Mart’s presence also depressed civic participation and is associated with lower voter turnout in the 2000 presidential election.”(Goetz and Rupasingha).

To tie back to Horrigan and placemaking. Public engagement is needed to develop a city, even more so if the city wants to develop in a sustainable way. Placemaking tells us the importance of engaging community members instead of seeing the process as something which should be done by experts. However, the establishing of big brand businesses, as Wal-Mart, makes people less likely to participate in any community involvement. To work for more local business will therefore not only give a richer and healthier community but also a more engaged community members that are willing to help to develop Rosemount and make it greener.

References

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2. "Wal-Mart and Social Capital," Stephan J. Goetz & Anil Rupasingha, 2006. *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*, Agricultural and Applied Economics Association, vol. 88(5),
3. *Community Matters: Service-Learning in Engaged Design and Planning* (Earthscan Tools for Community Planning) – May 31, 2014. Routledge, New York. by Mallika Bose (Editor), Paula Horrigan (Editor), Cheryl Doble (Editor), Sigmund C. Shipp (Editor)

Other Outreach Practices

Create a Public Art Project with Rosemount Area Arts Council

One good way to create awareness is through art. Try to engage with the local art's council to organize a pop-up art installation or project surrounding the environment. This would add beauty, gain recognition for local artists, and raise public consciousness.

Create a Citizen Task Force

One way to shift the responsibility of engagement from the city staff to the community itself would be the creation of a self-directed task force. Consider advertising in local bulletins, or through the booths, to help connect citizens who would like to be more involved. This city-approved, but not managed, group could take on it's own projects to move the city in a greener direction.

Start a School-Based Challenge

Talk to interested teachers to create a school-wide challenge for elementary school children. It could be based in science classes, a month long challenge on how many times the kids could pick up litter, turn off the lights, or other simple measures. This would involve the students primarily, but having the parents signing off on their accomplishments would remind them to take action as well.

Have A City-Wide Bike-To-Work (or to School) Week

Making an environmentally friendly behavior, like biking to work, a week long challenge can be a good way to remind people that it is possible. Use social media accounts to promote biking to work one week in the spring or fall, and encourage city officials to do it. Create a hashtag to gather and share the photos of people doing it.

Have An Environmental Column in Rosemount Local Papers

Consider having a weekly column in the local newspaper to highlight both what the City is doing, and give ideas for how citizens can get involved themselves. It will reach

many members of the community, and is a way to make sure people are constantly reminded of new actions.

Gather and Publish Resources for Organizations

Consider making a list of resources for citizens on the City of Rosemount website that would help them learn more about environmental actions they could take. One of the challenges for the church was the lack of knowledge about steps they could take- giving them a one-stop shop for resources to grants, the local watershed, or other groups that could be of assistance would help them immensely.

Further Outreach Resources

For more information on best outreach practices or theories, please look into the following websites and organizations.

Outreach Partners

<http://outreach-partners.org/resources/iop>

Outreach Partners are a health focused non-profit that specializing in engaging hard-to-reach populations. Their website provides free resources and information that would be helpful for future outreach efforts.

Build the Field

<http://www.buildthefield.org/>

Build the Field has in-person “Engaged Learning Series” that offer information about community engagement, as well as online resources to help gauge the success of engagement.

Grassroots Solutions

<http://www.grassrootsolutions.com/2015/03/free-for-all/>

Grassroots Solutions is a consulting company that specializing in engaging communities. It publishes free how-tos and guides on engaging communities in a sustainable manner.

Tamarack Institute for Community Engagement

<http://tamarackcommunity.ca/g3s126.html#enviro>

Tamarack’s website provides both examples of successful environmental engagement, and resources ranging from community planning to audio seminars.