

“Achieving Community Solutions by Working Together in New Ways”

Community Engagement in Carroll County

Hosted by the Carroll County Collaborative & Carroll County United Partners

Ossipee & Conway September 22, 2009 • Wolfeboro September 23, 2009

Eighty-eight community members in Carroll County came together over the course of two days at forums in Ossipee, Conway & Wolfeboro. Participants experienced a community discussion about ways we might want to work differently and began to identify what a common aspiration for the county might look like. Joseph “Jay” Connor, founder and CEO of The Collaboratory for Community Support, was the presenter and facilitator for the morning. Following a PowerPoint presentation, “Working Differently to Achieve Community Solutions”, Mr. Connor led small groups in a process to define community and identify aspirations and measures. The following summary contains highlights of the small group work.

Definitions of Community

- Currently is more a collection of individual towns than a county-wide community (3)
- Social over geographic – people in confined area/common goal/takes care of own/families coming together/sense of belonging/place. (3)
- Community is place where people can be safe, healthy, clean water/everyone’s welcome. (3)
- Spend time together toward a common goal. Is a multilayered place where people feel connected. (3)
- Sense of place/live & play/common values/being effective community at raising children (3)
- Commonality of purpose, ownership and control/reciprocal dependability, ownership (1)
- Where you have a sense of place, where you work and play, where there is a sharing of resources along with dependability and trust (1)
- Geographic or political divisions or where district services are provided (schools, services, county) (1)
- Commonalities: quality of life affected by tourism. (1)
- Even with fragmentation (north, south/east, west; first and second homeowners, economic), it was decided that Carroll County should be the community. (2)
- Group of people with a common purpose and/or connected in some way to satisfy a common need (2)
- Carroll County (2)

Community Discussion themes/highlights

- Currently see fragmentation. Geographically large makes it hard to coordinate. (3)
- Hard to see Carroll Cty. as a community. Fastest growing and fastest aging. Can think in terms of water sheds. (3)
- Sense that Carroll Cty. hasn't yet thought of itself as a community. (3)
- Some people don't go from town to town. Stay in own town. Local control, home rule. (3)
- People live in one community and work in another. (1)
- Starts little, grows outward. (1)
- Services provided in the county have dividing lines (few county-wide organizations) (1)
- Large county through which it is hard to interface. (1)
- Some "complaints" were employment, education, livable wage, resort community, taxes, and transportation (2)
- Many in the community have more than one job. (2)
- Would like the community to be Carroll County but not sure. See divisions between north & south, Conway & Wolfeboro, small & large/services have dividing lines. Trying to visualize whole county as a community. (2)
- County fits a niche. (2)

Community Aspirations (by breakout groups)

Aspiration Make Carroll County a better place to live, work and raise families. (3)

Measures

- Labor force demographics
- Changes in demographics (ages, influx, outflux)
- Student enrollments
- Economic diversity

Aspiration Get Carroll County to identify as community; work on issues more effectively; quality of life for all – positive and productive place to live (more economic opportunities). (3)

Measures

- Literacy level
- Housing
- Food
- Medicine
- Income – living wage/increase in adequate jobs
- Graduation rates

Drivers to get to better place. Need baseline & gauge progress.

Aspiration Everyone welcome. Opposite of isolated towns. Extended families./more interaction between young and old. Keeping the community whole. Having families at the center. (3)

- Eviction rates (homes & businesses)
- Families outmigration after elementary school

Aspiration Building & maintaining infrastructure which responds to the changing needs of community & create a positive productive place to live. (3)

Measures

- Economic
- Self-sustaining
- Connection to internet

Aspiration Positive and productive place to live (3)

Measures

- # kids graduate from high school
- Rate people leaving
- Rate people moving in
- Quality health
- # new businesses/hiring local?

Aspiration Best place to live and work and play (1)

Measures

- Make connections with everyone, including second homeowners.
- Percentage: skills, attitude, behavior, circumstance

Aspiration: strengthen communication and increase participation in local decision-making groups (1)

Measures

- Cross-town/constituent collaboration (in managing shared resources?)

Aspiration: Stay, thrive and be valued. (1)

Measures

- County-wide protocol (DCYF)

- Reduction of nonprofit silos – check ego at the door – how many are willing?
- Clarity that goals come first (number of people who utilized it).

Aspiration stay, thrive, be valued/maintain community involvement where all ages contribute and add value (1)

Measures

- Demographics: why do people stay? What is baseline?
- How many plan or want to come back after college, etc.?
- Feeling of connection
- What do people want/need in their community?
Comment: How do you define ‘thrive’?

Aspiration Best place to live and work (1)

Measures

- Retention: give people opportunities to thrive
- Participation: more engaged and connected, shared work
- Connection: cooperation, collaboration
- Intergenerational capacity

Aspiration Make CC the best place to grow up and grow old (best for youth, workers, elderly) (2)

Measures

- Healthy kids
- Healthy workers - # working at livable wage
- Healthy elders - Do elderly have ease of access to good health?

Aspiration a place where all citizens live independently/promotes/supports independence/self-sufficiency (2)

Measures

- Adequate system for shelter for everyone
- # receiving free and reduced lunch
- # homeless

Aspiration Great place to grow up and grow old (2)

Measures

- Information sharing

- People smile and wave at you
- All generations feel more connected to the community
- Inter-community meeting places
- More connection between second homeowners and NH natives
- Program for people to identify themselves as Carroll County citizens
- How to measure whether aspiration has been met?

Aspiration Community provides an opportunity for every person to achieve a liveable wage. (Opportunity for every person to have all basic human needs adequately met in order to provide time for people to NOT have to work – slow down the pace and connect to the people who matter to them and have time to develop connections.) (2)

Measures

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| • More preventative health care | • Less need for mental health care |
| • Less homelessness | • Less demand for prescriptions |
| • More time for leisure activities | • Less domestic violence |
| • Less shared housing | • Volunteerism would increase |
| • Lower crime rates | • More higher education |
| • Fewer emergency room visits | • More leisure activities |
| • Fewer accidents | • More high school graduates (rates) |
| • Less exodus of citizens | • More pet adoptions |
| • More time spent with children | |

Aspiration Discussion Highlights

- All ages feeling anxious re: economic security. (3)
- Nonprofit leaders are so busy, they often don't have time to talk with each other. (3)
- Rarely have direct contact with legislators. (3)
- Maybe working on aspiration will create community. (3)
- What is impact of government structure on getting to success? No correlation between gov't structure & success. However, may need to identify and respond to public policy constraints. (3)
- Start with who you've got with the commitment to keep moving out to include more people. Can't give people not at the session a veto to stop the process. (3)
- Important for parents to have involvement with their children. Having families at the center. (3)
- Aging demographics – retirees moving in/young people moving out. Need to create conditions to allow young people to live here. (3)
- Look at whole and intended & unintended consequences. (3)
- Ensuring something for younger people to connect with. (3)
- Who was the catalyst for the work in Rochester, MN? In Wolfeboro, all nonprofits are competing for the same money. Jay - What's more important is,

“what do we want to accomplish?” there’s no right answer; it doesn’t matter who leads the work but rather how do we get on the same page. The problem is that if it is only one organization, that one organization is seen as having an agenda. (3)

- We’ve tried getting the nonprofits to not compete but couldn’t get anyone to do the work. (3)
- Carroll County does not see itself yet as a community – how to sell to a disparate group? Jay - The process is about moving out in concentric circles and pushing the conversation further out – now you need to ask “how do I take this to my neighbors?” you need to start moving, but make sure everyone feels welcome even if they show up later. (3)
- Find balance between home rule and collaboration (1)
- Our towns, small and large, must have the same problems but I’ve never heard anybody doing anything about it. (1)
- Need to accommodate tourism without affecting local community (1)
- Need better transportation. (1)
- Want employment opportunities with livable wages. (1)
- Needs to be a sharing of resources and expertise, better communication to improve quality of life, respect for the worker, higher wages, and more investing of money in the schools. (1)
- Do our planning boards talk to each other? Jay - “They’re acting the way we have organized them to.” (1)
- Regional planning commissions take a bigger view (have 3 separate ones that serve the county.)
- First time county commissioners have gone to towns and talked with selectman. (1)
- How do we know if the community wants to change? Jay - Work still has to be done even if the goal is to stay the same/maintain what we have. (1)
- The Housing Coalition is an example of a narrower focus across a larger area. People have their own things they are passionate about. (1) Jay - “All Communities have the expertise to decide on a goal. When people align to an outcome, turf gives way. Need to move from blaming (no progress) to how to engage more people. This is where progress happens.”
- No goal is achieved in isolation. (2)
- We get focused on the activities before we really know what we are working on.
- There is no countywide tax breaks for large employers or employers NOT based on providing service. (2)
- In Madison, they are doing things without a clear sense of why. (2)
- Get people to buy into a piece of the community (increase ownership in the community)(2)
- If talking about better improvement – need to talk county wide; part of the reason community is coming apart is young people are pumping gas in the morning and selling sweaters in the evening and are still not making it. Jay - Opportunity for a connected voice to influence Concord. (2)

- How do we reconcile quality of life, natural resources, and economic development?
- The aspiration is not to work together, but working together is the result of working on a goal. (2)
- Quality of life includes better employment (livable wages), better healthcare, mental health care, education, lower crime rates, better home environments, retaining a younger population, parents (2)
- Schools don't fail in isolation, but in the context of their community. (Jay)
- Second homeowners brought up as a group, balance between working together and independence, and fragmentation of group identity. More than 50% of the MWV is second home owners representing more than 50% of the tax base. (2)
- Parents are torn between 2 & 3 jobs and raising their kids. Engagement with businesses will help companies, kids and parents. Jay – Businesses invest for a 'return on their investment', not just to be good citizens. Communities need to be clear first [about their goals] in order for businesses to align. (2)
- If you don't expect people to achieve, they won't – our expectations can hold us back. (Jay)
- All three audiences visibly reacted to the fact that many states plan their need for future prison beds based on the percent of children reading at grade level by the end of third grade because of the strong correlation between these numbers. (Cyndi)

General observations from Jay Connor

- As move forward to create an aspiration and measures, need to define things so everyone knows what it means.
- People seem to be wanting to push out to working as a county even though that is not quite the comfort zone.

Some emerging themes

- Aging
- Economics
- Out-migration of youth/ in-migration of ...?