University–Community Collaboration to Advance Sustainability

University of Minnesota Public Engagement Leaders Retreat

June 11, 2013

Mike Greco, AICP
Program Manager, Resilient Communities Project
Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA)
Key Questions:

How can we enhance long-term capacity to produce sustainable solutions, livable communities + resilient institutions?

How can we foster innovation in community engagement and cross-disciplinary collaboration in universities?
Resilient Communities Project

Connects U of MN + cities + community partners to advance sustainability and resilience through course-based projects

One-year partnership—RCP as matchmaker

Initial support from Institute on the Environment + Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA)

Initiative of the Sustainability Faculty Network
How Does It Work?

• City defines 15–30 projects with external partners
• City + RCP identify additional partners and stakeholders
• Community workshop to outline issues + assets/resources + research needs
• RCP identifies potential course matches
• Scoping meeting with faculty, project lead, community partners
• Students carry out projects
• RCP facilitates final presentations and deliverables
How Does It Work?

2012–2013 pilot partnership with City of Minnetonka

14 projects matched with 25 courses across 8 colleges

RFP for 2013–2014

7 applicants, $20,000–160,000

City of North St. Paul chosen as 2013–2014 partner

- College of Continuing Education
- College of Design
- College of Education & Human Development
- College of Food, Agriculture, & Natural Resource Sciences
- College of Liberal Arts
- College of Science & Engineering
- Humphrey School of Public Affairs
- Law School
Minnetonka Projects

- Stormwater management
- Aging in place
- Water + energy conservation
- Mid-priced housing options
- Transit-oriented development
- Conservation development
- Rooftop gardens
- Parking regulations
- Transportation demand management
- Water resources planning
- Neighborhood identities
- Post-development impacts
- Density + housing options
- Housing program evaluation

U of MN Courses

- Neighborhood Revitalization
- Building & Site Integration in Sustainable Design
- Housing Assessment & Analysis
- Land, Environment, & Energy Law Clinic
- Principles & Methods of Evaluation
- Urban Hydrology & Land Development
- Pollution Prevention
- Methods for Natural Resource & Environmental Policy
- GIS in Environmental Science & Management
- Design Thinking for Action
- Urban GIS
- Networks and Places
- Housing Policy
- Managing Urban Growth and Change
- Land Use & Transportation Capstone
- Environmental Communication
- Evaluation Problems
- Ecology of Agricultural Systems
- Environmental Planning, Policy, & Decision Making
North St. Paul Projects

- Live/work housing
- Living streets and capital improvements
- Green energy initiative
- Neighborhood identities
- Downtown revitalization strategies
- Civic engagement and communication
- Fiber optic network development
- Community identity and branding
- Environmental education
- Redevelopment-ready community
- Public art and public history
- Master redevelopment plan
- Silver Lake trail connection
- Community gardens and local food
- Staff development and retention
- Development of underutilized parcels
- Aging in place
- Energy conservation initiative

Additional Course-Based Capacity

- Distance education opportunities
- Reengaging community organizations
- Active living and community health
- Tree preservation policy
- Storm water management

Additional Student Capacity

- Individual capstone projects
- Professional papers/theses
- Research assistantships through CURA
What Is Different?

Multiple projects over a sustained period

Potential to meaningfully engage external partners

Efficient access to full range of U of MN resources

RCP staff experience with community engagement + content knowledge in sustainability

Potential for long-term relationships among faculty, city staff, and community partners
Key Questions

How can we enhance long-term capacity to produce sustainable solutions, livable communities + resilient institutions?

How can we foster innovation in community engagement and cross-disciplinary collaboration in universities?
Enhancing Capacity

Communities

- Fostering internal/external collaboration
- Coproducing knowledge about sustainable solutions
- Creating impacts beyond the partner city

Universities

- Training the next generation of sustainability practitioners
- Building experience in community-based work for students + faculty
Fostering innovation: engagement

Facilitating sustained community engagement
Not just “one-off” — community-driven
Engaging public, private, and nonprofit community partners
Building long-term community–university relationships
Driven by broader goal of advancing sustainability + resilience
More than engagement for the benefit of students + faculty, bigger than local projects
Fostering innovation: cross-disciplinary collaboration

Sustainability + resilience require cross-disciplinary solutions

Significant barriers in universities
  Tuition models, college focus, promotion + tenure

Calls for strategic investments that respond to critical challenges
Thank you!

Website: rcp.umn.edu
Twitter: @RCPumn
E-mail: rcp@umn.edu