

Developing Community Connections with Asset Mapping

FACILITATING LOCAL VISIONING IDENTIFYING ACTION STEPS

Facilitating Local Visioning and Identifying Action Steps are Steps 3 and 4 in an Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) process that helps people connect their strengths to create new opportunities for living well where periodic wildland fires are expected. (See the Series Overview for an introduction to the seven-step process.) In Steps 1 and 2, Situation Assessment and Asset Mapping with Connectors, you got familiar with the community's strengths; found people who are well-connected within the community's civic life; and set out with them on a process of systematically "mapping" individual, organizational and institutional assets related to wildland fire. Now you are prepared to facilitate a community-based vision for a better fire future. Once you have found the common ground of a shared vision, your group can focus on ways to mobilize community strengths to make the vision of fire-adaptation a reality.

Step 3: Facilitating Local Visioning

Community visioning is a process of collectively imagining a desired future. It is a common planning technique for groups seeking to define and articulate their purpose, core values and mission. It is also used by local governments to attract public input for setting urban development priorities. In either case, a resulting vision statement sets the direction for developing the goals, objectives and

practical steps needed to realize the desired future. To strategically advance community-driven fire adaptation, you can use visioning in a small group of connectors (see Step 2) to develop a picture of what your community would be like if it were more wildfire resilient.

Where to Begin?

A question to start with: "What will our community look like when it is truly fire-adapted?"

These questions may also be helpful:

- ▶ What would different parts of our community do to maintain their defensible space? (Consider residents who are elderly, live here part-time, are marginalized or have few resources.)
- ▶ What would broad community support of prescribed fire look like?
- ▶ How would newcomers learn that living well with fire is integrated into our community life?
- ▶ What would our community need for recovering its economic health after a wildland fire disrupted local businesses or caused longer-term impacts like flooding?
- ▶ How are the unique strengths and character of our community and its history evident in our approach to fire adaptation?

Guidelines for a Visioning Process



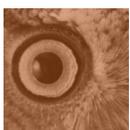
Set a relaxed schedule of 3-4 visioning meetings of 1-2 hours each for a small group of connectors. You need time to think, tell stories and respond, and to expand, re-consider and hone your vision.



In each meeting, collectively explore your community's fire future. In addition to the viewpoints of credentialed fire experts, be open to personal, practical and imaginative elements in originating an inspiring vision.



Remember identifying all those community assets in Step 2? With that knowledge, you can build a vision on the community's demonstrated strengths, a vision that responds cooperatively to challenges and expresses common values.



Have fun by using the gifts, skills and resources within the group to put your vision into a format easily shared with others: write scenarios or stories, draw pictures, record audio or video interviews, design maps, or construct a landscape model. (Save the three-sentence business type of vision statement for a time in the future when formal organization becomes necessary to meet your goals.)

Step 4: Identifying Action Steps

While you were working with connectors to “map” the community’s fire-related assets, you may have recognized some immediate opportunities to bring people together on a project. Even if you have already started on some projects, now is a good time to translate your vision

into strategic goals that set a direction toward your fire-adapted future. In this phase, the aim is to mobilize your community’s existing capacity—its strengths—to proactively address the threats and realize the benefits of wildland fire.

The Basics of a Community-Based Action Planning Process



Working with the asset map and the vision your group has developed, identify 3-5 broad, long-term goals. Having these goals clearly defined can help you communicate with others about hopes and intentions and find your common ground.



For each goal, use your asset map to identify the individuals, groups and organizations in your community that are contributing something to this goal.



Make plans to talk with one or more of them about your group’s work. When you get together, share your vision and goals and initiate a conversation to explore the possibility of a new, collaborative action that fits everyone’s existing schedule and level of available resources.



Repeat this process whenever you have the opportunity.

Right-Sizing Action Steps

There are three hallmarks to strengths-based community activity that ensure its sustainability:

- ▶ focus on the assets of the community rather than its deficits,
- ▶ work from the inside out, and
- ▶ let relationships drive the action.

For community-based action, this means not just knowing about community strengths but using them preferentially. Especially at the beginning, instead of creating action steps that depend on outside experts or funding, your group should encourage interested community members to access their own creative initiative and resources as

priceless contributions to the area’s fire adaptation. Shared community resources are considerable—time, experience, imagination, networking, access to physical locations, innumerable skills, professional connections, youthful energy, monetary donations, equipment, ecological history, and so forth can all be harnessed. Using the community’s present capacity is a vital path for building future capacity.

The next installment in this series, “Widening the Circle, Bridging for Support, and Becoming Collaborative Partners,” outlines the final three steps in using a strengths-based approach to facilitate community-driven fire adaptive activity.

This is part of a series of guides that will familiarize FAC practitioners with the hows and whys of the community-led asset mapping process. Together they lay out some best practices and lessons learned by communities as they use this process to become better adapted to fire. Find links to all the documents in this series at <http://www.conservationgateway.org/ConservationPractices/FireLandscapes/FireLearningNetwork/NetworkProducts/Pages/ABCD.aspx>

For more information, please contact Jana Carp at (510) 851-2836 or jana@communityfire.org.



The Fire Learning Network and Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network are part of *Promoting Ecosystem Resilience and Fire Adapted Communities Together*, a cooperative agreement between The Nature Conservancy, USDA Forest Service and agencies of the Department of the Interior. For more information about PERFACT, contact Marek Smith: marek_smith@tnc.org or (919) 794-4374.
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