

# Community Economic Development Indicators and Quality of Life

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# Traditional measures...

- Don't abandon completely
  - > provide insight into an economy's performance with measures of income, wages, jobs
  - > Yet, may not be reflective of the range of activities influencing economic development outcomes
- Expand with other measures



# Consider the range of economic development indicators...

- Can (and should) go far beyond traditional measures
  - *Can we make them better to reflect our communities?*



# From the local perspective, an economy typically includes the following major components:

- 1. Purchases of local goods/services by private individuals in the area (consumption)
- 2. Purchases of local goods/services by businesses in the area (investment)
- 3. Purchases of local goods/services by government organizations in the area
- 4. Net purchases of local goods/services by individuals, businesses, or governments from *beyond* the area (exports)

# How can e.d indicators be more inclusive?

- ⦿ Requires partnering to fully capture the range of indicators
  - > Not just local government reporting
  - > Non-profit and private sector participants, citizen and worker inclusion



# First, changing the mindset

- Development doesn't have to mean growth in terms of bigger/expansion
- Can focus on better development processes and outcomes – *better, not necessarily bigger*
  - Photo: Tiny Sneedville, TN has no hopes of growing rapidly; rather, they have focused on increasing cultural amenities via a crafts cooperative, arts incubator and training programs



# Revising traditional approaches

## ① 1. Consumption

- > Revitalizing traditional downtowns and neighborhood shopping areas to maintain a vibrant core

### Main Street Design Example

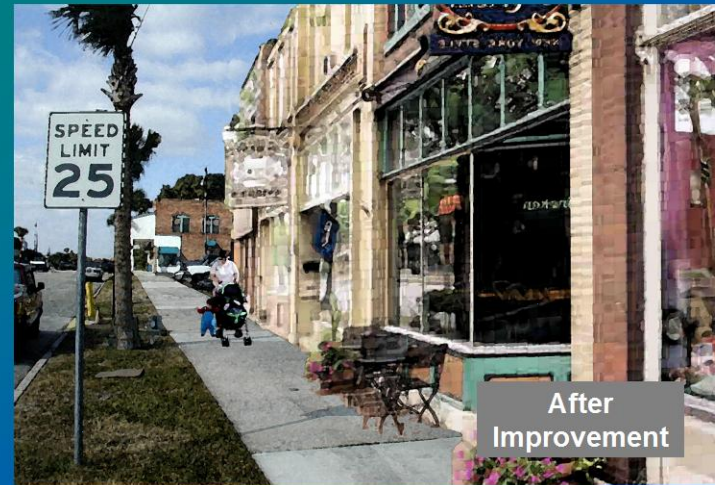


Before  
Improvement

- Photo: Tavares, FL – small community engulfed by suburbanization focuses on redevelopment

- Example: Burlington, Vermont
  - > Priority action: work with regional planners and neighboring communities to ensure the city as the primary economic center of the region, to prevent sprawl by absorbing a higher percentage of regional growth than other communities.
  - > Indicators: Burlington versus regional population, jobs and housing growth and aggregate retail sales and employment data versus surrounding towns
    - The Legacy Project, City of Burlington, Vermont

## Main Street Design Example



## 2. Investment



- Encourage local businesses to find suppliers locally
- Support business diversity and self-reliance
  - > Resource efficiency
  - > Serve local markets to reduce fluctuations
- Burlington's Economic Self-Reliance goal through local ownership, control and maximum use and reinvestment of local resources. Focus on local ownership and support for local businesses to anchor the local economy.

- Photo: Burlington's Church Street Marketplace was the result of public, private and nonprofit investments

# 3. Government

- Again, supplier analysis
  - > Buy locally when possible
  - > Buy resource efficient products
- Set example for others by resource efficiencies in operation
- Indicators in these areas can include purchases locally versus outside the community, resource efficiency levels and collaborative purchases
  - > Photo: Eustis, FL strives to integrate bike paths and alternative transportation modes to encourage efficiency



# 4. Exports

Target and support companies that practice sustainable business approaches; increase commercial incubator space

Indicators: type and volume of product/service sales outside the home area; innovation capacity with measures of training, technology transfer and usage, numbers of patents



Photo: Sid Martin Bio-tech Center, University of Florida has generated dozens of new companies via tech transfer and incubator services

# What about other aspects?

- These four components do not fully capture the range of a community's economic development concerns and needs.
- Certainly, economic security and opportunity are key.



- Burlington's goal: residents to have access to livable-wage jobs, full employment and necessary education and training to meet basic needs for food, shelter, clothing, health care, child care and transportation.

# More ideas for “system-wide” (more inclusive) e.d. indicators

- Not just job creation, but *quality* job creation – jobs that have wages equal to or greater than cost of living index or livable wage index
- Housing and jobs balance to check sustainability of workforce – ratio of jobs to amount of housing
- Housing affordability -with measures such as income compared with housing prices. City of Flagstaff, Arizona (pop. 75k) looks at deficiency in dollars per month for mortgage payments at the median wage of employer

## ◉ Levels of civic investment in cultural and social venues

> Are there investments to enhance QOL?

- Burlington's priority action: allocate resources to maintain diverse cultural opportunities accessible to all, from art in public spaces to affordable studios and rehearsal spaces, teaching facilities, exhibition and performance venues, and lifelong education opportunities

# Who's Happy? (and how it relates to QOL)

- ◉ More than “utility maximization”
- ◉ In 1946, the US was ranked the happiest among 4 advanced economies; 40 years later, 10<sup>th</sup>, and now, behind some developing countries...
  - <http://www.happyplanetindex.org/explore/global/>

# Up to a certain point, more really does = better

- Now, how do we move the focus from *More to Better*?
- QOL planning is part of community indicator identification AND implementing responses/policies to address issues
  - Toppenish, Washington, the home of the Yakama Indian Nation, is a town of 7500 in a remote location. Building on its old West heritage, the town is covered with murals and draws over 30,000 tourists per year.



# For the future...



- A new way of thinking – *better, not bigger* – and gauging progress towards goals for enhancing quality of life beyond “economics”