Cultural Sustainability:

Gaining Support for Natural Areas and Best Management Practices







- Best management practices (BMPs)
- Wetlands
- Buffers
- River/stream corridors
- Native landscaping

THE SUSTAINABLE SITES INITIATIVE







- Public opinion polls have indicated general public support for clean water, open space, etc.
- Local, regional & national planning initiatives
- Voluntary programs
- Regulatory programs
- Sustainability has gone "mainstream" right?

So, why do sustainable projects/initiatives often:

- Generate controversy?
- Create public backlash?
- Bring out N.I.M.B.Y.s?
- Cause concerns about decreased property values?
- Raise concerns about public health, safety, and welfare?



Better understand the cultural aspects of sustainability:

- Informal survey
- Collected anecdotes (successes and "horror stories")
- Summarized them...





- Survey said "assume plan is good" responses indicated poor design is cause of public discontent
- Lots of design recommendations
- Often public resistance to change



Planning & design

- Survey said "assume quality construction" – responses indicated poor construction also part of the problem
- Lack of QA/QC via construction observation



Implementation



"Lack of proper post-construction maintenance is definitely a reason..."

Maintenance

- The "vocal minority" refers to any small but very vocal group that (often incorrectly) believes they speak for the majority
- The "vocal minority" can quickly become the focus of attention



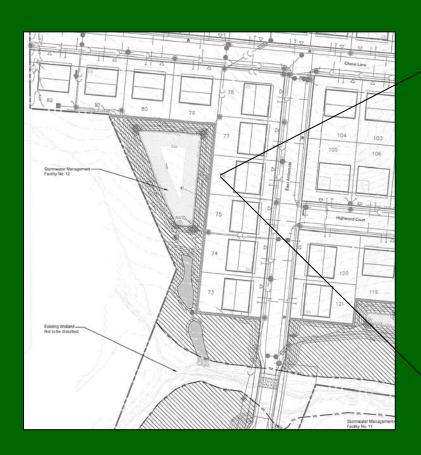
"Vocal minority"

• Fear of "weeds & varmints"



Misinformation

• Intentional spreading of misinformation or just misinformed?





Misinformation

• "...government wasting our tax dollars..."



Distrust of government

- Reluctance to enforce regulations concerning dumping, encroachment onto public property, etc.
- Inconsistent application of regulations/policies



Enforcement



Public meeting to present project vs.

Consensus building - "people want to be asked"

Consensus building

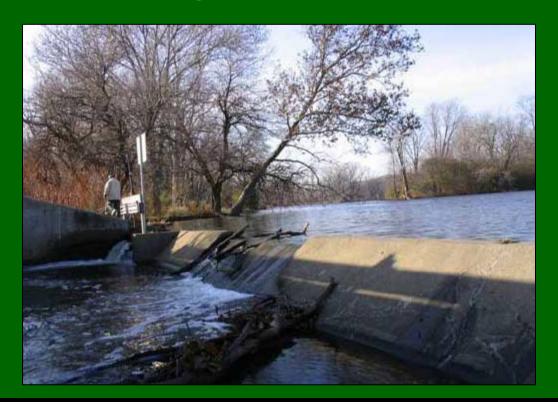
Consensus building

- Invite/engage stakeholders
- Start with a blank slate
- Get stakeholders to acknowledge the problem or need
- Public participation in planning and design process



Consensus building

"...the level of public acceptance to a project/BMP is directly related to at what point you get people involved in the project and the amount of information (including how it is delivered)."



Consensus building

Question:

Is "nature" to be looked at (and feared) from a distance or is "nature" to be experienced?

Answer:

Untouchable = low acceptance Accessible = higher acceptance

Integration

Golf course as an example of sustainability?



Integration

• Multi-media: brochures, letters, websites, etc.



Education/outreach

- Post-project presentations (HOA's, community groups, etc.)
- Stewardship programs (adopt-a-park, adopt-astreet, etc.) to get people invested



Education/outreach

- Design
- Construction
- Maintenance



Accountability

Sales/marketing



Accountability

In conclusion:

As much as advocates would like to think sustainability is universally accepted as the norm, in practice there are still cultural challenges to be overcome.

Keep trying! There has been a noticeable increase in acceptance over the past 5-10 years.

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Thanks you!

Questions?

Comments?

Stories?

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