

*“Never believe that a few caring people can’t change the world. For, indeed, that’s all who ever have.”*

Margaret Mead

The Green Valley Institute exists to help the communities and citizens of The Last Green Valley, also known as the Quinebaug-Shetucket National Heritage Corridor, sustain their environment and quality of life while growing their economics.

We are a non-regulatory organization dedicated to:

- Improving the knowledge base from which land use and natural resource decisions are made,
- Building local capacity to protect and manage natural resources as our region grows.

The GVI was created through a formal partnership of the Quinebaug-Shetucket National Heritage Corridor and the University of Connecticut’s College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, University of Massachusetts’ Cooperative Extension System and other partners.



University of Connecticut  
College of Agriculture and Natural Resources



**Community Involvement** is a key component in the process of planning for the future. With input from the community you can

- Learn all sides of an issue,
- Involve stakeholders in the process,
- Build consensus,
- Plan for your town’s future,
- Achieve best result through collaboration.

There are several tools and techniques to use, some more effective than others given the situation.

**Public Surveys:** a list of questions asked of the general public. The survey can be mailed, taken over the phone or in person.

- Good Tool if ....**
- Need feedback from broad cross-section of people
  - Want to increase awareness of issues
  - To provide credibility to the process

- Tips ....**
- Clearly state purpose of survey
  - Make it easy to answer and to tabulate: use questions that are yes/no or range of values to choose
  - Include one or two open-ended questions
  - Involve volunteers, seek help from colleges or a local Senior Center

- Don’t Use if ....**
- Limited resources for mailing, calling or to tabulate results
  - Are already at the end of the process
  - Too early in process and don’t have clear idea of what questions need answers

**Task Force:** a group or committee, usually of experts or specialists, formed for analyzing, investigating, or solving a specific problem.



- Good Tool if ....**
- Have specific topic and need strong public involvement
  - Want to get opposing sides to work together
  - Need better understanding of issues

- Tips ....**
- Clearly define role (advisory or overseer)
  - State the time frame when final report is due
  - Recruit stakeholders, mix of opinions and talents
  - Establish routine schedule
  - Never take them for granted

- Don’t Use if ....**
- Can’t get broad cross-section of community
  - All you want is a stamp of approval
  - Decision-makers would not value result

**Forums:** community workshops used to create a vision of the future and to develop the steps to achieve that vision



- Good Tool if ....**
- There is potential for accomplishment
  - Want to define action steps
  - Want to inspire volunteers to help take that action

- Tips ....**
- Make it fun / interactive
  - Recruit stakeholders, mix of opinions and talents
  - Focus on future, don’t dwell on problems
  - Channel their energy to achieve result

- Don’t Use if ....**
- Can’t get broad cross-section of community
  - Process is already underway
  - Too many skeptics or naysayers



## The Way of Seeing

The human brain is divided into two halves, called the left brain and the right brain. Most people can only focus on information in one side of the brain at a time. The left brain focuses on words, language, math and science, and is reality based. The right brain is big picture oriented, imaginative and creative and can see future possibilities. It is very difficult for people to hear verbal information (which is processed by the left brain) and transfer that information to the right brain (where visualization takes place). The old adage "a picture is worth a 1000 words" is very true.

Visioning Workshops, Charrettes and Mapping Workshops are effective techniques when asking people to see into the future as these processes actively engage the right brain.

**Visioning Workshop:** using graphics to help a group of interested people envision possible results

**Good Tool if ....**

- Need to identify potential for community improvement
- Want to get public inspired and build consensus
- Include opinions from folks that may not speak up at a meeting

**Tips ....**

- Engage people with creativity
- Encourage interaction
- Set short time limit to increase energy level
- Publicize
- End with discussion of the outcome

**Don't Use if ....**

- Don't have time organize and publicize
- Far along in process
- Topic has narrow focus or few answers



Group uses jigsaw puzzle shapes to identify and categorize needed action steps to *Put the Puzzle Together* for downtown revitalization.

**Charrette:** series of workshops for graphic brainstorming guided by professionals

**Good Tool if ....**

- Want to collect information in an interactive setting
- Give everyone a chance to contribute
- Want a graphic image of a collaborative effort

**Tips ....**

- Use as a kick-off event to announce a future community planning project
- Invite key stakeholders
- Publicize the event and the results
- Recruit Planning or Landscape Architecture students to participate
- Need -
  - Large scale maps and overlay
  - Room with tables
  - Markers

**Don't Use if ....**

- Decisions have been already made
- Topic focus is too narrow
- Not able to acquire large scale maps
- Don't have the expertise to assist the process



### Additional Information:

- Green Valley Institute: [www.GreenValleyInstitute.org](http://www.GreenValleyInstitute.org)
- American Planning Association: [www.planning.org](http://www.planning.org)
- Lincoln Land Institute: [www.lincolnst.edu](http://www.lincolnst.edu)



A publication of the Green Valley Institute. Please contact us at 860-774-9600 for more information.