

Environment 1

Introduction

During the recent Reality Check Workshops, topical experts and members of the public worked together in small groups to examine a particular topic in-depth. During the two-hour workshops they worked with a trained facilitator to complete the following exercises:

- 1) Review of Ideas. Participants reviewed all of the ideas related to their topic that were collected during the community Idea Gathering Sessions.
- 2) Critical Questions. Participants engaged in a discussion of two Critical Questions, which had been identified by the *Vision for Staten Island* Steering Committee. The facilitator recorded the results of the discussion on flipchart paper, and then helped the group summarize major areas of agreement and disagreement.
- 3) Implementation Recommendations. At the end of the discussion period, each participant wrote down two practical, specific strategies or implementation steps to help Staten Island achieve its vision for their topic.

Two small groups addressed the topic of Environment. The results from the first Environment group are provided below. Note that responses have been recorded verbatim, and some errors may remain due to handwriting legibility. Responses are numbered for reference purposes only; this does not indicate any sense of priority.

Critical Question 1:

What are Staten Island's most significant challenges and opportunities for protecting the environment and preserving natural resources? Write your ideas below and, if appropriate, use the map provided to indicate locations for specific suggestions.

1. Protect properties already saved
2. Reduce destruction of adjacent areas around wetland (buffer zone)
3. Do not sell any open space properties for development
4. Uphold existing laws pertaining to development near or within wetlands and their buffers
5. Challenge to the environment is lack of public transportation
6. Distorted civic dialogue on environmental issues
7. Adult education on environmental issues in general
8. De-map the Richmond Parkway
9. Expand Blue Heron Park along (?) Rd (Barclay Ave)
10. Purchase Goodhue Woods
11. Opportunity is the scale of waterways to green space
12. Higher educational institutions – education and research
13. Range of committee and civic groups – i.e. fisherman
14. Education: field guide/education
15. Information signs at environmental sites/areas – multi-lingual

Critical Question 1 SUMMARY:

1. Indictments of public officials for not upholding laws/regulations for protecting wetlands and preserved areas
2. Education (adult) in environmental issues through the colleges publications, signage to explain/clarify the civic dialogue – repetition
3. Lack of public transportation endangers the environment; don't enlarge existing roads
4. Education by itself may not be enough. Educational system is lacking
5. Perfect time for environmental education

Critical Question 2:

What can we do to balance the preservation of open space and natural resources with economic growth?

1. Rehabilitate existing unused manufacturing sites (for example) and change tax rules to allow re-use of these buildings (to make it feasible to demolish or renovate)
2. Eco-tourism – use SI's rich natural history similar to Cape May/Cape Cod Eco-tourism
3. Promoting our rich environment – “nice place to live and work”
4. Promote SI to demonstrate renewable/sustainable technologies

Critical Question 2 SUMMARY:

No summary was provided

Implementation Recommendations:

Consider the draft vision statement, the ideas gathered from the public, and your group's discussion of critical questions. Please recommend two practical, specific strategies or implementation steps that you would recommend to help Staten Island achieve its vision for your topic.

1. Provide funding that will enable the appropriate agencies to protect our natural and recreational parks
2. Enforce existing regulations and laws to prevent the destruction of preserved lands
3. Create a well funded public vehicle for addressing environmental education bringing together advocates, officials and educators
4. Create a well funded public vehicle to explore the possibilities of ecotourism bringing together public and private interests
5. There is a very real felt issue regarding enforcement of wetland regulations vis-à-vis private development. What about a multi-institution Task Force that documents and recommends on this issue?
6. Promote the Island as the place to demonstrate renewable, sustainable technologies. Use Fresh Kills park as a research station and identify other potential opportunities
7. Focus on making our marine resources accessible. Piers and jettys will bring people together as in Baltimore Harbor, SF Harbor, Boston Harbor, and create industry. To bring in recreational for party boats, supplies, dinner cruise, ship repair, etc.
8. South Shore and East Shore beach replacement/replenishment – “eel grass restoration” in Raritan Bay to increase fish population. Bring back marine industries: clamming, oystering, small boat building, charter boats, water taxi's, inland cruise vessel slip

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