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## **I. Priority – *Result to be realized, as expressed by citizens –***

**I want to have clean, healthy neighborhoods with a vibrant sense of community.**

## **II. Indicators of Success – *How the County will know if progress is being made on the result***

### **1. Environmental and Health Index**

Options for this measure are currently being considered by the Vibrant Communities and Thriving Economy Outcome Team for inclusion in this report.

### **2. Citizen Perception of Personal Involvement in Neighborhoods**

This chart shows data by area of the county taken from the Auditor's Office's annual Citizen Survey. It is an average of responses to these three questions:

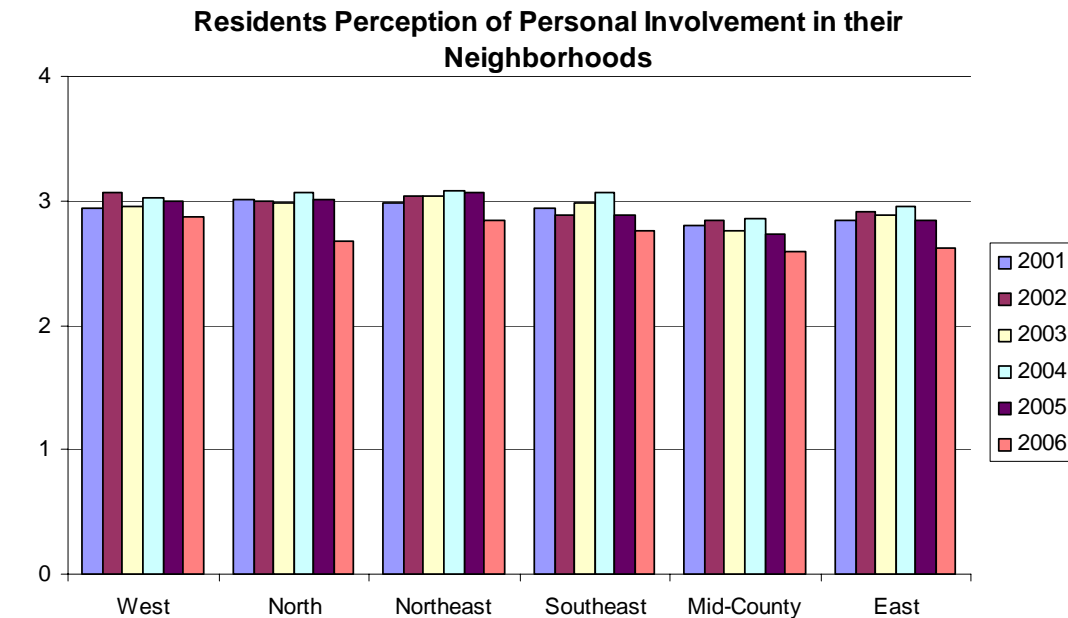
1. Many of my neighbors know me.
2. I can recognize most of the people who live on my block.
3. I regularly stop and talk with the people in my neighborhood.

Responses are reported on a scale of 1-4, with 4 showing the strongest level of agreement with the statement.

### **Personal Involvement in Neighborhoods Index**

There was generally little variation between areas of the county for this index. Residents in Mid-county and East county identify as slightly less personally involved in their neighborhoods than other areas. The score was down slightly in 2006 for each district

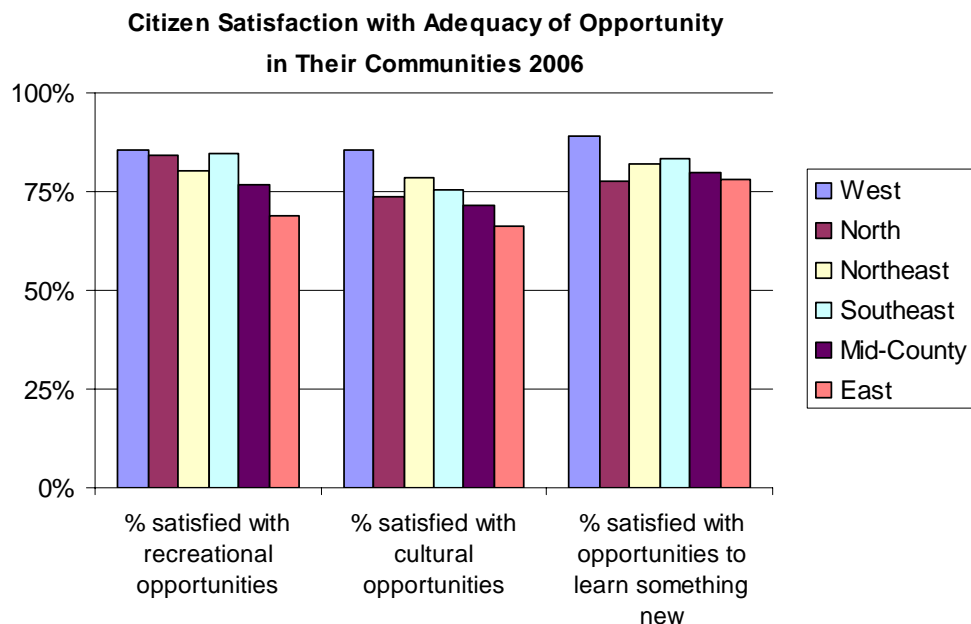
# Vibrant Communities



Source: Multnomah County Auditor's Office Citizen Survey

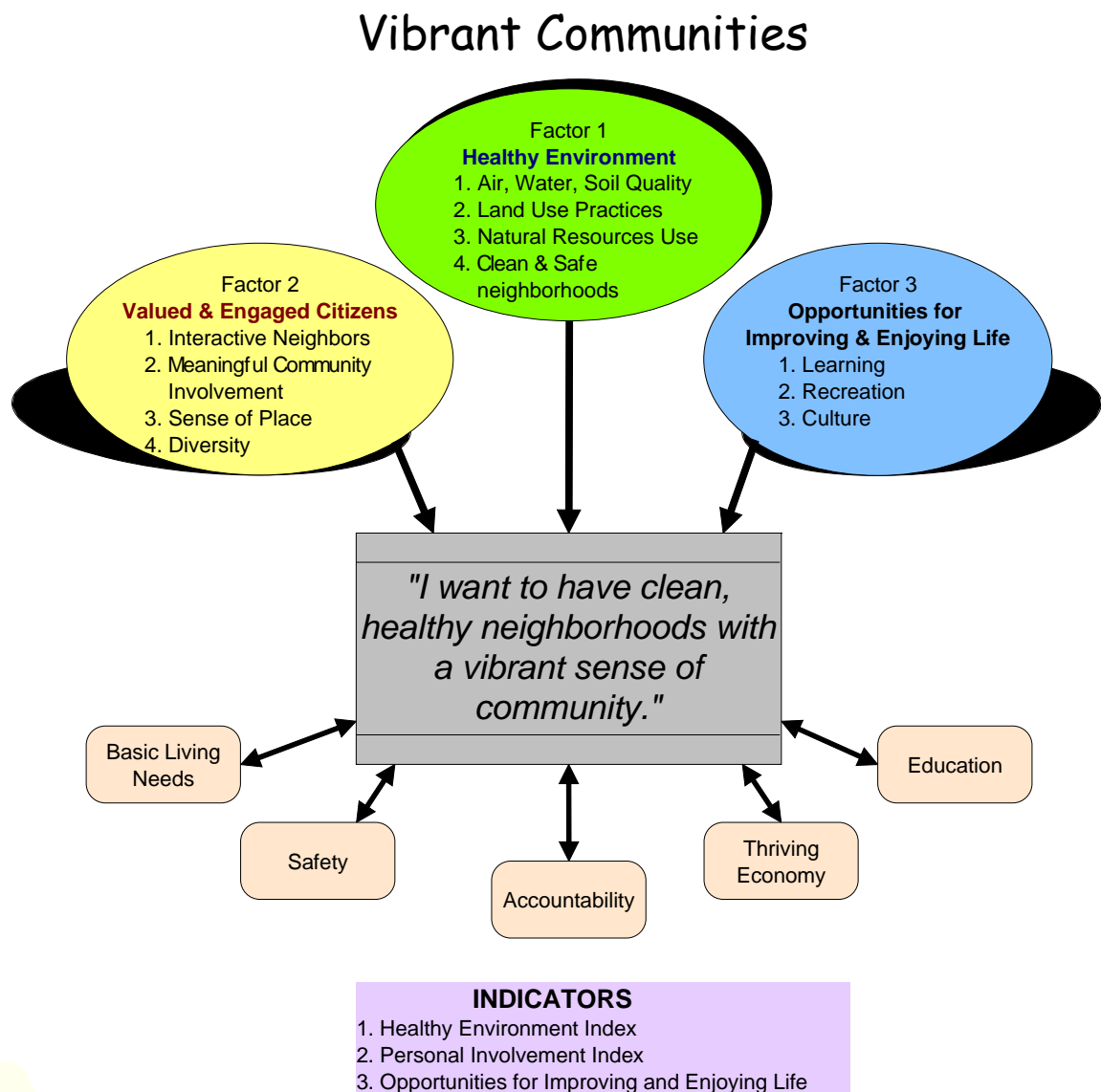
## 3. Citizen Perception of Adequacy of Cultural, Recreational, and Lifelong Learning Opportunities

Beginning in 2005, the annual Citizen Survey asked residents to rate their satisfaction with cultural, recreational, and lifelong learning opportunities in their communities. Respondents were highly satisfied with these opportunities. Generally, residents in West, Northeast, and Southeast noted the highest level of satisfaction on all three questions, with East county noticeably higher on learning opportunities. Residents in North and Mid-county expressed slightly lower levels of satisfaction.



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## III. Map of Key Factors – Cause-effect map of factors that influence/produce the result



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As the FY 2007 Outcome Team reviewed the strategy map, they used the terms “community” and “neighborhood” interchangeably, yet the priority differentiates between clean, healthy neighborhoods and a sense of community. Therefore, they defined the terms and used them as defined throughout this report. The FY2008 Outcome Team concurred with those definitions and continues to use them as defined in this revised report.

In our minds, a “neighborhood” is a physical location – the place people live. The “community” is a group of people with a common connection. Thus, a community could be based on a physical location, but it could also be a community of interests that brings individuals together from different neighborhoods. An individual has one neighborhood but could have multiple communities – all of which contribute to feeling connected and thus experiencing a vibrant sense of community.

The FY2008 team made no changes to the strategy map. We agree with the previous team’s choice of factors and the strong impact of the other priorities on Vibrant Communities as reflected on the map. The map reflects the fact that many of the factors identified by the other five Priority Teams contribute to the relatively broad outcome of *“I want to have clean, healthy neighborhoods with a vibrant sense of community.”* This relationship is represented on the map but with no further work around identifying factors, sub-factors, strategies, or indicators. This map reflects the three major factors that could be considered relatively unique contributors to this outcome.

The idea of measuring vibrancy is fairly new. Most of the evidence did provide consistent insight into the factors that build vibrant communities, but there was minimal guidance as to the relative importance of each individual factor. The model of factor dominance portrayed on the map is described below. We recognize that this dominance selection is at least in part influenced by the values that are manifested in Multnomah County in ways such as environmental awareness, land use decisions, and public support for education and libraries. Those values are the reason that many people choose to live here.

### **Healthy Environment is the dominant factor for clean, healthy neighborhoods.**

The prioritization between Healthy Environment and the second highest factor, Valued and Engaged Citizens, was challenging. Ultimately we determined that the health of the environment is fundamental to the outcome. We are familiar with living in an environment that, with some notable exceptions, is clean and healthy. Careful planning has led to accessible transportation choices; clean air, water and soil; beautiful parks and greenspace (including the largest urban forest in the country) and bike paths. In addition, nuisance control and prevention of health hazards is critical in maintaining clean, healthy neighborhoods.

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## **Valued and engaged citizens are the second most dominant factor for vibrant communities.**

There is substantial evidence in the literature that interactive neighbors, meaningful community involvement, a sense of place and diversity within the population lead to a vibrant sense of community. People who recognize their neighbors and are recognized by them care about what happens to one another. When they feel a sense of place and a sense of belonging to a larger group, they're more likely to care about what happens to that place and those people. Feeling a part of their community and being actively engaged in decisions that directly affect their lives help people develop a sense of responsibility for what goes on in their neighborhoods.

There is further evidence that suggests that providing community places (such as libraries, community centers, and green spaces) where neighbors can interact and actively pursue their common interests also increases their sense of community. By meeting residents' need for human connection, synergies are formed that ultimately result in increased community activity and involvement.

## **Opportunities for improving and enjoying life are the third factor for vibrant communities.**

Learning, recreation and involvement in cultural events are all strong contributors to improving and enjoying life. Residents of a vibrant community have access to educational, cultural, and recreational opportunities that honor diversity and serve their needs from infancy through the retirement years. Providing access to residents across the county by optimizing the use of community facilities, breaking down cultural and economic barriers and ensuring that activities reflect the diverse needs of individuals and neighborhoods will contribute to the community's vibrancy.

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## **IV. Selection Strategies and Request for Offers – *Focused choices to realize results***

### **Strategy #1: Champion a sustainable environment with clean, healthy neighborhoods.**

Multnomah County recognizes that the top primary factor contributing to this priority area is the quality of the environment as it impacts neighborhoods, the places where people live, work, and play. For many residents, the sense of neighborhood and community is strongest in the several block area around their home.

Best management practices for sustainability can reduce the use of resources and energy to prevent the pollution of air, water, and land; to reduce wastes at the source; and to minimize risks to human populations and the environment. A sustainability framework recognizes the relationships among the economy, ecology, and community and requires that all agencies consider these inter-connected issues in their programs and policies. A sustainability framework can provide a means for dealing with the pressures in allocating scarce natural resources among competing needs. Sustainability can also break the cycle of crisis-driven issue management to a systematic approach that integrates environmental concerns with economic and social issues. This type of systematic, collaborative approach may result in better environmental and social outcomes at lower costs.

A community is only able to thrive when basic neighborhood systems are functioning such as the provision of clean water, rodent and pest control, animal services, and other infrastructure systems. As we've seen in the hurricane aftermath of recent months, there is no opportunity for a vibrant community when residents are struggling with basic survival needs. When these needs are consistently met, neighbors can turn their attention to connecting with others in the community and enjoying a sense of pride in the livability of their neighborhood.

Currently, Multnomah County has three primary roles in this effort:

1. As an employer, we can lead by adopting sustainable internal government business practices;
2. As a key stakeholder in the metropolitan area, we can be a regional partner and have a clear, consistent presence in processes where another agency is the lead player.
3. To lead by example and “walk the talk”.

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**We are looking for program offers that:**

- Demonstrate sustainable practices in internal operations to meet policy goals; and as a stakeholder in regional partnerships.
- Support clean, healthy neighborhoods by assisting the public in resolving neighborhood nuisances involving animals and by preventing health hazards.
- Promote innovative, cost effective projects and/or partnerships that lead to clean and healthy neighborhoods.

**Strategy #2: Provide places and promote opportunities for neighbors to connect.**

Community spaces make a substantial contribution to the overall quality of life in any community. Such places create a welcoming atmosphere of accessibility, vitality, and safety. They can connect people with resources that significantly enhance their lives and boost the well-being of the entire community.

In 2000, Harvard published a plan for rebuilding community ties. Among many strategies, the plan underlined the importance of day-to-day interaction among neighbors. Communities need places for residents to enjoy their leisure time, to share beliefs together, receive public services, broaden their knowledge of the world, as well as somewhere they can challenge their minds. Civic spaces where all citizens can meet, interact, access information that is meaningful to them, and develop life skills are essential in weaving the social fabric. Maximize use of community facilities such as parks, places of worship, community centers, schools and libraries as neighborhood assets that make it possible for residents to gather and promote a common identity of shared experiences.

Vibrant communities can benefit from processes that bring people together to explore issues, build solutions and take action. Research has shown that positive day-to-day interaction among neighbors develops understanding between them and leads to a higher sense of community than when people do not have regular contact with their neighbors. Organizations such as the World Bank and Fannie Mae have recognized the crucial role of community identity and “social capital” as critical in solving deep-seated problems such as poverty and housing.

**We are looking for program offers that:**

- Maximize the use of county and community facilities that provide opportunities where neighbors can meet and interact. Emphasis should be to provide easy-to-get-to, ADA accessible locations and/or provide extended hours.
- Provide cross-generational and/or multicultural interaction opportunities in the community.
- Provide a place and appropriate activities for all community members, especially underserved populations, such as; retired persons, people with disabilities, and immigrant communities.

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## **Strategy #3: Promote literacy and a lifetime of learning.**

Opportunities for improving the lives of citizens are important factors in supporting a vibrant community. These include the actions of supporting literacy and lifelong learning.

The connection between adult literacy and a vibrant community are clear: 43% of all adults who read at the lowest level of literacy are living in poverty, compared with only 4% of adults who read at the highest level. In Multnomah County, fully 15% of adults are reading at the lowest level. The county's Poverty Elimination Framework advocates for a skilled workforce, and literacy is critical to the identified goal of moving people from low wage to living wage jobs. Research shows that when older adults have strong literacy skills, they are more likely to be self-sufficient in meeting their basic needs. Literacy programs outside the realm of formal education offer an avenue for learning otherwise closed to many county residents.

Learning throughout life, from the cradle to the grave, is critical in helping people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities to succeed. Lifelong learning is defined as all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence, within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective. It promotes the development of knowledge and competencies that will enable each resident to adapt to the knowledge-based society and actively participate in all spheres of social and economic life, taking more control of his or her future. Learning opportunities should be available to all residents on an ongoing basis, so that each person can have an individual learning pathway, suitable to his or her needs and interests at all stages of life.

### **We are looking for program offers that:**

- Provide literacy education programs, especially in targeted low socio-economic neighborhoods.
- Provide opportunities and resources for life-long learning.
- Promote innovation in recruiting volunteers, mentors and/or businesses in providing literacy and life-long learning activities.

## **Strategy #4: Provide a variety of cultural and recreational opportunities, particularly before and after school.**

An important part of a vibrant community is the activities that citizens can engage in outside of work and school. These cultural and recreational activities make our community a fun place to live, and attractive to businesses. Activities that reflect the diverse needs of individuals and neighborhoods also break down cultural, physical and economic barriers.

Cultural and recreational activities enrich the lives of members of our community and contribute to a community's sense of cultural and social diversity. For example, programs that fund and facilitate after-school arts education programs in schools use

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arts activities to teach tolerance, creative expression, and improve academic performance. Arts and culture programs for youth help provide a critical alternative to delinquent youth behavior.

In addition, research by the organization Fight Crime: Invest in Kids shows that children who regularly attend high-quality out-of-school programs are more likely to be engaged in school and less likely to participate in delinquent or high risk activities such as experimentation with alcohol, drugs and sex. The Seattle Police Chief is quoted in their 2000 report as having said, “It’s a lot cheaper to pay now for after school programs, than to pay later to put kids in jail.” Since peak hours for juveniles to engage in community disturbance crimes are from 3 to 6PM, after-school programs help to prevent crime, as well as teach skills and values. These after school programs (and also before school programs) respond to the need for quality childcare, highlighted in the Early Childhood Framework. Through out-of-school activities, children can develop social skills, improve their academic performance, and establish strong relationships with caring adults.

**We are looking for program offers that:**

- Consistently and visibly support local programs that provide ongoing cultural and recreational opportunities for members of the county’s communities.
- Provide a place and appropriate activities for school-age children during the critical after school hours.