

Conceptualizing Community Vitality: Imagining and Illustrating Sustainable Collaborations for Well-Being

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Abstract

Vital communities are characterized by strong, active, and inclusive relationships between residents, private sector, public sector and civil society organizations that work to foster individual and collective wellbeing. Vital communities are those that are able to cultivate and marshal these relationships in order to create, adapt, and thrive in the changing world and thus improve the wellbeing of citizens.
(Scott, 2010, p. 4)

The Canadian Index of Wellbeing (<https://uwaterloo.ca/canadian-index-wellbeing>), an organization associated with the University of Waterloo, looks beyond the usual measure of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to ask not only how the economy is faring, but also to explore more holistically how the individuals and communities in our country experience well-being. In my 15-20 minute conceptually based presentation, I intend to explore one of the eight domains identified and measured in the Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW): **community vitality**. I will examine how the CIW defines and describes community vitality and explore how this contributes to a broadened understanding of what it means to live well in a way that is sustainable for future generations. To extend my understanding of community vitality, I will look also how the New Economics Forum (<http://www.neweconomics.org>), an organization based in the United Kingdom, measures and advocates for community wellbeing. Finally, I will explore how education becomes central to constructing the collaborations required to imagine and sustain community vitality. Throughout the conceptual descriptions I will draw upon examples from a current and local community initiative, the “Walk Bike Ride Fort Richmond” active transportation project. This local project will offer a portrait of the collaborative processes of community vitality in active negotiation.