Opportunity

The Town of Mansfield, CT received a Sustainable Communities grant from the federal government to provide vision, strategies and tools for the Town to be the 21st century community it wants to be. Facing pressure from an expanding University of Connecticut campus and a deep connection to the landscape, Mansfield wanted an agriculture strategy to be a part of their updated Plan of Conservation and Development. Yellow Wood was included on the project team, led by Goody Clancy, specifically to develop the agriculture strategy.

Approach

Working with the Town’s Agriculture committee, we developed three broad goals for the agriculture strategy, focused on viable agricultural enterprises, positive impacts on the economy, and positive impacts on the environment and human health. We facilitated a “Farmer’s Forum” (using our innovative approach to strategy development and measurement, You Get What You Measure®), in which 44 members of the community came together in a 6-hour workshop to identify indicators of progress towards these goals and then used a systems analysis to determine the key leverage points in the system. This work informed best practices research, stakeholder and expert interviews and the development of a comprehensive agriculture strategy. Farmers, local government officials and community members were convened throughout the process to weigh in on prioritization of strategies, strategy development and action items to ensure the final agriculture strategy was grounded in the realities of the community. A final report provided the Town with an overview of agriculture in Mansfield today, challenges and opportunities and final goals, strategies and actions.

Outcome

The final report provided the Town of Mansfield with a clear path forward. The goals, strategies and actions in the final report focused on ensuring that agriculture in Mansfield is vibrant and able to contribute to the economy. They take into account the state of agriculture in Mansfield today, as well as in the region, and are designed to achieve a shared vision for agriculture in Mansfield over the next 20 years. More than 70 stakeholders were engaged throughout the development of the agriculture strategy. Ongoing community engagement strengthened relationships within the community and led to new accomplishments and progress before the final strategy was even delivered.

Client

The Town of Mansfield is a small Connecticut community home to a large University of Connecticut campus. (http://www.mansfieldct.gov/)