

CASE STUDY: MONTCLAIR, NEW JERSEY

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Overview of the community

Montclair is an upper-middle class suburban community of approximately 38,000 people located approximately 12 miles west of New York City. More precisely, it is an urban suburb, as described in a 1996 cover story in *New York Magazine*. In that article the township was referred to as the Upper West Side of New Jersey and as more families from Brooklyn moved to the township in the last several years it also earned the distinction as the Park Slope of New Jersey. Part of the attractiveness to New Yorkers is the easy commute to midtown Manhattan. By bus or train the door-to-door commute for many takes less than thirty minutes.

The median family income, according to the 1990 census, is \$65,842 with over one-third of the residents possessing college degrees. There are neighborhoods of extreme wealth within the community, where homes cost upward of one million dollars, sit on three quarters of an acre, with an average property tax bill of \$26,000 a year. There are also neighborhoods of poverty within this community, which are comprised of poorer housing stock and multi-family dwellings. The homes in these neighborhoods were once home to the laborers and domestic workers who helped build Montclair and today they sell for, on average, \$175,000.

Montclair is a community that prides itself on its diversity; 30 percent of the population is African-American, while over 52 percent of the public high school students are African American. In the public schools it is not unusual to find the child of a Wall Street banker or a Pulitzer Prize winning author seated next to a child being raised by a grandparent whose only source of income is a small, monthly, social security check. Once an extremely conservative

community, Montclair is now a Democratic stronghold in Essex County with 68 percent of the registered voters supporting Clinton in the 1996 Presidential election and 72 percent supporting Gore in 2000.

Montclair has a council-manager form of government. The current manager was hired in 1994 after several years of transition and turnover in township managers. The Mayor and council, four ward and two at-large representatives who were in office when the performance measurement project began, were elected in May of 1996 with 46 percent of the voters (7,598 citizens voted in the municipal election) supporting their platform of “no new taxes.” As a result of this platform, budget negotiations and hearings took on a confrontational tone as the Mayor insisted on achieving his goal of “flat,” or more precisely stable, taxes. His position angered many homeowners who were willing to pay a little more in property taxes each year to ensure the quality of municipal services and the quality of the public schools. Municipal employees were equally frustrated as they were, and continue to be, expected to do more with less. The Mayor insisted there was a strong silent majority who elected him and wanted taxes to remain stable, although, this “silent majority” rarely appeared at public meetings to make their preferences known.

The community has a long and well-documented history of citizen participation and involvement, mostly at the grass roots level, and for this reason was selected to participate in the Sloan-funded project. There are ten officially recognized neighborhood organizations in the township, with several in existence for over forty years. There are literally dozens of “unofficial” community organizations, some small and socially oriented such as a block associations, others much larger and issue oriented. When a specific issue develops in the community, such as radon contaminated soil or a proposed rail connection to midtown

Manhattan, a citizen group forms to address it. There is an alphabet soup of citizen organizations: RANT-Residents Against New Jersey Transit; TUF, Tax Us Fairly; CUTS, Citizens United for Taxes and the Schools. When the issue is resolved, or disappears from the headlines for some other reason, so too does the citizen group formed to address that issue.

Organized around citizen concerns, as well as townwide issues, these citizen groups often take a results-oriented approach to problem solving. Frustrated by the incessant noise of leafblowers, citizens organized a petition drive, initiated a referendum, and township residents voted to limit the use of leaf blowers. Angered by the township's proposal to eliminate a highly successful public pre-kindergarten program, hundreds of parents organized a petition drive, packed the council chambers and Board of Education meetings on a weekly basis, and wrote compassionate pleas to elected officials, Board of Education members and the editor of the local newspaper. In spite of their passion and determination this group was less successful than the leafblower group; the governing body voted to eliminate the public pre-school program in 1996. As local author, Jon Katz, explained, Montclair is a "community where you can walk on your street alone, unmolested at two in the morning, but where you need to carry a gun to a Board of Education meeting."

Citizens in Montclair have the opportunity to serve on twenty-six different citizen advisory committees, commissions and boards ranging from parks and recreation to senior citizens to parking to civil rights and planning. Some advisory committees, deemed more prestigious than others, have long waiting lists, while others consistently seek new members. Several citizen advisory committees assist the Township in planning and budgeting. The township, library and Board of Education each have their own citizen budget advisory

committee. There is a township planning board, board of adjustment and joint capital improvement committee.

The early stages of the project

The citizen-driven, results-oriented assessment of government performance project began in January 1997 with numerous, informal, meetings with citizens, citizen groups, elected officials and municipal managers to develop an understanding of two critical aspects of the township:

- ? How do citizens, municipal managers and elected officials communicate and interact with each other?
- ? How do citizens, municipal managers and elected officials determine the Township of Montclair is doing a good job providing services?

An assessment of the existing processes of citizen participation was conducted to develop an understanding of how citizens interacted with elected officials and municipal managers. This assessment included document review, interviews, focus group discussions and a non-representative survey of citizens. One-on-one interviews were held with each of the seven council representatives, seven department directors, the municipal clerk, township manager, and the assistant to the township manager. The broad topic areas discussed included: citizen participation, citizen perception, performance assessment, including the role of the media, goal setting and decision-making.

Six focus group discussions were held with over one hundred citizens participating. Citizens were asked to discuss the ways they interacted with the township administration and governing body; their frustrations and satisfactions with the level and quality of interaction; their reasons for getting involved; and how they know the township is doing a good job. Focus group

discussions with citizen advisory committee members were held apart from those with “average” citizens not serving on council appointed committees.

We started this phase of the project at a time when trust in the local government to do the right thing was at an all time low. There were numerous questions about the legitimacy and representation of existing forms of citizen participation. Citizens were frustrated by the failure of elected officials to listen and respond to the genuine concerns of the community. Citizens who were interested in our project were not interested in performance measurement. They were interested in responsive government and they thought that we would somehow act as “marriage counselors” and help citizens and elected officials communicate more effectively.

The appointment process to serve on the 26 different advisory committees in town was being challenged. The challenge to this process began when a very well respected member of the Civil Rights Commission was not re-appointed. Citizens felt this decision was politically motivated because this commission member had publicly criticized the Mayor and council, and it was assumed he had political aspirations of his own. The elected officials denied this, and other accusations, stating there is a democratic appointment process in the township. According to the governing body, the individual was not re-appointed because he had served on the Civil Rights Commission for several years and they felt it was time to let other citizens, many whose names had been on the waiting list for years, serve.

The legitimacy of the appointment process and representation on all of the township committees and commissions was questioned as a result of this decision. Public debate went on for months at council meetings and in the newspaper. The debate extended beyond the failure to reappoint this individual to the commission to a broader debate about participatory democracy. In the end the Mayor and council stood by their decision not to re-appoint this individual.

Angered and disillusioned, executive members of the Civil Rights Commission resigned in protest and formed a new, “unofficial” Civil Rights Coalition in the township.

At the same time, some elected officials were questioning the representativeness of grass roots and nonprofit organization participation. Elected officials would say that a show of strength at a council meeting, or a collection of petitions, does not necessarily mean that most residents support a group’s position. Elected officials expressed concern that the same handful of residents showed up at all the council meetings and their concerns tended to shape the dialogue. So, while citizen participation is alive and vigorous in Montclair, the project started in a climate of questioning of participation from within and outside the government. As a result, most of the discussions and interviews during the first phase of the Sloan Project were tempered by a lack of trust in the elected officials to do the right thing.

Assessment Phase

During the assessment phase we learned that citizen input was rarely sought in the planning or decision making process, nor was citizen input sought in the establishment of goals and objectives for the township or for the various municipal departments. Citizens were involved after the fact, to validate a decision already made, or they found themselves serving on official township committees but having no voice in the process.

Citizens who were appointed to serve on official advisory committees felt underutilized. Many stated their opinions were never sought. Some were frustrated by the lack of response they received to formally submitted reports and recommendations. For example, when the governing body requested detailed reports from the environmental advisory committee on recycling and composting, the committee responded with comprehensive and detailed reports. The governing

body, however, failed to acknowledge the reports or respond to the committees' recommendations.

As much as the citizens serving on the committees complained of being underutilized, the elected officials also expressed a concern that citizen committees were not effectively utilized. Part of this problem was attributed to the fact that the goals and objectives of the citizen advisory committees were not clearly articulated, nor were the committees given specific tasks or activities to accomplish.

The preliminary findings from our initial assessment indicated citizen participation in Montclair varied depending on the citizens' relationship to the governing body. Citizens who were appointed to serve on township committees participated predominantly through methods we categorized as "governmental process." That is, they relied on the existing processes of attending council, board and committee meetings. They provided expertise to the council in the form of advice, official reports and recommendations, and in some cases draft ordinances. These citizens saw themselves as co-producers of government services, rather than customers or clients of municipal services.

Citizens not officially part of the institutionalized process of participation interacted with elected officials and municipal managers quite differently. They relied predominately on methods of interaction we identified as "grass roots" efforts. That is, they organized and rallied their neighbors, keeping their circle of friends and neighbors informed of key issues. In some cases, they circulated petitions and collected signatures, took legal action, if warranted, and applied pressure through the electoral process when dissatisfied with the performance of elected officials. These citizens saw themselves as customers or clients of government services.

While citizens participated most frequently through official government channels and through grass roots organizing, elected officials and municipal managers interacted with citizens through informal, personal contacts. Elected officials valued the personal contacts made at community events, religious services or a casual stroll through one of the town's five business districts. Personal contacts for municipal managers and elected officials were more often than not negative, mostly phone calls and letters from individual citizens complaining about the quality of a particular service.

Citizen committee members were frustrated by the lack of responsive feedback. When they sought answers, or requested information, it took entirely too long for someone to get back to them. To some extent this frustration was created by the fact that citizens did not have a designated contact person for information. A great deal of time and effort was wasted in trying to identify the source of certain information. When citizens provided expert advice in the form of official reports, which had been requested by the governing body, the reports were often not acknowledged. Interestingly, committee members expressed frustration over municipal budget constraints, which they acknowledged as limiting the Township's ability to provide quality services. Citizens not serving on council-appointed committees often spoke of their property tax burden, but never mentioned budget constraints or the impact a lower tax levy would have on the community. These perspectives highlight the different perceptions citizens had of themselves. Committee members saw themselves as co-producers of government services, whereas the "average citizen" saw themselves as a client or customer.

Council members and committee members both expressed concern that the township's committees were not effectively utilized. As they see it, a tremendous amount of citizen expertise and time is being wasted. There is confusion surrounding the responsibility of citizens serving on

these committees. Are members of the cable television advisory committee expected to film town council or board of education meetings? Are members of the beautification committee expected to clean the central business district? The roles and responsibility of township committees and committee members are not clearly articulated, nor is their relationship to the governing body clearly defined.

Committee members expressed concern over the politics of the appointment process and the lack of procedures for removing someone if they failed to attend meetings or otherwise failed to meaningfully participate in the process. In addition, citizens felt advisory committees should be more systematically involved in establishing goals and objectives for the Township. Many people (council and committee members) mentioned the value of an October 1996 meeting that brought together the executive members of the various citizen advisory committees and council representatives to discuss the township's strategic plan.

The findings of this preliminary assessment indicated that although there are frustrations with the quality and level of citizen involvement in this community, formal and informal citizen participation mechanisms are very much a part of this community. We felt we had a strong foundation on which to build this project.

Performance Measurement, Strategic Planning, and "Public Vision"

The entire citizen-driven performance measurement project was a tough sell in the beginning. We found it difficult to keep people focused on performance measurement. Performance measurement is not something that generates excitement, passion and commitment, especially from people not familiar with the concept, who therefore do not understand its value. As a result, we spent a great deal of time reinforcing the goals and objectives of this project to citizens, elected officials and municipal managers. We continually reminded people that the

overall project goal was to involve community stakeholders in assessing and improving government performance, and in influencing how government services could be made more responsive to community needs and priorities. In support of that goal our aim was to have:

1. Citizens intimately involved in identifying issues and measures of performance.
2. Citizens use performance indicators in public decision processes.
3. A partnership built among citizens, local government, and Rutgers University.
4. Participating citizens, elected officials and government administrators learn from each other and from related project across the country; and
5. The project develop a long-term institutional capacity to support citizen participation.

The challenge of getting citizens and municipal managers to focus on performance measures was compounded by the fact that the township did not have a strong performance measurement history. For the Township government as a whole, performance measurement was a relatively new concept when this project first began, having been introduced a few years earlier through a “program budget” format that the Township Manager had introduced. Separate from the budget process, several departments (e.g., Police) maintained their own manual or automated databases that provided useful performance information. But, overall, the availability of useful data varied by department. For the most measures were subjective.

The Montclair Township government only had limited experience with performance measurement and strategic planning. The Township Council developed a “strategic plan” called “One Montclair” when it took office in July 1996. This was largely a document stressing process goals to make Township government more efficient and effective, that included the development of performance measures for Township departments. It was not, and could not be expected to be, a strategic plan for the community. Other official forms of long-range planning

in Montclair included a state-mandated six-year review of Montclair's Master Plan (primarily land use), and the work of the Joint Capital Improvement Advisory Committee, which involved appointed citizen volunteers and officials of the municipality, the Board of Education, and the Public Library.

In 1997, the Township developed its budget in "program" form, in addition to the state-required line-item form, that included goals and objectives for all department programs. However, most objectives were not connected to quantified performance indicators and data. But, it represented a start in the direction of performance measurement. Also, most departments routinely collected quantitative data that was not reflected in the program budget, but may be useful for performance measurement.

Another opportunity in Montclair that we were able to build upon was a privately-organized November 1995 "visioning" initiative called "Montclair 2020," in which several public officials participated, along with approximately 150 residents selected by the organizers to be widely representative of the community. Montclair 2020 produced a list of long-term goals and potential projects; a vision for the community in the year 2020. There was anecdotal evidence of its influence on public and private initiatives in Montclair, however, people involved in Montclair 2020 chose not to develop a formal follow-up mechanism or institutional base for implementing the goals. As a result, a little over a year later, when our project started, several Montclair 2020 participants expressed frustration at the lack of systematic follow-up.

Additional Background: A Community with Fiscal Pressures.

We came to Montclair at a difficult financial time for the local government entities that serve the town. Like most New Jersey communities, Montclair is heavily dependent on local property taxes to pay for its municipal government, its public library, and its public schools.

Property tax rates had risen for several years, after a period of up-and-down volatility. A newly elected Mayor and most of the incoming Township Council had campaigned on not increasing taxes. But significant commercial vacancies in town, and a spate of appeals to reduce assessments, had caused steady erosion in the local tax base. Though recovery in the residential real estate market had been strong, property tax assessment lagged behind home sales, and key commercial vacancies persisted, so “ratables” fell again in 1997, creating a need to raise tax rates without cost increases. Yet, there were also cost pressures such as rising wages in collective bargaining agreements, increased enrollment in the public schools, and a greatly expanded library. The need for difficult decisions led to a protracted budget process, with the Township Council not passing a final budget until June, almost halfway through the fiscal year. That budget included assumptions about services that would be curtailed (e.g., commercial refuse) and fees assessed (e.g., for burglar alarms) which were later not fully enacted when it came time for the Council to authorize changes. So as the fiscal year was coming to a close, the municipal government was still making adjustments to keep the 1997 budget in balance. The Board of Education budget was mired in similar difficulties, which included controversial service reductions even as the budget rose.

Montclair’s residents have a wide range of needs and capacities. Montclair is racially mixed (about 30% African American and 69% white) and economically diverse, with census districts that range in median household income from only \$18,000 to over \$200,000. Montclair has kept much of its aging population, for a broad generational mix, but many elderly are finding it harder to manage rising property taxes. Montclair has traditionally provided a high level of local service, including an Arborist and crew to care for an estimated 30,000 street and park trees, providing a lush urban canopy that is rare for New Jersey. The Township also has a small

“Cultural Affairs Division” to support local festivals and assist members of the artistic and cultural community, who are an important part of the local economy. Montclair also still provides costly backyard “set out, set-back” refuse collection. Until late 1997, it provided commercial refuse collection without extra fees. And until fall 1997, the Montclair Board of Education provided free public pre-kindergarten to all residents who wanted it. The phasing out of free public pre-K, with a plan for a non-profit pre-K with sliding scale tuition starting in fall 1998, was one of the most controversial decisions of the year.

In the 1990s, Montclair limited its service cuts, in part, by being one of the more entrepreneurial local governments in New Jersey. Through the largest inter-local agreement in the state, Montclair provides fire services to a neighboring community. Montclair also provides public health services to four nearby towns through an inter-local contract. These agreements allow Montclair to maintain a higher level of public health and fire protection for its own residents as well as its neighbors. But recent cost increases and tax base pressures have outstripped the town’s entrepreneurial gains. Very recently, Montclair started taking a new look at how the municipality, school board, and public library can do more to economize by sharing services. The three entities held a public “summit” meeting, hosted by the Mayor, in December 1997, to formally kickoff the search for increased shared services.

The fiscal pressures in Montclair create a heightened level of tension both within the government, and among citizens, many of whom outspokenly opposed service cuts, while many others opposed tax and fee increases. The budget constraints and opposing viewpoints on how to address the revenue shortfall tempered the public atmosphere when we started the project.

Opportunities & Challenges Identified Early In the Project

We gained a wealth of useful information from the situational assessment that helped us in our early planning, and guided our efforts throughout the project. Five of the most significant challenges and opportunities identified through the situational assessment are described below.

1. Citizen participation challenge: The public questioning of citizen participation provided a challenge concerning how to organize participation for our project. We did not want the project to appear to be “captive” of grass roots activists, non-profit organizations, or people with ties to elected officials, which led us to take a middle ground between “grass roots” and “official” participation. Although we eventually wanted to establish Township recognition for an “official” citizen committee, during the first year we worked with a loosely-formed “task force” of citizens recruited from a variety of sources, including grass roots groups, non-profit organizations, official council-appointed citizen committees, and members of volunteer committees that support public events. A few of our participants said they had never been active in municipal affairs, but saw our project as a positive way to get involved while avoiding much of the political bickering they felt occurs with many other participation processes. Our meetings were open to all who wanted to come. Our efforts received significant coverage from the local newspaper, *The Montclair Times*, so citizens who actually read the paper knew what this project was about and knew when meetings were taking place. We wanted to demonstrate the value of citizen-driven performance measurement, and develop a high level of trust in the community, inside and outside government, before formalizing the participation approach.

2. Challenge of addressing both “outcome” and “value” issues: The project was designed to help citizens influence how public performance could be made more responsive to community needs. That suggested an emphasis on measuring, for example, aspects of physical conditions, public safety, economic conditions, student achievement, or other “community outcomes.” However, as it became clear through focus groups held as part of the situational assessment, many Montclair citizens were as concerned with getting good value for their tax dollars as they were concerned with improving conditions in the community. They see their quality of life influenced not only by community outcomes, but also by the affordability of local government. As the project progressed, it became a challenge to ensure that both “outcome” and “value” issues were addressed.

3. The Council’s strategic plan offered an opportunity for initial project legitimacy. The Township Council’s strategic plan, “One Montclair,” proved useful for gaining initial municipal support for this project. At the outset, we made it clear to municipal managers and council members that development of citizen-driven performance measures would help achieve the plan’s goals of establishing measures of municipal performance and improving customer service. Not that all of the members of the governing body were enthusiastic about this project. Several, including the Mayor, thought the project had the potential to embarrass them and make it look like they weren’t governing effectively. They were also concerned that our project would give legitimacy to a handful of citizens who were vocal critics of the governing process in Montclair.

- 4. The Township’s program budget provided an opportunity to influence operational plans and decisions.** While local performance measurement experience was not long or strong, existing department performance data provided a starting point for the project to build upon. As the Township was committed to program budgeting, the program budget offered a useful, strategic avenue both to establish better performance measures, and to build citizen concerns into the budget process and the departments’ annual operational plans in a measurable way.

- 5. Montclair 2020 provided an opportunity to root the project in positive, long-term community aspirations.** Although some Montclair 2020 participants were frustrated with the lack of systematic follow-up, we saw Montclair 2020 as an opportunity to give the project greater meaning in the community. If we could forge a link with Montclair 2020, we could help establish our project’s legitimacy, and could help focus performance measurement on higher-level “visionary” goals to build longer-term, deeper interest in citizen-driven performance assessment.

Project Strategies, Relationships, and Citizen Processes

Flexible Plans and Strategies

After the situational assessment, we developed an action plan for the rest of the first year. We were flexible, and changed our plans in response to challenges and opportunities. For example, ideally we wanted to link with Montclair 2020 as the project began, to provide visionary goals to guide citizen development of performance measures from the start. However,

leaders of Montclair 2020 showed only limited interest until our project was well underway, and we had established a visible presence in the community. In the meantime, we did not stop and wait until the link could be forged. We worked with citizens and municipal managers to develop ideas for performance measures, organized around service and issue themes, more than goals. Eventually, we did link with Montclair 2020, leading to a “Goals-Setting Weekend” in October 1997, in which citizens contributed to the development of six “aspirational goals” for Montclair. At that time we made a strategic shift in organizing performance measurement with citizens and the Township, using the aspirational goals as the main guide, while still drawing on the performance measurement ideas developed by citizens earlier in the project. (See section on aspirational goals for additional information on the goal-setting process.)

Relationship with Montclair’s Local Government Entities

We proposed the Montclair project as a partnership among the municipal government, its citizens, and Rutgers’ National Center for Public Productivity (NCPPI). We made a presentation to the Township Council in December 1996, and gained their support. For the situational assessment, we individually interviewed the Mayor, all other Council Members, the Township Manager, the Municipal Clerk, and all department heads. We maintained close contact with the Township Manager, and we interacted with the Council and department managers at several key steps.

This project focused solely on municipal government. We did not attempt to develop measures for the Public Library or the Board of Education, nor did we anticipate working with Essex County. When we started, the Library was in the midst of a major expansion. The Board of Education proved a more difficult case. Public education is of great concern in Montclair, with many citizens passionately involved on all sides of controversial issues. Citizens strongly

support the town's integration approach, started over 20 years ago, in which neighborhood schools were replaced by choice, "magnet schools," and busing. Costs and taxes (schools use 52 percent of property taxes) are involved in the main disputes, including what services the schools can afford to provide, how to respond to recent falling test scores, and whether taxes should be raised to assure high-quality programs. Many residents stated that if we didn't examine schools, our project would be irrelevant. Our response was to hold off examining schools for at least the first project year. We didn't want the project to be overwhelmed by school issues before we were able to demonstrate the value of citizen-driven performance assessment. We also didn't want to get mired in school controversies that stirred local passions before our measurement and citizen participation approaches were recognized as credible and objective. Ultimately, we decided not to include education in our project.

Types of Meetings and Group Processes for Citizen Participation

Our meetings with Montclair citizens took several forms. Generally, each meeting involved elements of one or more of the following:

- ? *Structured focus groups*, primarily used during the situational assessment.
- ? *Workshops*, with elements of training, role playing to view the town from multiple perspectives, and structured idea generation techniques (e.g., to identify goals and performance indicators).
- ? *Information, feedback, and discussion sessions*: e.g., to obtain citizen interpretations of findings, stimulate "civic conversations," develop consensus among citizens and managers:
- ? *Outreach meetings*, in which we attended other groups' meetings to present the project and "test" interim results, became particularly important to ensure representation of a broader range of citizens than those who would take the extra time to come to our meetings.

? *Planning meetings*, e.g., to begin planning a citizen survey.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS, PRODUCTS, AND OBSERVATIONS

We formed a working partnership with Montclair citizens, the municipal government, and the NCPP team, leading to four main accomplishments. This partnership:

- ? Demonstrated that citizens can work effectively with performance issues and select potential performance indicators;
- ? Developed citizen-driven “Aspirational Goals” for Montclair;
- ? Organized a group of citizens interested in conducting a citizen survey, and collected citizen ideas for survey questions related to each aspirational goal;
- ? Analyzed municipal department objectives based on the aspirational goals, and sharpened indicators for performance reporting and developed 1998 program budget objectives.

Demonstration that citizens can work effectively with performance issues and select potential performance indicators: From the start of the project, we found that if we structured focus groups, workshops, and meetings carefully, Montclair citizens could intelligently identify and discuss issues of government performance. This started to become clear in the focus groups we conducted for the situational assessment, in which 77 citizens gave us detailed information on, for example, how they interacted with the Township government, and how they decided whether services were well-performed. In feedback meetings with citizens who attended the focus groups, we found them helpful in interpreting draft findings. We summarized our findings from citizen focus groups, feedback meetings, and other “situational assessment” sources in our first public product, a six-page “Preliminary Report to the Township of Montclair” which we

presented to the Township Council. The preliminary report contained highlights from the situational assessment, including selected quotes of citizens in the focus groups.

Citizens moved to a new level of participation when several of them helped present initial findings at a “kickoff meeting” in May, attended by elected officials, Township managers, and over 50 Montclair citizens. For the last hour of the kickoff meeting, several citizens helped facilitate four discussion groups to “start civic conversations” about assessing Township services. The discussions were organized around four “service performance groups”:

- ? Public Health and Safety (e.g., Police, Fire, Health and Safety Code Enforcement);
- ? Infrastructure, Development, and Environment (e.g., Public Works, Planning, Parks);
- ? Citizen Services (e.g., Recreation, Cultural Programs, Senior Services, Human Services);
- ? Administrative Services (e.g., Clerk, Finance, Township Manager).

Approximately a dozen Montclair citizens attended a special workshop in early June which served as useful “practice” for workshops that soon followed. Approximately thirty-five citizens worked in the four “service performance groups” to identify key performance issues and initial ideas for performance indicators. An all-day workshop was conducted for municipal department heads, to ground them in measurement principles and prepare them to meet with citizens. We completed our June 1997 activities with a series of meetings between citizens who identified measurement ideas and the department heads, to develop initial “consensus” performance indicators for each service performance group. (Based on citizen interest and manager schedules, in the citizen-department workshops “public health services” were shifted to the “Citizen Services” group from “Public Health and Safety,” which became the “Public Safety” group.) The citizens, well-prepared from previous workshops, held their own in the meetings

with department heads. The session on public safety broke down into a predominantly “defensive discussion,” and was less productive than the other service performance discussions, although some consensus ideas on measures of “prevention” emerged. It became clear we would have to work with the uniformed services on developing a higher level of trust with us and our citizen processes. However, for the other groups, we were able to demonstrate that Montclair citizens could work effectively on performance issues and participate in selecting performance indicators. We documented the results of these sessions in a list of “Initial Citizen ‘Working Performance Themes and Indicators’ ” shown in Exhibit I. As noted later in this case study, we were able to develop greater trust with uniformed services, and as a result, a variety of public safety measures were added.

EXHIBIT IV-1: Initial Citizens' "Working Performance Themes & Indicators" (P. 1 of 3)

Performance Measurement Ideas & Indicators Identified in Meetings of June 23–26, 1997
"Additional Suggestions" cited below were added by NCPP/Rutgers on review of meeting notes.

CROSS-CUTTING THEMES (Emerg ed in several groups' discussions.)

? **Improving Communications:**

Need better citizen knowledge of services: Township, private, county, etc.

Need feedback from citizens (e.g., surveys) and to citizens (e.g., service news & information).

? **Value:** Number and value of properties off tax roles, and Township revenue lost as a result.
Additional Suggestion: Progress of Township effort to save money and raise revenue.

? **Geographic Considerations** (can help address distribution of need and service equity):
Many measures from each group would be useful to report by geographic districts of some kind.

? **Encouraging volunteerism and civic activity:** Suggestions:
Number of active volunteers and volunteer hours at specified programs and activities.
Percent of residents who say they spend at least N hours per month on specified volunteer work.

CITIZEN SERVICES PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

Theme: Maintaining Montclair's legacy of cultural and arts activity.

HOW MANY PARTICIPANTS AND DIVERSE ACTIVITIES ARE THERE? e.g.:

- ? Number of cultural performances each year;
- ? Number of different cultures represented in performances (diversity measure);
- ? Attendance at cultural performances and events (public and private; by type of event);
- ? Number of arts groups in Montclair;
- ? Number of artists in Montclair (living and/or working in Montclair).

Additional Suggestions: PERCEPTIONS, SATISFACTION, ATTRACTING VISITORS, e.g.:
Percentage of residents who perceive of Montclair as a center of cultural and arts activity;
Percentage of residents (or of participants) who are satisfied with the arts and cultural programs currently accessible to them in Montclair.

Number of people from outside Montclair who attend Montclair culture & arts activities.

Theme: Enhancing the lives of Montclair's elderly and handicapped populations.

SIZE AND LIVING STATUS OF THE ELDERLY POPULATION, e.g.:

Percentage (and number) of township population over 65;

- ? Percentage of elderly residents living in long-term care facilities;
- ? Percentage of elderly residents living in their own homes.

SIZE OF HANDICAPPED POPULATION, AND MEASURES OF ACCESSIBILITY, e.g.:

- ? Percentage (and number) of township population physically challenged;
- ? Percent of handicapped citizens rating buildings and programs accessible to them.

SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY, AND THEIR PARTICIPATION & SATISFACTION, e.g.:

- ? Number of recreation programs (public & private, including non-profits) by type & location;
- ? Number of elderly participating in recreational services;
- ? Number of elderly riding township seniors' bus;

? Percent of senior bus users (or of all seniors) satisfied with transportation service.

(Interest also expressed in Health Department services, but not enough time to discuss.)

EXHIBIT IV-1: Initial Citizens' "Working Performance Themes & Indicators"

COMMUNITY SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Theme: Preserving a healthy urban forest and adequate, well-maintained parks.

NUMBER AND HEALTH OF TREES IN MONTCLAIR, e.g.:

? Numbers of trees: Street (shade) trees; park trees; new trees planted; diseased/damaged trees.

? Percent of trees that are healthy.

CONDITIONS IN TOWNSHIP PARKS, e.g.:

? Percent of residents (or park users) who rate physical conditions as satisfactory (survey);

? Percent of park equipment and facilities rated in satisfactory condition (trained observations);

? Number of days per year in which specific parks are overcrowded;

? Safety record of parks and park facilities (e.g., number of accidents involving members of the public; number of reported crimes in parks);

? Percent of park facilities (by type) considered accessible by handicapped people.

? Fees and revenue for park activities: Revenue raised; Amount of fee, by type of activity.

Theme: Maintaining the aesthetics of Montclair.

CONDITIONS OF HOUSING AND PRIVATE PROPERTY, e.g.:

? Number and percent of housing units not in compliance with housing code (multi-family; single family);

? Number of outstanding zoning violations;

? Number and percent of housing vacancies.

Additional Suggestions: MEASURES OF PERCEPTION AND SATISFACTION, e.g.:

? Percent of residents who feel the physical conditions in their neighborhood are good;

? Percent of residents who are pleased with how their neighborhood looks.

Theme: Enhancing and protecting Montclair's business environment.

BUSINESS STABILITY AND GROWTH, e.g.:

? Number and percent of retailers in business in Montclair for more than 5 years; 10 years.

? Number of new businesses in Montclair each year.

? Additional Suggestion: Number of businesses who close or leave Montclair each year.

VITALITY OF MONTCLAIR BUSINESS DISTRICTS, e.g.:

? Number and percent of square feet of business space (retail, other) that is vacant;

? Number of different kinds of retail services available in each business district;

? Number and percent of prospective retailers who consider Montclair (e.g., make inquiries of EDC or Chamber of Commerce) who choose to locate (or NOT to locate) in Montclair.

Theme: Improve Parking.

PARKING AVAILABILITY, CAPACITY, CONDITION, AND SAFETY, e.g.:

- ? Number of spaces from alternate sources (e.g., school & church lots) available in peak hours;
- ? Number of crimes committed in Township lots;
- ? Percent of citizens (or parking lot users) who rate lot lighting adequate, lots clean;
- ? Additional Suggestion: Average total number of spaces available in peak hours.

EXHIBIT IV-1: Initial Citizens' "Working Performance Themes & Indicators"

Theme: Preserving our public infrastructure.

PHYSICAL CONDITIONS AND PERCEPTIONS OF CONDITIONS, e.g.:

(Note on first two: Township responsible for streets & curbs; Property owners for sidewalks.)

- ? Percent of citizens satisfied with the condition of streets and curbs in their neighborhood;
- ? Percent satisfied with the condition of sidewalks in their neighborhood;
- ? Percent of streets rated clean by trained observers;
- ? Trained observer ratings of physical conditions of streets and roads;
- ? Percent of citizens satisfied with the level of street (a) cleanliness; or (b) rideability.

Additional Suggestion: MEETING A CAPITAL REPAIR/REPLACEMENT SCHEDULE:

- ? Percent of major infrastructure components in service more than N years after their rated lifetime without replacement or capital overhaul (by type, e.g., sewer, water, bridge, road).

PUBLIC SAFETY

Theme: Keeping a safe and healthy Montclair.

PREVENTION AND TREATMENT, e.g.:

- ? Number of active neighborhood watch groups; number of participants on them.
- ? Number of citizens participating in fire safety programs;
- ? Number of graduates from the DARE program.
- ? Additional Suggestion: Percent of DARE graduates who are drug and alcohol free one year after graduating.

Other public safety themes considered important, but no consensus reached on how to measure them.

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

Theme: Citizen satisfaction and service quality.

HOW SATISFIED ARE CITIZENS THAT SERVICES MEET THEIR PRIORITIES?

Suggestions, e.g.:

- ? Percent of citizens satisfied with Township services (overall and by service);
- ? Percent of citizens who feel Township services are reasonably targeted at important public needs and priorities.

Additional Suggestions: SATISFACTION WITH SERVICE TRANSACTIONS, e.g.:

- ? Percent of users of complaint-response system who rate Township's response satisfactory;
- ? Point-of-service comment cards: Percent who respond service was satisfactory or better.

Theme: Convenient hours and modes of service accessibility.

HOW MANY SERVICES ARE AVAILABLE IN "OFF HOURS" OR THROUGH ALTERNATIVE MEANS, AND HOW MANY TAKE ADVANTAGE OF IT? Suggestions:

- ? Customer transaction services (list them) and number of service points (a) available outside normal business hours; or (b) accessible through alternative means (e.g., home, business, or public computer; by fax);
- ? Numbers of people who access services (a) in off hours; or (b) by alternative means.
- ? Number (& percent) of service transactions done (a) in off hours; or (b) by alternative means.

While we spent some time in July exploring data availability of initial indicators with department staff, we did not move ahead to finding data for the indicators in Exhibit I for two reasons:

- ? *We needed to draw from a broader base of Montclair's citizenry.* We reached out to many different citizen groups in Montclair and asked to be invited to their meetings. Exhibit 2 lists the groups we met with from July–December 1997, to introduce the project and "test" interim results such as the initial performance themes and, later, "draft aspirational goals." Generally, these groups confirmed that the project was on the right track, but may have been missing key issues. For example, from the outreach, issues such as activities for youth, affirmative action, and affordable housing were "put on the table" for consideration. In addition, several groups expressed frustration with the limited focus of our performance measurement project. Again, they wanted us to address the broader issues of participatory democracy and responsive governance.

EXHIBIT 2: Outreach: Citizen Organizations Visited for Information and Feedback

Montclair 2020
Lions
Rotary
Million Man Montclair

NAACP
St. Peter Clavier Church
League of Women Voters
Citizen Budget Advisory Committee
Joint Capital Improvement Committee
Civil Rights Coalition
Civil Rights Commission
Cable Television Advisory Committee
Landlord/Tenant Advisory Committee
Historic Preservation Committee
Citizen Committee on Recreation and Cultural Affairs
Senior Citizen Advisory Committee
Handicapped Advisory Board

? *We wanted to see if a "convergence" of our project with Montclair 2020 would change the emphasis of themes and indicators under consideration, which led to the next major project accomplishment, discussed below.*

The development of citizen-driven "Aspirational Goals" for Montclair: By May 1997, Montclair 2020 leaders became interested in connecting with our project. They saw performance measures as useful for tracking progress toward Montclair 2020 goals. To build the link with our project, Montclair 2020 leaders convened "reunion meetings" of Montclair 2020 participants in July and September 1997. Approximately twenty participants attended the first meeting and forty attended the second. At the first meeting, there was consensus that a "convergence" between the Sloan-funded project and Montclair 2020 would be desirable, though 2020 participants did not want to see a "merger" of the two. To ward that end, our project team planned a "Goals Weekend" for all interested citizens in October, with the intent to build on what citizens in our meetings had developed, as well as on the Montclair 2020 goals, to craft "aspirational goals" for Montclair that would help focus our performance measurement initiative. We invited all who attended the September meeting to come to our "Goals Weekend," and many did.

Approximately forty citizens attended the goals weekend, including Montclair 2020 participants, several elected officials, participants of our project’s earlier citizen meetings, and citizens who had not participated in either project, but were drawn by newspaper stories, ads, and other attempts to attract people. Participants were provided the goals developed in Montclair 2020, the themes and indicators developed in our project in June, and additional issues identified in outreach. The weekend gave people a chance to consider their higher aspirations for Montclair, not just service issues. But, as this weekend was not intended to lead to a continuing civic planning effort beyond public services, we asked citizens to consider how public services could contribute to the goals. Citizens contributed over 100 specific ideas on goals and public service contributions, which we were able to cluster, fairly easily, into six groups. This led to the six “Draft Aspirational Goals” (Exhibit 3) which were used as the basis for organizing all future efforts.

EXHIBIT 3: Draft Aspirational Goals (Also see continuation on next page.)

**Draft “Aspirational Goals” for Montclair Based on the
October 18-19, 1997 “Goal Setting Weekend”**

Summary of goals:

Montclair aspires to:

- ? Be a community unified in its continual celebration of diversity;
- ? Prepare its children to become excellent citizens at home, in employment, in the community, and in a multi-cultural world;
- ? Have informed and involved citizens who care for Montclair as they do their families;
- ? Maintain an attractive, healthy, safe and sound environment;
- ? Develop the community and economy to support an affordable, high quality of life for all;
- ? Provide all its citizens with high-quality, equitable, affordable public services and good value for their tax dollars.

Goals expanded to further reflect citizens’ expressions of their aspirations for Montclair:
MONTCLAIR ASPIRES TO:

Be a community unified in its continual celebration of diversity, by:

- ? Stimulating citizens to value their cultural, economic, and age diversity, and to use their diverse values and talents to create a welcoming, vibrant community, e.g.:

- > Encourage open, cross-cultural dialog and problem solving;
- > Maintain the wide range of age groups who lead active lives in Montclair;
- > Encourage life-long learning and intergenerational activities;
- > Using signs, symbols, and structures that support one Montclair while recognizing Montclair's diversity.

- ? Supporting affirmative action and promoting fair representation across racial and economic lines.

Prepare its children to become excellent citizens at home, in employment, in the community, and in a multi-cultural world, by:

- ? Providing the best education and fulfilling each child's potential, so they will succeed in post-secondary education or employment;
- ? Providing a wide-range of youth activities at many venues throughout Montclair;
- ? Developing our youth, giving them opportunities to be seen and heard as equals in the community, and acknowledging their contribution.

MONTCLAIR ASPIRES TO:

Have informed & involved citizens who care for Montclair as they do their families, by:

- ? Communicating useful information (e.g., on services, activities, geography) to all citizens through multiple, easily accessible vehicles, including public access technology;
- ? Developing continuous two-way education between the town government and citizens concerning services, proposed changes, and citizen needs, desires, and responsibilities;
- ? Encouraging volunteer and non-profit contributions to Montclair's quality of life.

Maintain an attractive, healthy, safe and sound environment, by:

- ? Keeping the physical environment attractive, well-maintained, and structurally and ecologically sound, including:

- > A healthy urban forest;
- > Quality parks and sufficient public space;
- > Safe and sound curbs, streets, and infrastructure;
- > A clean and tidy town (e.g., school campuses, streets and sidewalks, neighborhoods);
- > Private property maintained in attractive condition in all neighborhoods;
- > Responsible waste management, especially recycling.

- ? Maintaining an environment that promotes personal safety, security, and health including:

- > Residents who feel safe and secure in their neighborhoods;
- > Responsive, user-friendly police, fire, and health and human services;
- > Neighborhoods with mixes of uses that promote safety.

Develop the community & economy to support an affordable, high quality of life for all, by:

- ? Supporting the arts, marketing Montclair artists and designers, and promoting Montclair as a cultural Mecca;
- ? Enhancing the business environment to enable local businesses to grow, new businesses to move to Montclair, and the tax base to broaden;
- ? Maintaining or increasing affordable housing for Montclair residents;
- ? Meeting mobility and access needs of businesses, customers, and residents, including a range of transportation and parking alternatives.

Provide all its citizens with high-quality, equitable, affordable public services and good value for their tax dollars, by:

- ? Maintaining or improving satisfaction with services while achieving efficiency, savings, and non-tax revenue;
- ? Respecting and addressing the service needs of all citizens, and providing responsive, equitable service delivery to all;
- ? Recognizing both private citizens and government employees who provide outstanding public service.

We were confident that although forty people participated in the goals weekend, these citizens built on the work of several hundred people who had come before in Montclair 2020 and our project. The representativeness of the draft goals reflected the breadth of ideas, issues, and views covered. For example, while maintaining a high quality of life was emphasized, there was also an emphasis on keeping Montclair affordable, and providing citizens with good value for their tax dollars. When we shared these draft aspirational goals with people inside and outside government they almost always agreed that they sounded like goals developed by Montclair citizens, that they emphasized things important to many in Montclair, and that they reflected a diverse range of views and interests in Montclair. We persisted in calling these “draft” goals because we wanted to test how well they worked as an organizing tool for assessing Township services, and we wanted to give many people, including elected and appointed officials the opportunity to comment. Eventually, the Township Council passed a resolution adopting these Aspirational Goals for the community.

Organization of a group of citizens interested in conducting a citizen survey, and collection of citizen ideas for survey questions related to each aspirational goal: After the aspirational goals were developed, we worked with a group of citizens interested in conducting a citizen survey. In a series of meetings on the survey, and through mailings to additional people who could not attend the meetings, citizens identified a wide range of ideas for survey questions relating to each aspirational goal. Those who attended the meetings also reviewed a number of survey instruments we provided from other cities, and indicated topics and questions in each that seemed applicable to Montclair. A citizen satisfaction survey from Pasadena, California generated the most interest at our meetings, so we included it in our mailings to stimulate ideas from other citizens. We consolidated citizens' survey ideas under each goal, and under a "multiple goal" category for questions that apply to more than one goal. Approximately ten citizens expressed an interest in serving on a "survey committee" to develop and organize the survey. In 1998, we worked with the citizen survey committee, and a Rutgers survey expert, to hone these ideas into a set of usable questions that resulted in the first citizen-satisfaction survey for the Township of Montclair.

Analysis of municipal department objectives based on the aspirational goals, and sharpening of indicators for performance reporting and for developing program budget objectives: In an effort to insert a citizen influence into the municipal budget process, we worked with departments to sharpen their program budget objectives and revise them, as needed, to reflect the aspirational goals in measurable ways. We started by analyzing the 1997 program budget objectives with respect to the aspirational goals, and produced a 37-page matrix laying out all the departments' program objectives under each aspirational goal. Department managers could then

see how their programs meshed with those of other departments to contribute to the citizens' aspirational goals. Our timing was good. Department heads knew they would soon have to prepare draft goals and objectives for 1998, and as a result, they viewed our analysis as helpful. We then conducted a much more focused review, this time separately for each department. We stripped away all objectives that focused on internal administrative processes and one-time "project" goals that did not lend themselves to performance indicators. We organized the remaining program objectives by citizens' aspirational goals, and noted measures for each objective. We included measures contained in departments' 1997 program budgets, and suggested other measures we thought more useful—generally more outcome-oriented measures. In some cases, we took the liberty of re-phrasing their objectives to be sharper and more susceptible to measures that are likely to interest citizens. We used the aspirational goals as our guide, as well as the themes and indicators citizens had developed in June. We then had fruitful, focused discussions with all departments, in most cases involving key program managers as well as department heads. These discussions focused on what program goals, objectives, and indicators were practical to show how departments were contributing to the attainment of citizen goals and what indicators may be possible in the future. This resulted in the production of a "Working Draft: Program Objectives and Performance Indicators of Montclair Township Related to Aspirational Goals Expressed by Montclair Citizens." (See Exhibit 4 for an excerpt) This process enabled us to improve our relationships with all departments, especially the uniformed services. The Police Department, in particular, was helpful and forthcoming in citing useful performance measurement possibilities.

On December 15th, we met with citizens to review the working draft, and get their feedback on "what was missing" in showing how the Township contributes to the goals. We

also gave citizens alternative indicators to consider from other cities. The feedback from that meeting was useful, but limited. Because of the difficulty of getting people to meet in late December, we planned no more meetings for the year, but sent out a mailing to a “core group” of approximately eighty citizens to request written comments. We renewed our effort with departments and citizens, to:

- ? Obtain performance data of interest to citizens;
- ? Ensure new measurement approaches that better reflect citizen concerns; and
- ? Ensure that departments’ program budget goals and objectives are clearly tied to citizen priorities as reflected in their aspirational goals.

Observations Concerning Montclair Performance Indicator Development

Each step of the Montclair project built on citizen input in earlier steps, even as the project’s strategic direction changed. As the project proceeded, the NCPP team was careful to honor the contributions of citizens, and make use of their input even as plans changed. Our flexible approach resulted in a strategic shift in project organization, and development of performance indicators, around the draft aspirational goals developed in October. However, that did not mean the earlier work done by citizens was wasted. Citizens’ initial “working themes and indicators” from last June were used as working materials in October by citizens who participated in developing the aspirational goals. We also consulted these earlier themes and indicators liberally in our work with departments to help them sharpen their program objectives.

EXHIBIT IV-4: Excerpt of Township Objectives and Indicators Organized by Aspirational Goal (Complete List in Appendix 5)

Aspirational Goal 4: Maintain an attractive, healthy, safe and sound environment. 4B-The physical environment:

Program(s)	Objectives	1997 Indicators	Possible Future Indicators
Zoning & Property Maintenance	Reduce the number of "problem properties." Reduce the number of properties with Zoning, Housing, & Property Maintenance Code "violations of special concern to citizens."	4B.1 No. problem properties. <i>Vacant properties in serious derelict condition.</i> (Locations shown on map.)	F4B.9 No. properties with "violations of concern." Types of violations to be defined in consultation with citizens. (Locations shown on map.)
Neighborhood Rehabilitation (Grant to improve appearance)	Provide funding & consultation to property owners to renovate 10 to 12 rental units on New Street (1997).	4B.2 Neighborhood Rehab Indicators (Table) a) No. housing units renovated under this program. b) No. units with renovations started. c) No. units with renovations funded.	<i>May be expanded objectives, with additional types of neighborhood rehab improvements, for 1998.</i>
Street Repair and Maintenance	<i>Keep all Township roads in good condition.</i> <i>(Upgrade all roads rated "4" to rating of "1.")</i> Achieve a street cleanliness level of at least "2" in all business districts by May 1, 1997.	4B.3 Lane-miles of road at each rating level for physical condition. 4B.4 Percent of business street cleanliness ratings of "2" or better since May 1, 1997.	<i>The Public Works Dept. will explain street condition & cleanliness ratings in layman's terms.</i>
Sewer Operations and Maintenance	Reduce street flooding episodes. Decrease sanitary sewer backups & surcharges.	4B.5 Flooding & Sewer Backups (Table) a) No. street flooding episodes compared with an historical baseline. b) No. sanitary sewer backups & surcharges.	
Refuse Collection and Disposal And Recycling	Minimize missed refuse collections. Minimize missed recycling collections. Achieve at least the State's mandatory goal of 60% of solid waste recycled. Increase recycling participation in business districts.	4B.6 Missed Refuse/Recycling Collections (Table) a) No. missed refuse collections per 10,000 stops. b) No. missed recycling collections per 10,000 stops. 4B.7 Recycling Participation (Table) a) Percent of total solid waste recycled. b) Percent of business district establishments participating in recycling.	
Capital Projects	Replace or upgrade capital equipment and infrastructure components as they reach the end of their useful life.		F4B.10 Percent of capital repair and replacement schedule met. (Several measures may be used.)
Street Trees And Park Trees	Remove dead, diseased, and unsafe trees, and add new trees where possible.	4B.8 Tree Indicators (Table) a) No. trees removed (historical trend). b) No. trees added (historical trend).	
Maintenance of: Parks, Railroad Stations,	Maintain Township parks and outdoor recreation facilities in pristine condition.		F4B.11 Visual condition ratings (with volunteer support).

Public Buildings

Provide safe, clean buildings and grounds.

F4B.12 User satisfaction surveys.

The iterative process led to some improved indicators. In some cases, our iterative process that sometimes involved citizens, sometimes municipal staff, and sometimes both, led to creative ideas to develop indicators that better addressed citizen concerns than those initially suggested. For example, in Figure IV-1, under the theme “Maintaining the Aesthetics of Montclair,” citizens were interested in the “number of housing units out of code compliance,” and the “number of outstanding zoning violations.” Planning and Community Development Department staff pointed out that the codes affecting private property are complex, and the number of units out of compliance, as well as total outstanding violations, can be misleading, if the seriousness of the violations were not factored in. Toward that end, we worked with them on the idea of “violations of concern to citizens.” These can be violations of the housing, zoning, or property maintenance codes. The citizens and Planning and Development staff cooperated to “educate each other” on what most concerned citizens about the condition of private property, and what were the most applicable, serious violations related to those concerns. Based on informal discussions, citizens were most concerned with “neighborhood eyesore” properties that are obviously not well maintained. Citizens and staff jointly developed a “short list” of “violations of concern.” The department then developed a system for tracking properties with those types of violations outstanding.

While fulfillment of most aspirational goals required efforts beyond the Township government, the municipality does contribute, at least in part, to achieving all the goals. By the end of the October Goals Weekend, it was clear that citizens’ aspirations for Montclair include goals well beyond the influence of the municipal government. The municipal government can clearly make major contributions to the following two aspirational goals:

- ? Maintain an attractive, healthy, safe and sound environment;
- ? Provide all its citizens with high-quality, equitable, affordable public services and good value for their tax dollars.

The municipality's influence on the other four goals is quite limited. Other forces, in the community and beyond (e.g., in the regional economy) have greater influence on most of these goals. Yet it is clear from the objectives and indicators that the municipal government does make contributions toward all the goals, and can provide at least limited performance data on progress made in achieving all goals. Two departments (Police, and Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Affairs) are represented in all six goals. Future policy decisions for the Township Council can involve whether to engage others, public and private, to try to have a greater influence on some of the aspirational goals than the municipality can have on its own.

The citizen survey offered an opportunity to fill in gaps not represented in department objectives. In addition to the work relating to performance measurement, the project decided to conduct a comprehensive citizen satisfaction survey. The purpose of the survey was to gauge public opinion about their likes and dislikes about Montclair and the level of citizen satisfaction with municipal service delivery. The project went to great effort to insure that the responses would be as broad-based as possible and that every household in Montclair was given the opportunity to participate. Over 17,000 surveys were mailed and 4,110 were completed and returned. Since this was the first Citizen Satisfaction Survey conducted in Montclair, the data collected is to be used as "base-line" data to predict trends from one year to another. Subsequent Citizen Surveys that repeat many of the same questions can detect community trends and

community perceptions as well as indicating the magnitude of progress or deterioration in service levels.

Citizen Advisory Committee on performance measurement established by the township

council. Over the last two years we worked very hard to gain the trust and support of the elected officials. Even with their support it took a great deal of effort to obtain the council's approval for the creation of a citizen advisory committee on performance measurement. Several council members were skeptical about the idea of creating this citizen advisory committee. Several representatives expressed concern over citizens having access to municipal data that could be used to embarrass elected officials or promote the personal agendas of citizens interested in seeking political office. We had the support of three key members as well as the township manager and over a three-month period we were able to secure the support of all but one council representative. Rutgers identified eight citizens to serve on this committee. The township council appointed seven members. It was difficult to identifying only eight citizens. A core group of citizens worked with us throughout the project and four of these citizens were recommended to serve on the committee. Another four were selected from the over five hundred residents who expressed and interest in getting involved.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN MONTCLAIR

The NCPP team involved over a hundred Montclair citizens, all municipal departments, the Township Manager, Municipal Clerk, and Township Council in identifying issues of services and community conditions that are priorities for citizens, and ways to measure performance related to those issues. Perhaps most important, NCPP has worked with citizens to identify their

higher aspirations for Montclair, and helped citizens and municipal managers connect performance issues and indicators to those aspirations and the municipal program budget objectives. In particular, the Montclair project:

- ? *Demonstrated citizens' ability to work effectively with performance issues and select performance indicators.* Citizens participated effectively in focus groups, feedback sessions and other meetings, facilitated citizen workshops, and structured meetings of citizens and department managers, to produce to develop “Working Performance Themes and Indicators” with fourteen major themes and over sixty potential indicators for measuring performance related to those themes.

- ? *Development of citizen-driven “aspirational goals” for Montclair:* The NCPP team worked with leaders of a 1995 privately-organized “community visioning” project called Montclair 2020 to bring about a “convergence” between Montclair 2020’s emphasis on broad community goals and this project’s emphasis on public service performance. This led to an October 1997 “Goals Weekend” in which participants in Montclair 2020, the Sloan-funded performance project, and others attracted by publicity for the event, developed over 100 specific ideas for Montclair goals and how public services can contribute to the goals. These goals were readily clustered into six draft “Aspirational Goals” that were used to shape how departments and citizens work with performance measures.

? Organization of a group of citizens interested in conducting a citizen survey, and collection of citizen ideas for survey questions related to each aspirational goal: Citizens on the “survey committee,” and others who attended meetings or responded to mailings, have identified more than enough ideas for survey questions on each aspirational goal. The NCPP team worked with the survey committee to hone the ideas into a set of usable questions, and conducted a largely volunteer-driven, community-wide survey of citizen perceptions of Montclair, and their satisfaction with public services, as related to the aspirational goals.

? *An analysis of municipal department objectives based on the aspirations goals, and sharpening of indicators for performance reporting and for developing 1998 program budget objectives:* Shortly before Montclair municipal departments were asked to develop their 1998 program budget objectives, the NCPP team analyzed departments’ 1997 objectives and related indicators based on citizens’ aspirational goals, and reviewed their results with department managers and citizens. In the analysis and review process, many objectives that related to internal administrative processes and one-time projects were stripped away, leading to focused lists of between 8 and 23 performance indicators for each aspirational goal.

? *Establishment of a citizen advisory committee on performance measurement*

A Montclair Citizens’ Performance Advisory Committee representing the four wards of the town was created by the Township to institutionalize this process and to insure that performance measurement and citizen involvement in performance measurement remain a priority for the

township. In March of 2000, fifteen citizens were appointed to serve on this Committee. The Committee provides advice and direction to the Council vis-a-vis improving the entire performance measurement system, including the data collection aspects and future Citizen Satisfaction Surveys.

LESSONS LEARNED CONCERNING CITIZEN-DRIVEN PERFORMANCE

ASSESSMENT

Lesson One: All citizen participation is local, so citizen-driven performance measurement strategies must be locally-based. So many local factors can affect the success of citizen-driven measurement (e.g., intensity and organization of citizen participation, measurement history, government management capacity, local relationships and issues) that it is hard to imagine a “one-size-fits-all” strategy that can work in many communities without significant customization. Over the years, some approaches to developing management-driven performance measures have worked in multiple communities. But there is much less experience with citizen-driven measurement. And a project such as this, which actively involved both citizens and local officials, involved more levels of complexity than an approach that works with either the government or citizens alone. Until widely-applicable model strategies for citizen-driven performance measurement emerge from more projects and research—if they ever do—it is essential that a careful assessment of the local situation be done before settling on a strategy to implement citizen-driven performance measurement in a community. While implementation strategies must be local, there is still much to be gained from sharing information across communities attempting these kinds of projects. For example, they can exchange information on

performance measures and data collection techniques, and on techniques for working with citizens.

Lesson Two: Considerations of legitimacy and representativeness are always important.

This project began at a time when the representativeness of various forms of citizen participation were being questioned by key people in the community. This caused the project team to keep citizen participation informal at first, and to engage in outreach to many different citizen groups. A major challenge was to transform the “informal” model of citizen participation into a more “formal,” so citizen participation could be institutionalized beyond the grant period. For any approach to work, it is clear that both elected officials and citizens have to grant it “legitimacy.” Considerations of legitimacy and representativeness are important for this kind of project to be effective in any community. A key conclusion one can draw from Montclair is never to take the legitimacy and representativeness of citizen participation for granted. People in a community should review the representativeness and effectiveness of citizen participation from time to time, and be willing to make efforts to renew and revitalize participation approaches regularly.

Lesson Three: Citizen involvement makes a difference in how government performance is

assessed. The approaches to performance measurement that emerged in Montclair included community goals and specific performance indicators that were different from those that government managers had developed on their own. The starting point was citizen identification of important local issues worthy of measurement. Program objectives and indicators were aligned by “aspirational goals” which created a sharper, far more citizen-focused set of objectives and indicators than the Township previously had.

Lesson Four: Partnerships among citizens, public officials, and “outside experts” can be particularly fruitful in developing performance measures that are both practical to measure and responsive to citizen concerns. The mix of active citizens, government officials and staff, and outside measurement “experts” was a key ingredient of progress. Each of these groups contributed different skills, knowledge-bases, and perspectives essential to developing indicators that report things citizens care about. Citizens often have a “street level knowledge” of government bureaucracies which provides invaluable information, from a non-government perspective, on why suggested indicators will—or will not—work, and what practical alternatives may exist. Municipal staff members provide a detailed view of internal (and sometimes external) sources of data for issues of concern to citizens, and what the problems are with these sources. Outside experts can help citizens and public officials learn how other communities have measured the same services and performance issues. They can also bring knowledge of systems and techniques (e.g., citizen surveys, recent advances in geographic information systems) that goes beyond that of the municipal staff. Also, when outside experts enter the picture, staff members are generally less prone to react that particular information of interest to citizens is “impossible” to provide. When they did react that way, the expert knowledge brought to the table by the project team helped them discover indicators that are both practical and useful. Finally, citizen perspectives broadened the perspective of some local managers. By being provided with citizens’ perspectives of the community, rather than just the ir own, these managers began to see how the efforts of their departments combined with the efforts of others—and of other government entities—to affect citizen concerns.

Lesson Five: Process, pacing, and presentation are always important when working with citizens on public performance issues. Issues involved in public performance measurement can be subtle and complex, and can lead to a great deal of debate among citizens when trying to decide what things are important to measure, and the best ways to measure them. But the time available to work with citizen volunteers is necessarily limited, which puts a premium on efficient group processes that lead to quick decisions, while still allowing for due consideration of the issues involved. In the early stages of the project, the team used variations of “nominal group technique” to help citizens generate many ideas quickly, and sort through those ideas to pick priorities. Project teams must carefully consider what techniques and processes to use with citizen groups at every stage. It is difficult to balance the need for full and thorough discussions of subtle issues, with the need to get through a lot of information and ideas and reach decisions on a timely basis. Pacing of information flow with citizens is also important. A project team may only have one to two hours a month with most citizen groups. In between those meetings, the team may spend considerably more time with public managers or others connected to key data sources. In doing so, the project team can generate so much information—all of it important—that they “get too far ahead” of participating citizens. Good presentation approaches—on paper and in person—are also important to help citizens understand and use complex information. A combination of efficient group processes and good presentation approaches can be helpful when the project team generates a great deal of information for consideration between citizen meetings. But there is a limit to how much people can absorb quickly. Which leads to further tradeoffs between trying to reach decisions quickly and providing as much information as possible so that citizens can make well-informed choices.

Lesson Six: Performance measures precipitate further questions, and the need to refine measurement further and conduct follow-up policy research. This lesson holds true whether performance measurement is done from the government's or the citizens' perspective. Performance measures often don't provide answers. Instead, they help people determine better questions to ask. Cities that have been well known for management-driven performance measurement and improvement for many years (e.g., Sunnyvale, CA, Phoenix, Charlotte) have never "stood still" once they developed performance indicators. Over the years, they have often refined—and sometimes radically changed—their measurement and improvement approaches to increase the benefit to the community. Even in the early stages of this project, we experience a good deal of iteration and refinement of measures considered.

Portions of this case study are based on preliminary and annual reports submitted to the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation. Members of the project team contributing to these reports include: Kathe Callahan, Paul Epstein, Marc Holzer and Vatche Gabriellian.