



# Super Neighborhood Plan Workbook

2004



Updated 2004

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## **OVERVIEW OF NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING**

### **What is Super Neighborhood Planning?**

Super Neighborhood planning is an opportunity for you the citizen to shape the neighborhood where you live and work. By contributing to a neighborhood plan, people take an active role in improving their community and quality of life. The neighborhood planning process engages residents, businesses, property owners, city departments, and community organizations such as neighborhood associations, as well as other community groups. These groups work together to address land use, transportation, urban design, and other issues. A plan should:

- Represent the views of all the groups that make up a community
- Identify neighborhood strengths and assets
- Identify neighborhood needs and concerns
- Establish goals for improving the neighborhood
- Recommend specific action items to reach those goals

### **How Will a Plan Help My Neighborhood?**

Neighborhood planning provides an opportunity for concerned residents, businesses, property owners, and community organizations to work together to address the short and long-range issues affecting their everyday lives. This plan should ultimately serve as a guide for the neighborhood, City leaders, and developers so they know what you will accept in your neighborhood. Development of a plan will help a neighborhood in a number of ways. An adopted plan will:

- Describe clearly what the neighborhood wants accomplished
- Provide a framework for zoning and other land use decisions
- Give direction to the City regarding programs, services and capital improvements appropriate for the neighborhood
- Offer residents and businesses a clear picture of the type of development that is desired by the neighborhood
- Inform property owners and potential developers as to what businesses are needed and the types of development that will be encouraged
- Provide guidelines for the design of new development so it will compliment the existing neighborhood character

### **Does my Neighborhood Need a Plan?**

Abilene is constantly changing and throughout the city many are enjoying the benefits of living in this medium-sized community. Many times the changes we have seen in Abilene have been positive and at other times not so positive. In recent years, change in many neighborhoods has resulted in the deterioration and loss of much of the charm and character that originally attracted people to live there. Additionally, other new and more stable neighborhoods have seen the deterioration and worry about it affecting their area. Neighborhood planning is one tool that can help.

Some of the issues a plan may address are:

- Land uses that do not match existing zoning
- Future projects that may alter the character of the neighborhood
- Availability of and need for housing choices
- New and appropriate businesses to the neighborhood
- Encouragement of mixed residential and commercial uses
- Increased traffic in the neighborhood
- A need for more sidewalks or bike paths
- Preservation of the existing residential or historic character of the neighborhood
- Enhanced streetscapes, parks, and other open civic spaces

### **The Role of Consensus in Neighborhood Planning**

Consensus plays a valuable role in neighborhood planning ensuring that all significant interests – residents, business owners and non-resident property owners - have contributed to forming the plan’s goals, objectives and action items.

By utilizing the consensus model in decision-making, a neighborhood planning team can make decisions to be of higher quality due to the input of all the interested parties, greater commitment to implementation of the plan’s goals, and the assurance that the plan was developed with the values of:

- Inclusion
- Democracy and the ability to compromise
- Participation
- Understanding
- Flexibility

Consensus is fundamental to the neighborhood planning process. If the Neighborhood Planning Team is unable to reach consensus on an element of the plan, it should not be included. Furthermore, if the plan is not representative of the neighborhood and not developed through a consensus-based decision making process; the City Council will not adopt the plan and it will not meet federal guidelines.



### **What is the Role of City Staff?**

During the development of a neighborhood plan, City staff will provide technical support to the Neighborhood Planning Team. Staff can assist by providing:

- Demographic, land use, and zoning data
- Research and analysis
- Maps
- Field Data
- Tools to identify, clarify, and prioritize issues
- Methods to determine goals, objectives, and action items
- Coordination with other departments and city services
- Assistance with plan implementation
- Final plan development or creation
- Aid in updating adopted plans

### **What is the Neighborhood's Role?**

The vision and leadership for neighborhood planning must come from the community. The City encourages neighborhoods to be at the forefront of the planning process. Neighborhoods working on a plan are expected to:

- Form a Neighborhood Planning Team that is representative of the neighborhood or Super Neighborhood
- Secure a regular meeting place
- Establish meeting and workshop agendas
- Determine the plan's goals, objectives and action items
- Take an active role in the implementation of the plan
- Help City staff with periodic updates of the plan

A high level of community involvement during the development of the plan will assist with the implementation of the plan's recommendations and help your vision become a reality.

### **What are the Steps to Developing A Neighborhood Plan?**

There are several main steps in writing a neighborhood plan.

- Organize the Neighborhood Planning Team
- Determine the neighborhood plan's goals
- Conduct a survey
- Develop objectives and action items
- Hold a community workshop
- Conduct the neighborhood plan ballot
- Plan development (document development)
- Review of the plan by City departments
- Present the plan to boards, commissions and City Council
- Adoption of the plan by City Council

Each of these will be discussed in more detail later in this workbook.

### **How Long Will This Take?**

The process of writing a neighborhood plan involves a large number of meetings spread over 10 to 12 months. During this time, there will be work for staff and the Neighborhood Planning Team members between meetings.

Once the plan is adopted by the City Council, the next phase of the neighborhood planning process is implementation. This phase of the process has three parts.

**Part I** is to change the zoning in the neighborhood planning area to reflect the changes expressed in the Future Land Use Map.

**Part II** is the implementation phase. During this phase, as many of the plan's action items as feasible will be implemented. After the plan's adoption by the City Council, City staff will work to achieve as many action items as possible in the first six to twelve months. During this period, the Neighborhood Planning Team should work to implement those action items that its members took as their responsibility.

**Part III** is to publicize, disseminate, and put into use the design guidelines. The Neighborhood Planning Team and City staff will each have roles to play to ensure that this is accomplished.

Over the next few years the City staff's role in monitoring the progress of the plan will be reduced as the Neighborhood Planning Team takes on more of this responsibility. The Team will not have to meet as often as during the plan's development. A working meeting every six months to assess the status of the plan will be adequate.

### **When Can I Start?**

It is the intent of the Office of Neighborhood Services (ONS) to complete Super Neighborhood Plans as staff and resources are available. However, even before the official planning process begins in the neighborhood, you can begin assembling a Neighborhood Planning Team. The time spent establishing relationships with other concerned people in the neighborhood before the official planning process begins is very important. Through discussions with neighbors, this group of interested people will have identified many of the issues that the community finds important and maybe even offer a few possible solutions to neighborhood problems – an essential and sometimes lengthy part of the neighborhood planning process.

### **Will the Plans Be Implemented?**

By adopting the plan, the City Council demonstrates the City's commitment to implementing the plan. However, every action item listed in the plan requires separate and specific steps. A plan's adoption does not begin the implementation process of any item. In addition, adoption of the plan does not legally obligate the City to implement any particular action item. Some action items may require more money than a City department has budgeted for that year and may be addressed at a later date. Expensive items such as drainage controls or extensive sidewalk improvements may have to be included as part of a bond package. Due to state law, an adopted plan cannot change the development rules for a project that has already begun the City's review and approval process.

**What issues must a Super Neighborhood Plan address?**

During the neighborhood planning process, the Neighborhood Planning Team must address many important issues. The following exercise will help team members and prospective members begin to think about the subjects covered by a neighborhood plan. This exercise will also help the planning team focus their efforts when developing the plan’s goals, objectives, action items, and land use and neighborhood design recommendations.

Read the following questions and then continue to read this workbook with these exercises in mind. Take a drive, a walk, or a bike ride through your neighborhood with a friend, family member or by yourself. While out in the neighborhood, think about these issues and questions. Most of these questions can be answered without further research or fieldwork. However, there are a few that may require additional research.

**Neighborhood Planning Priorities**

- 1. What are the five most significant issues that affect the neighborhood?

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- 2. What are the three best things about your neighborhood?

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- 3. What types of additions to your neighborhood would make it a better place?

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- 4. After the adoption of a neighborhood plan by the City Council, what single physical improvement to the neighborhood, such as tree planting, benches for a park or playground equipment would make the neighborhood a better place?

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- 5. Goals are general statements of what the plan should accomplish. Think of five goals that you would include in the neighborhood plan. (See “Writing Goals, Objectives, and Action Items.”)

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## Preserving and Enhancing the Neighborhood

### Housing Issues (staff can assist with the answer to these questions from the census)

1. Can young families with children....  
 afford to rent in your neighborhood?  
 afford to purchase a house in your neighborhood?
  
2. Compared to most other neighborhoods in Abilene, housing prices in your neighborhood are:  
 way below average  
 below average  
 about average  
 above average  
 way above average
  
3. Compared to most other neighborhoods in Abilene, rental prices (for apartments, duplexes, and single family housing) in your neighborhood are:  
 way below average  
 below average  
 about average  
 above average  
 way above average
  
4. Are there ways housing options can be expanded in your neighborhood (i.e. single family homes, townhouses, etc.)?  

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5. List areas of the neighborhood best suited for new apartments (street name and block number: e.g., 900 block of Maple Drive)?  

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6. What parts of the neighborhood could benefit from a mix of other housing types, i.e. townhouses, condominiums, duplexes, etc. (street name, block number, and housing type)?  

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7. Could the neighborhood benefit from the addition of:  
 Garage apartments  
 Granny flats  
 Small lot amnesty  
 Urban home and cottage lot infill developments  
 Mixed-use buildings

8. Where in the neighborhood could these housing options be located and which option could be at a specific location (street names, block numbers, and housing type)?

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9. List residential areas in the neighborhood that should not be changed at all and briefly explain why they should be preserved.

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**Land Use Issues**

1. List three areas in the neighborhood where mixed residential and commercial uses would be the most beneficial (street name and block number).

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2. If an existing activity center of higher density residential uses or commercial uses is found in the neighborhood, list five types of new commercial development you would like to see in order of preference, with one being the most preferred and five the least.

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3. List the types of residential development (apartments, townhouses, mixed use buildings with retail space on the ground floor and apartments on upper floors) you would like to see along or near this activity center in order of preference with one being the most preferred and five the least.

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4. List areas of the neighborhood best suited for new places to shop, run errands, or eat out (street name and block number).

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**Transportation Issues**

Traffic, Parking and the Neighborhood

1. List intersections in the neighborhood that are unsafe or congested.

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2. Are there streets in the neighborhood that are dangerous due to speeding or cut-through traffic?

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3. Where do most of the residents in the neighborhood park their vehicles?

Front Yards       Driveways       In Garages       Side Yards  
 Public streets in front of houses

4. In the commercial areas of your neighborhood, when and where can delivery vehicles park (business name and delivery area – alley, street, etc.)?

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5. If on-street parking is a real problem in the neighborhood, are there areas in the neighborhood that could benefit from the city enacting a resident-only parking permit program (street name and block)?

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6. If there are streets in the neighborhood that serve citywide needs, what could be done to improve them? Examples of these streets would be North and South 1<sup>st</sup> Streets, Judge Ely Blvd., South 27<sup>th</sup> Street, etc.

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7. What streets in the neighborhood do cyclists frequently use?

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8. What are the barriers to cyclists and pedestrians in the neighborhood and where are they (street and block number)?

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9. What streets used by pedestrians lack sidewalks (street and block)?

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10. Can you walk or bike to any of the places listed below?

Park       Grocery Store       Shopping Center       Movie Theater  
 Convenience Store       House of Worship       Post Office  
 Restaurants       Ball Field       Library       Park

11. Where are the sidewalks in the neighborhood that need to be repaired or retrofitted to meet the Americans with Disabilities Act guidelines (street name, block number, and/or intersections)?

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Transit and Neighborhood Needs

12. Are there areas in the neighborhood that could be better served by increased bus service (street names, block numbers, and business names)?

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13. Where in the neighborhood are there bus stops that need to be improved? What types of improvements would best suit these locations (street name, block number, what side of street)?

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14. Are there locations where new bus stops are needed (street name, block number, what side of the street)?

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## Neighborhood Character and Urban Design Guidelines

Every neighborhood has a history. What events in the past have contributed to your neighborhood's current character or history? This exercise may involve research that is not readily available from a walk or a drive. Interviews with long-time neighborhood residents can provide a good starting point to understand why your neighborhood is the way it is.

1. Do you think your neighborhood is an interesting place in which to live?

Yes       No      Why?

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2. Such items as housing and building styles, street widths, traffic, sidewalks, trees and landscaping, light poles and parks define the character of a neighborhood. What architectural and streetscape features define the character of your neighborhood?

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3. Select three different types of streets in your neighborhood – a commercial street, a residential street, and one type of your choosing, like a street along an open space – that best capture the character and spirit of the neighborhood. Check the words below that you would use to describe the appearance of these streets.

Street # 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Attractive     Inviting       Lively     Dirty     Interesting  
 Clean         Unattractive     Ugly      Orderly     Chaotic  
 Boring        Dingy         Busy      Too Congested  
 Other (\_\_\_\_\_)

Is it pleasant to walk or bike along this street? Why or Why not?

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Street # 2 \_\_\_\_\_

Attractive     Inviting       Lively     Dirty     Interesting  
 Clean         Unattractive     Ugly      Orderly     Chaotic  
 Boring        Dingy         Busy      Too Congested  
 Other (\_\_\_\_\_)

Is it pleasant to walk or bike along this street? Why or Why not?

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Street # 3 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Attractive    \_\_\_\_\_ Inviting    \_\_\_\_\_ Lively    \_\_\_\_\_ Dirty    \_\_\_\_\_ Interesting  
\_\_\_\_\_ Clean    \_\_\_\_\_ Unattractive    \_\_\_\_\_ Ugly    \_\_\_\_\_ Orderly    \_\_\_\_\_ Chaotic  
\_\_\_\_\_ Boring    \_\_\_\_\_ Dingy    \_\_\_\_\_ Busy    \_\_\_\_\_ Too Congested  
\_\_\_\_\_ Other ( \_\_\_\_\_ )

Is it pleasant to walk or bike along this street? Why or Why not?

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4. What buildings in the neighborhood are the best examples of architectural styles most common in the neighborhood and would be good models for new construction (List the addresses and place an "R" for residential and a "C" for commercial buildings)?

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5. Are there historic buildings or sites in your neighborhood worthy of preservation and/or historical designation (addresses, street names, and/or block numbers)?

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6. What improvements to public areas (such as additional street trees, public landscaping or benches) would benefit the neighborhood most and where would they best be suited (street name, block number, or specific location and type of improvement)?

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7. What specific actions can the neighborhood do to help maintain open space and public areas?

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8. What type and where in the neighborhood are new and improved public facilities needed (street name, block number, or specific location)?

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9. Are there places and resources in the neighborhood that serve Abilene as a whole such as libraries, greenbelts, or parks? What steps can the neighborhood and City do to preserve and enhance them for everybody?

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10. If you could change one thing about your neighborhood what would it be and why?

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## **ORGANIZING A NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING TEAM**

### **The Neighborhood Planning Team**

A neighborhood is the sum of its parts. To fully represent its diverse parts, a Neighborhood Planning Team should include:

- Homeowners
- Business owners
- Renters
- Property owners who live outside the neighborhood
- Representatives from neighborhood institutions & associations

The goal of the neighborhood planning process is to create a plan that truly reflects the vision of the entire neighborhood. The more representative a team is, the better the resulting plan will be. If, during the course of plan development, a member must leave the team, an honest effort should be made to replace that person with an individual with a similar background to help preserve a diversity of viewpoints.

### **The Best Size for a Neighborhood Planning Team**

There is no set size of a Neighborhood Planning Team. However, drawing from the experiences of others, a team of ten to twelve people has proved to be the most efficient. A team smaller than six or seven people would have difficulty establishing a broad range of views, while a team much larger than fifteen could be too large for effective decisions to be made.

### **Responsibilities of the Neighborhood Planning Team**

Members of the team must dedicate a substantial amount of time to the development of the neighborhood plan. They also have a number of responsibilities that must be honored if the planning process is to be a success.

Chairperson. This person is responsible for ensuring that planning team meetings run smoothly. This involves enforcing the ground rules and ensuring that the meeting agenda is agreed upon and followed. The chairperson guarantees that all opinions – either for or against an item – are presented in a respectful manner, and makes sure all opinions are heard. In addition, it is the chairperson's responsibility to make sure that no single group or interest takes control of the planning process to the exclusion of other stakeholders in the neighborhood. A chairperson must also:

- Be able to work with people with diverse backgrounds and viewpoints
- Ensure everybody on the team participates and is respectful of divergent opinions
- Be available to consult with City staff during the work day and be able to return phone calls within four hours
- Ensure that multiple points of view are explored and considered and ask follow-up questions to clarify different perspectives
- Express support for innovative and creative ideas and help turn these ideas into solutions that can be implemented
- Provide ideas for meeting agendas
- Arrive promptly, start and end meetings on time

- Set expectations for the whole team
- Be the official representative of the Neighborhood Planning Team in meetings with city staff, other neighborhood groups, and when making public presentations
- Facilitate the dissemination of information regarding land use, transportation options, and urban design issues

Neighborhood Planning Team Members. The team members are responsible for the tasks they have assumed or were assigned. They are also responsible for ensuring that the chairperson fulfills his or her duties and offering assistance to the chair when required. Team members must also:

- Participate in plan development and implementation
- Attend regular meetings
- Develop an outreach strategy
- Be an advocate for the planning process
- Confirm plan goals, objectives, and action items with other members of the neighborhood
- Listen to all points of view before making a decision
- Be sure that someone has the responsibility to act in the chairman's place should they need to be absent

It is the responsibility of every Neighborhood Planning Team member, including the chairperson, to make sure that the team is representative of the neighborhood. The Team is not completely effective unless property owners, business owners, renters, and residents are all represented. The members should also assume shared responsibility for developing and executing an outreach strategy that promotes communication within the neighborhood.

### **Responsibilities for Office of Neighborhood Services Staff**

The chairperson and the members of the Neighborhood Planning Team are not the only individuals charged with responsibilities during the neighborhood planning process. The ONS staff also has responsibilities that must be fulfilled. Staff must:

- Attend Neighborhood Planning Team meetings
- Provide training, orientation, and consultations to neighborhood representatives
- Increase the flow of information to the neighborhood
- Be a resource to the neighborhood and its team
- Provide technical assistance on pertinent issues
- Work to increase neighborhood involvement in the planning process
- Publicize the work of the Neighborhood Planning Team and help coordinate outreach efforts
- Encourage other City departments to support the neighborhood planning process during the plan's development and implementation
- Promote collaboration among the team members

### **Questions for the Neighborhood Planning Team**

During the development of the Neighborhood Planning Team, several questions need to be addressed.

- Is a sufficient cross section of the neighborhood represented?
- Do members of the Neighborhood Planning Team have community involvement experience in activities such as volunteering, attending community or civic oriented meetings or writing and developing newsletters?
- Has the team developed a set of meeting ground rules?
- Are the members of the team familiar with the work plan?
- Are members of the planning team willing to meet periodically after the plan's adoption to help implement and monitor its progress?

### **Other Opportunities**

There are many other opportunities to be involved in during the neighborhood planning process other than making the commitment to serve on the Neighborhood Planning Team. For example, you can help at a workshop, serve on a subcommittee, distribute newsletters or surveys, or act as a translator for people who do not speak English.

## DEVELOPING AN OUTREACH STRATEGY

### What is an Outreach Strategy?

An effective outreach strategy is an important and required part of the neighborhood planning process. It informs residents, property owners, and businesses in the neighborhood planning area about the progress of the plan and notifies them about upcoming workshops. An outreach strategy also recruits team members to ensure that the Neighborhood Planning Team is fully representative of the neighborhood.

Throughout the planning process, public outreach is an ongoing effort. The ONS staff performs the initial public outreach. These efforts inform residents, property owners, and business owners that the City of Abilene is beginning neighborhood planning in their neighborhood. Following this initial effort, the responsibility for public outreach is the responsibility of the Neighborhood Planning Team.

When developing an outreach strategy, the Neighborhood Planning Team should consider several questions.

- What is the best strategy to deliver the message (newsletter, flyer, newspaper, etc.)?
- How will the information be delivered, who will deliver it, and to whom will it be delivered?
- What will the message say – what information will be distributed and when?
- Will an individual or a subcommittee be responsible for implementing the outreach strategy?

### Distributing the Information

An outreach strategy can employ a variety of methods to inform the neighborhood about the planning process. The method selected depends entirely upon what message is being delivered.

*Newspapers:* The local daily paper, *The Abilene Reporter-News*, provides a free community calendar-of-events service to nonprofit community groups. This feature could be used to announce team meetings and workshops. Check with the newspaper to see how far in advance they need the information.

There are neighborhood or district newspapers and other special interest periodicals available throughout Abilene. Like the “Reporter-News,” many of these also provide community calendar-of-events services to nonprofit organizations.

Another way to use the print media to distribute information about the planning process and to recruit members to the Neighborhood Planning Team is to create a relationship with the reporters and editors of these newspapers. This can provide the opportunity to make the neighborhood planning process a local-interest news story.

Sending a schedule of neighborhood planning meetings to the registered neighborhood associations in areas involved in the planning process is one way to increase representation on the team. These associations could put a small story in their newsletter about the planning process or include a schedule of meetings. The Neighborhood Planning Team can also create its

own newsletter. Both of these methods will be discussed in more detail in the section, “Developing a Neighborhood Newsletter.”



*Television and Radio:* There are several network affiliates that provide local televised news coverage. Given enough advance notice, one of these stations could send out a news team to do a brief story about a major workshop or a neighborhood-sponsored event such as a clean up. Early morning local news and public affairs shows may be another way to get the word out about the neighborhood planning effort.

There are also several radio stations in the area that are often willing to make public service announcements and could be used to distribute information about the neighborhood planning process.

*Other Ideas:* Besides newspapers, television and radio, there are other avenues to distribute information about the planning process.

The standard survey that is distributed early in the planning process can be one method. Questions and information can be included that:

- Ask residents to indicate if they would like to be notified in the future regarding the neighborhood planning process and scheduled meetings;
- Include a section describing orientation of new members; and,
- List a schedule of meetings for the rest of the process.

The Neighborhood Planning Team could send a schedule of neighborhood planning meetings on a monthly or quarterly basis to civic, business, and professional associations that may have interests in areas currently involved in planning. This could be one method to reach people with businesses in the neighborhood.

There is not a single method that will distribute information about the neighborhood planning process to all corners of the neighborhood. A combination of methods will get the best response.

However, when choosing an outreach method, the medium should be appropriate to the information being distributed.

For example, a press release for a neighborhood-wide workshop would be appropriate, whereas a press release for a regular team meeting would not. Also, more than one method of outreach should be employed for a workshop to promote the highest turnout possible.

Regardless of the methods used, it is the responsibility of the Neighborhood Planning Team to distribute information about the plan, the workshops, and to recruit members who are representative of the neighborhood. The greater the cross section of the community being represented, the more likely the City Council will adopt the plan.

Another method that could be used is to find a block captain or lead person for every block in your area. This person could help communicate with neighbors in a variety of ways. The effort to find interested citizens could be lengthy, but if done and maintained can be a valuable way to communicate and find future leaders for the neighborhood.

## DEVELOPING A NEIGHBORHOOD NEWSLETTER

A newsletter is one of the most effective ways of communicating with the entire neighborhood about the plan. It can also be an important part of the Neighborhood Planning Team's outreach efforts. A newsletter can:

- Inform residents about the neighborhood planning effort
- Invite residents to attend meetings
- Promote a workshop where the neighborhood plan will be presented
- Deliver a neighborhood survey
- Advertise other events, such as neighborhood clean-ups
- Educate the neighborhood about planning issues
- Provide information about City services, such as how to get potholes fixed

### Distributing the Newsletter

A newsletter distributed regularly, at least quarterly, is the most effective. It should be delivered to every household in the planning area, including apartments. In some instances, it may be necessary to get permission from the apartment manager before distributing the newsletter to apartment complexes. Some managers may be willing to distribute the newsletter for the planning team. If you mail the newsletter, update your mailing list at least once a year.

Distribution of the newsletter to businesses and neighborhood institutions in the community is equally important and broadens the scope of the outreach efforts. As stated earlier, neighborhood planning involves the cooperation of all of the different groups in the neighborhood. Extending the newsletter to businesses and covering issues that concern them is a great way to start making those connections.

The most cost-effective and efficient way to distribute the newsletter is to divide the neighborhood into small sectors composed of a few streets. This information can be displayed on a neighborhood sector map. Members of the neighborhood planning team, volunteers from the neighborhood, or block captains can then deliver the newsletter to the houses, apartments, and businesses in their section. Drop the newsletter in screen doors, roll it up and slip it between the doorknob and the doorframe, or slip it partially under the doormat so it will not blow away.

**Please Note: It is against federal law to put newsletters in mailboxes!**

The newsletter costs money to produce. One way to finance your newsletter is to sell advertising space to neighborhood businesses. This can also help the Neighborhood Planning Team to involve more businesses in the planning process. Some neighborhood associations sell ad spaces the size of a business card for \$20 to \$30. The ads can either be inserted into the newsletter text or included as an insert. Depending on the size of the neighborhood, selling ten ads can pay for the printing of the newsletter.

If English is not the first language of a significant percentage of the neighborhood's residents, consider having the articles translated by someone in the neighborhood.

### **E-mail Newsletters**

Many neighborhood associations use e-mail lists, or “listservs,” to supplement their newsletter. E-mail listservs allow users to instantly exchange ideas and information about neighborhood issues. Obviously, email cannot replace door-to-door newsletters because not every household in the neighborhood will have a computer. Yet, it can be a powerful tool for communicating with residents interested in planning issues. If someone in your neighborhood works or goes to school at one of the local universities, the student, staff or faculty member may be able to assist you in establishing an e-mail listserv through their university.



## UNDERSTANDING BACKGROUND DATA

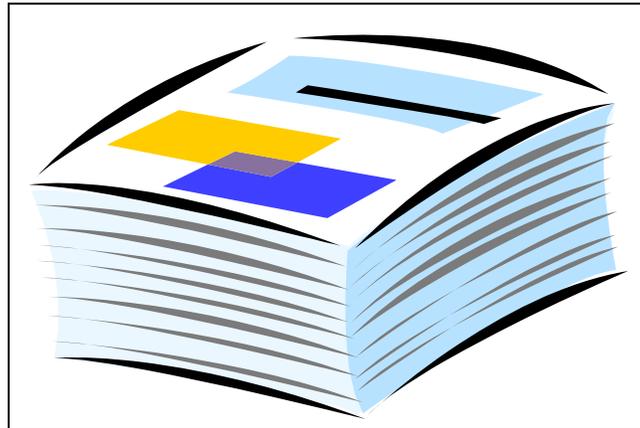
### **Your Neighborhood Planning Notebook – Basic Data and What it Means**

Once the Neighborhood Planning Team has been established, City staff will give a chairperson, elected by members of the team, a notebook with background and basic data about the neighborhood planning area. This notebook is used to store handouts, notes, and other information collected over the course of the planning effort. The notebook will include:

Maps: boundary of planning area, existing zoning, existing land uses, and existing public facilities.

Demographic Information: number of persons, population density, housing occupancy, housing tenure, ethnicity and other pertinent information.

Other Information: significant historical resources, commercial services, the initial questions answered by the organizing members or the planning team, and past planning efforts.



### **Maps**

Boundary of Planning Area: This map depicts the neighborhood planning area and its boundaries.

Existing Zoning: The existing zoning on a property determines what may legally be built there. Zoning is the most common and powerful tool used by the City to direct land use and development. A thorough grasp of the zoning in the neighborhood will help the members of the team understand the types of development that are currently allowed. It will also help in the development of the Future Land Use Map.

Existing Land Use: As opposed to the zoning – which is what is allowed – land use describes how property is actually being used. Areas where zoning and land use do not match should receive special attention in a neighborhood plan.

Other types of maps may be useful during the drafting of the neighborhood plan. These may include flood zone maps, maps that identify existing public facilities that serve the neighborhood and the City as a whole, maps locating historic sites and structures, and a map of the sidewalks, lighting and crime.

## **Demographic Information**

Significant Historical Resources: Many neighborhoods have important historical buildings and places that should be preserved.

Commercial Services: Acknowledging how businesses fit into the community is an important part of a neighborhood plan. These businesses often provide services to the neighborhood, and at times provide jobs for area residents. Appreciating the role of neighborhood businesses will allow the Neighborhood Planning Team to address the special needs of the business community.

Past Planning Efforts: Past planning efforts, either by the City or by the neighborhood itself, can be a useful starting point for current discussions. They may contain a great deal of useful information.

## **CONDUCTING A SURVEY**

### **Why Are Surveys Important to Neighborhood Planning?**

Survey research is an important tool for identifying a neighborhood's needs and concerns. The information obtained from a survey can help the Neighborhood Planning Team develop recommendations that focus on issues important to the neighborhood residents.

A survey is an effective way to create interest in the planning effort. If they see that their neighbors are involved in the planning process, they may be more willing to participate. The survey can also identify potential volunteers for the team and for other neighborhood projects.

Finally, survey research is an important part of the neighborhood planning process. It is a grassroots method of obtaining public participation and input. A properly conducted survey gives all of the area stakeholders –residents, property owners, and business owners – an opportunity to add their voices to the process.

### **What Types of Issues Can a Neighborhood Survey Address?**

A neighborhood survey can address almost any planning issue.

- What issues are most important to the neighborhood?
- What do residents think about the zoning and land uses in their neighborhood?
- Are there parts of the neighborhood that need more sidewalks or streetlights?
- Which parts of the neighborhood have problems with speeding or cut-through traffic?

### **How Are Surveys Used In Neighborhood Planning?**

The ONS staff is developing a standard survey that includes questions asked in every neighborhood. In addition, there are questions that can be tailored to a specific neighborhood as well as space for neighborhood specific questions developed by the Neighborhood Planning Team.

It is the responsibility of the neighborhood to deliver these surveys to all neighborhood residents. This includes people living in houses, apartments, and business owners in the planning area. The City will mail a survey to businesses and to non-resident owners who own property in the neighborhood planning area, but do not live or carry on business in the neighborhood. In addition, the City will cover the costs of printing each survey. ONS staff will tally the return responses and present a report to the Neighborhood Planning Team.

### **How Long Will It Take?**

Conducting a survey requires significant effort and time from both the Neighborhood Planning Team and City staff. The survey process can take over two months. During this time:

- Neighborhood-specific questions are drafted
- The survey is distributed to the neighborhood by the planning team
- Surveys are returned
- Results are tabulated
- A report is prepared that summarizes the survey results

### **Is One Set of Questions Enough?**

Surveys are distributed to three different groups – residents, business owners and managers, and non-resident property owners. These groups tend to focus on separate issues, but often share common concerns about the neighborhood.

Experience has demonstrated that it is best to develop two surveys: one for residents, and one for business owners and non-resident property owners. The business and non-resident survey should be limited to two pages in length. However, this survey does include some of the same questions as the residential survey. This produces points of comparison between the responses of different groups.

### **Conducting the Survey**

The goal of survey distribution is to deliver a copy to every resident, non-resident property owner and business owner in the neighborhood.

Residents. The distribution of residential surveys is the responsibility of the Neighborhood Planning Team using the distribution strategy described in the “Developing a Neighborhood Newsletter” section of this workbook. The team divides the neighborhood into smaller areas and assigns each area to a team of two persons. Ideally, each area is no larger than two or three streets.

There are four ways to distribute a survey. The team can use a single method or a combination.

- Volunteers go door-to-door and hand questionnaires to residents, and possibly arrange a return time, “I’ll be back in 2 hours to pick up this questionnaire, okay?” (choose any time to return)
- Volunteers go door-to-door and leave surveys with a stamped and return address envelope. (If the association is able to provide the envelope and stamp.)
- Surveys are inserted into the neighborhood newsletter that is delivered to every door in the neighborhood.
- Surveys are placed in central areas for residents to pick up, such as in the lobby of a cooperating grocery store or at libraries and returned to the same place. (This is the least effective way to distribute.)

Regardless of the method or combination of methods used to distribute the survey, every household should receive a copy. Each copy should include instructions on how to return it. For the best response include a postage paid envelope.

Non-Resident Property Owners and Business Owners. Non-resident property owners and business owners or managers will need to be given the opportunity to complete a survey. The City will mail surveys with return envelopes to these individuals. To ensure greater participation from business interests, representatives of the neighborhood can visit the businesses and personally distribute the surveys.

### **What About Non-English Speakers?**

Some neighborhoods have significant numbers of residents whose primary language is not English. The ONS staff can help the neighborhood develop a non-English language version of the standard survey. If there are no members on the team that can act as translators, the team should identify members of the community who can translate or personally administer the survey.

### **What About Apartments?**

Large apartment complexes – those containing more than 50 units – present a special challenge for conducting surveys. In a neighborhood with many apartment units, it may not be feasible to knock on each apartment door. However, it is important to make the survey available to all of the neighborhood’s residents – apartment dwellers included. Everyone in the neighborhood must have a voice in the process.

Explore ways to distribute the surveys to apartment residents in the neighborhood. Try to enlist the support of the onsite apartment manager. He or she may already have a system to distribute flyers or newsletters to residents. As a backup method, the surveys can be left in laundry rooms, beside resident’s mailboxes, or in other apartment facilities.



### **What About the Issue of Non-Responsiveness?**

It is not possible to reach all potential respondents through any single method of surveying. Certain groups can be systematically excluded from a survey effort. For example, if a door-to-door survey were to be conducted during daytime hours, people who work during the day would be excluded. Try to identify ways in which the survey might systematically exclude groups and try to counteract this problem or other problems.

**Members of some groups may be reluctant to respond to a survey. Their reasons can range from a lack of time or interest, to privacy concerns or other reasons. Often it may take several attempts to obtain the needed input. Avoid the trap of simply surveying those individuals who are convenient to ask.**

### **Collection, Interpretation, and Reporting the Survey Results**

The ONS staff will summarize the survey results. The summary should:

- Be an accurate reflection of neighborhood priorities
- Call attention to the important results
- Highlight the significant issues or possible solutions that were identified by survey respondents

A detailed, question-by-question breakdown of results can be provided, either at the end of the summary or in a separate document.

The Neighborhood Planning Team should use the survey results to refine the plan. In some cases, the survey results may cause the team to reassess the plan's priorities and goals.

- Are there new issues that were identified by survey respondents?
- Are there high-priority issues identified by the team that the survey results indicate to be a lower priority?
- Do the survey results show a clear ranking of proposed solutions?

## **PARTS OF A NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN**

There are several parts to any neighborhood plan. They are listed below and discussed in more detail on the following pages.

- Vision statement
- Statement of existing conditions
- History of the area
- Description of existing conditions
- Statement of issues
- Policies
- Goals & Objectives
- Implementation of actions
- Identification of resources
- Charts and maps showing existing and proposed conditions
- Methods to monitor, evaluate and update the plan

### **The Vision Statement**

It is important for the neighborhood to develop a vision early in the planning process. A vision is a statement of where you want to go, so you develop ways to get there. It is simply a statement of what you would like your neighborhood to look like if it were exactly the way you wanted it. The only thing that is important is that it reflects community-wide goals and is achievable in the long term.

### **Data Collection**

Data is collected to identify existing circumstances, to project into the future, and to form a basis to select issues and establish policies and objectives for future actions. Every effort should be made to collect data relating to assets as well as problems.

### **Data and Where to Find It**

There are two types of data and several ways by which it can be collected. Primary data is collected firsthand. For instance, it is the creation of land use maps by personal observation of the types of land use in your neighborhood or collecting data directly from surveys. Secondary data, on the other hand, is existing data collected from other sources such as census information, news articles, or library source material.

Both types of data are necessary and valuable. The deciding factor as to which type to use for any given purpose depends upon the quality and availability of the data necessary. Data can be obtained from various sources such as newspapers, reports and magazines; subdivision or development plans, past or new survey materials, maps, personal observation, the census, or verbal accounts from current or former residents.

Information that could help you during the neighborhood planning process could be:

- Characteristics of Residents: age, income, education, unemployment and talents
- Condition of Neighborhood: physical such as, housing type, ownership, streets, water, sewer, zoning and transportation circulation patterns
- Land use: vacant/developed land, building type and use
- Cultural/Government: associations, churches, organizations, schools, parks, and libraries
- Historic: structures, history
- Neighborhood Leadership: Parent Teacher Organization or Association, members, church officials, business owners and association leaders
- City ordinances, policies, plans and other documents

### **Data Analysis**

Analyzing data involves arranging data into an understandable format and determining what it means. The data can be mapped or organized into charts or text. Determining the results can be accomplished by comparing different pieces of data to each other, comparing findings to other areas, noticing trends over time or geographically, or determining if relationships or patterns emerge.

The results of gathering data should give you a picture of the neighborhood as it exists. If your data is accurate, this picture should be based on fact and not on hearsay or conjecture. You may discover that some of your or your neighbor's perceptions have not proved to be true.

### **SWOT Analysis**

After the data has been organized, it can also be analyzed by using the SWOT system to help identify:

*Strengths:* What is good about your neighborhood?

*Weaknesses:* What needs to be improved?

*Opportunities:* What are the possibilities to use the strengths or improve the weakness?

*Threats:* What situations exist that may endanger the future?

### **Mapping / Charts**

It is essential to know what is currently in your neighborhood for you to be able to identify possible changes. Current land use on each lot should be mapped. Also, problem areas should be noted such as areas with traffic problems; curbs, gutters and streets that need repairs; housing needs; areas of high crime or graffiti; and any other issues you can identify.

Also, be sure to map assets of the neighborhood. These could include parks, good streets, curbs and gutters, libraries, other public buildings, schools, or churches.

### **Identify and Prioritize Issues and Assets**

The SWOT system will help identify issues and assets. It is important to be clear in describing assets you wish to capitalize on and problems (issues) you wish to improve/solve. For instance, an issue could be that streets are not safe for pedestrians. Assets could be an existing park or well constructed streets. After the issues list is complete, begin to prioritize.

## **Goals**

The next step is to state goals. There should be at least one goal for each issue or asset stating in broad terms what direction the neighborhood wishes to go to act on the issue or asset. For instance, if one issue is that the area is not safe for pedestrians, then a goal could be to make the neighborhood safer for pedestrians.

## **Objectives**

Setting objectives is your next step. Each goal can have several objectives. An objective is a statement of the accomplishments you must reach to fulfill your stated goals. For instance, if the goal is to make the neighborhood safer for pedestrians, objectives may be to provide more or wider sidewalks, or install a traffic light.

## **PARK**

A good system to begin setting objectives is the PARK system. Each objective will fit into one of the following categories.

- Preserve:      What should be preserved?
- Add:            What should be added to improve the neighborhood?
- Remove:        What should be removed?
- Keep Out:      What should be kept from your neighborhood?

## **Implementation Actions**

Implementation actions are the specific tasks you must perform to reach your objective. In the case of pedestrian safety, actions could be to gain support from the neighborhood for wider sidewalks and a traffic light. Neighborhood leaders should meet with the Traffic Division to assess alternatives and identify funding.

## **Monitoring, Evaluation, and Updating**

One of the most important, and probably the most overlooked, parts of the planning process is monitoring the completed project to determine if it has been successful.

It is not always possible to anticipate all ramifications of a selected action. For instance, installation of a traffic light may solve the immediate problem of pedestrian safety, but it may cause unforeseen traffic problems. After monitoring the traffic light for some amount of time, it may be determined that the light is causing traffic backups and further action is needed to resolve this problem. The solution could be to alter the timing of the red and green light cycle, install a left turn arrow, or another solution as appropriate.

The thing to remember is that it is important to monitor each action and use your evaluation to determine if revisions are necessary. Be sure to communicate your results to residents and ONS staff. A neighborhood plan should be updated in entirety every 10 years.

## **WRITING GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND ACTION ITEMS**

The most significant part of any neighborhood plan is the development of Goals, Objectives and Action Items. Goals are broad statements that define what the neighborhood wants to accomplish. Objectives are more specific and divide the goals into manageable, measurable stages. Action items are very specific tasks that can be accomplished to achieve the goals and objectives.

### **Goals, Objectives and Action Items**

A plan must have goals. These should describe the desired outcome of the neighborhood planning process and should be expressed as general statements. A plan's goals should be clear, concise and realistic. Consider their political and funding implications. Look at them in terms of both short and long-range planning.

During the initial stages of the planning process, the Neighborhood Planning Team will identify some preliminary goals. However, these are a reflection of the team and not necessarily of the entire community. These initial goals usually represent the results of early brainstorming exercises and must evolve to reflect the desires of the neighborhood as expressed in workshops and surveys.

### **Example**

Goal: Provide quality development while maintaining residential stability for the neighborhood.

The plan's objectives are specific statements that provide details about the goals of the plan. These statements should preferably be expressed in measurable terms.

### **Example:**

Objective: Create neighborhood planning areas that deal with land use.

Action Items should be as specific as possible and should include the primary party or City department responsible for implementing the action. The wording of an action item should be specific and clear.

### **Example:**

Action Item: Rezone an area along Maple Street to General Commercial in order to promote commercial development.

As part of the process of developing action items for a plan, the team should propose a schedule for the implementation of these items. The team should also adopt priorities that clearly state which items should occur first. This is very important when there are several expensive action items such as a new public pool or a greatly expanded sidewalk network. By establishing priorities, a neighborhood can help the elected officials frame their decisions in terms of what should take place first.

### **Understanding What the Recommendations Will Cost**

City staff develops cost estimates and identifies possible funding sources prior to the plan's presentation to the Planning Commission and City Council. During the planning process, allow time for staff to research this information. Cost estimates play a critical factor in the City Council decision to adopt a plan. A plan with numerous expensive items has a lower chance of being adopted than one with several modestly priced items. A plan with creative and innovative solutions to neighborhood concerns will also be well received by the Council.

Being flexible and creating practical alternatives are the two best ways of achieving a plan's goals and objectives.

For example, suppose a neighborhood wanted to increase the amount of recreational space. The neighborhood could consider a number of possible action items.

- Buying land and building new parks
- Renovating existing parks
- Sharing existing open space with schools, churches, etc.
- Using vacant lots for community gardens or pocket parks
- Making it easier for people to get to existing parks

### **The Role of Consensus in Establishing, Goals, Objectives, and Action Items**

As stated earlier, consensus is the cooperative development of a decision that is acceptable enough, so that all members of a group agree to support the decision. Every decision that affects the plan must be made by consensus. This includes determining goals, objectives and action items.

If the Neighborhood Planning Team is unable to reach consensus on a goal, objective, or action item, it cannot be included in the plan. Moreover, if the plan is not representative of the community and not developed through a consensus based decision-making process, the City Council will not adopt it.

## HOLDING A WORKSHOP

Neighborhood workshops provide the Neighborhood Planning Team an opportunity to solicit opinions and input from members of the community. Participation from a larger segment of the neighborhood can identify and clarify new issues. Neighborhood-wide workshops can take place at any time during the plan's development. One held early in the process is a way to introduce people to the concept and practice of neighborhood planning.

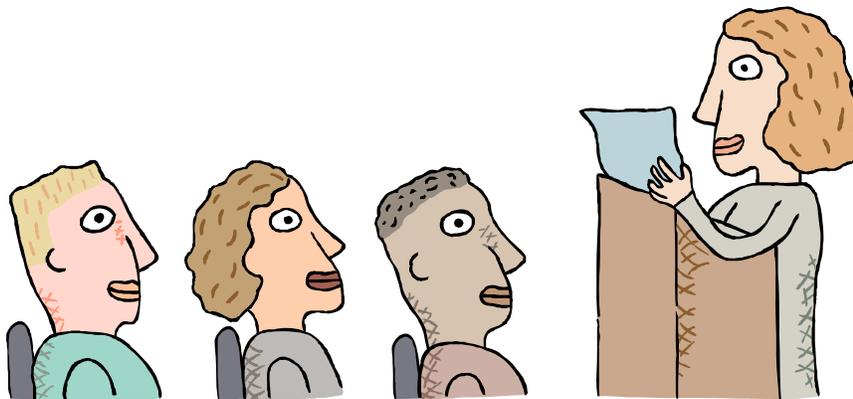
However, it is essential there be at least one workshop held near the end of the planning process. This will provide important feedback to the Team on a draft neighborhood plan. These workshops often include representatives from different City departments to explain what the department does and how it can help implement the plan's goals, objective, and action items.

When planning any large community-wide meeting, there are essential tasks that need to be addressed. An efficient way to organize such a meeting is to create a "Meeting To-Do List." This list can be easily modified to suit a particular meeting. When conducting a workshop, the Neighborhood Planning Team should:

- Establish a time and place
- Determine meeting format and speakers
- Invite neighbors and other interested individuals
- Gather all the needed materials
- Conduct an evaluation of the workshop

### **Establish a Time and Place**

The workshop should be held in a public place in or near the neighborhood if possible. Possibilities are a community center, a space at a faith based organization, etc. The location should be accessible and large enough to accommodate exhibit space and the estimated number of attendees. The most convenient time to hold the workshop is in the evening or on a weekend. This allows people who work during the day the opportunity to attend the meeting.



## **Determine Meeting Forum and Speakers**

When presenting a draft plan, several items should be considered.

- How will the draft be displayed and distributed to those in attendance?
- How will discussion and input be handled?
- What process will be followed if the attendees will be voting or “balloting” aspects of the plan?
- What are the next steps that need to be taken in the planning process?
- How shall different circumstances, which may arise, be handled?

There are several ways to present a neighborhood plan to the community. One method of presentation is to have several speakers offer different elements of the plan. These individuals could be drawn from the Neighborhood Planning Team and from the subcommittees. Small group “breakout” sessions covering sections of the plan are another way to encourage discussion and input. At the conclusion of these smaller sessions, ideas and opinions can be reported back to the entire group.

Voting on specific objectives and action items is a method to document opinions for consideration when finalizing the plan. One technique for voting gives everyone a certain number of stickers to place next to draft goals, objectives and action items. These elements of the plan may be from the team’s earlier efforts or developed during the small group discussions. This method provides immediate feedback as to the relative importance the attendees place on different items. In addition, the sticker voting technique can be fun.

## **Invite Neighbors and Other Interested Individuals**

Meeting notices should be mailed well in advance of the workshop. Generally, Neighborhood Planning Team meeting notices are sent a week to five days prior to the meeting. However, for a major workshop to present a draft plan, the notices should be mailed at least two weeks prior to the workshop. All of the parties with interest in the community should be contacted. These include:

- Area businesses
- Residents
- Property Owners
- Representatives from institutions located in the neighborhood such as schools and faith-based organizations
- City officials
- Media representatives.

As the date of the workshop draws closer, follow-up phone calls or post cards are effective ways to remind people about the meeting. Again, a method for phone calls needs to be established. If you have block captains or volunteers they can call their block.

### **Gather all Needed Materials**

There are several materials required for a neighborhood wide workshop. City staff may be able to provide you with many of these items.

- A sign-in sheet that asks for contact information such as name, phone number, address, fax number, email address, etc.
- Copies of the agenda
- Markers and paper
- Maps and other visual displays
- Other items you think might be needed such as pens, post-it-notes, etc.

If possible, provide refreshments, such as cookies, juice, water or coffee. Often this gesture alone can improve attendance.

### **Evaluation**

When evaluating the workshop, summarize the accomplishments of the meeting as well as input from the participants. When soliciting input from the attendees, be sure to ask:

- Were the handouts at the meeting helpful?
- After attending the meeting, do you have a better understanding of the neighborhood planning process?
- Were your concerns addressed during the meeting?
- What did you find most informative about the meeting?
- What concerns did you have that were not addressed during the meeting?

This information will guide decisions about revisions or help validate elements of the plan. This information will also help the ONS staff assist future Neighborhood Planning Teams hold more effective workshops.

### **Other Helpful Hints**

- Start and end the meeting on time. It is important to respect the time of your neighbors.
- Provide a warm welcome and explain the purpose and goals of the meeting at the beginning so everyone understands why they are there.
- Make sure that everyone is comfortable. Provide enough chairs, make sure everyone can see and hear the speakers and if possible set the thermostat to a comfortable level.
- If there will be anyone in attendance whose first language is not English, supply translated materials and provide a volunteer translator.
- Set ground rules to promote respect, open participation and minimize conflict.
- It is important that everyone has the opportunity to speak. Try to prevent individuals or small groups from dominating the discussion.
- Allow time for breaks.
- If there were special guests in attendance, a thank-you letter would be appropriate.

## **BALLOTING THE NEIGHBORHOOD**

The Neighborhood Planning Team will refine the draft plan based on the results of the workshops and other outreach efforts. The plan must then be balloted to the entire neighborhood. This gives the opportunity for the entire neighborhood – businesses, residents, property owners and other stakeholders – to decide on the merits of the plan. The chance to vote on the plan offers the entire neighborhood an additional opportunity to participate and show their confidence in the work of the Neighborhood Planning Team.

The ballot consists of:

- An executive summary
- All the goals and objectives from the plan
- All of the action items
- A proposed land use map

The ballot and support materials should not exceed six pages front and back. A document longer than this may discourage some residents from reading the ballot and voting. However, the full draft should be available upon request. Some neighborhoods have put a draft neighborhood plan on their neighborhood association web site. Other options for distributing complete copies of the draft plan include local businesses or at the library.

The demographic composition of some neighborhoods may require that the ballot and supporting materials be translated into another language. It is advisable for the team to identify someone in the neighborhood to provide assistance with translation.

The ballot is delivered to every resident, property owner, tenant and business owner. People from the neighborhood, Neighborhood Planning Team, volunteers, members of neighborhood associations, etc., deliver the residential ballots. The same strategy used to deliver the earlier survey to apartment complexes should be used to distribute the ballot. The City of Abilene will mail the ballot and support materials to the businesses and non-resident property owners.

The ballot should include a return mail envelope. As with the survey, City staff will tally ballots and present a report to the Neighborhood Planning Team.

A high return rate usually demonstrates widespread support from the neighborhood for the plan. There is no threshold or minimum return rate requirement, but the team should develop a strategy to encourage people to read, vote and return the ballot. Reminders in a newsletter, yard signs and flyer can help people remember to return their ballots.

## **NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN REVIEW AND ADOPTION**

Neighborhood plans submitted to the City Council should be representative of the neighborhood and consistent with adopted City policies and plans. To guarantee these qualities, parties from the neighborhood, City staff, and City boards and commissions will review the plan.

### **Neighborhood Review**

A neighborhood plan may recommend significant changes to the current character of the neighborhood. Therefore, neighborhood plans should be thoroughly reviewed and endorsed by members of the community. There are numerous opportunities for members of the neighborhood to voice their opinions and thoughts on the process. As part of the outreach strategy, the Neighborhood Planning Team should:

- Distribute a survey
- Update the neighborhood as to the plan's progress
- Advertise the public workshops where the plan's recommendations are presented
- Distribute the ballot

### **Planning Commission Review**

The Planning and Zoning Commission is a seven-member group appointed by the City Council. The members are citizens of Abilene and volunteer their time to serve on the Commission. The Commission reviews zoning and subdivision cases and other items relevant to planning and development. The Planning and Zoning Commission has the responsibility to ensure that all recommendations in the plan are consistent with the City's Comprehensive Plan and other policies.

Once City staff has reviewed the neighborhood plan and the necessary changes have been made, the plan is ready for review by the Planning and Zoning Commission. The Commission will be provided with a copy of the plan and any relevant background materials, such as land use and survey results.

When the plan comes before the Planning and Zoning Commission, a representative of the Neighborhood Planning Team should be present to provide a short presentation about the plan. In addition to this presentation, team members and ONS staff should be available to answer any questions that the Commission might have. Once the presentation is finished other people may speak in favor or in opposition to the neighborhood plan. After all interested parties are given the opportunity to have their views known, the Commission may then move to endorse the plan and recommend it to the City Council for adoption.

### **Other Boards and Commissions**

The Neighborhood Planning Team may present the plan to other boards and commissions. If there are a significant number of historic structures in the neighborhood, the planning team should make a presentation to the City's Landmarks Commission. It is important to let as many people know about the recommendations in the plan as possible, because you never know where assistance may be obtained.

## **City Council**

Once it receives a recommendation from the Planning and Zoning Commission, the neighborhood plan will be submitted to the City Council for adoption.

The neighborhood plan presentation given to the City Council is very similar to the one given to the Planning and Zoning Commission. Again, it is recommended that team members present the plan and answer any questions the Council may have concerning specific points within the plan.

Following the presentation and questions from the Council members, the City Council may move to adopt the plan. Once adopted, the neighborhood plan becomes an amendment to the City of Abilene's Comprehensive Plan. By adopting the plan, the City Council shows the City's commitment to implement as many of the plan's action items as possible. Implementation of the plan serves as a guide for City actions to be in close accordance with the plan's goals, objectives and action items. However, the plan itself does not represent a change to existing zoning if zoning changes are an action item. Zoning changes would need to be done under separate application and considered at a later date by the Planning and Zoning Commission and the City Council. However, the plan does provide a clear guide for zoning changes when the plan enters the implementation phase.

## **IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY**

An implementation strategy is the last component of a neighborhood plan. During the development of the plan, the Neighborhood Planning Team should keep in mind several things when formulating goals, objectives and action items.

- How will changes proposed in the plan be implemented and what will they cost?
- Who will be responsible for implementing the changes?
- What projects recommended in the plan should be added to the City's Capital Improvement Plan?
- What items from the plan should be added or removed from the City budget?
- Who will coordinate the neighborhood volunteers who will be working on projects to implement the plan?

### **Plan Implementation**

The plan's adoption shows the City's commitment to the plan's implementation. However, each action item listed in the plan requires separate and specific implementation. The neighborhood plan will be supported and implemented by:

- City boards, commissions and staff
- City department budgets
- Capital improvement projects
- Other agencies and organizations
- Direct neighborhood action.

### **City Boards, Commission's and Staff**

The City's boards and commissions will look to the neighborhood plan when they need guidance about the neighborhood. For example, the Planning and Zoning Commission will look at a proposed zone change request to ensure its appropriateness and conformity to the plan.

### **Department Budgets**

Every year the City departments develop annual budgets that outline their priorities for the coming year. The goals, objectives, and action items in a neighborhood plan provide input to the departmental budget process. This information allows departments to prioritize projects that address a neighborhood's needs and concerns as outlined in the neighborhood plan.

### **Capital Improvement Projects**

The Neighborhood Planning Team may identify issues or problems in the community that require significant capital expenditures. The guidance offered by the plan can help City officials and different departments during the capital improvements program process (CIP). A CIP is a community's plan for matching the cost of large-scale improvements to anticipated revenues, such as taxes and bonds. The input offered by an adopted neighborhood plan could help guarantee that a CIP project will advance the long-term interests of the neighborhood.

### **Other Agencies and Organizations**

Other agencies and organizations outside City government may also play a key role in the implementation of the neighborhood plan. When agencies such as Neighborhoods in Progress, Habitat for Humanity and others look for public input, the Neighborhood Plan serves as a clear vision based on consensus.

### **Direct Neighborhood Action**

Some of the elements of the neighborhood plan will be implemented by direct neighborhood action. Neighborhood clean-ups, graffiti abatement, and a citizens' crime watch are examples of projects that might be accomplished by the neighborhood.

