

NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING

Carol D. Barrett, FAICP

Executive Summary

Neighborhood planning gives citizens the opportunity to take an active leadership role in the planning process. A neighborhood plan can:

- Represent all of the groups that make a community;
- Identify neighborhood needs and concerns;
- Establish aims for improving the neighborhood;
- Provide recommendations for how to reach those aims; and
- Guide future development and policy and financial decisions by elected and appointed officials.

This chapter provides basic guidelines for neighborhood planning. The report includes the following information:

- Why do neighborhood planning?
- How to prepare and adopt a neighborhood plan.
- Critical elements to be included in a neighborhood plan.
- Implementation of neighborhood plans.

Background

Neighborhood planning is currently enjoying a resurgence. In earlier incarnations, neighborhood planning was organized by independent neighborhood organizations or was federally sponsored as an element of a program funded by the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Neighborhood community development corporations, organized as non-profit legal entities, provided a formal structure for citizen participation. Judging by the spate of articles in planning publications and the number of sessions organized at planning conferences, a new and slightly modified version of neighborhood planning is gaining greater acceptance. These are collaborative, public sponsored, neighborhood-based, land use-oriented planning initiatives. This report focuses on neighborhood based planning initiatives. A list of some of the communities currently engaged in neighborhood planning is attached to this document.

Neighborhood planning represents a particular kind of role for professional planners and planning commissioners. The role of professional planners in neighborhood planning is more as facilitators and negotiators rather than visionaries. Planners are not promise

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makers or promise keepers -- elected and appointed city officials can make and keep the promises. Planners can help guide the planning process and teach how the system works. The planning commission takes on the role of interpreting the community vision within which the neighborhood plan will have to fit. Sometimes that interpretation will mean expressing values different from the neighborhood interests.

How is Neighborhood Planning Different from Comprehensive Planning?

Painting a very broad brush, the neighborhood plan obviously covers a smaller scale than the comprehensive plan and can therefore include more detail. Neighborhood planning is likely to focus on short and mid-term implementation strategies as well as the long range. It is undertaken in the spirit of a partnership between the neighborhood community and the city. The neighborhood plan has a specific purpose of providing guidance to elected and appointed city officials so that formal actions by government will be more compatible with goals, objectives and plans made by neighborhood organizations. Both neighborhood planning and comprehensive planning entail a commitment to an inclusive participatory planning process, which includes all of the key leadership in a community and reaches beyond the typical single family homeowner.

Doing neighborhood planning without the framework of a comprehensive plan is risky business. Communities with experience recommend that cities hang tough with a requirement for neighborhood plans to be consistent with the comprehensive plan. Healthy neighborhoods cannot exist as islands in a city.

Neighborhood Planning Around the United States

The American Planning Association has published information about what elements are included in typical neighborhood plans. Looking at the list in the following table, it is clear that neighborhood plans vary according to local tradition and the needs of the community. The table helps to show that there is no single right or wrong way to do neighborhood planning.

LEGEND:

Essential = Recommended as basic by the American Planning Association Collaborative = Reflects community driven planning process rather than single department city-initiated plans.

Depends on Circumstances = May be appropriate based on local requirements.

COMMON ELEMENTS OF TYPICAL NEIGHBORHOOD PLANS		<u>Importance</u>
<i>Organizing Elements:</i>		
History and Major Milestones of planning effort		Essential
Acknowledgments (who worked on the plan)		Essential
Explanation of how plan is organized what is included and why		Depends
Graphics		Depends
Resource Directory (who in the City government can help)		Collaborative
Appendices		Collaborative
<i>Explanation of the planning process:</i>		
Neighborhood organizational structure		Essential
Mission/purpose <i>statement</i>		Essential
Documentation of citizen participation -		Essential
Needs assessment (physical and social)		Essential
Relationship to other plans		Collaborative
<i>Defining the neighborhood:</i>		
Boundaries		Essential
History		Depends
Identity		Collaborative
<i>Plan Elements:</i>		
<i>Land use</i>		Essential
Transportation		Essential
Civic and community needs (Infrastructure)		Essential
Economic development		Depends
Open Space		Depends
Environmental concerns		Depends
Mobility		Essential
Social services		Collaborative
Safety/crime prevention		Depends
Residential needs		Essential
Architectural Control/Historic Preservation		Depends
Employment		Depends
Commercial revitalization		Depends
Nuisance elimination		
Depends		
Industrial		Depends
Education resources		
Depends		
Special services for youth		Collaborative
<i>Implementation Framework:</i>		
Goals		Essential
Implementation strategy		Essential
Funding		Essential
Evaluation/Monitoring		Collaborative

The elements included in one community's neighborhood plan will not be identical to those used in other communities. It is appropriate that a neighborhood plan should respond to local needs and interests. A neighborhood plan may include topics beyond the elements outlined in the preceding table.

How Do Neighborhoods Get Picked for Planning Initiatives?

When starting a neighborhood planning project, the process for selecting the neighborhood(s) that will be included must be carefully thought out. Neighborhood planning can be targeted to *areas* that have experienced neglect; to middle class neighborhoods as a tool to discourage suburban flight; or to systematically cover an entire city over time. When a new neighborhood planning initiative is undertaken, the process for selecting the neighborhoods must be easily understood and achieve the objectives of the neighborhoods and the city.

Have An Application Process - An application process can be developed which will allow neighborhood communities with existing capacity for leadership and problem solving to demonstrate their commitment to the endeavor. Information about the neighborhood planning process should be shared throughout the community.

Evaluate Applications Fairly - The criteria for evaluation should be developed at the same time the application is being prepared. Information describing the evaluation criteria and selection process should be distributed with the application so that there are few surprises. The kinds of factors that could be considered include:

- Could the neighborhood develop a plan without public support?
- Is the leadership representative of the entire community? (i.e., are students included in areas with lots of university housing? Does a civic or neighborhood association have broad-based support from its members in the neighborhood?)
- How immediate are the needs?
- Does the organization(s) applying have a track record of cooperating? Of solving problems?
- How complex is the scope of work contemplated? Can it be accomplished within the budget and schedule?
- What are the main issues? Do these have transferability to other areas of the city?
- Will the planning process be able to fairly address the neighborhood's main issues? (For example, what if the main issue is trying to stop the city from building a new airport which the elected officials have already agreed to support?)

Involve Elected Officials in Making the Selection - Help to secure the interest and commitment of the elected officials to the outcome of the neighborhood plan by binding their interest to the process at the beginning. While staff (and appropriate boards and commissions) may have recommendations regarding neighborhoods to be targeted, the final determination should be made by the city's elected officials.

How Large Should a Neighborhood Planning Area Be?

The size of the neighborhood planning area may vary and should be determined by a number of factors:

- Planning resources available;
- The community's traditional understanding of what constitutes a neighborhood area;
- How long it will take to accomplish neighborhood planning citywide or in all of the desired target areas; and
- How much time will be spent preparing each neighborhood plan.

In the City of Austin's neighborhood planning process, a committee of civic leaders established guidelines recommending that consideration be given to areas of approximately 5,000 people or 30 square blocks. This size enables the neighborhood plan to address a variety of issues that would be more difficult to resolve within a smaller planning area. In Portland, Oregon, neighborhood planning areas are larger. approximately 50 to 60 square blocks. Regardless of the size adopted by a city, it is key that the neighborhood planning area be large enough to include a mix of uses. Having both employment and housing included within the neighborhood planning area is critical.

What Are the Values Important to Neighborhood Planning?

To have a strong neighborhood plan, the planning process must be open and fair. Divergent points of view must be heard and respected.

Communication. All of the key parties should be present at the table. A neighborhood is composed of diverse interests and all should be represented. There should be a free flow of accurate information. All sides must listen with an open mind. There should be respect for different points of view.

Shared Responsibility. All sides must be prepared to act responsibly and live up to their commitments. For example, the neighborhood association should be organized so that it is a representative group and its leaders can speak with authority. Likewise, the developer should be willing to treat neighborhood associations as an important part of the process. Schools, public institutions, and public facilities like parks are major players in affecting community success and must **be** seated at the planning table.

Community Interest. All interests should approach a planning project with a shared concern for the entire community. It is important for everyone to understand how a single development proposal may affect the overall community. Developers seeking support for new projects within the neighborhood need to work to minimize proposals negative impact. Residents need to understand how a proposal may affect and have benefits for the entire city.

Costs. Everyone should be concerned about reducing costs and spending money wisely. Neighborhood associations should recognize the importance of increasing the city tax base with new development or revitalized areas. Developers should recognize that short-run savings for their project may translate into long-term costs for the community.

What Role Will the Neighborhood Play in Preparing the Plan?

The role of City elected and appointed officials is to establish and recognize the planning process and designate the target areas. Staff will assist in collecting and analyzing data and offer other technical help such as researching specific issues or summarizing the results of previous studies. Tools available from the City include census data, zoning, and other maps. The neighborhood(s) working on the plan is expected to take the leadership role in:

1. Recruiting and retaining people for the neighborhood planning leadership team. These people should represent all aspects of the community including residents, property owners, business owners, tenants, community institutions, and other key groups. The leadership team must be **a** diverse and representative structure. There must be a large enough core of volunteers to get the job done.

2. Determining neighborhood needs based on a survey or similar technique.
3. Figuring out the best ways to keep everyone in the planning area informed and helping to carry out the communication strategy.
4. Finding a place in the neighborhood for regular meetings.
5. Helping to determine the boundaries for the planning area.
6. Setting up a way to communicate with adjacent neighborhood organizations.
7. Creating a system for review and approval of the plan that will include everyone in the planning area.

To clarify expectations, communities may decide to make explicit some of these values and expectations in the form of a Memorandum of Understanding to be signed after the neighborhoods are selected.

Preparing Neighborhood Plans

After neighborhoods are selected and the neighborhood planning leadership team is established, staff should work with the leadership team and prepare a Memorandum of Understanding. The memorandum should outline shared understanding of schedules and responsibilities. Staff should make sure that the necessary technical resources are made available to create a climate for success. This can include team building exercises, surveys data collection and analysis, access to decision-makers, or other resources important to the team such as word processing and photocopying. Items addressed in a Memorandum of Understanding may include:

- Work program
- Timetable
- Participation
- Products
- Approval process

To be effective, the planning process outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding needs to bind neighbors to see through the planning process so that when the going gets tough, people don't jump ship.

The final content of a neighborhood plan will reflect the character and interest of the neighborhood. No single approach will work for all neighborhoods. However, it would be helpful if all of the city's neighborhood plans addressed a core set of topics so that

there will be compatibility among the plans. The major topics are listed below along with examples of how a neighborhood might approach these issues.

- Neighborhood Needs and Aims -- What is important to the neighborhood and why. What are current city serves and facilities? How can things like libraries and parks be improved?
- How the Neighborhood Fits Into the City -- How is the land around the neighborhood used and what is in the neighborhood that supports other citizens.
- Land Use — How to preserve, encourage, or discourage the way buildings and land are used in our neighborhood. Should there be changes to the zoning to implement the plan after it is adopted?
- Environment — What factors will make a safe, clean, and healthy community now and in the future? How can the community and the City work together to strengthen police and fire service? What about neighborhood clean-ups? How can the water and air be protected?
- Transportation and Mobility — How do residents travel to work, shop, and relax including bus, walking, bicycling, and driving. Where are more sidewalks needed? How can people be encouraged to share rides and to drive more slowly through the neighborhoods?
- Social Services -- Who provides services in the community and how do they work together?
- Other City Needs and Aims — What are other city-wide concerns that affect the neighborhood? Should there be changes in the citywide needs and aims to better support the neighborhood?

- Implementation Strategy -- How are changes to be made, what they will cost and who will be responsible? What projects should be added to the Capital Improvements Program? What items 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?
- Other Topics Important to the Neighborhood.

The format for a neighborhood plan can vary. Some plans are simply several sheets of paper stapled together. Others are large maps suitable for framing which include the plan recommendations and illustrations of how the recommendations would look if implemented. The format should be appropriate to the types of recommendations made in the plan.

How Long Does It Take to Prepare a Neighborhood Plan?

Some communities have a fast track process for neighborhood planning. Planning participants meet several times a week and the plan is completed in a couple of months. Other communities take longer. In general, neighborhood plans should be developed in six months or less to capitalize on the interest and enthusiasm of the leadership committee. While some troublesome issues may not be fully resolved within that time limit, it is worth proceeding promptly with the items where the community can come to consensus. It should be noted, however, that some cities find it takes several years to prepare a neighborhood plan. However, a multi-year process tends to eliminate most "normal" residents, the business community, and everyone but the incredibly dedicated citizen.

Why Would a Neighborhood Want to Prepare a Plan?

There are advantages to neighborhoods that work together on a plan. Plans can be adopted by the City Council and help provide direction **for** all City programs and projects that affect the neighborhood such as the budget and the Capital Improvements program. City departments that provide services to a neighborhood may work alongside the neighborhood and professional staff planners. The neighborhood will have a clear vision of its priorities and needs as well as consensus on things that need to be done. The neighborhood will also have greater visibility. Businesses will know what services are needed and what development will be encouraged.

Why Would a City Want to Try Neighborhood Planning?

The City might get nudged into doing neighborhood planning by neighborhoods. However, in most cases neighborhood planning is seen as a strategy for implementing comprehensive plans. There are other significant intangible benefits of neighborhood planning. The value **of these should not be underestimated:**

- More civic capacity;
- More knowledgeable public;
- Greater grassroots leadership; and,
- Greater trust and connectedness.

Neighborhood planning can improve the City's coordination of services to an area by bringing attention, focus and problem-solving resources to an area. It can improve input *and* coordination regarding all city-wide issues; however, a balancing of all interests must still occur. For example, in Texas no neighborhood plan can pre-empt zoning rights as established by state law, but plans can improve the communication and decision making for future recommendations for changes to the zoning code.

Steps in the Neighborhood Planning Process

STEPS	PROCESS
1. Set goals	Brainstorm, review previous applicable work, develop issue statements, survey community
2. Study and analyze	Examine inventory and trends data, develop additional forecasts and projections if needed, identify neighborhood assets and constraints, propose alternatives
3. Prepare plan	Select alternatives, propose implementation strategy, review with community
4. Adopt plan	

5. Implement plan and monitor

Verify • resource commitments, evaluate process, and prepare for future plan updates

The planning process must be coordinated at several levels:

- Within the Neighborhood. Will the leadership team be organized to work as subcommittees? Will leaders be charged with formally reporting to their respective constituencies? How will information be shared with residents who are not part of any organized group?
- Neighborhood to Staff. Work needs to be planned within the confines of resources and reality. For example, some neighborhood groups may have expectations that must be tempered. Some citizens will not understand the time required to carry out neighborhood planning work and may suggest deadlines which cannot be met. Citizens have also asked whether the City neighborhood planning **will**: cater food for all meetings; pay people to attend meetings; provide child care (this raises issues of significant municipal liability); employ residents to carry out the neighborhood planning; or fund travel by citizens to national conferences to discuss neighborhood planning. Some cities may be prepared to answer "yes" to all of these questions. Others may not. In any event, the City should be prepared to respond.
- Staff to Staff. Much of the information that will be helpful is scattered throughout city government. Support for neighborhood planning from the City's top appointed and elected officials is important to securing assistance from other staff. Neighborhood planning is cross-functional and multi-disciplinary. The nature of the work will demand considerable coordination and communication. Everything will have to be done at once. Everything will be a priority. Be prepared for both the strengths and weakness of the city's system to become readily apparent.
- Neighborhood to Neighborhood. By definition, the neighborhoods share edges. Plans being prepared for one neighborhood should not negatively impact **another. To that end**, there needs to be informal consultation with affected neighborhood and community groups representing those areas immediately adjacent.

How Do Neighborhood Plans Get Reviewed and Adopted?

The review and adoption process needs to be carefully crafted at the beginning of the planning and should be consistent with local practices. Whatever adoption process is envisioned, be sure and allocate enough funds for printing, postage, and advertising so that the community is aware that the planning is underway and so that copies of relevant documents can be provided to interested parties.

In the Neighborhood - Before embarking on a neighborhood planning process, the decision should be made as to how the plan will be reviewed by the community and approved before it is formally submitted to the City. For example, in Round Rock the City had to amend its Comprehensive Plan to provide a specific legal framework for neighborhood planning. Issues to be considered include:

Who in the neighborhood gets to review the plan?

By what majority does the plan have to be approved?

If neighborhood plans are envisioned as changing zoning and land use policy, then procedural safeguards are required to ensure that adequate notice is provided and those affected by the plan recommendations have an opportunity to participate in the review process.

Every effort should be made to notify everyone who lives in the neighborhood, businesses, and property owners. Direct mail is preferred and at least the Executive Summary should be sent directly along with information about how to request a copy of the entire document. Other strategies including notifying key institutions, organizations, and groups are a second alternative. Before relying on advertisement in the print media, know what percentage of the households subscribe to the newspaper.

Coordinate and conduct a community-wide plan review meeting in such a way that everyone has an opportunity to participate. Ideally, the community leadership team helping to prepare the plan should present it. There should be an opportunity for questions and answers. Actual approval of the plan should be by ballot, not by a show of hands. If it appears that particular elements of the plan are generating significant controversy, you might structure the ballot so that people can vote on individual elements of the plan thereby allowing you to report consensus where it truly exists and salvaging as much of the plan as possible.

In some cases, the business community, representing real estate interests, may recommend that the plan must be approved by a majority of the neighborhood or a high

percentage. Be wary of such suggestions. What other legislative action by City Council requires majority approval by all of the residents? In a democracy, decisions are made at the ballot box by those who chose to vote. If local elections generally have a turnout as low as 15 percent and it only takes a majority of that 15 percent to determine public policy, it may not make sense to impose a higher standard for neighborhood planning. Nonetheless, some communities have done so. The City of Fort Lauderdale allocated \$100,000 to be spent on the implementation for each of its neighborhood plans and ended up imposing fairly elaborate procedural requirements. The City mailed information about the election to every household within a neighborhood. The same information was also widely advertised. Only registered voters could participate and the City Commission required that a super majority of 70 percent approval by those voting be required to adopt the plans. The neighborhood elections were conducted by the County Supervisor of Elections.

Official City Action - Elected officials can adopt neighborhood plans either by ordinance or resolution, or-by a combination. All three forms of action are used by other city's depending on their traditions. Any action by the City Council to adopt neighborhood plans must be consistent with applicable state law. Any adoption process should also include a role for the Planning Commission and any other relevant Boards and Commissions.

Implementing Neighborhood Plans

Neighborhood plans include information about timing, funding, and responsible parties. A variety of mechanisms can be used to implement neighborhood plans. Some plan recommendations are implemented through individual projects like a block clean-up day. Others take the form of programs such as **after school day** care programs. Still others are implemented legislatively such as land use recommendations for an area. Keep in mind that most implementation is funded through redirection of existing departmental budgets. Make some doable, **short** term recommendations. Other plan recommendations can be long term and more controversial.

As part of the implementation strategy, neighborhood organizations can include those resources which they can commit to plan implementation to help match or leverage

greater City financial commitments. The neighborhood plan implementation strategy must be crafted to meet the plan recommendations and therefore must remain flexible. Some recommendations may require subsequent ordinances. Others can be implemented through changes in the way the City Departments prepare budgets or recommend projects for the Capital Improvements Program. If amendments to the development code or the zoning ordinance are required to implement the neighborhood plan, action by the City Council to adopt the neighborhood plan by resolution and appropriation of staff resources will trigger staff follow-up. Regardless of form or content, an implementation strategy must assign costs, responsibility for actions, and oversight to monitor and follow-up on implementation.

Typical Implementation Activities from Neighborhood Plans:

Public process with agreed upon criteria for reviewing proposed bond proposals, CIP budgets, etc.;

Neighborhoods get budget to assign for sidewalk improvements;

Update zoning code;

Set priorities for staff time;

Monitor related planning efforts;

Set priorities for other studies;

Analysis of costs and benefits of annexation;

Create assessment district for urban forestry, sidewalks, or other improvements desired by neighborhood;

Establish standards for transit oriented design;

Quarterly update newsletter; Reciprocal planning
review;

Establish a Neighborhood Committee that would advise on implementation of all neighborhood plans through city-wide process -- Articulate all points of view with a goal of resolving the unsolvable;

Symposia;

Neighborhoods to standards;

Parks to standards;

Data base;

Pro bono work on deed restrictions; -

Neighborhood traffic control;

Neighborhood involvement in subdivision review;

Resource manuals;

Matching grants for projects -- fund newsletters, park improvements;

City-wide neighborhood conference;

Capacity building for neighborhood groups;

Neighborhood oriented parade of homes for inner city neighborhoods;

City fairs featuring neighborhoods;

Deed restrictions;

Amend zoning regulations;

Code enforcement to bring substandard properties into compliance;

Encourage organization of neighborhood associations;

Develop a neighborhood planning training program;

Promote annual goal setting for all neighborhood organizations;

Improve brush/bulky trash collection;

Promote programs to address environmental issues of the neighborhoods, i.e., graffiti, illegal dumping, erosion, stormwater runoff, etc.; and,

Create a "swat day" when all city departments provide resources at the same time for clean-up, filling potholes, etc.

Revising Neighborhood Plans

An orderly process for revising and updating the neighborhood plan should be identified in the plan. There can be a form of a "concurrence letter" from the leadership committee that prepared the original plan indicating the acceptability of proposals that fall within the spirit of the neighborhood plan. However, substantive revisions should have to be approved in the same manner by which a plan was originally adopted.

How Much Does It Cost to Do A Neighborhood Plan

Surprisingly little specific information is available; perhaps because most of the cost has typically been for in-house staff and the magnitude of needed effort and costs have not been calculated. Assuming two planners, part-time for six months and a 200 percent multiplier for indirect overhead costs and direct expenses would suggest an estimated cost of \$100,000 per neighborhood plan. Actual costs will vary depending on the size and scope of the neighborhood plan, the amount of volunteer effort by citizens, and other related factors.

Evaluating the Effectiveness of Neighborhood Planning

Although there will be a lot of informal discussion regarding the effectiveness of neighborhood planning, formal integration of evaluation components is preferred. Evaluation forms should be included along with the agenda for each public meeting. Both the format and content of meetings should be evaluated. A survey can be conducted of all households after the plan is completed to determine the degree of satisfaction with the planning process and results. Respondents should always be given the opportunity to identify continuing concerns.

A "debriefing" of the neighborhood leadership could be conducted. In a meeting setting individuals can build and expand on one another's ideas. Care should be taken that everyone feels comfortable talking; it may be necessary to include a written evaluation instrument. However the discussion is organized, the focus should be on lessons learned and what should be done differently next time.

With enough time and resources, formal neighborhood indicators could be established and measured before and after neighborhood planning, such as the condition

and value of the housing stock, increase in tree canopy, improved performance in the public schools, etc.

The neighborhoods, working with staff, should evaluate what worked well and what did not. All aspects should be revised based on the lessons learned including the application and selection process, the way the plans are prepared, and how they are reviewed. This information should be used to strengthen and continue neighborhood planning.

Candidly, whatever measurement system is employed, be sure and account for enhanced citizen involvement and cooperation—the most likely outcome of neighborhood planning.

Conclusion: Neighborhood Planning Issues and Concerns

The neighborhood planning process is not without both its pitfalls and pratfalls. Be sensitive to the cultural milieu. Planners in Austin goofed by offering Easter candy (licorice jellybeans) in an African American neighborhood not long after the public quote from Texaco regarding how all the black jellybeans stick together in the bottom of the bag. Someone present at the meeting in Austin took loud and public notice of the perceived slight. Another evening meeting was scheduled for a Jewish holiday. This action was viewed as insensitive.

Focus must be on what neighborhoods want. Convince the cynical with small projects that can demonstrate dramatic results. And some just want to whine -- get beyond that stage and agree on specific problems that should be addressed. Be prepared to answer challenging questions:

- Is the effort of neighborhood residents to guide decisions regarding private property owned by others a legitimate one?
- Who really represents the community? What are their credentials? How often must they be renewed?
- If the neighborhood is to assist with implementation, what levels of accountability are required for the expenditure of public funds? To what extent should government functions be delegated?

In many communities, neighborhood planning will have to fit into an existing context of staff and citizens advisory boards. Early on, decisions will have to be made about who and how the neighborhood plan is to be reviewed by these entities.

The care and feeding of the neighborhood planning staff should not be neglected. Pay attention to morale and team building.

Acting on the ideals of neighborhood planning—the collaborative values with community leadership—may be new concepts in a city or a planning bureaucracy. As a result, there may be some head butting. New approaches to doing business are often uncomfortable for many people.

One-size neighborhood planning does not fit all. Besides the "master plan" type neighborhood plan addressed in this document, neighborhood plans can also focus on:

- Start up - Help neighborhoods to organize.

- Targeted planning - Address a specific issue such as parking or housing condition.

- Revitalization/redevelopment - Focus on a project and how to make it happen when neighborhood consensus is essential to the economic development process.

Don't forget the power of words. Many neighborhood organizations feel that the very word itself belongs only to the pure of heart (i.e., "neighborhood associations") and they resist its use by planners and other assorted outsiders. In Austin, planners have used the phrase "planning area" as a substitute for neighborhood to satisfy such concerns.

It's messy. Embrace the chaos.