

BOOKS

Involving the Community in Neighborhood Planning

The 2004 ULI/Charles H. Shaw Forum on
Urban Community Issues
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The Urban Land Institute, as they are often want to do, have produced a useful book of community participation in the neighborhood planning process; dated but still relevant. While the focus of the discussion is on cities of all sizes, the lessons to be learned are directly applicable to small cities and towns. Without citizen support, plans of any kind go nowhere; without resident and city collaboration and participation, neighborhood plans go nowhere and may actually reduce resident confidence in the entire planning process. “Just another study” becomes a mantra that stymies future efforts to be constructive.

From the ULI...

Introduction

*N*ighborhoods are the building blocks that shape a city's identity and vitality.

Changes in a city's population, employment levels, housing choices, and transportation options all have an impact at the neighborhood level. Collaborative neighborhood planning on issues involving land use and development, redevelopment, transportation, and economic development offers cities the opportunity to identify, coordinate, and prioritize a variety of goals with the involvement of the local community.

However, collaborative neighborhood planning is not a common practice in many cities. Rather, a city may produce plans for housing densification, economic development, mass transit, or traffic circulation without the input of the neighborhood(s) they affect—if, indeed, it adopts any plans at all.

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With little or no planning occurring at the neighborhood level, local residents and stakeholders often become active only when proposed changes or persistent problems arise. Neighbors come together when there is an urgent issue at stake or to respond to a problem.

Neighborhood planning on a comprehensive level can help residents and business owners identify their community's priorities, plan for the long term, and ensure the consistency of their community's goals with those of the larger city.

Nonetheless, collaborative neighborhood planning encounters many challenges. It is difficult to attract a critical mass of community members to meetings and to maintain the momentum that is needed to complete a planning process that can take up to a year. Most planning efforts are also constrained by limitations on funding and staffing.

Participants at the 2004 ULI/Charles H. Shaw Forum on Urban Community Issues identified seven key principles for successful collaborative neighborhood planning and reviewed some examples of neighborhood planning practice.

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The complete version of "Involving the Community in Neighborhood Planning" can be found at:

Link: <http://uli.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Report-1-Involving-the-Community-in-Neighborhood-Planning.ashx .pdf>