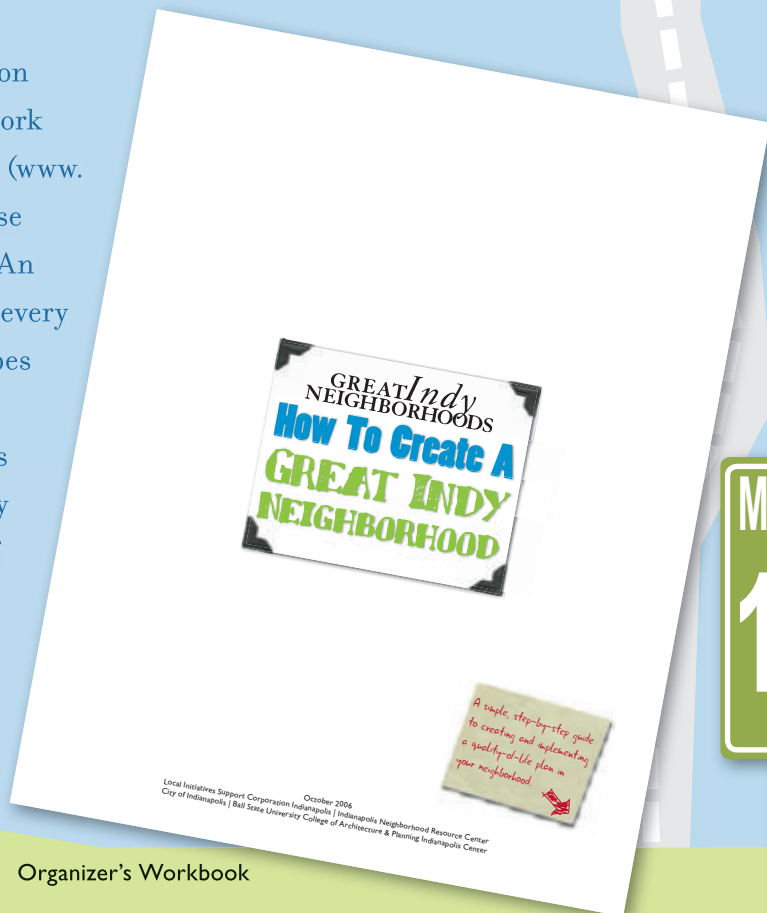


QUALITY OF LIFE PLANNING



Quality of Life planning has been shown through the Great Indy Neighborhoods Initiatives (GINI) to be an extremely effective way to begin to get at truly resident driven comprehensive community development. What GINI demonstrates is that if you are able to engage residents around their visions and passions and then give them the support and authority to act, amazing things are possible. This section is a more detailed version of the framework established in the GINI Planning Guide (www.greatindyneighborhoods.org). Please use this section in tandem with that guide. An important thing to keep in mind is that every community is different. All of these types of strategies will need to be retrofitted for your community. That said, the tools and processes talked about here are very effective with varying types and sizes of groups.





THE DATA

One of the real luxuries that you have as an Organizer, especially in Indianapolis, is that you have access to data sources that can help support what the neighborhood wants to work on. There are a number of places that you can turn to get this information. It is important to see all of this data as an aid to conversation or to help stimulate the creativity that can only come from neighbors. The best place to start is with the city planning department. They have access to everything from citizen phone calls for city services, census data, aerial maps and even existing plans that may have an effect on your community. You can see the full list of data available through the planning office on the INRC website at www.inrc.org.

Another data resource available to you in Indianapolis is SAVI (Social Assets & Vulnerabilities Index, www.savi.org). SAVI provides a web-based tool to pull data from over 30 sources and map it using your established parameters. Residents on the Near Westside of Indy have used SAVI to map by census tract areas that have an elevated high school dropout rate. They added to the map public facilities that could be used for GED classes, and then dropped in bus routes to find the facilities that were in areas that needed the service but could also be accessed using public transportation. The possibilities of SAVI are endless. SAVI also has profiles based on the boundaries of Indianapolis registered neighborhood groups.

Some other important sources for data are as follows:

<http://www.civicnet.net> – This is your online resource to Marion County Government. The best use for this in neighborhoods is the section on Property. It has been used as a good resource to start the search for the true owner of the property in your neighborhood.

<http://ideanet.doe.state.in.us> - This is the State Department of Education website. This is very helpful at getting information on every school in the state. You can find out what schools in your community are doing well on their ISTEP scores and also compare them to similar schools around the state.

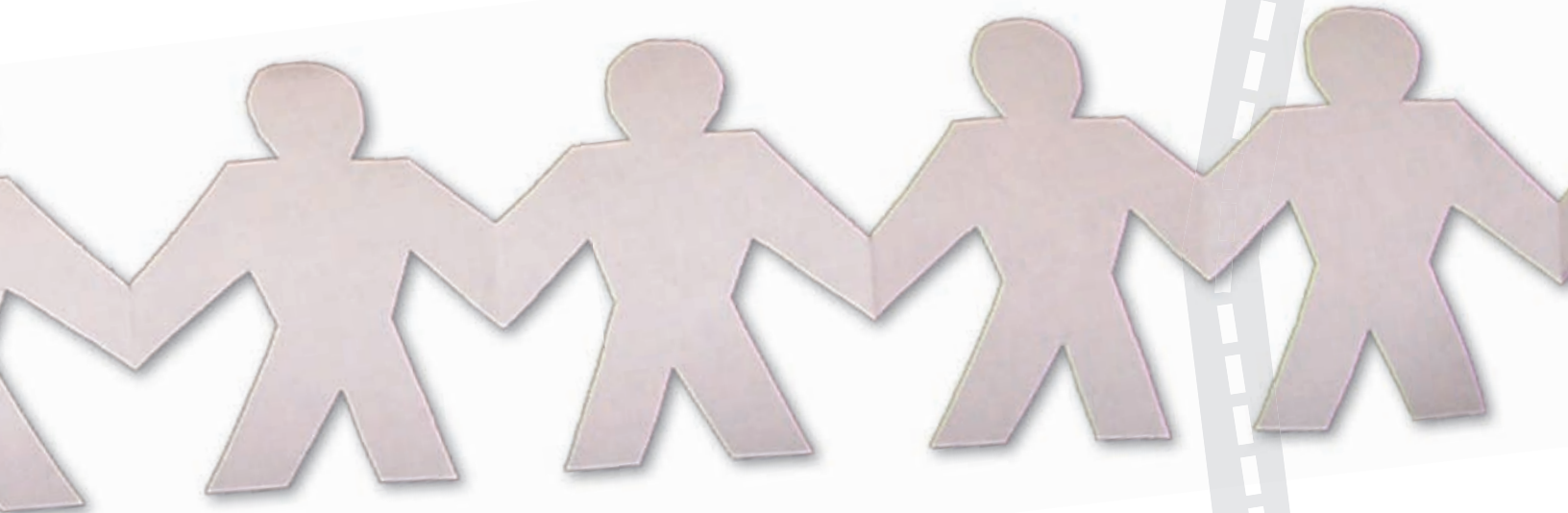
IT'S THE PEOPLE'S PLAN, NOT YOURS



In order to have a plan that will have the passion behind it to be acted upon, it must come from the people. The residents of your community must understand that it is their responsibility to implement what gets put into the plan. The best way to ensure resident responsibility of a plan is to have as many people as possible assuming ownership during the planning process. In order to do this, you need to organize ... before, during, and after the planning process.

A kick start to the planning process is to organize for a neighborhood-wide visioning event. This is a wonderful opportunity to get all of the community stakeholders in the same room to envision what your community can be. It is also one event in your initial organizing that can build momentum. Market this event as a celebration not a meeting. You want everyone in the neighborhood to think that this is an event not to miss. Think ahead and plan for all of the typical barriers that keep neighbors away. Have a plan in place to address issues like childcare and transportation.

When planning the agenda for your visioning event keep in mind that people are much more willing to talk about things that are important to them. Try to structure the event with as much choice as possible. The Near Eastside Visioning event was structured using a modified version of Open Space Technology (see section on Neighborhood Meetings). They had 3 rounds of 26 table conversations, with first round of topic discussions based on the recommendations of community residents. During the first round anyone in the room was invited to suggest a topic they felt needed to be discussed and it would be a table topic for the next round of discussion. With this method no one could leave the event saying that their issue was not talked about. Another important aspect of this design is that it is completely transparent. It limits the claims that could be made by participants that outcomes were in place before the event.





EVERYONE LOVES PLANNING

How many times have you been a part of a planning process that was dull and seemed like you were just there to give consent to what the expert has come up with? Did you feel that you were just there to check the “Neighborhood Input” box? Quality of Life planning should be a really exciting time for your community. It is a time for neighbors to develop the roadmap for their visions for the community, and to put them into action.

It is important to remember that your role in this part of the process is to make sure that the connections between neighbors continue to be made. If you have a group of neighbors planning around public safety, you need to make sure that they get connected with those in and outside the neighborhood that have a stake in public safety. This may be local police officers, representatives from the Prosecutor’s office, or your local health and hospital inspectors.

A great way to structure the planning process is to categorize the conversations that took place at the visioning event into a manageable number of planning areas or action teams. Make sure that, however you structure these groups, the categories make sense for your neighborhood. You will see these themes emerge from the conversation topics. Once the group has agreed upon what these teams should be, structure your notes from the visioning session based on these categories.

As a group, determine who in the neighborhood would be a good facilitator for each of these groups and get the notes to them. Set a schedule for the planning meetings as early as possible and stick to that schedule. Everyone needs to know up front what the time commitment will be. It is a good idea to have all of the teams meet on the same night in the same space so that you can benefit with the same interaction across topics that you got at the visioning session, while ensuring communication and coordination between all groups. It also gives people the opportunity to be a part of different groups if they are uncertain about what group they want to be a part of. Once you have your groups established and your dates set, it is time to plan.

As you move through the planning process, it is important to encourage residents to be creative with their priorities. Do not be afraid to dream and plan big. Even if something seems out of reach, if there is a group that is willing to work on it, put it in the plan.

This brings up another good rule: These plans are not be a wish list for someone else to do. You should not be going into this with the expectation that when the plan is complete, the city or someone else will do it for you. The rule for the GINI process was that nothing got printed in the plan that did not have a person or a group of people signed on as responsible for working on that priority. No matter how great an idea it might be, unless someone is willing to work on it, it is not part of the plan.

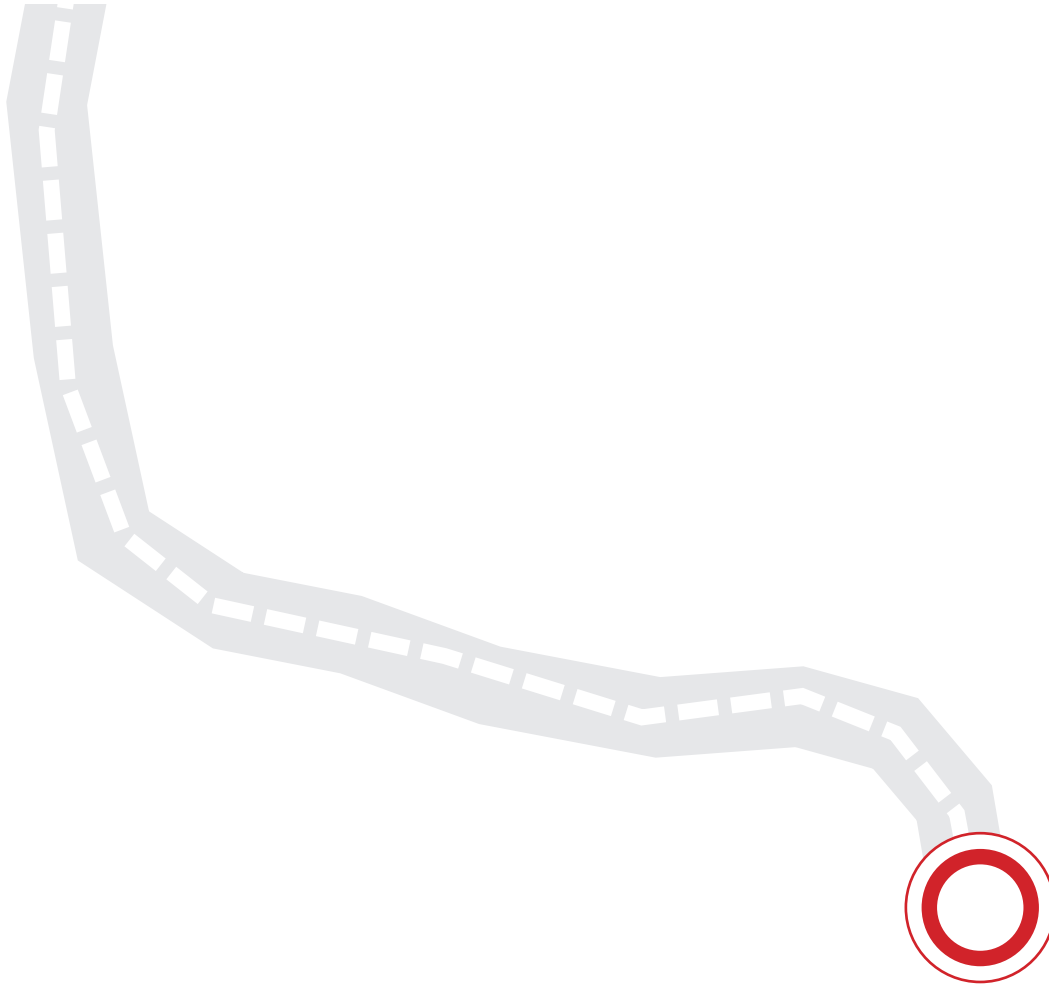
NOT JUST ANOTHER BOOK FOR THE SHELF



There is nothing more frustrating to neighbors than when they think that all of the time and energy they spent on planning was a waste. The transition from planning to action should be spelled out in the plan and you should waste no time in moving the plan forward. It is important at the completion of the plan to celebrate not just the work that was done, but to also celebrate the neighbors that took the time to do it. It will pay dividends later for people to know that the time they spent planning was not only valued but worth the time.

Once the shift has been made to implementation, it will be important to continuously follow up with the entities that signed on to be responsible for parts of the plan. You will need to be the connector, and the eyes and ears on the street to look to leverage existing resources with the opportunities that present themselves. If you have put together a truly comprehensive plan, every day will present another opportunity to connect someone or another group to the plan. Your role is also to be the continuous promoter of the plan. More connections can be made when the community's priorities are made known to the widest audience possible. It is these connections that will be crucial to the implementation of your community's plan.





*Congratulations!
You made it!*