
3 The Community Development Process

The community development process can be difficult, time-consuming, and costly. Community residents often are more concerned with daily tasks than thinking about, and coming up with, a vision of their community's future. Residents want their children to go to good schools, they want decent jobs, and they want a safe, clean environment in which to live. Without a vision, however, communities have a limited ability to make decisions about these issues. It is analogous to driving across the country without a map.

Who should determine a community's future other than community residents? A consultant hired by the local government to develop a plan, a state or federal agency making decisions about highway bypasses or wetlands preservation, or a private developer constructing a shopping mall or a residential subdivision could all make a large impact on a community's future. Residents of a community need to participate in and actively envision the future of their community; otherwise, other groups and individuals will determine their future for them.

The community development process can be as important as its products. The process we present in this chapter follows the model in Figure 3.1. The model shows a linear process that begins with community organizing and moves on to visioning, planning, and finally implementation and evaluation.

There continues to be some debate over the importance of process versus outcomes in community development. Some people argue that the goal of community development is to increase public participation and that it does not matter if their efforts are successful or not. Others contend that the ultimate goal is to improve the quality of life in the community, with public participation being simply a means to an end. Our position is closer to the latter view. We focus in this chapter on the process of community development, with the ultimate goal of enhancing community assets. It is difficult to maintain interest and commitment to community development processes if participants cannot point to successes. In the long run, both process and outcomes are essential pieces of community development.

In this chapter, we focus on three areas: community organizing, community visioning and planning, and evaluation and monitoring. In the first section

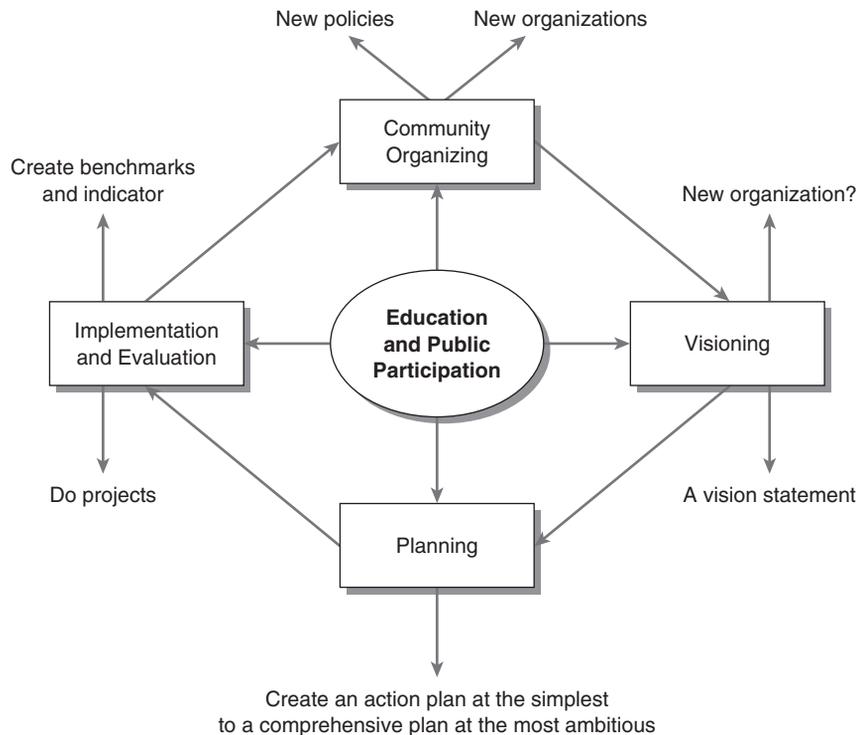


Figure 3.1 A Community Development Process

of this chapter, we focus on public participation. We are especially interested in identifying its various forms and techniques for encouraging it.

Public Participation

More than 100 years ago, Alexis de Tocqueville (1835/1945) remarked on the vibrant civil society in the United States, with its remarkable number and mix of voluntary organizations and associations—the types of organizations that are likely to rely on public action. Although the number and mix have shifted since he made his observations, voluntary organizations and associations are still an important part of the fabric of civil society. Although many lament that public participation has declined in the United States, there has been an enormous increase in the number of community-based organizations (CBOs) involved in development over the past two decades.

In most cases, community development practitioners grapple with the issue of participation. How is a community motivated to affect change? How does a community maintain momentum? Who in the community should get involved? To begin the discussion, we address some conceptual issues surrounding public participation.

There are at least four types of public participation: public action, public involvement, electoral participation, and obligatory participation (Langston, 1978). By examining these differences, we can better understand the community development process and its relationship to and use by CBOs and local governments. From this comparison, public action fits closest to the community development process model. In this type of public participation, the activities are initiated and controlled by citizens, with the intent of influencing government officials and others. Public involvement and obligatory participation, on the other hand, are initiated and controlled by government officials. Yet this type of public participation is growing, can have a meaningful impact on the quality of life, and may ultimately lead to a community-initiated effort.

In the community development process model (Figure 3.1), the role of public participation may start with public action and shift to public involvement, depending on the organizational context and “ownership” of the process. Generally, public action is the category of public participation on which CBOs focus.

Sherry Arnstein’s (1969) “ladder of public participation” is a useful framework for understanding the role of CBOs in public participation (see Figure 3.2). This ladder has eight “rungs” divided into three sections that illustrate degrees of participation and public power. Arnstein argued that power and control over decisions are necessary ingredients to “real” public participation. The lower two rungs are nonparticipatory participation and are called manipulation and therapy. Examples include public or neighborhood advisory committees or boards that have no authority or power in controlling projects or programs but simply represent a way to vent frustration.

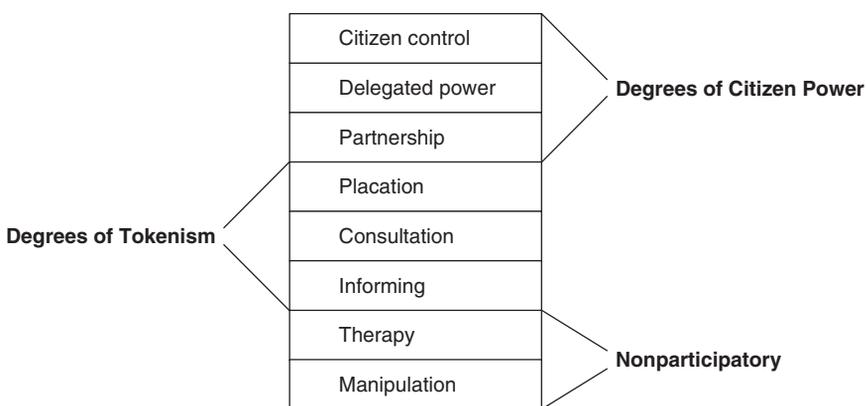


Figure 3.2 Ladder of Public Participation

SOURCE: From “A Ladder of Citizen Participation,” by S. R. Arnstein, 1969. Reprinted with permission from the *Journal of the American Planning Association*, copyright July 1969 by the American Planning Association.

The next three rungs illustrate “degrees of tokenism”: informing, consultation, and placation. Methods include simple communication tools, such as posters, and more sophisticated tools, such as surveys, meetings, public hearings, and placement of citizens on powerful boards.

The final three rungs represent “degrees of citizen power”: partnership, delegated power, and citizen control. Here, planning and decision making can have three degrees of power in relation to a citizens group, board, or corporation: shared power between citizen group(s) and the public authority, authorized power to prepare and implement a plan or program, or empowerment to essentially act as a decentralized local government with full control over particular programs (Arnstein, 1969, pp. 223-224).

Ideally, CBOs attempt to place themselves in the top rungs of the ladder, whereas many local governments conduct their participation efforts at the lower rungs of the ladder. Especially when CBOs are newly established, the original catalyst is often public action, and the desire to maintain public input on a regular basis is strong. In the day-to-day work of CBOs, however, public participation is difficult to maintain for several reasons. First, it increases the complexity of decision making. Developing programs, services, and policies that take into consideration a wide range of interests can be challenging. Second, it is time-consuming and thus can be seen as inefficient. Third, reaction time is slowed, a disadvantage when the organization needs to act quickly to take advantage of a funding deadline. Finally, the demands for funding and reporting require a professional staff (see Chapter 4). Over time, staff may develop expertise and experience, giving them a sense that they know what is best for the community. Thus, CBOs can encounter two pitfalls in relation to public participation: (1) With professionalization, they can lose sight of their community base and at worst become unrepresentative of the community, and (2) due to the funding requirements, their agenda—goals and programs—can become co-opted by external forces.

So far, we have discussed conceptual models and types of public participation that CBOs would fall under, given their purpose. We have yet to ask why people participate. The natural tendency is to think that people get involved because of the importance of the issue—it directly affects them, and they have an interest in finding solutions to the problem. Many organizers assume that they can increase the level of participation by educating people on the issue and encouraging them to get involved with the effort to address the issue.

Although this approach may work for some people and in some cases, we must recognize that there are many other reasons why people may become involved in a local organization. Many people may become involved because of social relationships. Participation is a way to meet new people and develop new friendships. Similarly, people may become engaged because a friend or a neighbor is participating in the project. Thus, these social relationships can be a valuable mechanism for encouraging others to participate.

People also may participate because of the kind of activities offered through the organization. Although many residents do not have much time for community activities, others may be looking for new activities. Getting

involved in fund raising or planning may provide opportunities for which some people are searching. In many instances, residents have experiences and skills that are underused, and they are seeking opportunities to make better use of these skills.

Although time is cited frequently as the primary reason for lack of participation, it is rarely the real issue. A variety of other constraints may limit participation. Among the most important barriers are lack of child care, transportation, accessibility for the disabled, and interpreters, as well as a lack of advance information. Local organizations need to consider providing services to overcome these barriers if they want to have a diverse set of residents participate in meetings and activities.

Communication is another reason why residents may not participate. This issue may be especially important in communities where there are no local newspapers, radio stations, or television stations. Even in communities where there are adequate communication systems, it may be difficult to reach people in the community. Nothing beats face-to-face communication.

Residents also need to see real, direct benefits to participation and that their actions are having an impact. Thus, it is important for community organizers to identify small projects where they can demonstrate success with the community.

Understanding why people do and do not participate in a community development process can help us to identify additional techniques of public participation. There are many techniques, each with varying functions. Depending on what a CBO is trying to accomplish, it will need to choose the appropriate technique for the purpose it is trying to achieve. In Table 3.1, we identify a variety of public participation techniques and their objectives. The table is not exhaustive, but it provides a range of techniques that can be and are used by CBOs and other organizations to achieve different purposes. The choice of the appropriate technique depends on several issues, such as the context for the process, the number of people participating, the available resources, and the participants' level of interest.

Because the choice of issue can affect the level of participation and the likelihood that participants will stay with the organization, the techniques need to focus on accomplishing something. They cannot be seen as meaningless exercises. The technique should be one that helps unite people rather than divide them. Most community organizers begin with small, simple techniques that have a clear outcome. The techniques need to be explained clearly to participants so that they understand clearly the process they will use to make decisions.

Community Organizing

To many, organizing can sound like a daunting task. How does one individual or a small group organize people to change something? As Kahn (1991),

Table 3.1 Public Participation Techniques and Their Function

<i>Technique</i>	<i>Identify Attitudes and Opinions</i>	<i>Identify Impacted Groups</i>	<i>Solicit Impacted Groups</i>	<i>Facilitate Participation</i>	<i>Clarify Planning Process</i>	<i>Answer Citizen Questions</i>	<i>Disseminate Information</i>	<i>Generate New Ideas and Alternatives</i>	<i>Facilitate Advocacy</i>	<i>Promote Interaction Between Interest Groups</i>	<i>Resolve Conflict</i>	<i>Plan Program and Policy Review</i>	<i>Change Attitudes Toward Government</i>	<i>Develop Support/Minimize Opposition</i>
Arbitration and mediation planning	X							X		X	X	X	X	
Citizens advisory board	X			X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	
Citizen representatives on policy-making bodies	X			X	X			X					X	X
Community surveys	X		X											
Community training				X	X				X				X	
Drop-in centers		X		X	X	X	X					X	X	X
Focus group	X		X	X		X				X				
Meetings, community sponsored and neighborhood	X		X	X	X	X	X	X				X		X
Meetings, open informational			X		X	X	X					X		
Neighborhood planning council	X			X				X	X			X	X	
Ombudsman		X			X	X	X					X	X	
Policy delphi	X							X						
Public hearing		X	X	X		X	X					X		
Short conference	X			X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X		X
Task forces			X					X				X	X	X
Workshops	X		X	X	X			X		X	X	X	X	X

SOURCE: Adapted from "Matching Method to Purpose: The Challenges of Planning Citizen-Participation Activities," by J. Rosener, in *Citizen Participation in America: Essays on the State of the Art*, edited by S. Langston, 1978 (pp. 109-122). Lexington, MA: Lexington Books. Reprinted with permission.

a leading authority on community organizing, reminded us “organizing doesn’t need to be big to be successful” (p. 19). Organizing begins with one person wanting to change one thing. It is a way for people to work together to solve a common problem.

Organizing takes various forms. Union organizing focuses on workers with the same employer or in the same industry. Constituency organizing involves group characteristics, such as gender, race, language or sexual orientation. Issue organizing addresses a particular concern, such as school, taxes, or housing. Neighborhood or community organizing focuses on place and addresses people who live in the same place (Kahn, 1991, p. 70). Community organizing, therefore, is distinct from other forms of organizing because it focuses on mobilizing people in a specific area. Recently, however, there have been successful efforts at blending these various forms of organizing, such as union and community organizing. These efforts attempt to organize workers where they live rather than in the workplace. This strategy has the advantage of obtaining support from local organizations and institutions that would not normally be involved in union organizing efforts. Unions also become more involved in community issues, such as schools, in an effort to garner support from residents.

There are three approaches to problem solving in communities: service, advocacy, and mobilizing. The first two approaches do not involve community residents in problem solving. In fact, residents may never be consulted. Service focuses on the individual, trying to address an individual’s problems, such as unemployment, poverty, lack of health insurance, or mobility limitations. Service programs address problems one at a time, not comprehensively, and do not examine or challenge the root causes of those problems. Advocacy is a process where one person or a group of individuals speaks for another person or group of individuals. Advocates can effect change in organizations and institutions on behalf of others. Mobilizing involves community residents taking direct action to protest or support local projects, policies, or programs. Mobilizing is important because it gets people involved in direct action on a problem (Kahn, 1991, pp. 50–51).

CBOs use two different strategies to mobilize residents: social action campaigns and the development model. Social action campaigns are efforts by CBOs that aim to change decisions, societal structures, and cultural beliefs. Efforts at change can be small and immediate, such as getting a pothole filled, or large and long-term, such as promoting civil rights or fair trade practices. Tactics used in social action campaigns include, but are not limited to, appeals, petitions, picketing, boycotts, strikes, and sit-ins (see Case Study 3.1). Some tactics are nonviolent yet illegal and represent a form of civil disobedience (Rubin & Rubin, 1992).

The development model is more prevalent at the community level. Community development corporations (CDCs) represent a type of community organization that uses the development model to achieve community development goals (see Chapter 4 on a discussion of CDCs and other types of CBOs).

These organizations focus on providing economic and social services in disenfranchised neighborhoods and communities (Rubin & Rubin, 1992).

Rubin and Rubin (1992) identified several different community organizing models that are used across the United States. Probably the most popular model has been the Alinsky model. The Alinsky model involves a professional organizer, who works with existing organizations to identify issues of common interest in the neighborhood. The Boston model takes a different approach by contacting welfare clients individually at their residences and relies heavily on appeals to the self-interest of each person. In recent years, the Association of Community Organization for Reform Now (ACORN) has mixed these two models. The ACORN model is based on developing multi-issue organizations that are much more political than the other two models. Another model that has received a great deal of attention in the literature is the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) model, which emphasizes the importance of intensive training of organizers. Although this model is a direct descendent of the Alinsky model, it emphasizes the importance of maintaining close ties with existing community organizations as the neighborhood is organized. Each of the models has advantages and disadvantages. The choice of which model to use is based largely on the context, the resources, and the circumstances. We discuss these different models in more detail in the chapter on political capital.

In the next section, we describe a specific process—visioning—that many communities have used to help them define the future. Visioning is not the only process that practitioners use, but it represents one approach in the community development field that helps to focus groups of individuals on the assets of a community. Visioning is making community planning models more open and accessible to the entire community and establishing a more open and democratic process in envisioning a future at the outset of a process.

Community Visioning

Community visioning has become an accepted planning technique. Many communities used this technique to promote broad public participation on the direction a community should move in the future (Shiple & Newkirk, 1998). A visioning process establishes a desired end state for a community, a vision of the future toward which to strive. Shiple and Newkirk (1998) saw vision as “a metaphor that describes social, cultural, and perhaps emotional attributes” (p. 410). They further considered visioning as a way to return to the roots of planning when individuals such as Le Corbusier, Daniel Burnham, John Nolen, and Frank Lloyd Wright had visions of place. The visioning technique, however, strives to establish a vision of place through broad public participation rather than one individual’s view. In theory, a community vision occurs through a group process that tries to arrive at a consensus about the future of place. A neighborhood, a whole city, or an organization can use a visioning process.

Box 3.1 Visioning Defined

Visioning is a process by which a community envisions the future it wants, and plans how to achieve it. Through public involvement, communities identify their purpose, core values, and vision of the future, which are then transformed into a manageable and feasible set of community goals and an action plan.

SOURCE: Green, Haines, and Halebsky (2000, p. 1.2).

A growing number of communities in the United States have been engaged in a formal process to develop an overall image of what their community wants to be and how it wants to look at some point in the future—what we refer to here as community visioning. In this section, we briefly describe the visioning process, how the process differs from other planning efforts, and how visioning is used by communities.

The basic advantage of visioning is that it allows for an expansive, innovative, and proactive future orientation. Visioning focuses on the strengths that must be developed to reach a desired end state. It expands the notion of public participation beyond that of other models and suggests that the community can design and create its own future.

The Roots of Visioning: Context and History

Beginning with the Housing Act of 1954 (Glass, 1979), a debate was opened about the purpose of public participation and how it was to be included in decision-making processes of local governments and higher levels of government and in CBOs (Howe, 1992; Meyerson & Banfield, 1955; Rabinovitz, 1969). The acceptance of public participation in government decision-making processes occurred during the turbulence of the 1960s and, in many instances, was mandated as part of the policy-making process.

Especially in professions where public participation was a routine event, such as in urban planning, the ideas of grassroots participation, community organizing, and planning from the bottom up were much discussed. The dominant planning model transformed over time as ideas about public participation and how it should work were appended to the base model. In the next section, we describe this model and two other planning models that have influenced the process of neighborhood, town, and urban development. Community visioning represents the latest transformation of a general process that ideally strives to involve residents in creating and deciding on their mutual future.

Comprehensive-Rational Planning

Comprehensive-rational planning has been the most common form of planning used in cities, villages, and towns to address their future.

The comprehensive-rational model is focused on the production of a plan that guides development and growth. The plan aims at comprehensiveness and implies focusing on the elements/functions of a place (Rittel & Webber, 1973; Wildavsky, 1973). Critics have leveled several criticisms of the model. Among the most important criticisms are that it is impossible to analyze everything at once; “wicked” problems cannot be addressed (Rittel & Webber, 1973); it cannot react swiftly; it is based on assumptions of growth and thus cannot deal effectively with decline or stagnation (Beauregard, 1978); it is based on past trends and forecasting that prove to be inaccurate; and it is ineffective because the plans rarely reach the implementation stage (Hudson, 1979). Radical critics argue that it supports the accumulation and legitimation functions of the state (Beauregard, 1978; Fainstein & Fainstein, 1982) and is elitist and centralizing (Grabow & Heskin, 1973).

Advocacy Planning

Paul Davidoff (1973) promoted a new model of planning in the 1960s: “Planning Aid,” which was based on the idea of Legal Aid. The process of advocacy planning involved advocate planners, representing community groups, and presenting alternative plans to a city council, which decided on the plan or plan elements that were politically feasible, appropriate, and doable. The product of the process would be plural plans offering different, alternative visions of a community. Advocacy planning promoted a level of public participation unheard of under the comprehensive-rational planning model.

There are several strengths to this model: It focuses on one issue or geographic area, plans are not comprehensive (which makes it less daunting for residents), and the model attempts to bring equality into the planning process by giving poor and disadvantaged groups a voice. The advocacy approach has several weaknesses, however, including the risk of conflicting plans. If this were to happen, who would mediate? Politicians or planners? There also is a risk of being co-opted by a local bureaucracy or a more powerful interest group, or both. How likely is it for a planner in a public planning office to act as an advocate? If planners are outside the system—for example, if they work in a CDC or another CBO—they can be ignored or frozen out of the process and risk having their plans co-opted by political or bureaucratic forces. Nevertheless, community developers closely follow in the footsteps of advocacy planners, precisely because they bring to the conversation alternative ways of looking at projects and proposals.

Strategic Planning

Another model, strategic planning, originated in the military and moved into the corporate world, where it was limited to budgeting and financial control. By the 1980s, strategic planning was applied to local governments

and nonprofit organizations. Bryson (1995) offered the following general definition of strategic planning:

[Strategic planning is a] disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape what an organization is, what it does, and why it does it . . . [This effort] requires broad yet effective information gathering, development and exploration of strategic alternatives, and an emphasis on future implications of present decisions. (pp. 4-5)

There are many corporate-style strategic planning approaches, but the most well known and used model in the public sector and within CBOs is the Harvard policy model. This model has been around since the Harvard Business School developed it in the 1920s. SWOT analysis, a systematic assessment of a community's or organization's strengths and weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, comes from this model (Bryson & Roering, 1987).

Strategic planning has several strengths. The process aims to build agreement within an organization or a community. It forces the community to ask and answer the questions "What are our goals and aims?" and "What do we want to accomplish?" These questions encourage communities to think and act strategically—maximizing effectiveness, identifying their comparative advantage, focusing on critical issues, and turning liabilities into assets.

Strategic planning also has several weaknesses. The process is not always well suited to the public sector or CBOs that have multiple objectives. The process may have difficulty satisfying competing and often conflicting demands. In addition, it is internal to the organization, so involving the public may be difficult. The process relies heavily on analyses of the status quo and makes demands for information and data that many communities find overwhelming. It also embraces competitive rather than cooperative behavior.

Charrettes

This physical, design-based, collaborative approach or method allows a community to focus deeply, rather than broadly, on a particular site for arriving at consensus to design and execute a project. Local governments, developers, and CBOs use charrettes to promote creativity in site design despite sometimes overly restrictive zoning regulations and to provide a method of input and discussion about controversial project ideas (La Fiandra, 2006; Lennertz & Lutzenhiser, 2006). A charrette is designed as an intensive and focused process, lasting from 2 to 7 days, and involves a project design team and stakeholders. The essence of a charrette is an iterative design and review process. The multi-disciplinary charrette team works in short bursts of time on a project plan, punctuated by stakeholder review sessions. Stakeholders initially operate in a proactive mode helping to frame the project and define broad guidelines. Thereafter, stakeholders react to draft project plans that the charrette team quickly puts together (La Fiandra, 2006; Lennertz & Lutzenhiser, 2006).

Visioning

Visioning is an asset-based approach to community development. Community planning and development efforts usually begin with a scan of where the community is headed, which may involve an assessment of demographic, economic, social, and fiscal trends in the area. The next logical step is to develop a common view of where the community should be headed, which usually involves some form of visioning process. A community may convene a special meeting, or series of meetings, to develop a community vision. The primary product of such an event is a guide for subsequent planning or, in the case of a CBO, program development. Usually, the vision is followed by the development of specific strategies and an action plan the community wishes to follow.

The visioning process focuses on assets rather than the needs of the community. The visioning process begins with identifying an overall community vision and then develops visions in strategic areas (e.g., housing, land use, education, workforce development). Action plans (identifying specific projects, timelines, and individuals, departments, or agencies responsible for completing tasks) are created based on these visions (see Table 3.2). The process requires a substantial commitment by local residents and an ongoing role for facilitation. Individuals trained in facilitation processes could provide the role of ongoing facilitation. CBOs, because of their connection to communities and their experience with different forms of public participation, can play an active and helpful role in a visioning process. Visioning differs from some of the other planning techniques because it usually does not begin with a detailed analysis of trends or rely heavily on data to identify needs. Instead, it focuses on community assets through the values of residents and the visions they have for their community.

Over the past decade, many community development practitioners have turned away from strategic planning and comprehensive planning to visioning methods. One of the reasons for this shift is that visioning does not rely as much on data as the other planning methods do. For example, the heavy emphasis that comprehensive and strategic planning place on providing basic data on the trends and structure of a community frequently overwhelms participants at the beginning of the process and sometimes diverts attention away from the important issues the community is facing. Visioning may involve data collection and analysis, but these tasks usually come after there is some agreement on the direction the community should take and the issues the community is facing.

Timing and Momentum

One of the issues that communities may face is the question of whether they are ready to begin a visioning process. Should they focus on developing new leaders in the community before engaging in this process? Should they instead develop new and existing organizations that may be needed to implement

Table 3.2 A Visioning Process

<i>Step</i>	<i>Component</i>	<i>Component Explanation</i>
1	Getting started	Coordinating committee forms and begins planning for the first workshop.
2	Community visioning workshop	Coordinating committee facilitates process of preparing a general vision statement and identifies key areas.
3	Establishment of task forces	At workshop, assemble task forces by key area and meet to set action plan.
4	Key area visioning workshops	Each key area task force convenes a community workshop to facilitate a process for preparing a key area vision statement and identifying key sub-areas.
5	Review of plans and/or programs, etc.	Task forces should review all relevant existing plans, zoning, and subdivision regulations.
6	Data gathering and analysis	Each task force should gather and analyze pertinent data and prepare strategies. Larger task force evaluates data and strategies against general and key area visions.
7	Goal and strategy development	Task forces should develop goals and strategies based on data and vision statements.
8	Community feedback workshop	The coordinating committee should plan on a community-wide workshop to present the general and key area visions and broad strategies.
9	Development of action plans	Each task force should prepare action plans based on agreed strategies and goals.
10	Implementation	Undertake action plans.
11	Monitor, evaluate and revise	The coordinating committee plans a meeting that reviews the activities and accomplishments to date and what activities will be implemented the following year.

SOURCE: From *Building our Future: A Guide to Community Visioning* (Report No. G3708), by Gary Green, Anna Haines & Stephen Halebsky. University of Wisconsin Extension, Cooperative Extension, Madison, WI, 2000. Reprinted with permission.

the community's action plans? Timing and preparedness certainly should be considered before moving ahead with a community visioning process. At the same time, organizational and leadership development are frequent results of visioning efforts. By successfully completing projects that have been identified in the process, communities can develop the capacity to address bigger and more complex issues. Participants may discover along the way that what they really need are more leaders in their community and that they need to invest

in a leadership training program. Without initiating the process, this realization may not have occurred.

Keeping the process on track and moving forward can be challenging. It is also one of the chief criticisms of this kind of process. Most visioning guidebooks provide pointers on how to maintain initiative (see Green et al., 2000).

Workshops

To guide the visioning process, three questions can be asked to drive the visioning workshop forward and shape the way in which participants think about their community:

- What do people want to preserve in the community?
- What do people want to create in the community?
- What do people want to change in the community?

One way to help the community develop their vision is to ask them to complete the sentence “In the year 20XX in our community, we would like to see _____.” It is useful to look beyond the immediate future and develop the vision for at least a 15-year period. To go beyond 25 years, however, may be difficult for the group to work with in such a session. Case Study 3.1 cites a vision statement from one community.

Case Study 3.1

Overall Vision Statement: The Town of Star Prairie

In the year 2030, the Town of Star Prairie is rural, family friendly, and growing.

The Town of Star Prairie is a rural, green community proud of its heritage and identity. The town has retained its rural character as defined by its rustic nature and its sylvan spaces that are both quiet and peaceful. The town's green spaces are many and varied, ranging from plenty of scenic beauty and quality lakes and rivers to bike and walking trails and parks and playgrounds. Residents have access to public hunting grounds at the old health center site and enjoy fishing on Cedar Lake, considered one of the top fishing lakes in the state of Wisconsin. Part of the town's rural charm is the number of quaint businesses, the museum at the old town hall, and places that people can meet in comfort and openness. The town has maintained its identity in part through its rural character, but it also has an independent government with good communication with other neighboring communities.

The Town of Star Prairie is a family-friendly community. Town residents are proud that parents can bring up their children in a safe and rural quality of life.

The Town of Star Prairie is a growing community. Despite a growing population, the town has retained the quality of its groundwater, in part by its investment in a sewage treatment system for Cedar Lake. Its growth has allowed access to bus and light rail service along the highway to the Twin Cities and the construction and maintenance of good roads.

Natural Resources

In the year 2030, the Town of Star Prairie has preserved and enhanced the quality of its lakes (especially Cedar Lake and Squaw Lakes), groundwater, wetlands, rivers and streams (especially the Apple River and Cedar Creek), and forests and hills through various ordinances and other mechanisms. The town has made efforts to recreate and maintain prairies. The residents recognize that the town's natural resources are important to their quality of life and must be preserved and enhanced. In addition, the town has worked with the county and other jurisdictions to maintain and create quality off- and on-road trails (for hiking, biking, horseback riding), parks (such as Apple River County Park), boat landings, and hunting areas.

Land Use

In the year 2030, the Town of Star Prairie has successfully managed the growth pressure from the Twin Cities by allowing for a mix of housing, open space and recreation, agriculture (especially crop and pasture land), and commercial uses, while still maintaining its rural character. The town regulates this variable land use mix to prevent nuisances, such as noise and odors, and to prevent land and air pollution.

Housing

In the year 2030, the Town of Star Prairie has affordable housing for seniors and others. When subdivisions are built, natural features are preserved and parks are required within them.

Agriculture

In the year 2030, the Town of Star Prairie has an active agricultural industry that especially focuses on plant and tree nurseries, small dairies, and other types of animal production and vegetable production.

Utilities and Community Facilities

In the year 2030, the Town of Star Prairie cooperates with its municipal neighbors. With the City of New Richmond, the recycling center is jointly operated. The town operates a community and senior center. To keep and better our water quality and to maintain water quantity, our more developed lakes, such as Cedar Lake, have rural water systems and sewage treatment facilities. Access to our lakes is easy for all residents from boat landings. In addition, the town has worked with others to maintain its dam and power plant.

Cultural Resources

In the year 2030, the Town of Star Prairie's historical society has a museum at the old town hall and maintains and preserves historical records. The town's historic homes and other structures are maintained and preserved.

Transportation

In the year 2030, the Town of Star Prairie has preserved its rustic roads, such as Old Mill and Brave Drive, and has maintained its road infrastructure. The town has planned and developed additional roads as appropriate for current and future land uses. The town cooperates with the county and others to develop a light rail system to the Twin Cities and a bus system to area communities. The town and the city of New Richmond have developed an agreement to share airport fees. The Cedar Lake Speed Way is closed down at its current location, and the area is redeveloped as part of the park system.

(Continued)

(Continued)

Economic Development

In the year 2030, the Town of Star Prairie has a number of healthy businesses, including small taverns and restaurants, and agriculture-related businesses. Business growth in the town has focused on rural-based businesses. Retail businesses are quaint. The town has achieved this type of business growth through an environmental review process that limits impacts on natural resources and a design review process that helps to maintain the rural character of the community.

NOTE: The second author, Anna, worked with the Town of Star Prairie and its local planning department, which was the basis for this case study.

In Table 3.3, we provide a list of the types of participants that should be involved in a visioning process. Some communities have sought to gain support for their vision by getting it formally adopted by a local government. Formal adoption has several benefits, such as broad dissemination of the vision, increased legitimacy in the community, and possible influence in getting local government officials involved in the implementation stage.

Table 3.3 Types of Participants

<i>Economic Sectors</i>	<i>Organizations</i>	<i>Government</i>	<i>Personal Factors</i>	<i>Political Views</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agriculture, forestry and fishing • Wholesale • Construction • Manufacturing • Transportation and utilities • Finance, insurance and real estate • Services • Tourism • Media • Business type—size, ownership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Art and culture • Education • Civic • Unions • Youth • Neighborhood • Social service agencies • Health care • Environmental • Recreation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elected officials • Planning department • Natural resources • Transportation • Housing • Education • Economic development • Workforce development • Regional planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Race/ethnicity • Age • Sex • Homeownership • Class • Children • Length of residence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservative/liberal/independent • Progrowth/anti-growth

SOURCE: From *Building our Future: A Guide to Community Visioning* (Report No. G3708), by Gary Green, Anna Haines & Stephen Halebsky. University of Wisconsin Extension, Cooperative Extension, Madison, WI, 2000. Reprinted with permission.

Goals and Strategy Development

Participants in a visioning or planning process usually want to jump immediately into identifying specific projects that could be undertaken by the group. Planning processes in general and visioning processes specifically require that broad goals and strategies be identified first before moving too quickly to developing specific projects. These goals and strategies can be introduced to the group or developed within the group itself. This step in the process helps provide a tighter linkage between the vision and the action plan that will be developed. Without developing a set of goals and strategies, communities may identify specific projects that are not related to the vision established earlier in the process.

Action Plan Development

An action plan is a description of the activities needed to be done to move the community toward its vision. For each project that is identified, there should be a detailed plan of what needs to be done, who can do it, when it will be done, what information is needed, and what resources are necessary to implement the strategy. Action plans should be prepared based on agreed-on strategies and goals. In Box 3.2, we provide a description of the types of information needed to prepare an action plan.

Box 3.2 Action Planning: Basis for Worksheet

Below is a list of the categories and questions that should be asked for each identified project. The purpose of using a worksheet for action planning is to help the CBO or other group to thoroughly analyze and assess how it can start and complete a project. An important facet of this analysis is a political assessment. A formal acknowledgment and assessment of the local political situation can help move projects forward. This assessment will help the CBO or group to decide whether or not it is feasible to move forward on any particular project.

1. *Assess Fit of Vision and Project:* What is your vision theme? What is your project? Why are you doing this project (purpose or desired outcome)? Who will potentially benefit from this project? Who will potentially be harmed by this project?
2. *Analyze the Situation:* Where does this project fit into current community priorities? Are there any groups working on related projects? Have there been past attempts on this or similar projects? Who does it affect positively (individuals and groups)? Who does it affect negatively (individuals and groups)?
3. *Assess Helping and Hindering Forces:* Who are the decision makers (formal and informal, individuals and organizations, internal and external)? Who can help or hinder this project? Who makes the contact? What strategies will we use to influence the decision makers?

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Who is likely to support the project in the community and who should contact them? What do the people contacted think of the vision and project, what would they like to see as an outcome, and how would they carry out the project? How will you enlist their support? Who is likely to oppose the project and who should contact them? What do the people contacted think of the vision and project and what are their specific objections? What would they like to see as an outcome and how would they carry out the project?

4. *Decide Who Is Going to Do It and How:* Were there any new individuals identified who would be valuable resources for your task force? Are some task force members ready to move on to other projects or feel they have made their contribution? Who will coordinate the task force? How often will the task force meet? What subgroups, if any, are needed? How will you keep each other informed? How will you keep the community informed? How will you keep people outside the community informed?
5. *Create a Community Resource Inventory:* What skills, knowledge, linkages (networks), representation, or resources are needed for the CBO or group at this stage of the project? The inventory should cover the following categories of needs: skills and expertise, physical (facilities, equipment), information, finances, and other.

Monitor, Evaluate, and Revise

Communities engaged in development are seldom interested in monitoring their progress and evaluating their efforts. They are primarily concerned with getting things done. There are several reasons, however, why it is useful for a community to measure its progress and evaluate its efforts:

- To keep people involved in the community development process by showing them tangible results of their efforts
- To show foundations, local governments, and other financial supporters that their resources are well spent
- To improve the community's efforts by establishing a reliable system of monitoring progress
- To gain support of the community-at-large for development efforts by having an effective evaluation system in place

Monitoring is an assessment of the planning process. The purpose of monitoring is to provide indications of whether corrections need to take place in the action plan. For each element of the action plan, communities should ask questions such as the following: Are the deadlines being met? Is the budget appropriate? Is the staffing appropriate? Is the amount of work realistic? Are priorities receiving the appropriate amount of attention? How are we working as a group? Are we learning something important to share? What else do we need?

Evaluation focuses on the specific accomplishments of the process. A distinction should be made between measuring outputs and outcomes. Outputs are usually things that can be counted that result from the action plan. They are an intermediary measure. Examples of outputs include the number of jobs created, number of houses built, or number of programs developed. Outcomes, however, are usually much more long term and are more difficult to link to the specific elements of the action plan. They are more closely linked to the ultimate objectives identified in the visioning process. Examples of outcomes are decreased levels of poverty or increased levels of personal income, more people accepted into leadership roles, and improved social networks among residents. It is difficult, however, to make a causal link between outcomes and an action plan. Participants in the visioning process should ask how a community is better off as a result and then try to measure success in terms of goals stated in the action plan.

To monitor or evaluate a community's actions it is useful to assess the change in the outputs and outcomes over time. It is important to collect information on the value of the measure at the starting point, often referred to as the base line. When evaluating change, a community should identify the unit of analysis. The unit of analysis is the basic unit whose properties you choose to measure and analyze. For most communities, the unit of analysis is the neighborhood, the city, or even the county. The decision of what unit of analysis to use may be determined by who is involved in the effort or by data availability. The length of time used to assess change also may vary. The length of time should be based on a reasonable expectation of how long it should take the actions to have an effect. So, if your goal is to create new jobs, you might be able to see the effects of your actions in a few years. Improvement in environmental quality, however, may take a longer period. Thus, the period to be studied may vary by the specific outcomes and impacts that the community wishes to examine.

A written action plan, containing benchmarks or performance indicators, describing the points of success along the way when possible, is essential in monitoring results. Benchmarks are especially useful for long-term projects. For instance, a community may have a long-term vision that involves high-quality health care. Reaching this vision may involve a set of goals and strategies that span several years. Knowing the number of people without access to health care or the number of physicians in the community at the start of the project helps local leaders track their progress.

The benchmarks should be reasonable in terms of what can be accomplished in a specified period of time, but, at the same time, benchmarks should keep efforts focused on the ultimate goal(s) in the strategic visioning document. In this regard, photographs of the community when the visioning process started can be useful in making "before" and "after" presentations to show that benchmarks, such as improvements in buildings or streets, have been met. In designing benchmarks or performance indicators, however, community leaders must recognize that community development is not limited to job or income creation; rather, it should include sustainability, historic

preservation, health care, education, recreation, and other essential characteristics of a healthy and vibrant community.

Linking benchmarks to each goal provides residents with information about progress in each section of the plan. When one part of the overall effort is not performing well, adjustments can be made to bring it in line without substantially changing the entire approach. Regular reviews of the action plan and comparisons with benchmarks can be very useful. Showing progress on small projects can build confidence and encourage more involvement by residents and businesses.

Community-Based Research

Frequently, communities decide they need to do some research as part of their planning process. In this section of the chapter, we provide an overview of survey research and participatory action research.

Survey Research

In many, if not most, cases, communities begin a community development process by conducting a survey. Survey research requires community members' time as well as their financial commitment. Before embarking on a survey project, community members need to ask themselves several questions: Do we want to conduct a survey or use another technique to achieve public participation? What is the best way to obtain the needed information? What do we want to know? How will this information be used? Can residents commit sufficient time and money to conduct a survey?

Most communities conduct surveys to collect information on the attitudes, opinions, values, and behavior of local residents on a specific topic. If the goal is to obtain public participation on a policy issue, other techniques may be more appropriate or cost-efficient. For example, it may be quicker and easier to hold public meetings or conduct focus groups. Focus groups may be more appropriate in a situation where you want to understand why people feel they way they do about particular issues. Public meetings provide an opportunity for residents to voice their opinion about issues and listen to the perspectives of their neighbors. A survey instrument may not provide the type of information obtained from these two other techniques.

A survey may not be appropriate at the beginning of the planning process. If a survey is conducted too early in the process, residents may not have identified all of the issues they want to consider. At the same time, if a survey is conducted too late in the process, residents may feel that their participation is meaningless because the plan has already been worked out. Communities also need to consider whether they have sufficient resources for conducting a survey. Similarly, community leaders must be willing to use the information once it is collected.

There is no single best technique for conducting surveys. The appropriate technique depends on the resources available, the type of information desired, and the sampling strategies. In the following list, we briefly discuss the advantages and disadvantages of three commonly used survey techniques—face-to-face interviews, mail surveys, and telephone surveys:

1. Face-to-face interviews generally provide the best response rate of the three techniques considered, usually more than 70%, and permit the interviewer to use visual aids or fairly complex questions. This technique is often used with long questionnaires as well. Interviewers can follow up on responses to get a better understanding of why a given response is provided. Face-to-face interviews, however, are the most expensive of the three techniques, and there may be more problems with interviewer bias.

2. Mail surveys are probably the most frequently used technique for conducting community surveys, mainly because they are usually the cheapest method of the three considered here. With mail surveys, maps and other visual aids can usually be included, though the instructions need to be concise and understandable. The response rate for mail surveys varies depending on the number of follow-up letters sent. Many communities will send out only one wave of questionnaires, which generally produces a response rate of 30% to 50% on average. A follow-up postcard can yield another 10%, and a replacement questionnaire will generate another 10% to 20%. There are several disadvantages to using mail surveys: The length of the survey can be more limited than that of other methods, and it is very difficult to ask complex questions in mail surveys.

3. Telephone surveys are used increasingly by communities because they can be done quickly and generally have a higher response rate than mail surveys do. The cost may vary, however, depending on whether or not individuals are sampled in each household. The response rate among telephone surveys is almost as good as face-to-face interviews, and the interviewer has the opportunity to probe for additional comments. One of the chief disadvantages is that interviewers cannot use visual materials or ask complex questions.

Participatory Action Research

One method of community-based research is called participatory action research (PAR). This method grew out of community development work in developing countries, in particular Latin America and Africa. PAR is an advocacy tool for a grassroots, bottom-up approach to community development that purposefully incorporates participation from disenfranchised or marginalized groups in society—the poor, minorities, women, and children.

PAR is defined by the three words that make it—participation, action, and research. “A hallmark of a genuine participatory action research process is that it may change shape and focus overtime as participants focus and refocus their understandings about what is ‘really’ happening and what is really important to them” (Wadsworth, 1998, p. 7).

Participation involves researchers, funders, and communities—both the people who are researched and the people whom the research is for. In every PAR process, participation must be deeply defined and understood.

Action refers to the researcher’s involvement in real projects with participants. It is the opposite of armchair research, which may only use secondary data and not require the researcher to ever leave his or her office. It also does not refer to a researcher in the field gathering primary data through interviews or observations for a great length of time, although both techniques may be used in a PAR process. Action means involvement and working with people in their communities to create change. Research within a PAR process can involve any of the formal techniques used in conventional research projects, but in PAR, for example, residents as participants would derive the questions.

Summary and Conclusions

In this chapter, we focused on the role of public participation in the community development process and presented visioning as a particular process used by communities to guide their futures. The process of visioning lends itself well to using a variety of public participation techniques, as well as including aspects of community organizing. Visioning exercises have become part of general planning processes at the local government level but also are used by voluntary groups and CBOs to guide them in their work in communities and neighborhoods.

There continues to be some debate over the importance of process and outcomes in community development. Some practitioners believe that the process is the key and that the eventual outcomes of the process do not matter. Others believe that visible outcomes are all that matter and that the process is relatively unimportant. Probably the most reasonable position to take regarding this debate is that most community development efforts require both a meaningful process that involves residents and tangible products that participants can point to as the result of their effort.

Finally, we argued that community-based research is normally an important element of the community development process. Although participation of residents in the process is often taken for granted in the planning process, the research stage is often handed over to the “professionals.” Increasingly, residents are taking back this activity and guiding the research process themselves.

KEY CONCEPTS

Acorn model	Monitoring
Advocacy planning	Obligatory participation
Alinsky model	Outcomes
Boston model	Outputs
Community organizing	Participation action research
Comprehensive-rational planning	Public action
Electoral participation	Public involvement
Evaluation	Survey research
Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) model	Strategic planning
	Visioning

QUESTIONS

1. Why is public participation important in a community development effort?
2. What are the four forms of public participation? What are some differences between these forms?
3. How do the forms of public participation relate to the ladder of public participation?
4. What are the different organizing models and how do they differ?
5. What is visioning?
6. How does public participation and visioning relate to the future growth and development of communities?
7. What is community organizing?
8. Define evaluation and monitoring.
9. What are the differences between outcomes and outputs? Give some examples of each.

EXERCISES

1. Contact a CBO to evaluate its community development process. Ask the following kinds of questions: What kinds of public participation techniques did the CBO use? Did the CBO develop a plan? What kind of process

was used to create that plan? What kinds of outcomes have occurred? Are any impacts claimed due to the process? Has the CBO developed any indicators to monitor progress?

2. Discuss the advantages and limitations of the CBO's public participation techniques and their planning process and action plan. Discuss the limitations of claiming outcomes and outputs. Discuss how they can make their process broader and more participatory in the future.

3. Identify a federal, state, or local agency that recently conducted a public participation process in your community. An example might be a transportation plan for a city. Evaluate their effort to involve the public in the decision-making process. What were the strengths of the process? What were the weaknesses of the process? How could the process be improved in the future?

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ADDITIONAL READINGS AND RESOURCES

Readings

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Web Sites

- The Aspen Institute Policy Programs—www.aspeninstitute.org. The Aspen Institute has a Web site that describes various issues about measuring community capacity. The institute also has a workbook titled *Measuring Community Capacity Building: A Workbook in Progress*, which is very useful.
- Axelrod Group—www.AxelrodGroup.com. This site provides information regarding the Conference model (an approach that includes the use of Future Search) and follow-up conferences designed to help in the development of an action plan.
- Future Search—www.ctarrce.org. This Web site provides information on Future Search, an organizational development technique of collaborative inquiry that focuses on the future of an organization, a network of people, or a community.
- International Association for Public Participation (IAP2)—www.iap2.org. This organization helps people around the world, including communities, to improve their decisions by involving those people who are affected by those decisions. It provides many public participation tools.

Sites for Data and Tools

- American Factfinder—factfinder.census.gov. This is the richest source of data for communities. The U.S. Census Bureau provides detailed household data that can be examined at several different levels of geography. In addition to the decennial census, this site provides access to the American Community Survey, Economic Censuses, and population estimates for communities.
- Community Economic Toolbox—www.economictoolbox.geog.psu.edu. For a good source of economic data, the Community Economic Toolbox provides some important indicators of economic change. In addition to economic snapshots, this Web site supplies communities with basic economic tools, such as location quotients and shift share analyses.

Videos

- Collaborative Planning* (1990), produced by the American Planning Association, directed by Edith Nettle. This video “shows how citizens can work together in their communities to plan for the future.” Available from Community Services—Washington, 915 15th St., NW, Suite 601, Washington, DC 20005.