

The Next Generation Planner's Toolbox – Session Notes
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Facilitators' Board Summaries

Group 1 – Facilitators: Florence and David

Problem or Issue:

Technology – sufficient [as a] project management tool

Public Notice [methods] / Public engagement

Diversity among planning personnel [lack of]

Reality vs. Perception

Challenges or Barriers:

NIMB

Don't want change

Politics – changes in administration/management

Are you allowed to think critically?

Tools Needed:

Better data / Education at younger age

GIS / Skilled personnel

Social media

Creative One-on-One

Best Practice Ideas:

Collaborate and explain why, how, when

Engage community early and allow community to lead

Workshop for (any) permit applicants

Group 2 – Facilitators: Ashley and Margaret

Problem or Issue:

Sharing common goal
Jurisdictional collaboration
Change engineering to include bike and ped
Wind farm impact on environment
Confined animal feeding operations impacts
Algal bloom problems
Jobs vs. labor – workforce housing
Small houses
Housing questions – accessory housing code conflicts
Input from public challenges

Challenges or Barriers:

Politics and \$
Public education (community not schools)
Understaffed – just doing development review
Car centric rules – entrenchment needs to be broken down with new variables
NIMBYism
Limited resources
Planners have long term vision – politicians short term results
Don't have authority to override
Underfunded and first to cut

Tools Needed:

Land bank
Tour other housing projects 5 years + success (list)
APA workshops for elected officials
Website and interactive maps

Facebook outreach
Next Door app
Mobile apps
Interns / co-ops
Getting talent to come to more rural areas
Online permitting
Support to rural counties not part of MPOs

Best Practice Ideas

Spending time with residents – human connection
Clear up misunderstandings
Feel, Felt, Found [approach to communicating with angered citizen]

Complete Discussion Notes

Group 1 – Facilitators: Florence and David

Problem or Issue:

- Technology divide. Certain segments of the population have issues utilizing technology. One example given was the Amish population, their religious beliefs forbid them from using computers and mobile phones, making it difficult to communicate with them via modern methods. Planners must contact a relative or friend who can utilize technology in order to get in touch with the person who doesn't utilize technology.
- Public notice issues. Even though many planning agencies use multiple forms of notice, many citizens claim they didn't hear about a public hearing or meeting. How many forms of communication must planners use to make notice? E-mail, phone, newspaper, social media, media, mail, etc...
- Public engagement. Planners feel like they are always talking to the same people and those same people are the only ones showing up to public meetings. How do you get other groups of people interested in the planning process?
- Overall lack of diversity in the planning profession.
- Public education. The public lacks a basic understanding of the planning process. Implementation of plans and the corresponding results don't happen overnight. It's a battle of the public's perception vs reality in many cases.

- Project management. City manager wants a widget/application to track process of projects. Cost of existing solutions is very high or require weeks of training to use.

Challenges or Barriers:

- The public is resistant to and fearful of change. NIMBYs. People buy property and never want the view onto someone else's property to change. Draw Bridge mentality - I got what I want, now keep everything around me the same and everyone else out.
- How do you get new, fresh people and ideas at public meetings?
- Politics. With the change in administration after an election or a change in management direction organizational priorities can change leading to frustration amongst staff. How do you ensure good process regardless of politics?
- Are planning professionals allowed to think critically? Or must they stick to old plans and text? Not all planners give recommendations any longer to their boards and committees.

Tools Needed:

- Better access to data.
- GIS. Many communities can't afford commercial GIS software and tools.
- Better public engagement tools and methods for engaging new generations.
- Pizza & Ice cream fund. Used to persuade community members to attend public meetings.

Best Practice Ideas:

- Training programs. Example, train community maintenance staff on care of street trees so they don't see them as a negative.
- Engage the public and allow them to lead discussions for comprehensive plan updates.
- Workshops to help the public/developers get through the planning/zoning process.

Group 2 – Facilitators: Ashley and Margaret

Problem or Issue:

- Lack of a common, understandable goal across different departments and organizations.
 - Unable to work in-tune with people outside the organization.
- Civil Engineers are entrenched in a 'car-centric' approach to speed regulations, disregarding the increase in multi-modal transit.
 - i.e. The speed warrant process doesn't account for the increase in bikes and pedestrians when calculating.

- Large commercial windfarms (such as in northern Ohio) are environmentally dangerous and divide communities.
- Confined Animal Feeding Operations
 - Large farm buildings stuffed with animals pose problems for surrounding residents.
 - Cause negative environmental and water impacts.
- Algae Bloom
- Provision of workforce housing
 - Need for affordable, sustainable housing
 - Public education surrounding this needed housing
- Underfunding- as a political issue.
 - Misunderstanding by local politicians resulting in underfunding.
- Typically public input increases on a case by case basis, only when there is a controversial issue. The interest is not sustained throughout time.
- Lack of Public Knowledge
 - On issues like zoning
 - To increase understanding of ‘what is planning and why is it important’

Challenges or Barriers:

- Lack of sustained attention results in citizenry, and local officials, being unable to recognize patterns.
- People aren’t informed enough about both the practice of planning and the issues individually.
- Lack of political will.
- Political Hierarchy
 - Dealing with politics gets harder as one moves up in the levels of government
 - Planning departments are typically underfunded and first to get cut
 - Seen as a low tier <- need to change this
- Understaffing results in planning departments that are unable to start new projects. They are forced to “tread water,” focusing on work such as development reviews.
- Ownership must be acquired before demolishing dilapidated housing.
- Reassessment of how procedures are undergone given modern conditions

- i.e. reassessment of how speed warrants are developed in relation to an increase in modes of travel
- Entrenchment in Past Techniques
- Nimbyism
 - NIMBY - 'Not In My Back Yard'
 - One who resists proposed/unwanted development in their local area
- Short-term visioning clashing with long-term visioning
 - Elected officials often serve shorter terms, so their focus may be more immediate/short-term.

Tools Needed:

- The establishment of an inventory of successful projects.
 - A way to display the successes, such as a web page or database.
 - Provides a template to base future work.
- Tools for Public Education
 - To address education – make as much data publically available online as possible.
 - Interactive Maps, Visualizations, Photos
 - APA workshops could be extended to elected officials so they could understand the planning process more.
- Using nextdoor.com to understand the relevant issues in separate communities.
- Mobile Applications (Apps)
 - Can have uses while in the field
- Online Permitting

Best Practice Ideas:

- Holding 1 on 1 meetings, or small group discussions with community members.
 - Take time to go over things that need to be better addressed with residents and talk through the problems to avoid misunderstanding.
 - 'Feel, Felt, Found' structure for diffusing public frustration.
- Help people understand the role of planners.

- Accomplished through making information public and forging a personal, human connection.
- People are less nervous when they know the planners. Their fears and concerns can be weakened if they trust their planners.
- Engage early and allow the citizens to have a voice
- Land Banks
 - Focused around the conservation of vacant, foreclosed, or underused properties, Land Banks create an inventory of land that they manage and repurpose for later use.