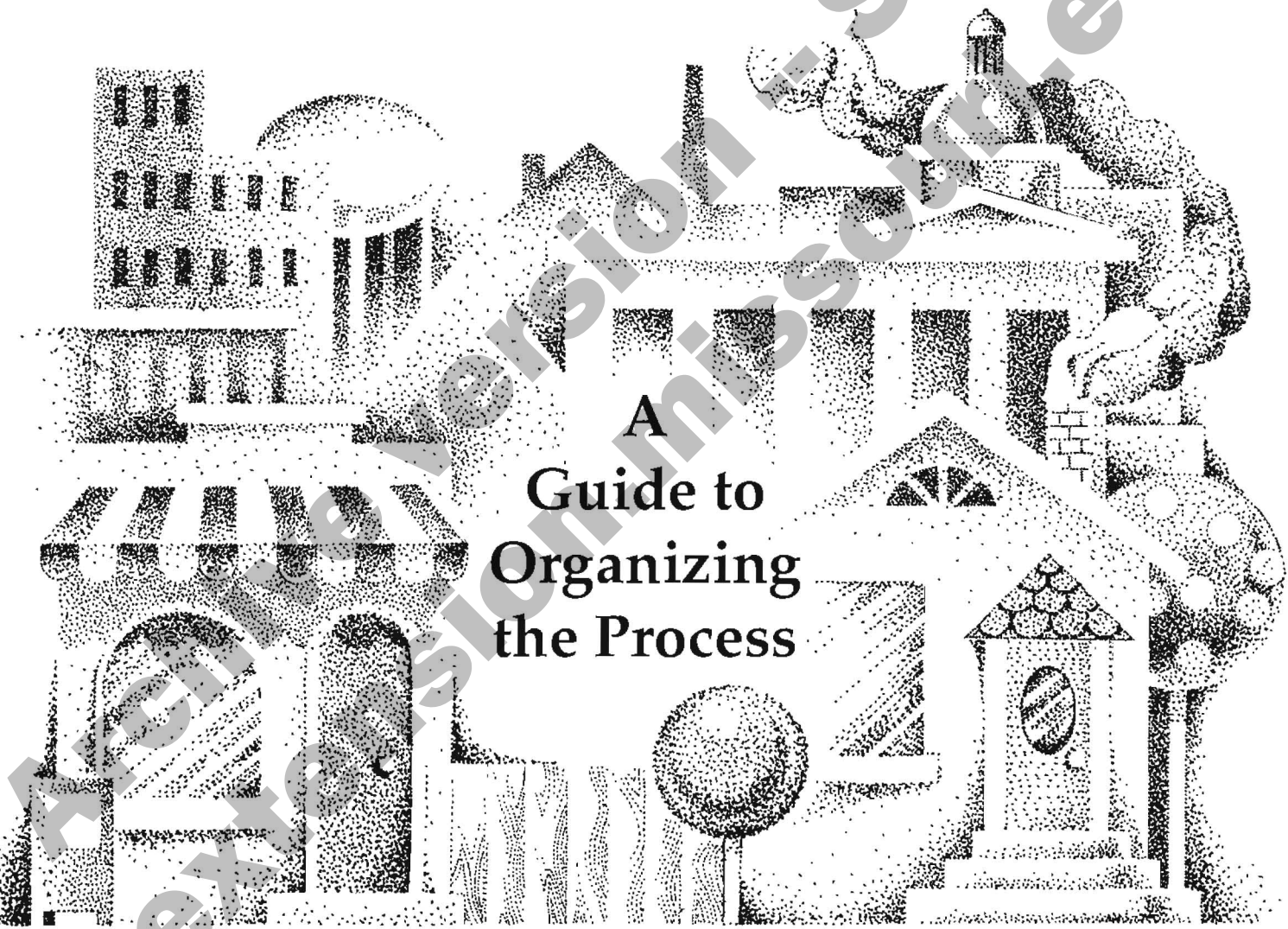


---

# Town Meetings that Work



A  
Guide to  
Organizing  
the Process

Johanna Reed Adams

Charles St. Clair

William E. Robertson

PUBLISHED BY UNIVERSITY EXTENSION, UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI-COLUMBIA

MU Manual

\$2.00

DM464

---

**Authors:**

**Johanna Reed Adams**

**Charles St. Clair**

Community Development Specialists, University Extension

**William E. Robertson**

Professor, Department of Community Development

University of Missouri-Columbia

To order additional copies of this publication, send \$2.00 to and request "Town Meetings that Work, A Guide to Organizing the Process," DM 464, from Extension Publications, 2800 Maguire, Columbia, MO 65211. Make check payable to University of Missouri. For a complete listing of University Extension publications, request our free publications catalog, MP 205.

New England “town meetings” were (and are) famous for face-to-face decision-making on a community wide basis. These meetings have become idealized as the perfect form of democracy because all citizens participate willingly and freely. But outside of New England, many town meetings are not always productive. We’ve all gone to a public hearing or other community meeting to learn about an issue only to find the meeting dominated by groups representing one side of the issue, or such bad organization that the issue was never discussed. Frustrating, wasn’t it?



# Town meetings

This guide will give you ideas on how to run a “town meeting” in an organized and effective manner, while producing a community consensus in a cooperative atmosphere. It is the result of our work with more than two dozen communities over the last five years, communities ranging in size from less than 100 to more than 25,000.

The type of town meetings that we will describe are not public hearings required by law. Rather, they are town meetings organized by “community betterment” groups that set a direction for the community. These organizations fall into the community “governance” category rather than community “government.” What’s the difference? Well, let’s explain...

Most of the time, when you think about participating in your community, you probably think about voting. The school needs a new roof, so you go to the polls and vote for a bond issue to pay for it. You vote for the mayor and city council in your community. You decide who will represent your town in the state legislature by voting. Many people only participate in the life of their communities by voting. But voting is not enough.

Take a close look at your community and you’ll probably discover that a lot of this progress isn’t because of “city hall.” It’s the result of citizens participating in voluntary activities — governance activities. Governance comes from the Latin word *gubernare*, which means to direct or steer. Sometimes we feel it is difficult to direct or steer our community unless we are elected or appointed public officials. Yet there are many other opportunities to do so.

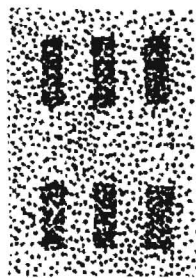
Participating in a town meeting such as the one described here is one those opportunities.

The town meeting process that we use in working with communities is based upon the principle that preventing problems is a lot more efficient than solving problems once they arise. For example, every community has had a problem with potholes. What is the problem-solving approach to potholes? Find the pothole and fill it with asphalt, then wait for it to reappear and fill it again and again. The prevention approach analyzes the situation (determining the traffic-flow on the street), sets a goal for the long-term use of the street and constructs the street with materials that last beyond the projected use of the street

**Community governance  
vs.  
community government**

---

# The nature of community



What is the difference between a community and a city? They appear to be interchangeable. A "community" is characterized by close personal interactions; it is a place of "emotional cohesion, depth, continuity and fullness."

A "city," on the other hand, is a place that exists with little emotional exchange between its inhabitants. It is characterized by "large scale, impersonal and contractual ties."

Size is not the critical factor in distinguishing "community" and "city;" rather, the people interaction determines whether you live in a "community" or a "city."

The goal of the town meeting process is to encourage and nurture "community."

To further define community, think of it as a collection of systems which exist over time in a place that is identified by its natural and constructed environments. These systems involve the interactions of people independent of place, but are influenced by place.

These systems are present in every community to varying degrees. The "social" system involves the development, maintenance and transmission of cultures, values, traditions and norms.

The "political" system organizes the work identified as important to the community.

The "economic" system produces, distributes and consumes resources that sustain the community. These systems work together to make the community whole and supportive for its residents.

These systems operate in a place that includes both the pre-existing physical aspects of the environment and the environment as it has been altered to be more useful to the inhabitants. All of these elements – the systems and the place – exist over time. In fact, a community exists in three separate times: the past, the present and the future. Each is important in defining whether and how the community will be successful.

because that is more cost-effective than continually repairing potholes.

The town meeting process is intended also to get people involved in action. Many town meetings are simply talk, but if that is all that happens, people get discouraged. This process involves helping people to choose issues they are interested in and gives them an opportunity to work on them.

Finally, the town meeting process is an open process. It depends upon the participation of as many people in the community as possible. Everyone can express his or her opinion and then commit to establishing a consensus. Decisions are made by everyone, not a small group of people.

This guide shows you how to organize and run a town meeting while getting people involved in community projects.

---

Understanding and using all community aspects for the benefit of its residents is the essence of the community development process. All aspects of a community are considered and acted upon in the town meeting process.

Organizing a town meeting does not have to be difficult, but it does take planning and participation to be effective. Who should organize the town meeting? Our experience indicates the most effective town meetings are those sponsored by a coalition of groups.

For example, in most communities, there are many organizations that, individually, could sponsor a town meeting—the chamber of commerce, city government or the school district.

However, these organizations function individually and probably do not represent the entire community. Often they do not have the entire community's trust. Although this statement may seem harsh, most communities have groups or "power structures" that are looked upon with suspicion. If one of these groups sponsors a town meeting, there will be people who will not attend because they believe the sponsoring organization has a "hidden agenda."

In order to avoid this problem, we suggest the town meeting be sponsored by a coalition of community groups. The chart on page 13 shows a matrix for putting together a planning committee. We listed the typical groups; if your community does not have all of these groups, include as many as you can.

After you have established a planning committee, you should begin thinking about some of the following things:

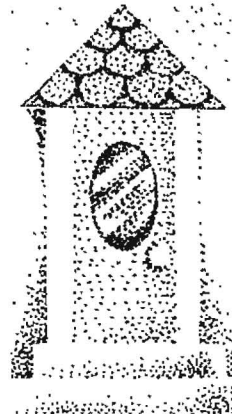
Everyone! A town meeting should not be a meeting of the same old faces. A town that is making progress has broad participation from all segments of the community—young, old, male, female, all races and creeds.

Charts on pages 14 and 15 provide an invitation guide. But don't stop there. We'll cover more of this topic under publicity.

There will be scheduling conflicts every night, but try to avoid obvious ones such as city council meetings or community betterment meeting nights.

In addition, be sure to pick a night that will be suitable for several months, because the town meeting process is not just one meeting, but a series of meetings over several months.

For example, if you begin in the summer, don't pick a night that is traditionally a school-event night in the fall. As an alternative, you might consider weekends or mornings. Each of these times presents special problems, of course, but they may work just fine in your community. The important thing is to find a



# Organizing a town meeting

**Who will we invite?**

**When will the town meeting  
be held?**

---

## Where will it be held?

time when a good cross-section of the community can be present.

The location of a town meeting is dependent upon two things: your estimate of the number of people attending and a place that has tables for the participants. Community buildings or schools are good for town meetings. If you think you might have one hundred people attending, don't pick a place that has room for only twenty-five. On the other hand, it's not a good idea to hold a meeting for one hundred people in an auditorium that seats two thousand.

Also, it is essential for people to be able to sit at tables. Town meetings are working meetings that require writing ... so tables are handy. Additionally, check the acoustics in the meeting room ahead of time. Everyone must be able to hear easily. If the room is large enough, use a microphone, but check it for echo.

## How will we publicize the meeting?

The town meeting should be planned far enough in advance so that at least two notices are printed in the local newspaper. Ideally, you should give yourselves at least one month to publicize the town meeting.

Effective forms of publicity include the local media, posters or fliers, and announcements at civic clubs and community organizations. Ask a local utility company to insert your notice into utility bills. Some communities have even delivered handbills to every house in town. The bottom line is: don't rely on only one or two methods of publicity and don't assume that "everyone will know."

## Who will moderate the meeting?

The role of moderator is important. Ideally, it should be someone who has had experience facilitating meetings of large groups of people, such as a local minister or University Extension specialist. The important thing is to find someone who is respected and trusted by all groups in the community. The moderator will need to be thoroughly familiar with the town meeting process so the meeting can run smoothly.

## Who will supply materials?

A town meeting is a working meeting. Here is a list of supplies you will need to get started:

- newsprint pads
- markers (one for each table)
- masking tape
- pencils
- "scratch paper"
- work sheets

For the first session, you will need a minimum of three sheets of newsprint for each table, plus 10 to 15 extra sheets. You don't have to buy expensive newsprint pads, but the sheets must be large enough for people to see from a distance—2' x 3' sheets work well. You might invest in a roll of butcher paper and cut it into sheets, or see if the newspaper has leftover newsprint that you can have. Additionally, each session uses work sheets that must be copied ahead of time. Decide early in the planning process how you will pay for the supplies.

In addition to the materials for the work session, it is a good idea to supply

---

refreshments at every meeting. Town meetings are intense experiences for the participants and they will need an occasional break to “recharge their batteries.” Coffee, ice tea and cookies will help.

Every aspect of the town meeting should be a specific responsibility of someone! Decide ahead of time who will be responsible for contacting the news media, who will bring refreshments and who will arrange for the meeting place.

Following are some suggestions to increase the chance for a successful town meeting:

- **Provide child-care**

Many people (particularly women) in small towns would like to participate in community activities, but have a hard time finding someone to stay with the little ones. Participation will increase and be much more representative of the community if you arrange to have child care at the meeting. Perhaps a class at the local school would be willing to provide this service for a nominal fee.

- **Set the right atmosphere**

Publicize the town meeting as a time for people to plan for the future, not complain about the past. A town meeting should not be used as a forum to criticize the way things are now, but rather as a way to envision the community as it can be.

- **Include youth**

Be sure to include youth in planning and running the town meetings. Young people are much more valuable than just free labor for community projects. They have ideas and energy, unrestrained by “the way things have always been.” If you haven’t included them, you’ve missed an important segment of the community.

To be most productive, we suggest that there be at least four town meeting sessions. These four meetings are used to learn and become comfortable with the procedures that are essential elements of the process. However, you should not embark on the process if you intend to have only four meetings. These procedures should become a part of your overall community betterment structure. Each session includes parts of the community development process:

- creating an agenda for the future (session one),
- community analysis (session two),
- action planning and implementation (sessions two, three and four), and

**Who will be responsible for each task?**

**Suggestions for a successful town meeting**



# The town meeting process

- 
- evaluation (sessions two, three and four).

By the end of session four, your community group should be well on its way to making the community the kind of place you want it to be.

## Session 1

Session one begins the work of creating an agenda for the future of your community. This is a time for citizens to look back on the community the way it once was, to consider how it is now and to decide how they want it to be five or 10 years from now.

This session is based on the belief that people do have control over their future – that they can create their future. It is based on the belief that you don't have to move to live in a better community! This session will take about two and one-half to three hours. There are several parts to this first session and they should be presented in this order:

- **The “community skills bank”**

This is a way of collecting information about people in the community who can be of help in your community betterment activities in the future. Generally, people involved in community improvement activities fall into three categories: workers, wisdom and wealth.

The “workers” are people who are willing to get out on Saturday morning and plant trees in the city park, sweep the downtown sidewalks or set up chairs in the community hall for meetings.

The “wisdom” is that group of people who can be counted on to attend a community planning session or write a grant application.

And the “wealth” segment consists of people who may not join you for that Saturday morning tree-planting session. They may not be interested in spending their evenings developing the town's strategic plan; but when you need a contribution for the local theater group or help to buy supplies for the town's sesqui-centennial celebration, you can count on them.

These are the three “W's” that every community needs. The skills bank questionnaire is a way of finding out who fits into which of these categories.

Allow people about 10 minutes to fill out the sheets. Some people may have a hard time deciding what their skills are, so be encouraging. Also, you might suggest that people share their skills with the other people at their table.

- **The past community**

Ask each person to think about how your community was in the past and list its characteristics. Give them about five minutes. Then have each group make a master list on one-half of the newsprint.

Encourage the groups to work fast. The objective is to get a quick impression of the way they think the town used to be.

- **The present community**

Individually, each person should describe the community as they think it is now. List these characteristics on the other half of the first newsprint sheet—which is then hung on the wall.

Don't let the groups get involved in arguments about how things are now;



you just want them to think about their community.

- **The future community**

Next have each person fill out the "Dick Tracy Comes True" sheet. This is a list of community characteristics in "The Future"—not as you think it will be, but as you want it to be.

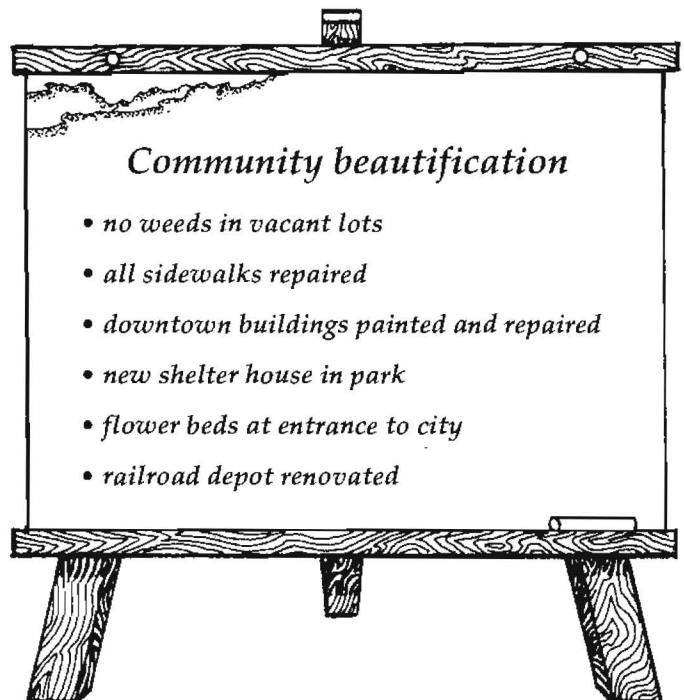
This is the really important work of the evening, so give them 15 to 20 minutes to work individually and then to list their characteristics as a group on a large sheet of paper.

- **Future characteristic "categories"**

This is usually done during a break by the moderator and other members of the planning committee. The newsprint sheets are collected and reviewed to find similarities between the groups. From past work with communities, some categories tend to show up again and again. These include:

- Community beautification
- Downtown revitalization
- Education/schools
- Government operations
- Economic development
- Business development
- Leadership
- Promotion
- Tourism
- Public safety (fire/police)
- Transportation
- Recreation
- Youth programs
- Communications
- Environment
- Housing
- Human Services
- Health
- Community Pride/Citizen Involvement
- Culture/Arts

After general categories are chosen, the characteristics from all the newsprint sheets are transferred to sheets with the category headings. For example, you might have a category sheet that looks like this:



- **Future goal development**

After the break, category sheets are distributed to tables and participants have the opportunity to choose which category they would like to work on. They use the sheet entitled "Developing Future Goals" and write goal statements for their category using "XYZ will..."

The goal statements describe the community in the future as people want it to be, in relation to that category. The goal statements should be positive and preventive; they should not be a statement of a problem or how a problem is to be solved. The goals should be written on newsprint sheets.

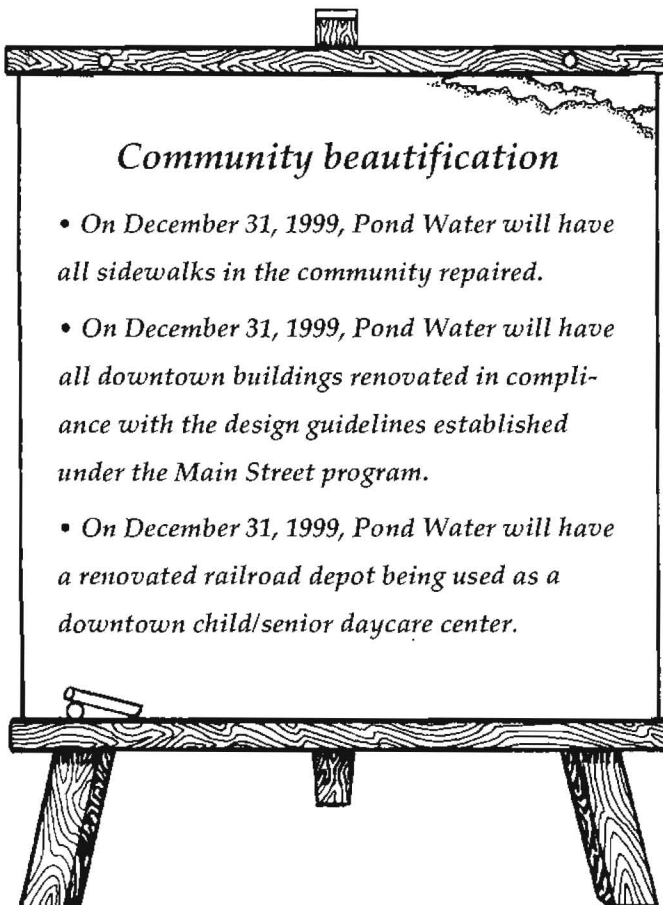
- **Goal review**

When all groups have completed their goal statements, each group reviews its work with the entire group. At this point, the goal sheets are taped to the wall and the entire group is asked if it agrees with the category group's suggestions. This is a "consensus-building" activity for the community. A set of goals might look like the chart below.

- **Decide whether to continue**

At this point, a set of fairly complete and explicit goals have been established for the community and agreed upon by those in attendance. The last activity of the meeting is to determine if people want to begin to work on these goals and if so, to set a date for the next meeting.

Those in attendance are encouraged to talk also to others in the community about the goals that were established. It is important for the "town meeting" group to verify its ideas of the community's future with others who will be affected by those ideas.



## Session 2

During session two, several tasks are performed—the process of community analysis begins, action planning is initiated and the first evaluation of the project is done. Each is an essential part of an on-going community improvement/community betterment activity. Allow at least two hours for this session.

### • Review goals statements

The first activity is to review all goal statements that were developed at the first meeting and revise them if new information has become available, or if, upon reflection, people want to add to or delete some points of the original goals.

It is important for people to feel and to understand that goals change and that they have the right to make those changes. Nothing that happens in the town meetings should necessarily be final.

### • Establish a “task force” for each category

For each category (such as community beautification, economic development or youth), a “task force,” or working group, should be established to determine how goals in that category are going to be reached.

As was done in the first session, category sheets with the goal statements should be distributed to tables, and people should be encouraged to choose the category on which they wish to work. Groups begin the process of community analysis at this point.

### • Identify community “strengths”

The first step in community analysis is to consider the “strengths” available to reach community goals. Each group should consider resources the community possesses to accomplish its tasks and list these on a newsprint sheet.

Groups should consider the three types of resources (the “3 W’s”):

- (1) wealth—money (in cash or in kind) from sources available to reach a goal;
- (2) wisdom—the knowledge and skills of people in the community as well as their ability to call upon outside information sources; and,
- (3) workers—people themselves and the time and energy that they can contribute.

### • Identify community “weaknesses”

For each category, identify obstacles in the community that keep you from reaching your goals. These obstacles should be considered also in terms of the “3 W’s” above.

**Short-term Action Plan**

*Task force name:* Community beautification

*Goal:* To renovate depot for daycare center

*Tasks:* Find out the railroad's plans  
Find out state standards for daycare centers

*Who's responsible:*

- Lucille Mall
- Polly Wanadoddle

*Other involvement:*

- Larry Welk – knows the railroad president
- Aerial Display – sister works for the state

*Time:* Six hours

*Cost:* \$10 for phone calls

*Information needed for action:* Phone numbers for the railroad and state agencies

- **Develop short-term action plan**

Have each task force develop a short-term plan to eliminate some part of a community obstacle, or pick one “strength” and develop a short-term plan of action to build on that strength.

While it may seem easier to try to eliminate an apparent weakness, that course of action should be chosen only if it is directly related to reaching the long-term goal. In either case, the plan needs to be something that can be accomplished in one month and should include the following information (use the “Short-Term Action Plan” sheet for this):

- what specific tasks need to be accomplished
- who will be responsible
- who else will be/should be involved (your partners)
- how much time will it take
- how much will it cost
- what information is needed to make it happen

- **Report on short-term action**

Each group reports on its planned action for the month and gives a copy of the “Action Plan” to the coordinator. Each group should also take a copy of the “Action Plan Report” form to record its progress during the month.

- **Set next meeting date**

Again the group is asked if it wants to continue, and if the answer is “yes”, a next meeting date is set. By this time, the group should be getting a sense of organization and will probably want to consider establishing a regular meeting date.

### **Session 3**

Session three opens with a progress evaluation of individual task forces, continues the analysis of the community and begins long-range planning. This session will last between two to two and one-half hours.

- **Review short-term action of each task force**

Each task force reports on the progress it has made during the month. This should be a “celebration” of progress. If the group has had difficulties during the month, discuss them so possible solutions can be found.

- **Review goal statements from the first meeting**

Once again, goal statements should be reviewed and revised if new information is available. It is important to emphasize again that goals can, and often do, change from one meeting to the next, as new data is added to the “community intelligence bank.”

- **Develop long-range plan**

For each goal statement, a long-range work plan to achieve that goal should be developed. The long-range plan is like the “short-term action plan,” but looks at a five- to 10-year period. The long-range plan includes the following information:

- when work will start on the goal and an approximate finish date
- what are the milestones that indicate achievements along the way (a long-range plan is much like a roadmap for traveling from point A to point B; a milestone might be the cities along the route)
- what tasks must be done to reach each milestone (what are the short-term actions that must be accomplished)
- who is responsible for each task
- who should be involved in working to reach the goal (who is affected by this project, who is interested, who has a stake in the outcome)
- what resources are needed to reach each milestone (the 3 W's – wealth, wisdom and workers)
- in addition, it is important to consider the “opportunities” and “obstacles” related to this activity (“opportunities” are those external forces – national and state trends and special programs – that might help move the goal to completion; “obstacles” are those external forces that might hinder the achievement of the goal)

- **Develop another short-term action**

Each task force should decide upon another short-term activity to accomplish in the following month. The idea is to continue to build small successes from one month to the next. A successful community improvement activity is not a one-time, monumental achievement, but a series of small, well-thought-out actions that combine to meet an agreed-upon goal.

Subsequent sessions can (and should) be scheduled, at which time progress is reported and activities are planned. These sessions should serve also as “study” times, when new information about the goal/issue/task force is presented or identified as needed. Community betterment groups need to spend at least two hours per month planning what they intend to do during the month. This planning time can be very valuable in consensus-building and in helping to avoid problems that arise from a reluctance to consider alternatives.

**Sessions 4, 5, 6, etc.**

The process we have described has been used successfully in nearly every part of Missouri. The degree of success, however, depends upon several things:

- **The planning committee**

If the planning committee is broad-based and is a coalition of community groups, the chances of success are increased. If the planning committee represents one narrow interest in the community and is organizing a town meeting because it has a viewpoint it wants to promote, the town meeting will probably have limited success and will not be a process, merely a meeting.



**Final thoughts**

---

- **Preparation**

The planning committee must prepare for the town meeting very carefully. This includes publicizing the event well in advance, making arrangements for an adequate meeting place and assuring there are adequate supplies for the actual work of the town meeting.

- **Follow up**

Adequate follow-up after the meeting is as important, perhaps, as adequate planning before the meeting. Someone or some group must be responsible for making sure the materials developed during the meeting are saved for future meetings, that attendance lists are kept, that subsequent meetings are as well publicized as the first, and that the commitment to follow through with the goals is established.

- **Continuation**

The town meeting process should not be seen as a program or event which is completed after a few meetings. The process is one which can be and should be used indefinitely.

Community progress depends on only three things – goals, plans and action. The town meeting process is a way of making these three things second nature in the community: goals and plans are developed at monthly meetings of interested citizens who then work during the rest of the month making those goals and plans a reality. This is a simple and very effective system that can pay big dividends.

Town meetings, when organized and run properly, can be an important boost to your community. Town meetings do work!

---

# Appendices

The following pages may be photocopied for use in planning and organizing your town meetings.

# Organizing a Town Meeting

## The Planning Committee

Use the following table to determine who can help organize your town meeting. The first column lists some typical organizations which should be involved in planning the meeting. Columns 1, 2 and 3 are people within the organizations who should be contacted. It is a good idea, generally, to contact more than just the presidents or nominal leaders of organizations, though they will be the first people you call. There may be a person in the group, for example, who is responsible for organizing community projects or who is particularly interested in community improvement.

<b>Community Groups</b>	<b>Contact #1</b> (Name/phone number)	<b>Contact #2</b> (Name/phone number)	<b>Contact #3</b> (Name/phone number)
City Government			
Community Betterment			
Chamber of Commerce			
School District			
University Extension			
Youth			

# Organizing a Town Meeting

## Groups to Invite

Use the following table to determine who should be invited to your town meeting. In the first column, list the organizations which should be asked to participate. Columns 1, 2 and 3 are people within the organizations who should be contacted first. Encourage them to contact the other members of their organizations about the meeting.

<b>Community Groups</b>	<b>Contact #1</b> (Name/phone number)	<b>Contact #2</b> (Name/phone number)	<b>Contact #3</b> (Name/phone number)



# Organizing a Town Meeting

## Individuals to Invite

Use the following table to identify individuals who should be invited to your town meeting. Even in the most highly organized communities, many people do not belong to identifiable groups. This form will help you pinpoint people who should be included at the town meeting, who may not show up on other lists. In the first column are examples of "types of individuals" to contact. Use columns 1, 2 and 3 to list specific people to contact.

<b>Types of People</b>	<b>Contact #1</b> (Name/phone number)	<b>Contact #2</b> (Name/phone number)	<b>Contact #3</b> (Name/phone number)
Civic leader			
Teacher			
Business person			
Influential resident			
Concerned citizen			
Community worker			
Local banker			
Youth			
Youth			

# The Skills Bank

Every community needs the skills, knowledge, and expertise of its residents in order to grow and prosper. And every community resident has valuable and unique contributions to make. We are going to develop a "Skills Bank" to be used in making your community the kind of place you want it to be. What are the skills, the knowledge, the expertise you would be willing to deposit in the bank?

**Name:**

---

**Address:**

---

**Phone:**

---

Your answers to the following questionnaire will give your community betterment committee an idea of the skills and interests of people of this community. Please answer each question by circling the letter of the phrase that best describes what you would be willing to do in each hypothetical situation. Circle only one letter for each situation. Please be assured that these are only examples of typical situations in communities; you are not committing yourself to actually participate in any of these activities at this time! Thank You!

1. The annual Prune Growers Festival is coming up soon. I would:

- a. Set up chairs in the community center for the Prune Players annual show.
- b. Buy some of the supplies needed for the 200 prune pies that will be auctioned off.
- c. Serve on a committee to plan the program for the Festival.

2. The city recreation director has been told that there is an opportunity to obtain a grant to build a new park. I would:

- a. Help distribute a survey to determine recreation needs in the community.
- b. Talk to local groups to raise the \$25,000 needed to match the grant.
- c. Work with the recreation director to develop the application.

3. Merchants downtown have decided to begin a revitalization program that they hope will help keep money in the community. I would:

- a. Work on a one-day clean-up detail four times a year to spruce up Main Street.
- b. Help set up a revolving loan fund for businesses that want to renovate their buildings.
- c. Work with the merchants to identify new ways to keep customers from going out of town.

4. The local high school must be replaced in the next five years. I would:

- a. Stuff envelopes for a school bond election campaign.
- b. Contribute money to a school bond campaign.
- c. Work with the school officials to plan the campaign.

5. The city council has determined that a city sales tax is needed to fund the new road resurfacing program that the citizens identified as their number one priority. I would:

- a. Telephone some of my friends to find out if they would support the tax.
- b. Agree to buy all my groceries and gas locally for the next year to support the tax.
- c. Serve on a committee to help the council determine which streets will be resurfaced the first year.

6. The local community betterment group wants to hold a town meeting to plan programs for the year. I would:
  - a. Prepare some refreshments for the meeting.
  - b. Donate \$5.00 for the supplies for the meeting.
  - c. Help plan the agenda for the meeting.
  
7. The city park was recently vandalized. I would:
  - a. Help repair and repaint the damaged bandstand.
  - b. Contribute to a fund to purchase new lights for the park.
  - c. Help organize a youth community betterment program to prevent future problems such as this.
  
8. The only grocery store in town just closed. I would:
  - a. Work one hour a month at a community cooperative grocery.
  - b. Buy a membership in a community cooperative grocery.
  - c. Serve on the board of directors of a community cooperative grocery.
  
9. The economic development council wants to renovate a building for a new business that would like to open. I would:
  - a. Help prepare the building for occupancy.
  - b. Buy shares in the economic development foundation.
  - c. Work with the EDC to develop a job-training program.

When you have answered all the questions, please count the number of "a's," "b's" and "c's" and record them below.

- a. = \_\_\_\_\_
- b. = \_\_\_\_\_
- c. = \_\_\_\_\_

**My skills, knowledge, expertise include:**

Things I like to do:

---



---



---

Things I am good at:

---



---

Things I know how to do:

---



---



---

# The Past

Think back to a time—5, 10, 50, 100 years ago—when your community was at its best. Write down some short phrases that describe the way it was at that time. Be sure to consider all aspects of the community—the social, cultural, economic, and political systems, as well as the physical surroundings—in your descriptions. Please be specific. When you finish, share your ideas with the other people at your table.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

---

---

# The Present

Think about your community today. Write down some short phrases that describe it at this time. Be sure to consider all its aspects—the social, cultural, economic, and political systems, as well as the physical surroundings—in your descriptions. Please be specific. If you think the economy is good, for example, tell us why you think it is good. When you finish, share your ideas with the other people at your table.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# The Future: Dick Tracy Comes True

It is now December 31, 1999. Dick Tracy has come true: you have a two-way wrist radio/television. You can see and talk to anyone in the world that you want to. Think about what you would tell them about your community. Describe its characteristics—its economy, the people, its culture, the political system, the environment—any and all aspects of the community that you think are important. In other words, describe in detail the kind of community you want it to be—not what you think it will be like; rather, describe what you want it to be like. Be specific.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

7. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

8. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

9. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

10. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# Developing Goals for the Future

Look at the descriptions of your community in your category. Write one, two, or three sentences that incorporate those descriptions into a goal for the future. Each statement should begin "On December 31, 1999, \_\_\_\_\_ will..." Each statement should be positive and preventive. Your task is not to solve today's problems, but to describe how the downtown will be at the turn of the century.

On December 31, 1999, \_\_\_\_\_ will \_\_\_\_\_

On December 31, 1999, \_\_\_\_\_ will \_\_\_\_\_

On December 31, 1999, \_\_\_\_\_ will \_\_\_\_\_

On December 31, 1999, \_\_\_\_\_ will \_\_\_\_\_

On December 31, 1999, \_\_\_\_\_ will \_\_\_\_\_

On December 31, 1999, \_\_\_\_\_ will \_\_\_\_\_

On December 31, 1999, \_\_\_\_\_ will \_\_\_\_\_







# Short-Term Action Plan

(To be accomplished in one month)

Task force name: \_\_\_\_\_

Task force members: \_\_\_\_\_

Goal (from "Developing Goals" sheet) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Date to be accomplished: \_\_\_\_\_

What tasks need to be accomplished? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Who will be responsible? \_\_\_\_\_

Who else should be involved? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Which other task forces have a stake in this short-term action plan? (name two) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How much time will it take? \_\_\_\_\_

How much will it cost? \_\_\_\_\_

What information do you need to make it happen? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# Long-Range Action Plan

	1993	1994
What is the goal?		
When will you start/end?		
What tasks must be done to achieve each milestone?		
Who is responsible for reaching each milestone?		
Who should be involved (who are your partners)?		
What resources are needed to reach each milestone?		
a. Workers (people)		
b. Wisdom (information)		
c. Wealth (money)		

1996

1998

2000

2002

(Write goal here)


# Action Plan Report #\_\_

(Complete two copies of this report)

Task force name: \_\_\_\_\_

Task force members: \_\_\_\_\_

Goal (from "Developing Goals" sheet) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Tasks undertaken: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Outcomes (successes): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Outcomes (not-quite successes): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Who worked on this action? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Who were your partners in the community? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How long did it take? \_\_\_\_\_

How much did it cost? \_\_\_\_\_

What needs to be done now? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

---

# References

“Everything has been said and we come more than seven thousand years of human thought too late.”

— Jean de la Bruyere (1645-1696)  
French writer, moralist

In other words, there aren't many original ideas left in the world, so this manual is a collaboration with history and the people who, before us, figured out how the world works. If you are interested in reading first hand what they have to say, here is a list of some of the original thinkers whose ideas we borrowed.

Alexander, C. 1977. *A Pattern Language*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Arnot, Marie, Lee J. Cary, and Mary Jean Houde. 1985. *The Volunteer Organization Handbook*. Blacksburg, VA: Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

Bell, Colin, and Howard Newby. 1973. *Community Studies: An Introduction to the Sociology of the Local Community*. New York: Praeger Publishers.

Delbecq, Andre L., Andrew H. Van de Ven, and David H. Gustafson. 1975. *Group Techniques for Program Planning*. Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman and Company.

Lackey, Alvin S., Robert Burke, and Mark Peterson. 1987. “Healthy communities: the goal of community development.” *Journal of the Community Development Society*. 18(2) pp.1-17.

Milnar, David and Scott Greer. 1969. *The Concept of Community*. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company.

Poplin, Dennis E. 1972. *Communities: A Survey of Theories and Methods of Research*. New York: The Macmillan Company.

Sanders, Irwin. 1958. *The Community: An Introduction to a Social System*. New York: The Ronald Press Company.

Tuan, Yi-Fu. 1977. *Space and Place*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Walter, E. V. 1988. *Placeways*. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press.

Warren, Roland. 1970. “The good community — what would it be?” *Journal of the Community Development Society*. 1(1) pp. 14-24.

Wilkinson, Kenneth P. 1991. *The Community in Rural America*. New York: Greenwood Press.



■ Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension Work Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914 in cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture. Ronald C. Powers, Interim Director, Cooperative Extension Service, University of Missouri and Lincoln University, Columbia, Missouri 65211. ■ An equal opportunity institution.