

**THE CITY OF WILMINGTON'S
CITIZENS PARTICIPATION PLAN**

PROJECT REPORT

PROJECT CLASS

GREER A. PEACOCK

The original goal of my project was “To develop a strong plan action that would allow for the sustainment of the City of Wilmington’s Neighborhood Planning Councils beyond this administration”. In April I changed the focus of my project from the sustainment of the NPCs to the Development of the City of Wilmington’s Citizen Participation Plan. The Citizens Participation(CP) Plan is being revised for two reasons; 1. It is an HUD requirement to obtain CDBG funding and two. It is part of the Mayors vision of bottom-up government. Presently, under discussion is how the CP Plan can be used for the development of the five-year consolidated plan, as well as, the distribution of the 6.2 million dollars in capital funds for the community.

In my project contract, I explained that the Neighborhood Planning Councils (NPCS) was the City of Wilmington’s community-based initiative. This initiative was in response to the Mayor’s vision for the City’s neighborhoods to become empowered and to help plan, develop and implement programs, projects and initiatives that will revitalizes their communities in conjunction with City government. The NPCs consist of representation from civic association, block clubs, churches, social service agencies, businesses, and individuals within the boundaries of the NPCs. There are eight NPCs, one for each councilmanic district and the boundaries are the same. The NPCs also have a leadership council. The “Leadership Council” includes the Chair and Co-Chair/President and Vice-President from each of the eight NPCs. It is this leadership group that I am working very closely with for my project.

From April until the Present I have accomplished the following:

- ✓ collected data from other cities which have citizens (see appendix “a”)
- ✓ formulated an ad hoc committee from the npc leadership to assist with the development of the plan (see appendix “b”)
- ✓ have a completed draft of the plan (see appendix “c”)
- ✓ have presented the draft of the plan to the NPC leadership for review and comments
- ✓ have presented the draft of the plan to the Mayor and the Director of Real Estate and Housing

We are awaiting approval and/or comments from the NPC Leadership, the Mayor and the Director of Real Estate and Housing. The Mayor’s approval is very important to the processes because without it, there will little to no cooperation from the City’s Department Heads. A major hurdle we now face is the adoption of the plan by City Council. There are several reasons way the plan needs to be adopted by City Council. One reason is it is a federal regulation from HUD. The second reason is the it will be used for more than the allocations of CDBG dollars.

It is our intentions (the community and staff) to have the Plan completed and adopted by City Council by the being of the CDBG funding cycle which starts in late September or early October of 1999.

APPENDIX “A”

(Example of some of the collected data)

Citizen Participation

The City of Burlington is proud of its commitment to citizen directed planning. Burlington's commission form of government is very conducive to citizen involvement as departments are governed by appointed citizen boards. In addition to citizen commissions, each of the City's wards has a Neighborhood Planning Assembly (NPA). The NPAs are used extensively by city departments to present projects and policies, and to receive input in the decision making process. NPAs meet regularly to identify neighborhood needs and develop strategies to address those needs. Each NPA also receives a portion of the City's annual CDBG allocation to implement those strategies as the neighborhood sees best. In addition, NPAs have the opportunity to review and comment on all major city planning documents. The City also sponsors various planning retreats, numerous public meetings and public hearings to solicit input from the public on the policy issues that affect their lives.

As stated earlier, the 1995 Burlington Consolidated Plan has been coordinated with two, closely related, major local planning efforts developed in the past year with considerable community involvement: *Common Ground - A Strategic Plan for the Old North End Enterprise Community* and *Jobs and People III - Towards a Sustainable Economy*. In developing the Consolidated Plan the City built upon the citizen participation from the other planning documents and supplemented the process with additional community input. The process for developing this 1995 Burlington Consolidated Plan was consistent with the Citizen Participation Plan for the City of Burlington as adopted by the Burlington City Council on January 23, 1995 (SEE APPENDIX II). In addition to the participation required by the Citizen Participation Plan, CEDO staff consulted with numerous housing, social service and economic development agencies and individuals to identify needs and priorities for the city's Consolidated Plan.

For a copy of the Citizen Participation Plan for the Consolidated Plan, as adopted by the Burlington City Council, see Appendix II.

APPENDIX I

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN as adopted by the Burlington City Council on January 23, 1995.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN FOR THE CITY OF BURLINGTON

as required by 24 CFR Subpart B

The City of Burlington, through its Community and Economic Development Office (CEDO) strongly encourages the participation of citizens of the City of Burlington in its Consolidated Plan for the Community Development Block Grant Program and HOME Program. The elements of the Citizen Participation Plan as required by 24 CFR Part 91 are as follows:

A. Citizens will be notified about the consolidated plan. CEDO will make a concerted effort to notify citizens, agencies and organizations of the development of the consolidated plan, substantial amendments to the plan, and the availability of CDBG, HOME and other Federal HUD funds. This will be done by letters, flyers and public notices in the newspaper. In addition, CEDO will notify the chairpersons, steering committees and coordinators of the Neighborhood Planning Assemblies (NPA's are semi-autonomous, grassroots organizations which exist in each of the City's seven Wards whereby citizens can discuss issues concerning their Wards, neighborhoods and City programs. Wards Four and Seven have a joint NPA.) 24 CFR § 91.105 (a)(2).

B. Citizens will be Provided with Information.

1. Workshops will be held. Workshops will be held at various and convenient times to inform and educate citizens on the development of the consolidated plan, amendments to the plan and the availability of funds.

a. Applicants for CDBG funds will be notified about any changes to the CDBG program or the CDBG allocation process as a result of the consolidated plan, the amount of funding available, changes in Federal CDBG rules and regulations, or changes in the City's

criteria for selection. 24 CFR § 91.105 (i).

b. Applicants for HOME funds will be notified about any changes to the HOME program or the HOME allocation process as a result of the consolidated plan, the amount of funding available, changes in Federal HOME rules and regulations, or changes in the City's criteria for selection. 24 CFR § 91.105 (i).

2. Before the City of Burlington adopts the consolidated plan, the City will make available to citizens, public agencies and other interested parties information that includes the amount of assistance the City expects to receive and the range of activities that may be undertaken. 24 CFR § 91.105 (b)(1).

3. **The proposed consolidated plan, substantial amendments to the plan and performance reports will be published for comment.** The City will provide all citizens with not less than 30 days to comment on the consolidated plan, and not less than 15 days to comment on any substantial amendments to the plan and any performance reports before their submission to HUD. A summary of the proposed plan, substantial amendment or performance report will be published in one or more newspapers of general circulation, and copies will be available at the Fletcher Library, at CEDO and at other specified locations. The published summary will describe the contents and purpose of the plan, substantial amendment or performance report and will include a list of locations where copies of the entire proposal can be reviewed. 24 CFR §91.105 (b)(2), (c)(2), (d)(1).

4. **Citizens will be appraised of the progress of the consolidated plan.** CEDO will regularly communicate with citizens and applicants for HUD funds, particularly the NPA's. NPA representatives of the Advisory Group will be encouraged to communicate with the NPA's on the progress of the Advisory Committee. 24 CFR §91.105 (a)(2)(iii)

5. **Citizens will be Provided with Access to Information.** The City, through CEDO, will provide citizens, public agencies and other interested parties with reasonable and timely access to information and records relating to the City's consolidated plan and the City's use of funds under the CDBG and HOME programs during the preceding five years. 24 CFR § 91.105 (h).

C. Citizens will Be Provided with Technical Assistance. CEDO will provide technical assistance to all applicants with special efforts to assist the NPA's in the development of their applications for funding, particularly those NPA's which are predominately low and moderate income neighborhoods. CEDO will also provide the NPA's with staff support to

coordinate the activities of the NPA's. Citizens, through the NPA's, will be encouraged to discuss the various activities funded by Community Development Block Grants, HOME grants and other Federal HUD programs. 24 CFR §91.105 (i).

D. Citizens will be Encouraged to Participate through the Advisory Group. Following the same CDBG citizen participation process that has been in place for over a decade, CEDO will form an advisory group to make recommendations to the Mayor and City Council on the allocation of CDBG funds. The group will be comprised 13 voting members and 3 *ex officio* members, representing a broad cross section of the Burlington community and will include:

1. Members (3) of the City Council Community Development Committee as *ex officio* members.
2. Representative (1) of the United Way of Chittenden County
3. Representative (1) of the State of Vermont.
4. Representative (2) of the City of Burlington appointed by the Mayor.
5. One Representative (7) from each of the City's 6 NPA's, except the Wards 4 and 7 NPA will appoint a representative from both Wards 4 and 7. Low and moderate income residents are encouraged to participate in the selection of proposals for funding through the Advisory Committee through the NPA's. Representatives of the NPA's are selected by the NPA itself.
6. Representative (1) of the Burlington's Human Right's Council.
7. Representative (1) of Burlington's Advisory Committee on Accessibility.
8. Representative (1) of Burlington's Enterprise Community Steering Committee.

24 CFR § 91.105 (a)(2).

E. Citizens Views will be Solicited.

1. The City will hold at least two public hearings during the year to obtain citizens' views about community development needs, development of proposed activities and review of program performance. At least one public hearing will be held before the consolidated plan is published for comment to obtain the views of citizens on housing and community development needs, including priority nonhousing community development needs. 24 CFR §91.105 (e)(1).

2. The City will ensure adequate public notice before each public hearing, with sufficient information published about the subject of the hearing to permit informed comment. Public hearings will be announced in the newspaper, on public access television and by posting flyers around the city. Citizens will be notified of the public hearings at least two weeks before they are held. 24 CFR §91.105 (e)(2).

3. The City will hold all public hearings at times and locations convenient to potential and actual beneficiaries, and accommodations will be made for people with disabilities. All hearings will be held in accessible locations and sign language interpreters will be made available upon request. 24 CFR §91.105 (e)(3).

F. The City will Provide Timely Answers to Written Comments and Complaints.

1. The City will consider any comments or views of citizens received in writing, or orally at public hearings in preparing the final consolidated plan, substantial amendments to the plan or performance reports. A summary of these comments or views shall be attached to the final consolidated plan, substantial amendment or performance report. 24 CFR §91.105 (j).

2. Where practicable, the City will respond to written complaints within 15 working days. 24 CFR §91.105 (j).

G. Non-English Speaking Residents. The City will provide verbal interpretation for non-English speaking citizens that participate. 24 CFR §91.105 (e)(4).

H. Amendments to the Consolidated Plan.

1. The City shall amend its approved plan whenever it makes one of the following decisions:

a. To make a substantial change in allocation priorities or a substantial change in the method of distribution of funds;

b. To carry out an activity, using funds from any program covered by the consolidated plan (including program income) not previously described in the action plan; or

c. To substantially change the purpose, scope, location, or beneficiaries of an activity.

24 CFR §91.105 (c)(1).

2. **Substantial change.** A substantial change in the City's Consolidated Plan shall be defined as a change in a planned or actual activity proposed after the official adoption of the Consolidated Plan which affects 5% or more of the City of Burlington's current annual allocation of CDBG or 10% or more of the City of Burlington's current annual allocation of HOME funds. 4 CFR §91.105 (b)(7).

I. Displacement. The City of Burlington will minimize displacement of persons and assist any persons displaced in accordance with the City of Burlington's Home Improvement Program- Displacement and Relocation Policy which is currently in effect.

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SECTION I. BACKGROUND TO THE PRESENT CITIZEN PARTICIPATION STRUCTURE

During the spring and summer of 1974, several community meetings were held by the Oakland Redevelopment agency staff, City staff, and OCCUR to determine--jointly with citizens and neighborhood groups--how citizens of Oakland could most effectively participate in planning, implementing, and evaluating Community Development Program activities.

The community meetings concluded with the designation by the city Council of the seven Community Development District Boards as the official citizen participation structure for the Community Development Program. (See the diagram on Page I-3 in this Section). Each district board has a set of bylaws setting forth its purpose and function. All boards hold regular open, public meetings. Recommendations made by the seven individual district boards are forwarded to the Council of Seven/CD District Chairpersons. The functions of the Council of Seven/CD District Chairpersons are:

"...to advise the CDAC/EDAC, Mayor and City Council, on all matters relating to the City's Community Development Programs and Economic Development Programs, particularly as these programs affect the housing, economic and social development of the City; and,

to formulate recommendations and plans for the efficient allocation of Community Development and Economic Development funds and for the effective operation of program activities carried out through these funds." (1)

1) Rules and Procedures for the Conduct of Business by the Council of Seven/CD District Chairpersons

Recommendations from the Council of Seven regarding housing and neighborhood development of the City are forwarded to the CDAC. Recommendations relating to economic development matters are forwarded to the EDAC. The functions of the CDAC are:

"...to advise the Mayor, City Council, and Redevelopment Agency on all matters relating to the City's Community Development Program, particularly as this program affects the housing and social development of the City;

to formulate policy recommendations and plans for the efficient allocation of Community Development funds and for the effective operation of program activities carried out through these funds;

to conduct investigations and make reports as requested by the Mayor, Council, Redevelopment Agency, and/or the City Manager, and Administrator of the Redevelopment Agency; and

to perform such other related duties and functions as the City Council, Redevelopment Agency, City Manager and/or the Administrator of the Redevelopment Agency may from time to time direct." (2)

The functions of the EDAC are:

"...to study, investigate, and research into economic development matters in the City of Oakland; and

to provide advice and recommendations on economic development programs in the City." (3)

Recommendations from the CDAC and EDAC are forwarded to the City Council. OCCUR, as the facilitator of Citizen Participation for the Community Development Program, relates at all of the above levels.

2) Rules and Procedures for the Conduct of Business by the Community Development Advisory Commission

3) Ordinance NO. 9588 C.M.S.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN STRUCTURE*

CITIZENS

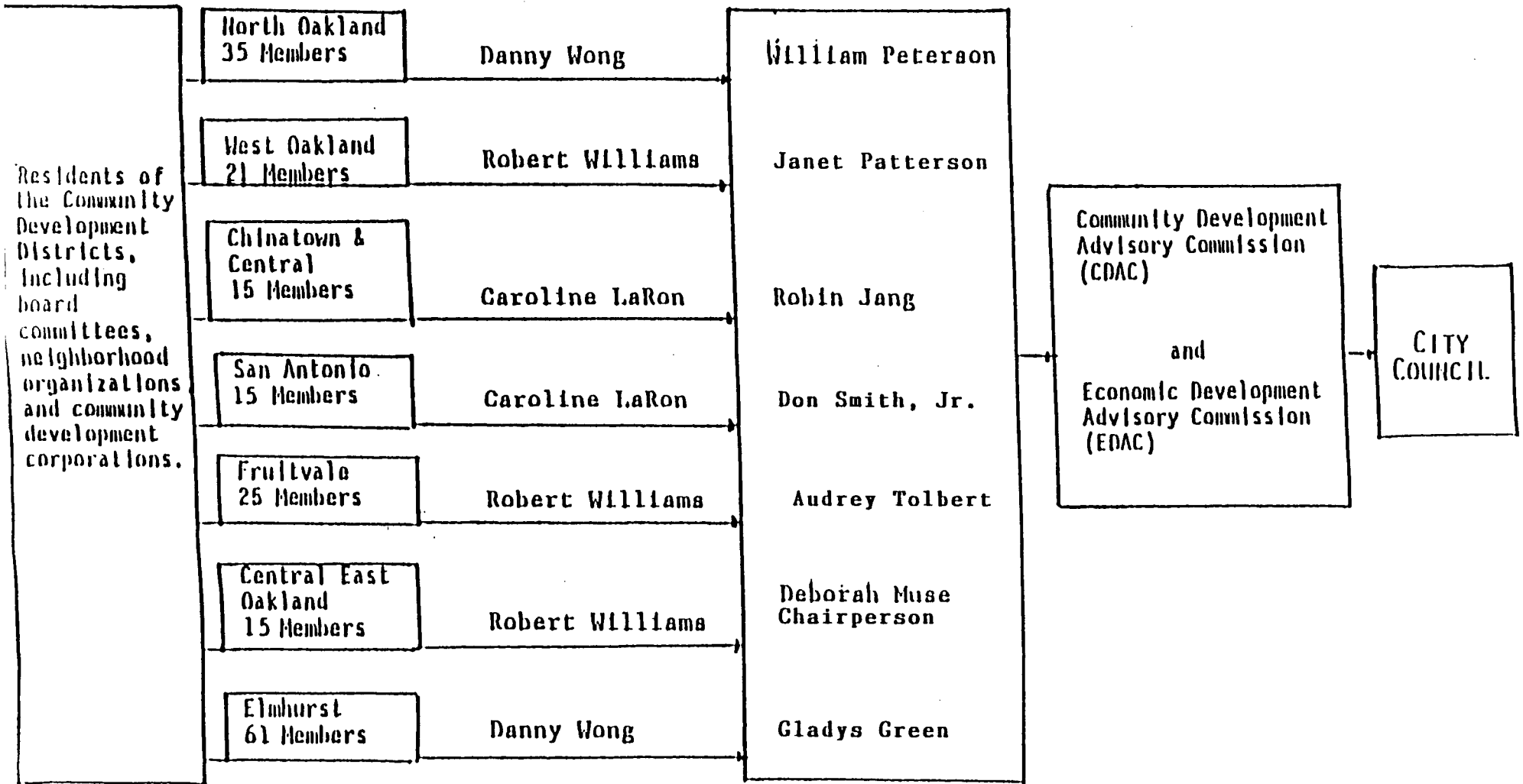
DISTRICT BOARDS

DISTRICT COORDINATORS

COUNCIL OF SEVEN/CD
DISTRICT CHAIRPERSONS

COMMISSIONS

COUNCIL



*AOCUR, as the officially recognized Citywide participation facilitator, relates at all levels.

SECTION II. PARTICIPATION SERVICES PROVIDED BY CITY STAFF

The Department of Program Planning and Community Services (PPCS) in the Office of Housing and Neighborhood Development (OHND) provides on-going citizen participation services to the seven Community Development (CD) Districts through three District Coordinators. This department is also responsible for coordinating preparation of the annual grant application to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and for providing technical assistance to CD Districts and to other City departments.

By combining these functions in one department, Oakland has created a unique Community Development Program. As detailed on the following pages, the District Coordinators have three basic kinds of tasks:

Citizen Participation Services: working with District Boards, individual citizens and neighborhood groups.

Program Development Services: recommending activities to be funded and formulating new programs.

Project Administration/Implementation Services for:
neighborhood projects

Summary of District Coordinator Functions

District Board and Citizen Services

- * Advising district boards & board committees.
- * Providing monthly status reports.
- * Arranging & attending meetings of boards, committees & neighborhood groups & relaying their recommendations to City staff.
- * Responding to numerous telephone calls on CD programs, housing needs, & district problems.
- * On site investigation of citizen complaints regarding district problems.
- * Counselling boards on the CDBG Application process.
- * "Troubleshooting" & reconciling community disagreements over CD funded activities.
- * Preparing correspondence & recommendations at the request of the board.
- * Translating for non-English speaking citizens.

Program Development

- * Developing strategies for carrying out CD goals.
- * Researching the feasibility of proposed CD activities.
- * Recommending new programs & improvements to existing programs.
- * Drafting sections of the annual CDBG programs.
- * Recommending project budgets.
- * Assisting in securing supplemental (non-CD) programs and funding.
- * Promoting interdepartmental communication to serve district citizens.
- * Assembling information about CD projects for citizens, staff, & Council review.

Project Administration/ Implementation

- * Preparing acquisition & development schedules for public improvements.
- * Coordinating citizen involvement in determining scope and design of neighborhood projects
- * Participating in consultant and contractor selections.
- * Resolving delays in project execution.
- * Coordinating funding requests and contract implementation with public services agencies
- * Arranging supplemental funds & program revisions when faced with project cost overruns.
- * Outreach - community awareness.

APPENDIX "B"

**THE CITY OF WILMINGTON'S
CITIZENS PARTICIPATION PLAN
DEVELOPMENT
COMMITTEE**

Kemo Jabbar-Bey	NPC Leader/Community Leader
Maria Matos	NPC Leader/E.D. of CBO
Lance Bruce	NPC Leader/Community Leader
Chris Dolley	NPC Leader/Minister
Greer A. Peacock	Staff-Department of Planning
Keith Booker	Staff-Department of Planning
Roslind Kotz	Staff-Department of Real Estate and Housing

APPENDIX “C”

**THE SUSTAINMENT OF THE CITY OF
WILMINGTON'S
NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING COUNCILS
WILMINGTON, DELAWARE**

**GREER A. PEACOCK
NEW HAMPSHIRE COLLEGE
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS
COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
GRADUATE PROGRAM
DAVID MILLER- ADVISOR**

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BACKGROUND

The City of Wilmington is known as the corporate capital of the world, with over half of the Fortune 500 companies calling the downtown business district home. According to the 1990 census, the city has a population of 71,526 residents. Of this population, 58% are black, and 7.09% are Hispanics. The remaining balances of the population are either white or other minorities. The downtown business district has a stable and growing economic base with job growth, and absorption of office rental space. While the City's business district flourishes with economic growth, the surrounding neighborhoods are underdeveloped and distressed. These communities suffer from low incomes, high unemployment and underemployment. The majority of their residents are living below the poverty level. They also suffer from physical blight, deterioration, and high crime.

The City's Department of Planning and Development has divided the city into thirteen (13) analysis areas (neighborhoods). Approximately six of these neighborhoods, have been designated, as Federal Enterprise Community (E-C). E-C has an average poverty rate of 31.3 percent and an average unemployment rate of 14.4 percent. In addition to the E-C zone, the city has been designated a federal Weed and Seed Area. The Weed and Seed area is composed of four (4) of the city's analysis areas. The City received its Weed and Seed designation in 1992. This area was chosen because it historically has been the city's highest crime and drug-infested neighborhoods. One of the city's neighborhoods is located in both the E-C and the Weed and Seed areas. These distressed communities are in dire need of strong economic and community development polices. They also need concepts and plans to reduce the overwhelming problems and to improve their quality of life.

HISTORY

In 1981 Wilmington's City Council passed an ordinance authorizing the creation of Neighborhood Planning Advisory Committees. The purpose of the committees was to provide advisory information and suggestions regarding housing, traffic volume, and patterns, zoning and land use planning to the Planning Department, the Planning Commission, the Commission on Minority Affairs and to the Mayor and City Council. In 1984, the City of Wilmington elected a new Mayor. Under this administration the Neighborhood Planning Advisory Committees was not a priority and allowed the ordinance to lapse.

Mayor James H. Sills, Jr. was elected the City's first black Mayor in 1992 and was re-elected in 1996. One of the Mayor's goals and visions is for the City's neighborhoods to become empowered and to help plan, develop and implement programs and initiatives that will revitalize their communities in conjunction with city government. With this vision in mind, the Mayor established the Neighborhood Planning Councils as a community-based initiative with the City of Wilmington's Department of Planning and Development. The Mayor's charge to the Neighborhood Planning Councils was to provide leadership in concert with the City's administration in initiating a community-wide planning process to address the physical, social, and economic needs of their community. Once their neighborhood plans are completed, the Neighborhood Planning Councils will work with the City's administration to promote the goals of the plan. In August of 1998, through the urging of the Neighborhood Planning Council leadership, City Council passed another ordinance amending the original 1981 ordinance. This new ordinance called for the creation of the Neighborhood Planning Councils whose functions are the same as the advisory committee.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

If no solution is found then . . . by the year 2001, the City of Wilmington's community-based planning process will not exist and 100% of the city's residents will not be able to have input into city government

ASSESSMENT

History has shown that the city of Wilmington has made two attempts to establish a vehicle by which city residents can have input into city government. The first attempt was in 1981 and the second was in 1992. What happened between 1981 and 1992 is the major thrust of the problem. Between those years, there was a change in the city's administration. With the change came a shift in priorities. Citizens' participation was not a goal or vision of the new administration. Then in 1992 with another new administration, citizen participation was once again a priority. The next mayoral election will be in November 2000. The new administration (if there is one) will start in January 2001. If there is a change in administrations what will happen to the Neighborhood Planning Councils? What can be done to maintain the existence in the new administration?

GOAL STATEMENT

To develop a strong action plan that would allow for the sustainment of the City of Wilmington's Neighborhood Planning Councils beyond the present administration. This plan would include the community, Mayor, City Council, all city department heads, and employees.

The City of Wilmington has developed a positive working relationship with its neighborhoods. Through this relationship, the city accepts the advice and responds to information from the residents with respect to policies for land use, zoning, community development, welfare, public safety, and other areas as it relates to the future growth of the city. This relationship is rooted in the Neighborhood Planning Councils, and, without their sustainment, this relationship ends.

OBJECTIVE

This project would research other cities that have neighborhood-based planning initiatives. We would review and evaluate how cities with similar initiatives have been able to sustain them from one administration to another. A review committee will be established to review the different studies and develop an implementation plan for Wilmington. The committee will consist of staff, city council members and Neighborhood Planning Council members. If the project is successful, it will establish a mechanism by which the Neighborhood Planning Councils will have perpetual life.

The minimum objective was to have completed by December 1999, all research and review of data from other cities with long-term neighborhood-based planning programs.

The project objectives did not change over the year.

ACTIVITIES

The following activities were used to implement the project's objective:

- 1.** Collected data on other cities that have similar initiatives and how they have obtained sustainment. This was done mainly through the Internet.
- 2.** Identified and recruited members for the committee to develop the citizen's participation plan. Members were recruited from the Neighborhood Planning Council Leadership.
- 3.** Worked on a strategy, along with the Neighborhood Planning Councils to develop a sustainment plan.
- 4.** Identified stakeholders whose commitment and buy-in were necessary for the plan to be successful.
- 5.** Worked with the staff of the City's Department of Real Estate and Housing with the consolidated planning process on the community level.
- 6.** Attended all meetings of the Neighborhood Planning Councils along with the consultants for the consolidated plan, citizen's participation plan and the neighborhood capital improvement projects.
- 7.** Worked with consultants to develop the agenda for the technical assistance workshop for the Neighborhood Planning Council's to assist them in the identification of capital projects for their community.
- 8.** The consultants requested (who were from another state) a tour of the city's neighborhoods prior to the Workshops. Therefore, I planned and coordinated a tour of the city of Wilmington with the community and the consultant team.

OUTCOMES

The project had two major outcomes. One was the completion of the updated Citizens Participation Plan for the allocation of Community Development Block Grant funds. Federal regulations require that every funding jurisdiction that receives Community Development Block Grants funds have a plan that described how the citizen will participate in the funding process. The Citizens Participation Plan was developed with the Neighborhood Planning Councils through the leadership committee in conjunction with the City's Department of Real Estate and Housing. The revised Citizen Participation Plan calls for an advisory committee made up of city residents, representatives from the Neighborhood Planning Councils, members of City Council, as well as, city staff. The committee will make funding allocation recommendations to City Council and the Mayor. This is the first time since the 1960's that the residents of Wilmington participated in the funding process for Community Development Block Grant Funds. Before the revised Plan, funding allocations were made by city staff, city council, and the Mayor. Additionally, when the city did hold a public hearing on the allocations the decisions had already been made.

The second outcome was the use of the Citizens Participation Plan to develop the City's Comprehensive Plan. Every five years, the City of Wilmington, is required to develop a comprehensive plan for the allocations of Community Development Block Grant money. For the first time there was input into the plan from a neighborhood level.

UNEXPECTED SUCCESS

The project has several unexpected outcomes over the year. One unexpected outcome was that the city of Wilmington has provided the Neighborhood Planning Councils with \$3.2 million to develop capital projects in their communities. These funds are being provided through the city bond funds. Each Neighborhood Planning Council will receive \$400,000. Wilmington's City Council passed two ordinances that had a great impact on the Neighborhood Planning Councils. They were:

1. **Ordinance # 99-119**, requires that any construction project more than \$250,000 that entirely or partially funded by the city has to be reviewed by the Neighborhood Planning Councils before the issued a building permit.
2. **Ordinance # 99-117**, provides each Neighborhood Planning Council with \$25,000 for police overtime.

FAILURES

The project had one major failure. This failure was the inability to get some consensus from all the Mayor's key staff member about the importance of the Neighborhood Planning Councils and community empowerment.

LESSONS LEARNED

The project taught me the following lessons:

- 1.** Empowerment is an educational process. To empower the community, the residents need to know what empowerment and how it can benefit them and their community.
- 2.** In the city of Wilmington, the need for education goes beyond the community. It extends to the city's administration
- 3.** Empowerment is an ongoing process. Different communities are at different levels, and cannot be empowered at the same time. Additionally, there are different stages of empowerment and education has to be one step at a time.
- 4.** The role of politics in community empowerment. Several members of the Mayor's staff do not believe in his vision, and use their influences with the Mayor to try to block any empowering or neighborhood planning efforts.

ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED

There were two major organizations involved in this project the City of Wilmington and the Neighborhood Planning Councils.

There are eight Neighborhood Planning Councils in the City of Wilmington whose boundaries are coterminous with the City council boundaries lines. The Neighborhood Planning Councils are comprised of representatives from civic associations, block clubs, social service agencies, community development corporations, churches and merchants.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

There was community participation on several levels. The first level was the development of the Citizen's Participation Plan. A committee was created that consisted of staff from the city's Department of Planning and Development's Community Outreach Unit and the Department of Real Estate and Housing's Community Development Unit, along with members from the Neighborhood Planning Council leadership committee. The committee drafted the plan and it was reviewed by the Neighborhood Planning Council leadership and the members of the Neighborhood Planning Councils. After the review was completed and adjustments made by the Neighborhood Planning Councils, the Citizen's Participation Plan was released to the general public for comments.

The second level of community participation was the development of the Consolidated Plan. For the first time, the city had a neighborhood perspective and resident input into the plan. In the past, the Consolidated Plan was an in-house document written by the program manager for Community Development Block Grant. This year a team of consultants was hired by the City's Department of Real Estate and Housing to write the plan. Each of the eight Neighborhood Planning Councils had two special meetings to discuss community issues and concerns. With the assistance of the consultants the Neighborhood Planning Councils then prioritized their needs. Each of the eight Neighborhood Planning Councils will have a report (a mini-neighborhood plan) that they can use to develop their community. Each of these reports will be a part off the overall

Consolidated Plan.

The third was the \$3.2 million provided by the City of Wilmington for each Neighborhood Planning Council to develop capital improvement projects in their neighborhoods. Each of the eight Neighborhood Planning Councils will receive \$400,000 to plan and implement their projects. The Neighborhood Planning Councils have been engaged in a planning process to develop projects for the funds. The Department of Planning and Development's Community Outreach Unit hired consultants to work with Neighborhood Planning Councils in the development of their projects. The consultants held a two-day workshop which included a bus tour of the city. The tour was conducted by representatives of the eight Neighborhood Planning Councils. Although city staff was on the tour, they were merely passengers on the bus and not participants in the neighborhood discussions. On January 31, 2000, each of the eight Neighborhood Planning Councils will submit a comprehensive work plan that will spell out in detail how these funds will be used.

PROJECT SUPPORT

This project and the Neighborhood Planning Councils are supported by the following:

1. Citizens of the City of Wilmington
2. The Mayor
3. The Department of Planning and Development-Community Outreach Unit
4. Members of the City of Wilmington's City Council

CONCLUSION

Various cities across the country have had some type of citizen participation committees that have existed for ten years or more. Some cities have established these committees through a citizen Participation Plan, for example: Birmingham Alabama; and Oakland, California. Some cities have accomplished their citizen input through city council resolutions such as Semi Valley, California; and Seattle, Washington. Other cities, like New York City, have integrated its citizens' participation into the city's charter. Whichever way these committees were established, many have been functioning since 1974. It is my hope that twenty years from now the City of Wilmington will have maintained their Neighborhood Planning Councils. The City of Wilmington has both legislation and a Citizen's Participation Plan, but is this enough to sustain the Neighborhood Planning Councils in the future? History, in the City of Wilmington, has shown that ordinances alone were not enough to maintain citizen participation from one administration to another. It may take stronger legislation such as changes in the city charter to ensure the continuation of the Neighborhood Planning Councils.

In November 2000, the residents of the City of Wilmington will be going to the polls to elect a mayor who will govern the city over the next four years. How the citizens of Wilmington

choose to pull the lever on election day will have an impact on the existence of the Neighborhood Planning Councils. If the residents of the city choose to retain its present administration, then the Neighborhood Planning Councils have four more years to strengthen their hold and maintain sustainment. If the voters choose to elect a new mayor, it will really test what has been accomplished during this project.

RECOMMENDATIONS

I would make the following recommendations to continue to help sustain the Neighborhood Planning Councils:

1. Continue to examine other cities in the country to see how they have been able to maintain their community initiative.
2. If the present mayor is re-elected, there will be a need to ensure that the Mayor's key staff shares his vision about community involvement.
3. Provide training to the Neighborhood Planning Councils to strengthen and build capacity.
4. Provide training to the Mayor's key staff in the area of citizens participation.
5. Clearly define the role and responsibilities of the Neighborhood Planning Councils. Presently, the councils are torn between being advisory committees and developers.

NEXT STEPS

I think that the city needs to explore the possibility of establishing an office of neighborhoods/citizen participation, etc. as they have in Seattle, Washington and Portland, Oregon.