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# 4

## The Community Development Process

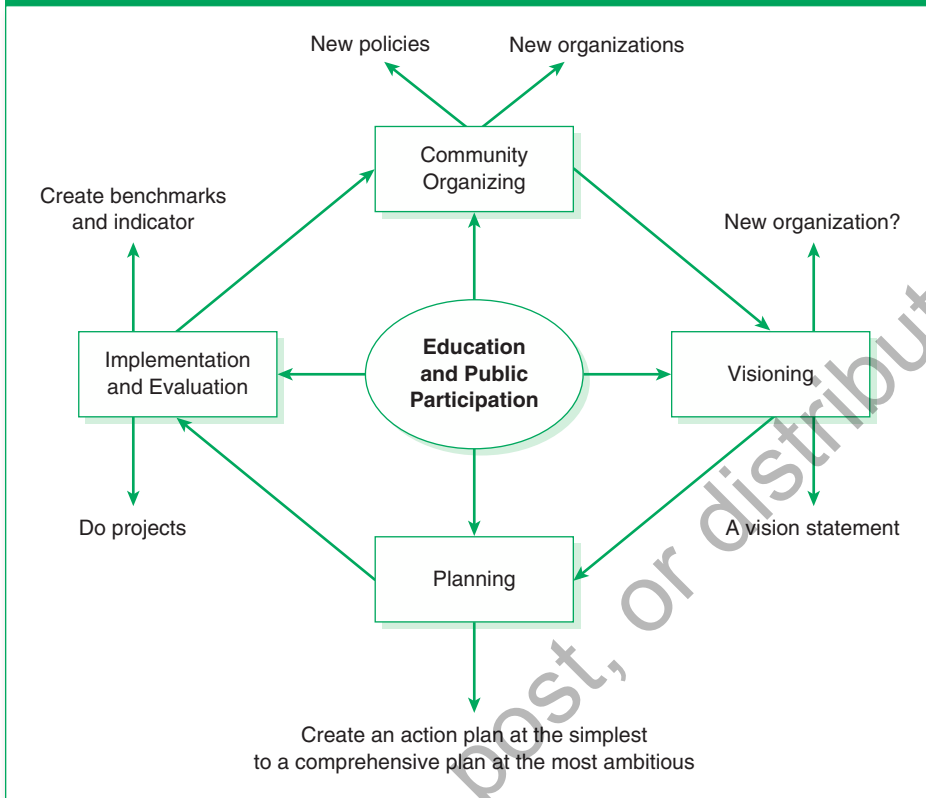
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The community development process can be difficult, time-consuming, and costly. Community residents often are more concerned with daily tasks than thinking about, and coming up with, a vision of their community's future. Residents want their children 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 have 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 process we present in this chapter follows the model in Figure 4.1. The model shows a process that begins with **community organizing** and moves on to visioning, planning, and finally implementation and evaluation. While we believe this model captures the essential components of the community development process, we recognize that many practitioners will vary their approach, depending on resources, timing, or the community context. This is where the “art” of community development comes into play. Practitioners need to be able to adjust the process to meet the needs of the community.

There continues to be 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. The experience of participating in local issues will build that capacity of residents to handle future issues. 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. Thus, it is more important to provide new affordable housing options or create new jobs than it is to provide residents with opportunities to participate in the activities. We do not believe this debate is very useful today. Community

**Figure 4.1** A Community Development Process

development requires a process of public participation, but it also must focus on producing tangible results if it is to be successful. We focus our discussion 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 several topics: community organizing, public participation, planning models, techniques and process steps, and community-based research techniques. In the first section of this chapter, we discuss community organizing.

## 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), 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 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).

Community-based organizations (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 4.1). Some tactics are nonviolent yet illegal and represent a form of civil disobedience (Rubin & Rubin, 2008).

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 5 for 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 (Chapter 11).

In this next section, we move from a discussion of community organizing to public participation. Here we are especially interested in identifying various forms of public participation.

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## Public Participation

More than 100 years ago, Alexis de Tocqueville (1904) 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. He concluded that these aspects of civil society were critical to the functioning of a democratic society. 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 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 effect 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.

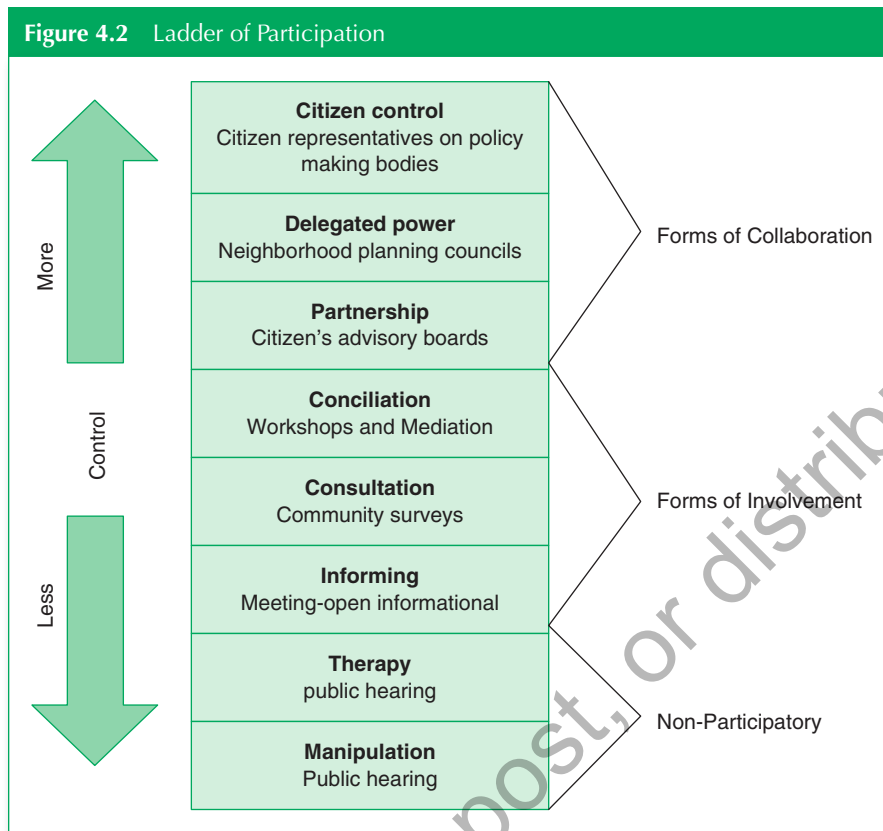
There are at least four types of public participation: **public action**, **public involvement**, **electoral participation**, and **obligatory participation** (Langton, 1978). By examining these differences, we can better understand the community development process and its relationship to and use by 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. This type of public participation is growing, however, and can have a meaningful impact on the quality of life and may ultimately lead to a community-initiated effort. Electoral participation is probably the most limited form of participation as it focuses just on the act of voting.

In the community development process model (Figure 4.1), 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. This (See Figure 4.2) 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. The next three rungs illustrate forms of involvement: informing, consultation, and conciliation. 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 forms of collaboration: 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 the 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 on 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



**SOURCE:** From “A Ladder of Citizen Participation,” *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 35, 216-224. Copyright 1969. Reprinted with permission of The American Planning Association (<http://www.planning.org>).

funding and reporting require a professional staff (see Chapter 5). 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 community 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. People may become engaged because a friend or a neighbor is involved in the project. Thus, these social relationships can be a valuable mechanism for encouraging others to participate in a local organization or project.

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 fundraising 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. Youth may be interested in gaining experience at some activity. Retired residents may be seeking opportunities to use skills or experiences they have gained over time.

Once individuals are involved in an organization, it can be important to sustain their involvement. Nepstad (2004) examined the factors that sustained individuals' commitment to participate, particularly as activists. She identified ways an organization can reinforce commitment, which included establishing emotional ties to leaders, practices that intensified an individual's identity with the organization and with the purpose, and tasks for each individual involved. The role of the leader is an important ingredient to attracting and retaining members.

Although time is cited frequently as the primary reason for lack of participation, it is rarely the real issue. Lack of communication, particularly with leaders, and infrequent actions are two barriers to long-term participation (Nepstad, 2004). 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 that 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. Technology is facilitating communication in many neighborhoods and can be used in a variety of ways. Setting up a neighborhood Facebook page provides up-to-date information on activities in the area. This strategy may be limited in many concentrated poverty neighborhoods and rural areas. Nothing beats face-to-face communication. It may have a more powerful influence on getting people motivated to participate in community events.

Residents also need to see real, direct benefits to participation and that activities are having an impact. Thus, it is important for community



organizers to identify small projects where they can demonstrate success with the community. The community can build off these successes and tackle bigger issues.

Understanding why people do and do not participate in a community development process can help 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 4.1, 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.

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## Planning Models, Techniques, and Process Steps

Beginning with the Housing Act of 1954, a debate began about the purpose of public participation and how it was to be included in decision-making processes of local, state, and federal governments (Glass, 1979; 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.



**Table 4.1** Public Participation Techniques and Their Functions

<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</i>	<i>Facilitate Advocacy</i>	<i>Promote Interaction Among Groups</i>	<i>Resolve Conflict</i>	<i>Plan Program</i>	<i>Change Attitudes Toward Government</i>	<i>Develop Support/Minimize Opposition</i>
Arbitration and mediation planning	X							X		X	X			
Citizens advisory board	X			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							
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. Langton, 1978 (pp. 109–122). Lexington, MA: Lexington Books. Reprinted with permission.

## 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 focuses 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 (1) it is impossible to analyze everything at once, (2) “wicked” problems cannot be addressed (Rittel & Webber, 1973), (3) it cannot react swiftly, (4) it is based on assumptions of growth and thus cannot deal effectively with decline or stagnation (Beauregard, 1978), (5) it is based on past trends and forecasting that prove to be inaccurate, and (6) 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). Although comprehensive-rational planning has several weaknesses, it still forces residents to consider the interconnections between various elements of a community.

## Advocacy Planning

Paul Davidoff (1973) promoted a new model of planning, “Planning Aid,” in the 1960s, 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 multiple 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. 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, many 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 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 following 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 and interests. 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 multidisciplinary 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).

## Appreciative Inquiry

**Appreciative inquiry** has a great deal in common with asset-based community development. In the context of community development, appreciative inquiry refers to a process of identifying the strengths and successes that exist in the community. The process was adopted widely by organizations in the 1980s and was adopted in community practice in the 1990s. The appreciative cycle usually consists of the 4Ds: (1) the *discovery* phase focuses on identifying accomplishments in the community and analyzing what factors contributed to the success, (2) the *dream* phase requires residents to envision how they could build on these successes to improve the quality of life in their community, (3) the *design* stage involves residents in developing strategies to accomplish goals that were identified in the dream stage; and (4) the final phase is *destiny*, which involves continuous learning and adjusting to carry out the goals.

## 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 a 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 basic advantage of visioning is that it allows for an expansive, innovative, and proactive future orientation. The visioning process helps residents focus on actions 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. 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.

### BOX 4.1 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).

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 4.2). The process requires a substantial commitment by local residents and an ongoing role for facilitation. It can be accomplished in a few meetings or as long as a year. 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 places 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 can come after there is some agreement on the direction the community should take and the issues the community is facing.

For some excellent examples of case studies using the visioning processes, see the website (<http://www.epa.gov/greenkit/index.htm>) maintained by the Environmental Protection Agency: Green Communities. Many of these case studies are small towns that have been experiencing decline over the past few decades. These case studies demonstrate how visioning can be implemented in these different contexts.

**Table 4.2** 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 subareas.
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	Community feedback workshop Development of action plans	Each task force should prepare action plans based on agreed-on 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, and Stephen Halebsky. University of Wisconsin Extension, Cooperative Extension, Madison, WI, 2000. Reprinted with permission.

#### **CASE STUDY 4.1 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,

*(Continued)*

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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, who have 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 re-create 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.

**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.

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**NOTE:** The coauthor, Anna Haines, worked with the Town of Star Prairie and the community planning department, which was the basis for this case study.

**Timing and Momentum**

One of the issues that communities may face is 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 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). One of the keys to maintaining momentum is establishing timelines or deadlines for various activities. It is also important to establish responsibility for specific activities. Who will be responsible for carrying out the activities and who ensures that the goals are achieved? Typically, organizations need to set up future meetings to check on the progress of the projects. These meetings are also a good opportunity to identify any additional resources that may be needed to successfully carry out the activities.

## 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 4.1 is a vision statement from one community.

In Table 4.3, 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.

## 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

**Table 4.3** Types of Participants

<i>Economic Sectors</i>	<i>Organizations</i>	<i>Government</i>	<i>Personal Factors</i>	<i>Political Views</i>
Agriculture, forestry, and fishing	Art and culture	Elected officials	Race/ethnicity	Conservative/ liberal/ independent
Wholesale construction	Education	Planning department	Age	Pro-growth/ anti-growth
Manufacturing	Civic	Natural resources	Sex	
Transportation and utilities	Unions	Transportation	Home ownership	
Finance, insurance, and real estate	Youth	Housing	Children	
Services	Neighborhood	Education	Length of residence	
Tourism	Social service agencies	Economic development		
Media	Health care	Workforce development		
Business type—size, ownership	Environmental	Regional planning		
	Recreation			

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

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. 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.

In most visioning processes, the specific goals should be tied directly to the vision statement that has been developed earlier in the process. The goals usually reflect the top priorities that have been identified by participants. These goals and objectives help establish the connections between the vision statement and the specific activities that the community will undertake to achieve that vision.

### 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 4.2, we provide a description of the types of information needed to prepare an action plan.

#### BOX 4.2 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? 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 do they 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 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, or improved social networks among residents. It is often 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.

It is preferable 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 baseline. 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.

Monitoring and evaluation are important parts of a community development process. And, for each step in the process, organizers and facilitators often need to conduct background research. For monitoring and evaluation, for example, it is often useful to identify a set of indicators to measure progress. Thus, while the above few sections focused on several steps in the community development process, this next section discusses several types of research techniques to use within a process.

## Community-Based Research Techniques

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 several techniques.

### *Community Indicators*

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 providing 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.

There are a number of methods of measurement. One of the most popular methods, because of its ease of use, participatory approach, and accessibility, is community indicators. Many organizations and websites promote the use of indicators to measure and evaluate community initiatives. The purpose of these techniques is to help communities gather, sort, and analyze data with the purpose of making more informed choices.

Another technique is called ecological footprint analysis. This technique, developed by Wackernagel and Rees (1996), is an accounting tool for estimating resource consumption and waste assimilation requirements of a community, region, or nation. The authors examined Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, and found that the city needs “an area 19 times larger than its 4,000 square kilometers to support food production, forestry products, and energy consumption in the region” (Holtzman, 1999, p. 42). Individuals can measure their own ecological footprint using one of a number of websites. The general idea is to understand the amount of resources a community or individual is using on an annual basis. Indicators enable communities to measure progress toward sustainability.

There are many different frameworks within which to develop community indicators: domain based, goal based, sectoral, issue based, causal, and combination (Maclaren, 1996). A domain-based framework organizes indicators based on a conceptual framework. For sustainability indicators, often the three Es—environment, economy, and equity—are used as the conceptual framework. It allows for and accentuates the links among the three dimensions. Thus, using this kind of framework, one would develop indicators under each of the three dimensions. In contrast, a goal-based framework develops goals first. Then, for each goal, it develops indicators.

The sectoral framework is divided by the sectors that an institution, such as a local government, is responsible for maintaining. Typical sectors include housing, welfare, recreation, transportation, and economic development. The strength of this framework is that local government agencies and departments can better monitor their programs.

Issue-based frameworks are organized to contend with the issues of the day, such as urban sprawl, crime and safety, or job creation. The weakness of this framework is that the issues are bound to change over time, so the indicators can become irrelevant. The causal framework introduces the notion of cause and effect. Indicators may be difficult to establish, for example, given the complexity of social and ecological models and the policies that might affect them.



Finally, a combination framework can combine two or more of the frameworks. The purpose is to overcome some of the weaknesses of one framework, while taking advantage of the strengths of each (Maclaren, 1996, pp. 190–194).

Choosing a framework and identifying indicators can be a long and intensive process. Many communities use a visioning process to help them establish a community vision, goals, and finally indicators. One way to select indicators is by brainstorming with all interested parties to identify an ideal set. Ways to narrow down a list of possible indicators include looking at data sources, investigating sources of help, and deciding what information is most useful. It is wise to monitor well a few key indicators that provide useful information, rather than monitor poorly a wide variety of indicators. Data may be available for certain indicators but not for others. An indicator that can be supported by available data may be more practical than one that requires extensive data gathering. Another way to narrow down a list of possible indicators is to use evaluation criteria. Box 4.3 provides a list of criteria for narrowing down an indicators list.

#### BOX 4.3 EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR POTENTIAL INDICATORS

- They reflect stakeholders' concerns.
- They are measurable.
- They are understandable.
- They are comparable and meaningful.
- Data are available to construct them.
- They are targetable and interpretable.
- They have a suitable geographic/temporal scale.
- They are timely and anticipatory.
- They are results oriented.
- They have long-range reliability.
- They are flexible.

#### *Community Assessments*

It is often useful to collect basic data on the community. The U.S. Census has easily accessible data both at a community-wide level and for larger cities; data are broken down to smaller levels (called block and tracts). Population counts, age, race, housing, occupation, industries, and many other variables are available. The American Community Survey (ACS) of the U.S. Census is a key source of data. It's available on an annual basis but is collected on a sample of the population and thus has statistical error; the decennial census is collected every 10 years. Many communities already have reports available. The United Way in many counties prepares a Community

Health Needs Assessment report. Many counties have a comprehensive or master plan that includes a chapter examining population and its growth, among many other variables, including housing and transportation.

### *Survey Research*

In many cases, communities begin the 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 the 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 community 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. At the outset, it's important to decide if statistically valid results matter. 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. Analysis also can be challenging as qualitative data demand time and knowledge for extracting relevant themes from the resulting data.

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, although 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. However, there are a number of advantages, including the use of random sampling, quantifying the results, and using statistical analysis.

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.

Increasingly, communities are using multiple techniques to conduct a survey. So, communities may begin with a mail survey and then contact nonrespondents through either a phone call or a face-to-face visit. This approach is obviously much more doable in small neighborhoods and where most residents have listed phone numbers.

Survey research is a valued technique for reaching community residents to obtain their ideas and suggestions. The quality of the data is largely dependent on how much effort goes into the design of the questionnaire and the response rate for the survey. Questions need to be designed to minimize the bias. The credibility of the entire project can be undermined by leading or biased questions. Similarly, every effort should be made to obtain the highest response rate possible. Communication about the purposes of the survey and how the data will be used is crucial.

### **Community Studies**

**Community studies** have a long history in sociology. One of the most well-known works is by Robert and Helen Lynd of Middletown. This husband

and wife team interviewed many people within one community and wrote two books based on their studies, one in 1929 and the next in 1937 (Crow, 2012). These studies are intensive analyses of life in a particular place. At least in part, community studies were inspired by the urban sociology work conducted at the University of Chicago, called the Chicago school. Many community studies were conducted in Britain as well, and an Institute for Community Studies was established. There were many critiques of the methods, including representativeness, and reliability and validity, which were largely ethnographic interviews and participant observation. Community studies is getting revitalized in part because of rethinking about methods and in part due to more sophisticated computer analysis such as the use of social network analysis (Crow, 2012).

### *Social Network Analysis*

**Social network analysis** (SNA) can be used as a research tool and for a CBO to understand the community within which it works. “A social network is social structure which consists of two elements: these are generally known as actors (nodes or points) and ties (sometimes referred to as links or relationships)” (Ennis & West, 2010, p. 408). SNA allows the researcher to map relationships between actors to see not only the structure of a network but where gaps are located. SNA can be done prior to and after a program intervention (pre- and posttest) as one form of evaluation. It’s also a visual representation of social networks that are appealing and potentially understandable to a wide audience. By using SNA, “communities are . . . able to not only create new stories about their strengths and achievement, but to understand how and where their assets can be most strategically mobilized in terms of addressing more structural issues” (Ennis & West, 2010, p. 412).

### *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.

One of the chief advantages of PAR is that communities own the research. They develop the goals, help collect the data, are involved in analyzing the data, and interpret the results. This level of participation by residents helps ensure that the research process is strongly connected to the visioning process and that the results will be used by participants.

## Summary and Conclusions

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In this chapter, we focused on the role of public participation in the community development process and presented visioning as a specific process used by a growing number of communities to guide their futures. The visioning process 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. We would be first to acknowledge that there are a wide variety of processes and tools that are used by community development practitioners. There is no single right method that will work in all communities at all times. As practitioners, we find ourselves adapting the process to different situations and contexts. The model we presented here simply represents a basic process that represents some of the common elements used by practitioners.

As we mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, 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	Ladder of public participation
Advocacy planning	Monitoring
Alinsky model	Obligatory participation
Appreciative inquiry	Outcomes
Boston model	Outputs
Community organizing	Participatory action research
Community studies	Public action
Comprehensive-rational planning	Public involvement
Electoral participation	Social network analysis
Evaluation	Strategic planning
Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) model	Survey research
	Visioning

## QUESTIONS

1. Why is public participation important in a community development effort?
2. What are the four types of public participation? What are some differences between these forms?
3. How do the types of public participation relate to the ladder of public participation?
4. What are the different organizing models and how do they differ?
5. Describe two of the planning models.

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.
10. Describe two of the community-based research techniques.

## 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?
4. Identify a neighborhood association with which to work. Work with the association in developing the goals of a survey and the appropriate method for collecting the data and/or attempt to conduct a social network analysis.

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## ADDITIONAL READINGS AND RESOURCES

### Readings

- Aspen Institute. (1996). *Measuring community capacity building: A workbook-in-progress for rural communities*. Washington, DC: Author.
- Bryson, J. M., & Alston, F. K. (1996). *Creating and implementing your strategic plan: A workbook for public and nonprofit organizations*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
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- Kaner, S. (1996). *Facilitator's guide to participatory decision-making*. Gabriola Island, British Columbia: New Society Publishers.
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- Leigh, N. G., & Blakely, E. J. (2013). *Planning local economic development: Theory & practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Lyons, T. S., & Hamlin, R. E. (2001). *Creating an economic development action plan: A guide for development professionals*. Westport, CT: Praeger.
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- North Central Regional Center for Rural Development. (2000). *Take charge: Participatory action planning for communities and organizations*. Ames, IA: Author.
- Rosener, J. (1978). Matching method to purpose: The challenges of planning citizen-participation activities. In S. Langton (Ed.), *Citizen participation in America: Essays on the state of the art* (pp. 109–122). Lexington, MA: Lexington Books.
- Stoecker, R. (2005). *Research methods for community change: A project-based approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Strand, K., Marullo, S., Cutforth, N., Stoecker, R., & Donohue, P. (2003). *Community-based research and higher education: Principles and practices*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

- Wackernagel, M., & Rees, W. (1996). *Our ecological footprint: Reducing human impact on the earth*. Gabriola Island, British Columbia, Canada: New Society Publishers.
- Whitney, D., & Trosten-Bloom, A. (2003). *The power of appreciative inquiry*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

### Websites

- Appreciative Inquiry Commons—<http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu>. A good general source of information on using appreciative inquiry.
- The Aspen Institute Policy Programs—[www.aspeninstitute.org](http://www.aspeninstitute.org). The Aspen Institute has a website 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](http://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.futuresearch.net](http://www.futuresearch.net). This website 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](http://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.
- Taos Institute—<http://www.taosinstitute.net>. The Taos Institute is an excellent resource for materials and training in the area of appreciative inquiry.

### Sites for Data and Tools

- American Factfinder—[factfinder2.census.gov](http://factfinder2.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 Action Partnership—<http://www.communityactioncna.org>. This website has an available online tool called the Comprehensive Community Needs Assessment (CCNA). The tool is free and provides selected basic information for an area, including demographic, education, employment, housing, income, health care, and nutrition.
- Community Development Practice—<http://www.comm-dev.org/publications/cd-practice>. This website, sponsored by the Community Development Society, provides innovative tools and techniques that can be used by practitioners.
- Community Economic Toolbox—[www.economictoolbox.geog.psu.edu](http://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 website supplies communities with basic economic tools, such as location quotients and shift share analyses.
- Community Toolbox—<http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents>. This website offers 46 chapters of step-by-step guidance on community-building skills. The toolbox includes chapters on community assessment, strategic and action planning, and leadership, among others.

Green Communities Toolkit: Environmental Protection Agency—<http://www.epa.gov/greenkit/tools3.htm>. This website provides details on the processes used in a wide variety of communities and the outcomes that have been achieved in these cases.

Headwater Economics—<http://www.headwaterseconomics.org/eps>. This source provides some unique data analyses for a variety of geographic areas.

Scenario Planning Tools—<http://scenarioplanningtools.org>. Fosters development and application of scenario planning tools.

Social Explorer—<http://www.socialexplorer.com/pub/maps/home.aspx>. Provides demographic information in an easily understood format: data maps. They have created hundreds of interactive data maps of the United States.

### *Videos*

American Planning Association—<http://www.youtube.com/channel/UC8J5WXnXgoN4wBGvdELbrNw>. This YouTube channel of the American Planning Association provides many videos from a couple of minutes long to over an hour.

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