Growing North Wilkesboro

A Neighborhood Action Plan

November 2012

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Overview

The Town of North Wilkesboro conducted six workshops from August thru November 2012. The purpose of the workshops was to identify ways of preserving community character and increasing community investment (especially in housing). As part of the fifth workshop, participants created a listing of several project and policy initiatives; in addition, they selected from this listing a small group of projects and policies – having a neighborhood focus (Figure 1) – to serve as an action planning demonstration project for how the town can move from *good ideas* to *making good ideas happen*.

Figure 1. Neighborhood-related Initiatives

Project Initiatives	*Policy* Initiatives
- Define – and name – neighborhoods - Organize neighborhood meetings - Appoint neighborhood captains - Coordinate *help your neighbor days* - Coordinate community resource groups - Promote home revitalization - Showcase a *house of the month*	- Give priority to improving defined neighborhoods - Identify point persons to execute plans, programs, and projects

This report documents information relating to the sixth and final workshop of the series – action planning. Organization of the report includes information about workshop participants, process design, results, and the next steps.

Participants

Ten persons participated in the action planning workshop. Figure 2 is a listing of the participants.
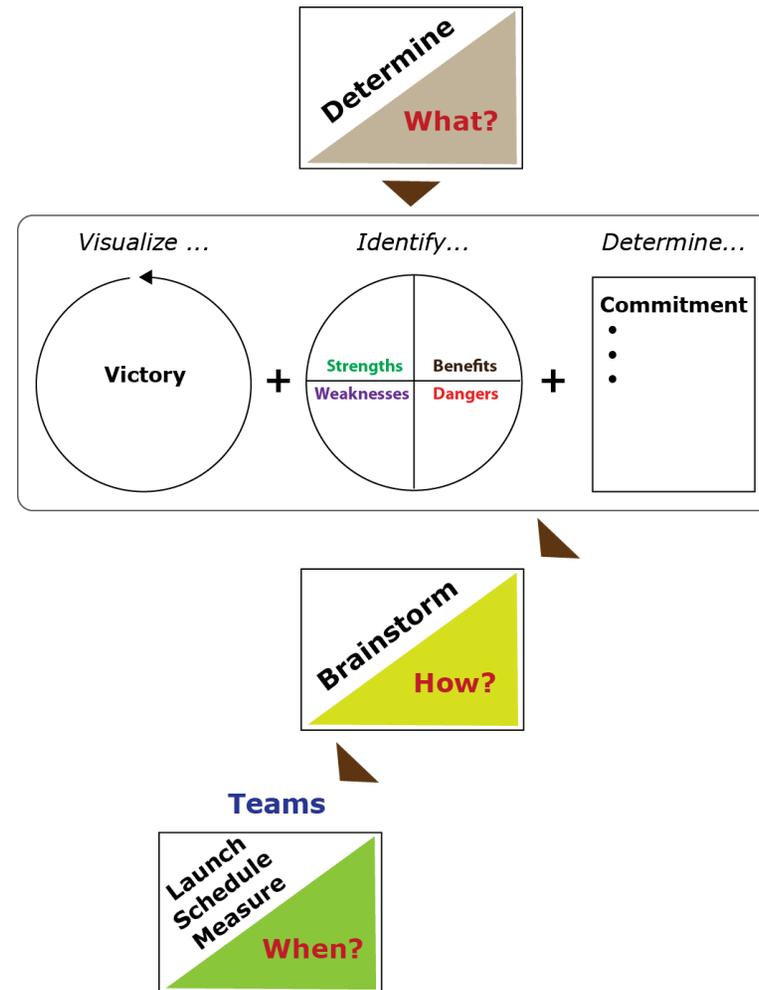
Figure 2. Participants

Names	
Bill **Clifton**	Bebe Anderson **Hennessy**
Mary **Bauguess**	William M. (Bill) **Hurd**
Debbie **Ferguson**	Robert **Johnson**
Ned **Fowler**	Isaac **Kerns**
Joshua **Harrold**	Martha **Nichols**

Process Design

Participants used a focus question to describe the purpose of the action planning workshop and the desired project objectives: *How can North Wilkesboro establish a system of well-defined neighborhoods that can provide identity and become a source of leadership, direction, and action in addressing specific needs within the various neighborhoods?* The process design used to address this focus question included 8 workshop activities, and Figure 3 highlights the process design activities and also graphically illustrates the sequence of these activities.

Figure 3. Process Design

1. *Victory visualization* … describing potential successful outcomes relating to the focus question
2. *Reality check* … strengths, weaknesses, benefits, and dangers relating to the victory journey
3. *Commitment* … statement of group consensus that considers both the victory and the reality check
4. *Supporting tasks* … composite action steps needed to achieve the victory (scheduled by calendar year month)
5. *Teams* … categorical groupings based on supporting tasks
6. *Launch activity* … a first step that initiates team tasks
7. *Measuring victory* … indictors of tangible outcomes (for each team)
8. *Tracking* … follow-up

**Determine**

What?

Visualize …   Identify…   Determine…

Victory   +   Strengths | Benefits
                    Weaknesses | Dangers   +   **Commitment**

Brainstorm

How?

Teams

Launch Schedule Measure

When?

The Results

The summary results for process design activities 1-7 (in Figure 3) included:

Victory

Victory Visualization (i.e., we must …)

- Develop criteria for determining neighborhood boundaries … examine block characteristics … identify walking patterns … draw boundaries
- Identify resources … seek partnering opportunities … involve civic and non-profit groups (e.g., churches, scouts, economic development offices/agencies, etc.)
- Keep people informed … publicize what's being done (i.e., project intent, on-going actions, and outcomes)
- Make road trips to observe and learn what other communities are doing or have done
- Never give up … be persistent
- Provide staff oversight
- Research and develop incentives for home revitalization
- Track progress … create statistics … celebrate successes
- Work closely with residents within each neighborhood … be inclusive … identify and cultivate leadership … schedule and hold meetings … emphasize benefits of working together (e.g., demonstrating *what's in it for me*) … train others regarding how to get organized and be action-oriented
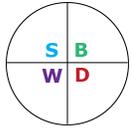
- Strengths … things that will help to achieve our victory
    - Core of residents with means, knowledge, caring attitude, and willing to make commitment
    - Historic significance that serves as both a base and start-point
    - Motivated participants
    - Pent-up demand for housing revitalization
    - Support from town government
- Weaknesses … things that might undermine our victory
    - Aging housing inventory
    - Apathy … lack of interest
    - Empty/vacant housing
    - High percentage of rental properties … opposition from landlords
    - Lack of funds
    - Transient population … difficulty in finding ways to integrate Hispanic population
- Benefits … the gains if we are successful
    - Others will want to move here … population growth … greater diversity … showing that *living in town* is good
    - Preserve property values … increase tax base
    - Synergy … working together can result in increased sense of community pride, ideals, and friendliness
- Dangers … hazards we might encounter along the way
    - Alienation of some community residents
    - Being exclusive (versus inclusive)
    - Greater demand for services police, water, etc.) … higher taxes
    - Unintended consequences and linkages (e.g., immigration and rental issues)

 The Commitment of the Group (i.e., is to …)

- Be inclusive
- Be proactive
- Define neighborhood areas
- Involve non-profits and civic groups
- Keep people informed about what's being done … all along the way
- Maintain a project focus
- Provide funding for planning assistance (e.g., intern)
- Recruit neighborhood participants … develop cadre of volunteers
- Seek additional funds
- Strengthen existing housing standards
- Work as team to develop and execute this action plan

 Teams, Launch Activities, Supporting Tasks, and Measuring Victory

- Participants created three planning teams: implementing actions and involving the community (Joshua, Martha, Mary, and Caprice [Caprice Cheek could not be present at this workshop but asked to be included in implementation activities]), getting organized (Bill C., Bill H., Debbie, and Joshua), and moving forward (Debbie, Isaac, Joshua, and Ned).
- Figure 4 graphically summarizes the various action planning steps, to include an execution schedule for the tasks.

Figure 4. Teams, Launch Activities, Supporting Tasks, and Measuring Victory

Team	Launch Activity	Supporting Tasks				Measuring Victory
		Dec-Jan	**Feb-Mar**	**Apr-May**	**Jun-Jul**	
Implementing actions and involving the community	*Meeting to discuss and develop neighborhood criteria*	• Identify contacts, and seek involvement from civic clubs and churches • Seek volunteers within each neighborhood • Review neighborhood criteria	• Develop and map draft neighborhood boundaries • Schedule neighborhood meetings, and mail invitation letters to neighborhood residents	• Form neighborhood work groups, and help to establish both leadership and an operational framework • Have work groups identify *name* for each neighborhood	• Develop action agenda for each neighborhood	*Schedule a block party in each neighborhood to celebrate accomplishments*
Getting organized	*Identify potential volunteers, and schedule a luncheon during which interested volunteers talk about the project*	• Develop a plain language statement of purpose (i.e., something similar to a mission statement … that reflects the workshop focus question) • Create a logo for the project (and possibly for each neighborhood)	• Research neighborhoods in other municipalities by taking field trips • Identify a PPR (primary person responsible) within each neighborhood • Develop a simple risk assessment for the project	• Prepare a budget • Design and implement a communication plan • Create a *Facebook* page • Create a script for making presentations about the project • Advertise the project	• Document both successes and failures • Prepare media releases • Identify volunteer(s) who can develop and maintain a website	*The town maintains an operational website that identifies neighborhoods and highlights neighborhood leadership, activities, and accomplishments*

Figure 4. Teams, Launch Activities, Supporting Tasks, and Measuring Victory (continued)

Team	Launch Activity	Supporting Tasks				Measuring Victory
		Dec-Jan	*Feb-Mar*	*Apr-May*	*Jun-Jul*	
Moving forward	*Summarize housing study into a 1-page document*	• Identify rental versus owner-occupied housing • Identify housing for targeted improvements	• Have a team meeting to assess impacts relating to delineation of neighborhoods • Lobby for hiring a code enforcement officer to work under the planning director • Create a proposal for property improvement incentives • Lobby for creating a plan that can help residents displaced by rental conversion	• Identify public/private partnership opportunities • Facilitate development of public/private partnerships	• Coordinate *help your neighbor days* for each neighborhood • Coordinate community resource groups that can assist with housing projects within neighborhoods	*Scheduling of 1-3 projects to replace condemned housing with historically accurate housing … priority going to housing in well-defined neighborhoods*

Next Steps

Tracking (or follow-up) activities should occur as part of task implementation. For this action plan, tracking activities will consist of periodic meetings – that include all team participants who developed the action plan – at least every 3 months. At these meetings participants will discuss: what they said they would do, what they actually did do, how conditions have changed, and any course adjustments that need to be made. This will help to assure that what they *said* would be done … actually *does* get done.

In summary, this action planning demonstration project serves as both a start-point and a catalyst to realizing the shared community vision (developed in workshop 4) of …

Re-imagining North Wilkesboro ➜ Moving Forward

Notes

Technical Assistance Provided By
Garry V. Cooper Associates