

How To Create A GREAT OPPORTUNITY NEIGHBORHOOD

A simple, step-by-step guide
to creating and implementing
a quality-of-life plan in
your neighborhood.



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Based on a Workbook Originally Developed by:

Local Initiatives Support Corporation Indianapolis | Indianapolis Neighborhood Resource Center
City of Indianapolis | Ball State University College of Architecture & Planning Indianapolis Center

What Makes a Neighborhood

GREAT?

It's a question we've been asking ourselves for decades in Houston. Of course, Houston is already a great place to live, work, and raise a family. But as our city has grown and changed, our ideas about great neighborhoods and the challenges we face have changed, too. That's why it makes sense to continue asking the question.

BUT EVERY NOW AND THEN, YOU HAVE TO ANSWER THE QUESTION, TOO.



That's what we've been doing for the last couple of years. LISC Houston, along with our partners, have launched a program to help neighborhoods around our city understand and embrace the principles of comprehensive community development, create a quality of life plan, and **PUT THAT PLAN INTO ACTION.**

Kicked off in the Fall of 2008, the Great Opportunities (GO) Neighborhoods Pilot Program provides funding and guidance to help good neighborhoods become great. The pilot program grew out of the 2008 Houston Sustainable Communities Forum, a city wide forum that included elected and public officials, community development corporations, business leaders and foundations. Feedback from participants, focus groups and interviews revealed a significant interest for LISC's approach to creating a healthy, sustainable community.

One of the most important steps in becoming a great neighborhood is the development of a neighborhood quality of life plan. You may ask, why would I need another plan to sit on the shelf? That is why LISC Houston prefers to call this plan a *Quality of Life Agreement*, because we expect neighborhood leaders will agree to put the plan into action. In this adapted workbook, we use the term "plan" and "agreement" interchangeably. This workbook is a **SIMPLE STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE** to doing this in your neighborhood.

We'd also encourage you to keep up with what's going on with other LISC Pilot Program neighborhoods and "pipeline neighborhoods" through our LISC web site and peer learning and training events. Stay informed at www.lisc.org/houston.

GOOD LUCK!

HEALTHY NEIGHBORHOODS ARE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

In 2007, Houston LISC embraced a new vision for supporting healthy neighborhood development in a sustainable manner. Our comprehensive approach brings together strategies for development of both “places and the people” concentrated in specific neighborhoods.

We define a sustainable community as **A PLACE OF CHOICE AND OPPORTUNITY WHERE FAMILIES CAN LIVE, WORK AND RAISE THEIR CHILDREN**. We have identified five program goals that, taken together, define this larger vision of Sustainable Communities:

- Expanding capital investment in housing and other real estate
- Building family income and wealth
- Stimulating local economic activity
- Improving residents’ access to quality education
- Developing healthy environments and lifestyles

A year later we launched a community revitalization program based on these goals called GO Neighborhoods, which is now in a pilot program phase. Eight neighborhoods were invited to participate in the Neighborhood Challenge selection process designed to determine which neighborhoods were most ready to start.

Key criteria for selection of these pilot neighborhoods included their ability to bring more people to the table and make decisions together. The Challenge also asked neighborhoods to identify a “Convening Agency” to serve as the neighborhood coordinator for the pilot program.

SELECTED PILOT PROGRAM NEIGHBORHOODS HAVE NOW SET OUT ON A YEAR-LONG JOURNEY of neighborhood engagement, planning and implementing “early action projects.” They are excited about the Pilot Program because it is a new approach in Houston. The program begins with residents discovering what is right about their neighborhood, and it puts them in charge of their future by developing their neighborhood’s Quality of Life Agreement. Houston LISC celebrates the hard work already accomplished by the Pilot Neighborhoods and is proud to support their efforts to develop Sustainable Communities.



The Eleven Principles of HEALTHY NEIGHBORHOODS

1. Leadership

Healthy neighborhoods value and cultivate skilled leadership and an active citizenry. Healthy neighborhoods possess a complement of local organizations, civic associations, religious communities, and/or community development corporations composed of the diverse, local array of racial, ethnic, and economic constituencies.

2. Vision

Healthy neighborhoods foster the creation of a “future community vision” and develop a holistic set of neighborhood strategies to achieve that vision. The ability to collaborate across barriers and sectors to successfully implement these strategies is recognized and valued.

3. Collaboration

Healthy neighborhoods exist within a metropolitan setting where governments and the private, philanthropic, and independent sectors value and provide coordinated support for neighborhood association formation and growth, local leadership development, and holistic community development initiatives.

4. Services

Healthy communities maintain the highest standard of health and human services.

5. Education

Healthy neighborhoods place a high value on intellectual and moral education. All local institutions and social structures take extraordinary measures to provide support to local schools. Parents and adults actively participate in the education of children. Children and young adults are involved in neighborhood associations and other local leadership forums that offer civic responsibility training.

6. Culture

Healthy communities offer a wide and varied array of artistic, cultural, recreational, and spiritual programs and venues to enrich the quality of life, nurture local talent, and foster creativity.

7. Safety

In healthy neighborhoods, police and citizens partner together to create a safe, crime-free environment. Healthy neighborhoods create safe and nurturing venues for children.

8. Environment

Healthy communities manage and invest in local properties and the common environment to maintain the community’s aesthetic and physical quality.

9. Housing

Healthy communities offer attractive housing as a community asset and a wealth-building opportunity for local families.

10. Business Diversity

Healthy communities possess a complement of retail and professional services.

11. Economy

Healthy communities have an integrated economic relationship with the surrounding region that provides both producers and consumers and generates economic opportunity. Healthy neighborhoods provide a setting where individuals can participate in the economy, either in the workforce or through entrepreneurial activity.

You Gotta Have A PLAN



Planning is one of the most important steps a neighborhood can take to become healthier, safer, and economically stronger. A quality-of-life plan is like a **ROADMAP**: it's how you get to your goal of becoming a great neighborhood.

Creating the plan isn't easy. Neighborhood planning requires meetings, strategy sessions, and reaching out to neighborhood residents, churches, schools, business leaders, and other stakeholders to make sure it is a plan your entire neighborhood will embrace. You have to consider all sorts of factors, from land use to education to public safety to the quality of housing to health care and beyond. It can (and probably should) take months to bring a plan together.

BUT IT'S WORTH IT. Through planning, you can develop a guide for the growth of your neighborhood. You see not only where you want to go, but how you can work together to get there.

A quality-of-life plan captures the vision of residents and turns your goals into achievable projects and programs. It's not planning for planning's sake, but practical planning driven by real community needs—that leads to real, visible results.

The best way to predict the future is to invent it.
- Immanuel Kant

Also, a quality-of-life plan is a living document. It's not static: it changes and grows as your neighborhood changes. That's because it's important to begin taking action while you're planning. An important part of creating your quality-of-life plan is finding meaningful actions you can take now to start making your neighborhood great and bring people together.

Pilot GO Neighborhoods are provided funding for “early action projects” that will help maintain this dynamic and action-oriented focus during the planning process. We encourage all neighborhoods to follow this “planning while doing” approach, which will be discussed later in this workbook.

Finally, **YOUR QUALITY-OF-LIFE PLAN IS YOUR PLAN.** It is not something imposed on you by LISC or any government agency. LISC suggests that your plan should actually be called a Quality of Life Agreement once you have enlisted individuals or groups who are committed to take responsibility for each action item, goal or project in your plan.

Before You Plan...

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

So a quality-of-life plan is the first step in making your neighborhood great, right?

Well...not quite. Before you can create your quality-of-life plan, you need to make sure your community is ready to undertake this process. The first step is actually reaching out to and **ENGAGING EVERYONE** who needs to be involved in developing the plan.

This will include “the usual suspects”: all those neighborhood leaders you know are interested in helping see your community grow and improve. But you should also take this opportunity to reach out to people and groups who may not have been included in the past. (Many times, they haven’t been included simply because they haven’t been asked.) Their perspectives and their energy will be crucial in both setting the vision and in implementing your plan.

The goal is not just to have all of these diverse stakeholders involved in planning, but for them to **TAKE OWNERSHIP** and responsibility for parts of the plan. As you will see, no action item or goal will make it into your Quality-of-Life Agreement if you don’t have someone who will be responsible for it. No one group has the capacity to take on all the important items that need to be in the plan, so it’s essential that as many groups as possible are involved.

Also, if you haven’t already done so, now would be a good time to start to form some sort of **STEERING COMMITTEE** to help oversee the planning process. Once your leaders are empowered, they can engage and educate the rest of the community about your plans in a way that promotes neighborhood ownership and involvement in the plan, right from the start.

As you prepare to develop your comprehensive quality-of-life plan, try to identify and engage representatives from as many of the following groups in your neighborhood as possible:

Neighborhood Groups

- _____
- _____

Local Development Corporations

- _____
- _____

Various Income Groups

- _____
- _____

Various Ethnic Groups

- _____
- _____

Health Service Providers

- _____
- _____

Human Service Providers

- _____
- _____

Recreation Providers

- _____
- _____

Apartment Complex Owners

- _____
- _____

Homeowners

- _____
- _____

Renters

- _____
- _____

Youth Groups

- _____
- _____

Schools

- _____
- _____

Faith-Based Groups

- _____
- _____

Library

- _____
- _____

Lenders

- _____
- _____

Foundations

- _____
- _____

Local Government

- _____
- _____

Police Department

- _____
- _____

Cultural Groups

- _____
- _____

Service Groups

- _____
- _____

Business Owners

- _____
- _____

Commercial Property Owners

- _____
- _____

Others?

- _____
- _____

Before You Plan... NEIGHBORHOOD MAPPING

So how do you make sure you're reaching out to as many people as possible?

First, it's important to remember that most people in your neighborhood are, in one way or another, already organized. Which is a good thing: it's not very effective to try to organize one person at a time. So a good first step is to **MAP THE GROUPS THAT THE RESIDENTS OF YOUR AREA ALREADY BELONG TO**. A good brainstorming session with the members of your steering committee will give you a good start, but don't stop there. You need to identify all the groups in your area that can help you make your plan a reality—and that will require some research and a lot of further conversation.

Creating this kind of map of your neighborhood is an excellent first step in **PINPOINTING PROBLEMS AND OPPORTUNITIES**. It can also help you identify portions of your neighborhood that would be good "target" areas in which you can concentrate your resources and have a clear, visible impact more quickly.

Another approach that LISC recommends is to identify 100 leaders to interview in your neighborhood. This is best done by simply asking "who has followers or has influence in the neighborhood."

A great tool to help you is a physical map of your neighborhood that takes geographic realities into account. Some of these elements could include:



Before You Plan... ONGOING EFFORTS

Once you've identified all of the influential groups and the 100 leaders in your neighborhood, it's time for the real work to begin. It will be important for members of your steering committee to go out and meet with each of these groups for two important reasons. First, you want to begin **BUILDING A RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LEADERS** of each group. Second, you will gain insight into the **PASSIONS AND INTERESTS** of each group—and so have a better idea of where their talents, interests, and energies can fit into the big picture of your neighborhood quality-of-life plan.

Fortunately, you don't have to start in a vacuum: you already have an idea of your groups' interests and abilities. For example, if you go out and meet with the local parent teacher association, it makes sense to start the discussion with education or youth issues.

But don't stop there. The best part about meeting with neighborhood groups is that **YOU NEVER KNOW HOW THEY'LL OVERLAP**. One of the parents may work for a locally owned business—which gives you a connection to an employer that you never had before. (LISC provides training for active listening skills for volunteer interviewers, see page 20).

This is a great example of the intertwined and ongoing nature of building great neighborhoods. You never finish community building. There are always groups forming that could help you make your neighborhood vision a reality. **EVERY PROJECT OR PROGRAM UNDERTAKEN IN YOUR COMMUNITY SHOULD HAVE A COMMUNITY-BUILDING COMPONENT**, and there are always opportunities for people to get involved.

BRIGHTSIDE NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN NOTES

Met with Brightside Business Alliance. Carl Johnson is on the board, but is also a Deacon at First Brightside Church, which has plans to add an indoor gym.

Principal Harrison at Brightside Elementary is seeking neighborhood volunteers to help with physical education after budget cutbacks.

Hey...we need to get all three of these neighbors together. Perhaps the fitness club could offer physical education classes for the elementary school kids in the new First Brightside Church gym!

Stephanie Calhoun with Brightside Fitness Club wants group to become more involved in public health education.

Before You Plan... TALKING THE TALK

So you've identified important groups, mapped neighborhood assets and boundaries, met with people who might be willing to help. Now you've got to **CROSS-POLLINATE THESE GROUPS AND GET THEM TALKING TO EACH OTHER.** Inclusive community forums can help get new ideas on the table and give everyone a voice in the planning process.

Sometimes, there can be the perception that there is so much work to be done that it's better for a small group of people—or even a single person—to make the decisions. This tends to alienate people who are not on the decision-making team. We believe that an **OPEN AND DEMOCRATIC PROCESS** that goes out of its way to be inclusive is not only the best path to creating a great neighborhood, it's **THE ONLY PATH.**



Your neighborhood forums should be held at a time and place that's convenient for as many people as possible. Be sensitive to your neighborhood's diversity and work to accommodate any language barriers. Also, be sure you invite all of the groups you've met with—but invite all of the neighbors, as well. You never know where the next great idea is going to come from.

Community building works only when it's the result of a neighborhood working hard to implement its own vision—not a vision imposed from the outside. **GET ALL THE IDEAS ON THE TABLE**, because it's just about time for the real work to begin.

100 NEIGHBORHOOD INTERVIEWS SCRIPT & TIPS

I work for a non-profit and we are updating a neighborhood plan.

We are interviewing neighborhood leaders to inform the process – you have been identified as a leader.

We are asking one question: Describe the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats that exist in the community. Strengths and Weaknesses are under our local control. Opportunities and Threats are beyond our control but they influence our future.

I'm going to take notes, and "code" as I do. To make it easier, could you identify the type of response when you give it. For example: "A strength is: _____."

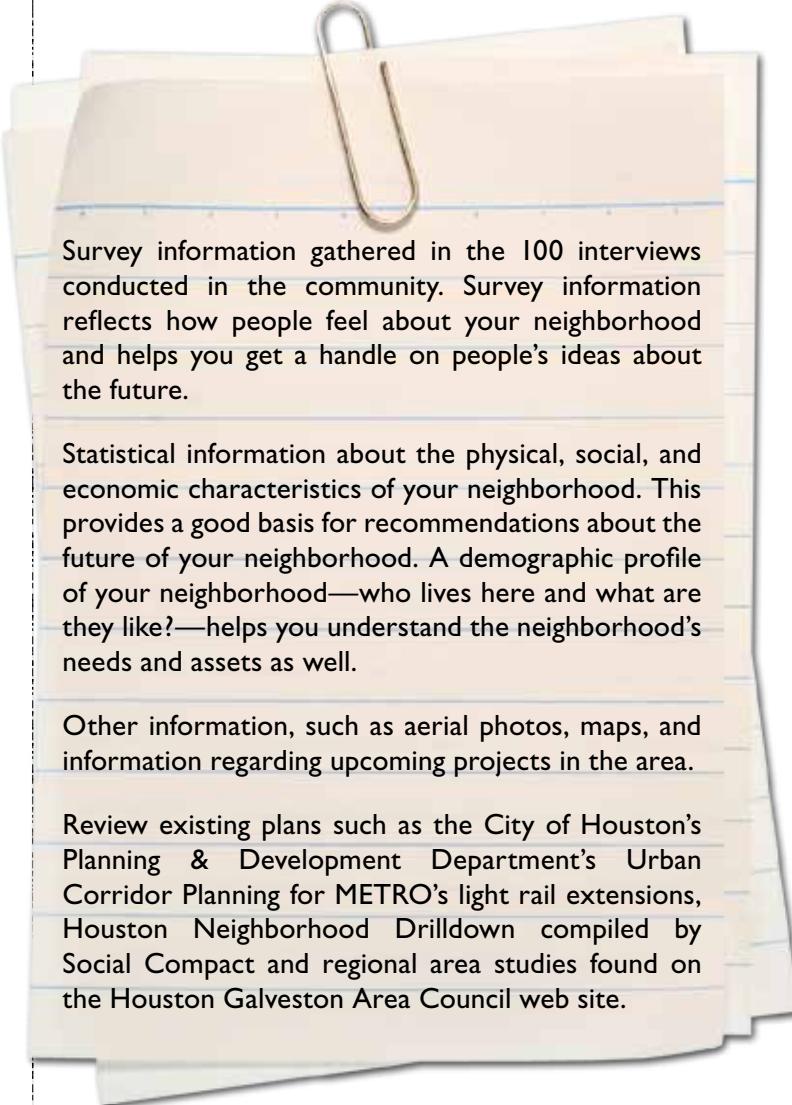
If the speaker becomes silent, let it remain silent until the interviewee breaks the silence.

If you have to break the silence, you can only do so by asking for an explanation of something the interviewee has already stated. DO NOT INTRODUCE ANYTHING NEW!

Creating Your Quality-Of-Life Plan

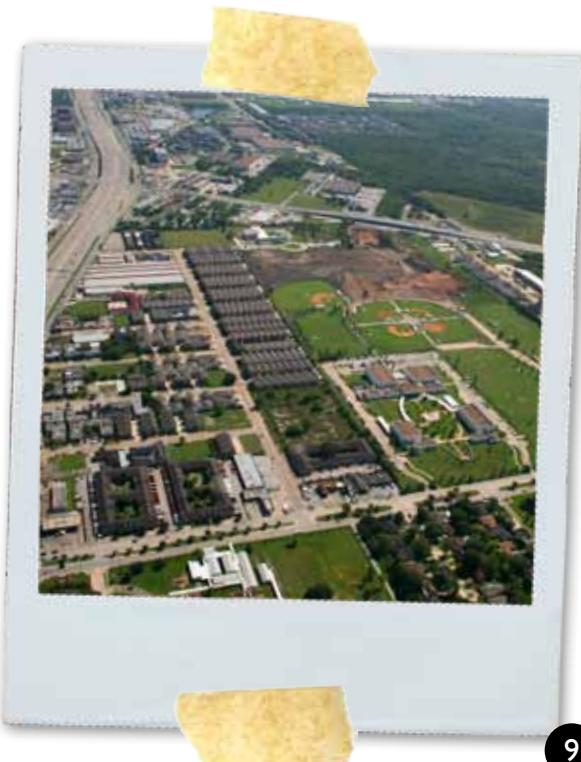
GATHERING AND SHARING INFORMATION

You can't create a plan to get where you want to go unless you know **WHERE YOU ARE RIGHT NOW**. So the first important step in the actual creation of a quality-of-life plan is gathering and sharing information with people in your neighborhood. This information could include:



Once you've gathered the information, you should **MAKE IT AVAILABLE TO ALL PARTICIPANTS** in the planning process. A presentation of your findings can become the first step in building momentum and interest in your neighborhood for upcoming phases in the quality-of-life planning process.

YOU
ARE
HERE



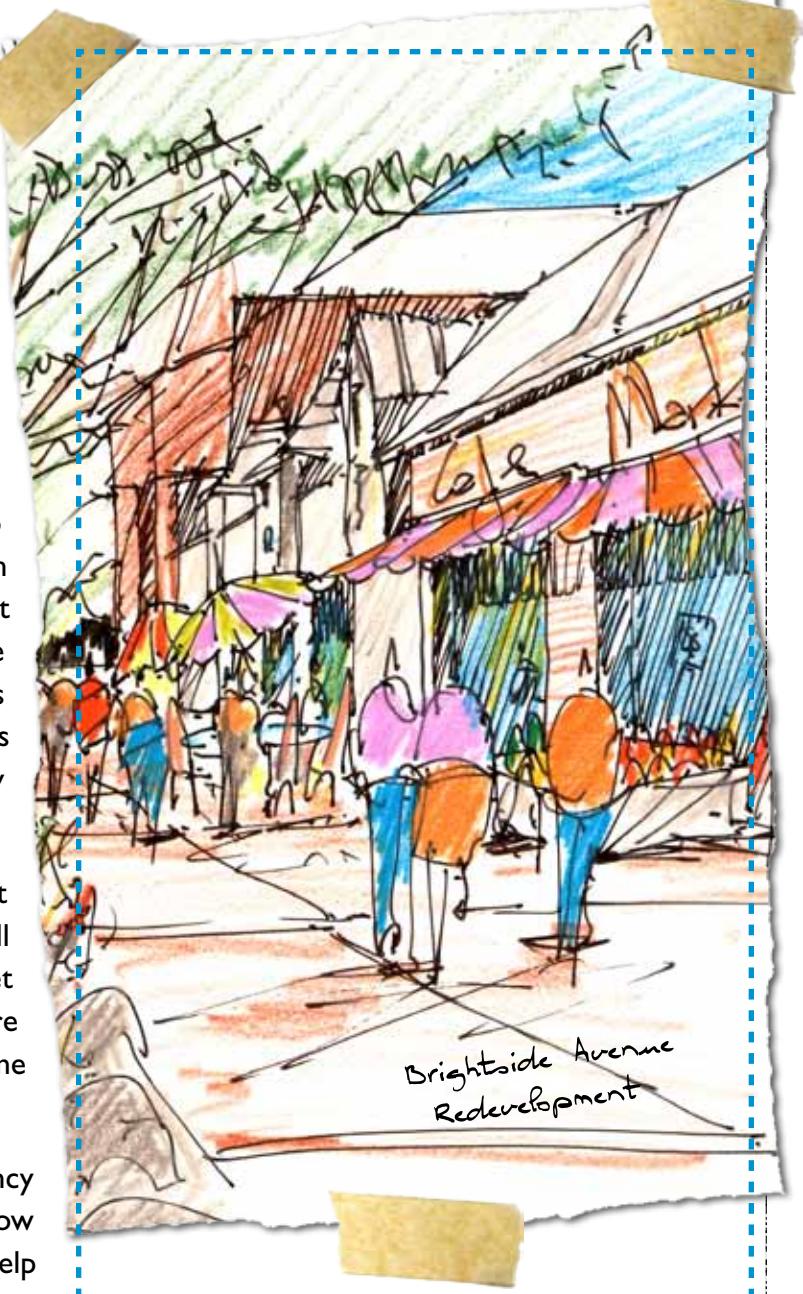
Creating Your Quality-Of-Life Plan...CREATING A SHARED VISION

If you've gotten this far, you'll notice there's been a lot of talk about engaging residents and neighborhood stakeholders in discussions about challenges, opportunities, and where the neighborhood should be in the future. Now it's time to **CRYSTALLIZE ALL OF THE TALK INTO A VISION**: a clear picture of what your neighborhood can and should become.

A community-wide, one-day workshop can be a great tool that serves both to invite the involvement of a broad range of community stakeholders and provide an opportunity to develop a vision for the future. Take some time in your workshop to allow attendees to talk about their visions for your neighborhood. Make sure someone takes good notes and includes everyone's ideas—good, bad, and in between. These notes will be invaluable in helping you express exactly what your vision for the future is.

That community workshop is also an excellent forum for presenting and discussing an overall timeline for the planning process. This will let neighborhood stakeholders know where you're going and what the next steps are in plenty of time to allow them to get involved!

As a Pilot GO Neighborhood your Convening Agency will coordinate all neighborhood meetings. But know that Houston LISC will provide consultants to help with your vision workshop or other tasks associated with your quality of life plan and agreements.

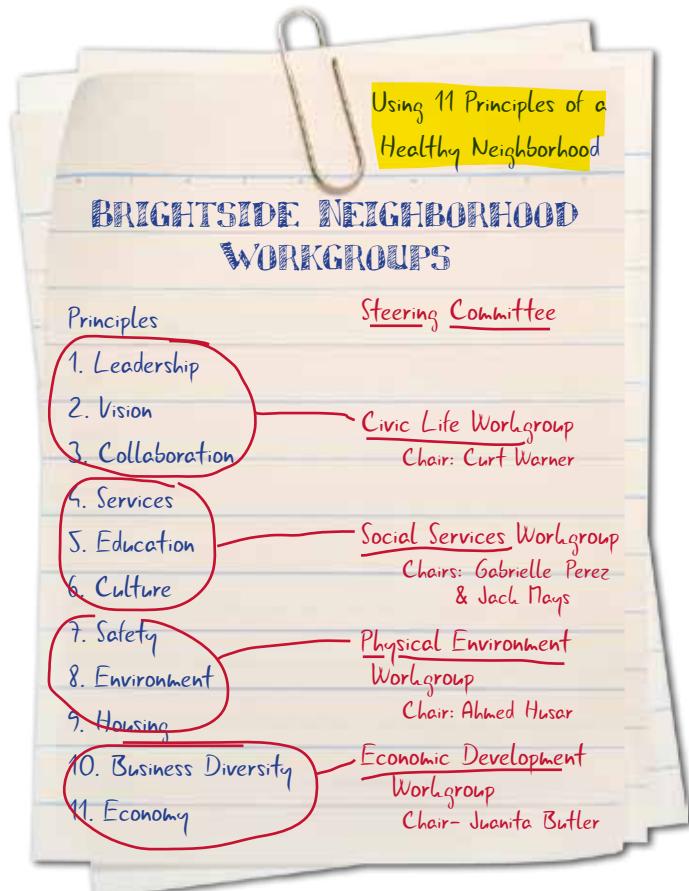
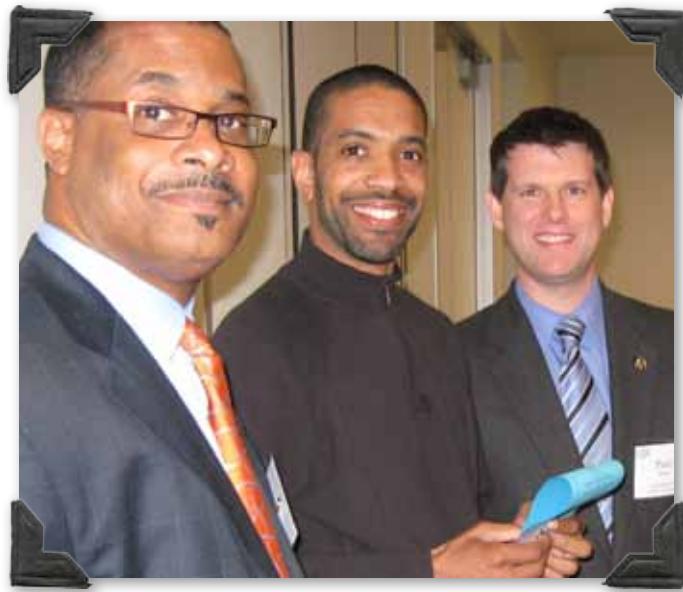


Creating Your Quality-Of-Life Plan... ADDING STRUCTURE

So, the next step is to **CREATE WORKGROUPS TO EXPLORE IDEAS AND RECOMMEND PROJECTS** to the neighborhood steering committee. Groups should be organized according to one of the following formats. You may choose to use the Eleven Principles of Healthy Neighborhoods or LISC's Sustainable Communities Five Goal Areas or some other holistic framework that best fits your neighborhood vision (see examples).

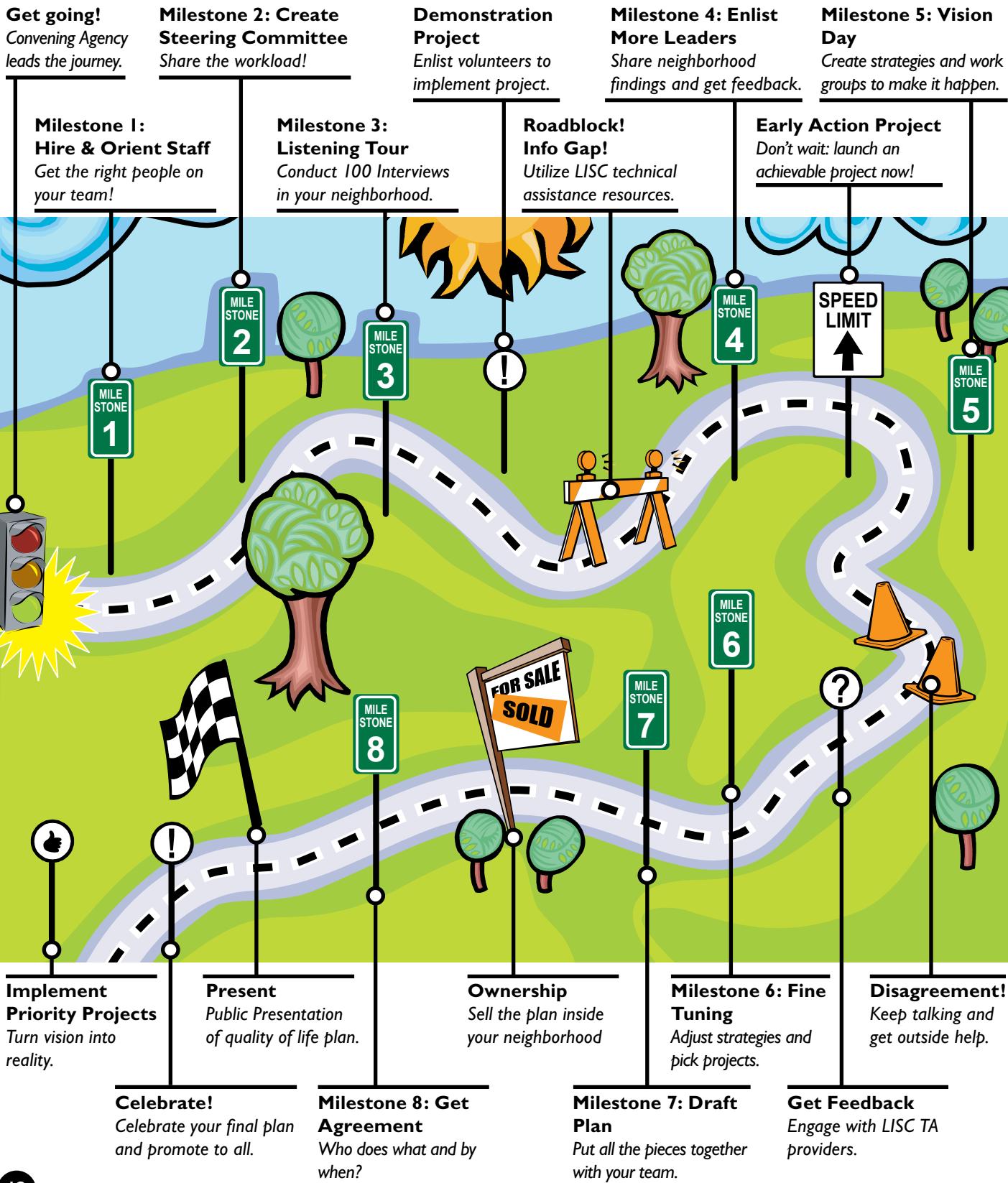
Your workgroups should be made up of a **BROAD AND BALANCED MIX** of community stakeholders, leaders, and partners identified in previous steps of the process. Each workgroup begins with the information you gathered at the start of your quality-of-life planning process, plus the vision for the neighborhood you created at your visioning workshop. The workgroups will use these elements to begin to discuss the important aspects of their chosen topics. Discussion should revolve around the community's assets and opportunities for improvement.

Be sure you set deadlines for recommendations from your workgroups. You'll need their input for the next step: hammering out the details of your quality-of-life plan.



A Roadmap For SUCCESS

So far you've worked hard to be selected as a Pilot GO Neighborhood. You have a neighborhood demonstration project already identified, you have a Neighborhood Convening Agency, and you have a core group of neighborhood leaders with whom to start. Now it is time to begin the journey of creating a quality of life plan.



Creating Your Quality-Of-Life Plan...**EARLY ACTION**

Throughout this handbook, we've been stressing the importance of getting a quality-of-life plan in place before taking action. But it's also **IMPORTANT TO GET THE NEIGHBORHOOD EXCITED** about comprehensive community development as early in the process as possible.

That's why it makes sense to identify low- and no-cost "early action" projects you can undertake while the planning process is still underway. These projects should be meaningful, inexpensive tasks that **MAKE A VISIBLE DIFFERENCE** in your neighborhood. This should be easy because you already have identified a Demonstration Project that should be near ready for implementation in the first few months!

Whose responsibility is it to complete these projects? While your steering committee should ultimately track all projects, this is a great chance to get neighborhood volunteers and other community stakeholders involved. Collaborating organizations such as schools, churches, and community centers might even be a great place to recruit volunteers!

By taking early action, you **SHOW THE NEIGHBORHOOD THAT BIG PLANS ARE UNDERWAY**—and that even small projects can make a big difference.



BRIGHTSIDE NEIGHBORHOOD IDEAS

- Revitalize the old Brightside Theater through public-private partnership.
- Have volunteers plant flowers around all stop signs on Brightside Avenue.
- Buy up vacant homes at tax sale and partner with high school building technology program to rehab.
- Develop business incubator in historic Goldman Building.
- Explore integration of Brightside College Sunshine Festival with annual neighborhood ice cream social.

Brightside Nursery can help here...let's do this now and show people we mean business!

Creating Your Quality-Of-Life Plan...CREATING PLAN DETAILS

After deciding upon overall goals and objectives for their topic, each workgroup should **IDENTIFY ACTIONABLE STRATEGIES** for neighborhood improvements in terms of proposed projects and programs. The workgroups should also recommend individuals, organizations, or agencies that might carry out the projects and programs they propose—not to mention the timing and funding for the improvements they envision.

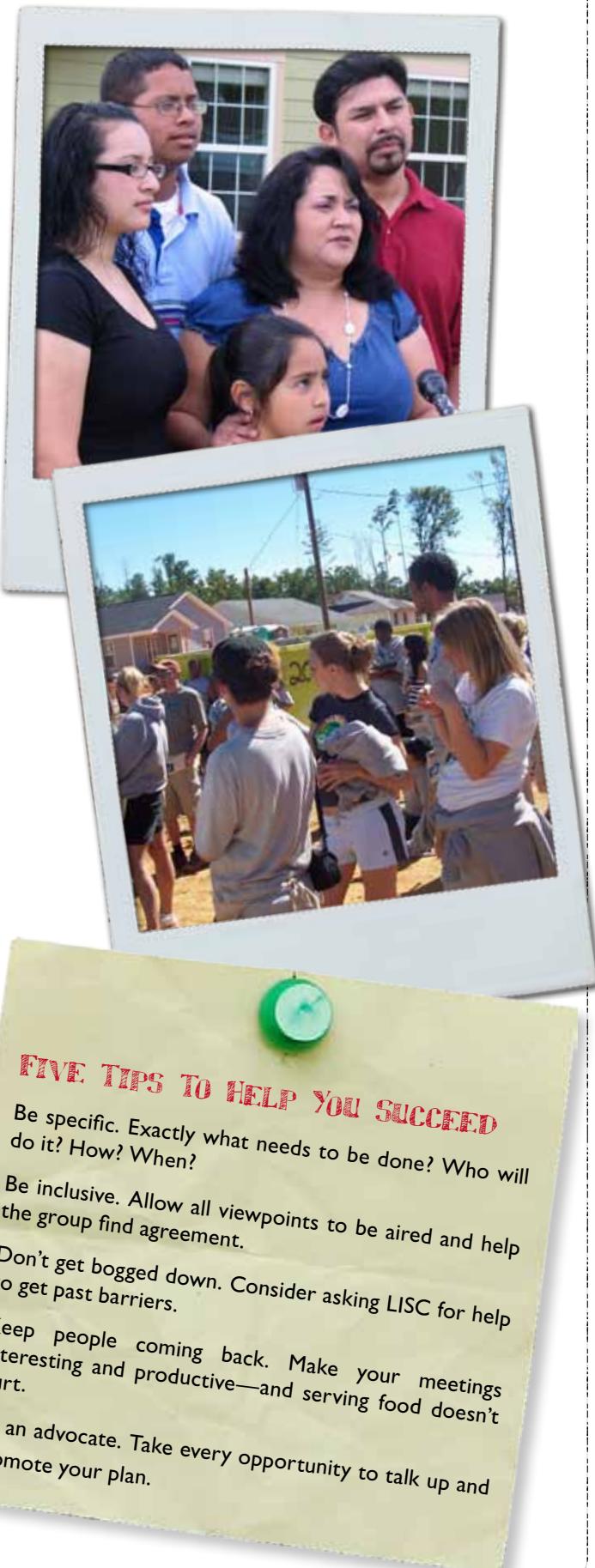
You'll want to make sure that your workgroups' recommendations are **SPECIFIC ENOUGH TO BE MEASURABLE**. "Improve the health of neighborhood residents" is not measurable. "Implement a quarterly health screening program at the community center" is.

It's also helpful for each of the workgroups to create a summary document of their work.

These workgroup reports may be reviewed by the planning leadership group or steering committee, which can begin to assemble all the elements into cohesive plan.

Note that you'll probably encounter some overlap in subject matter among your workgroups. You'll need to remove duplicate strategies and possibly discuss plan recommendations with other stakeholders to identify or confirm specific ownership of each strategy.

LISC will provide a facilitator and consultants that will help your neighborhood workgroups and steering committee, especially in packaging the final plan. Your quality of life plan will follow a standard format that the LISC consultants will provide. The final plan will be reviewed and approved by the neighborhood steering committee and convening agency before it is published.



BRIGHTSIDE NEIGHBORHOOD QUALITY-OF-LIFE PLAN

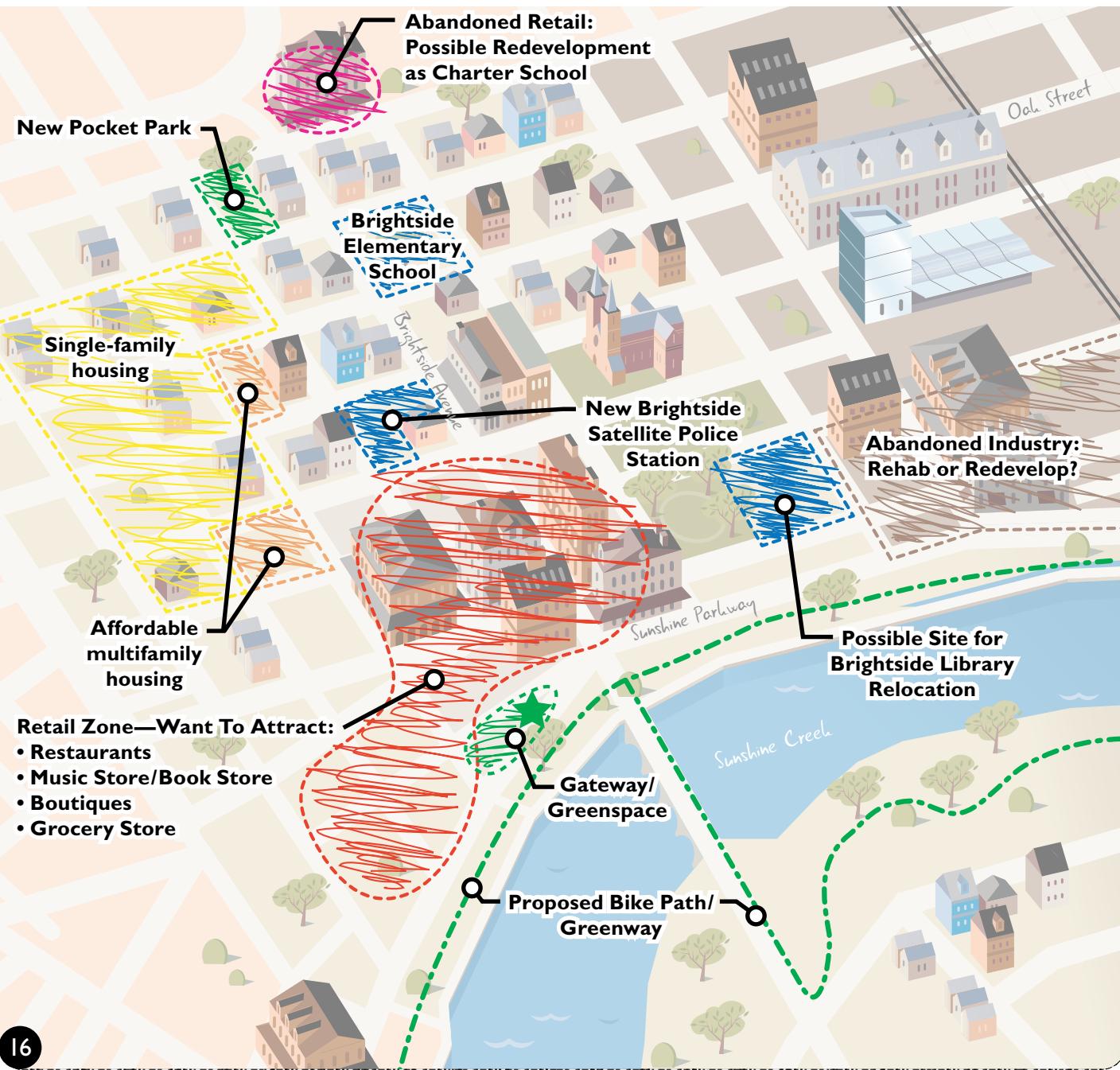
WORK PROGRAM

Strategy/Project	Vision Priority			Lead Organizations
	Short-term	Medium-term	Long-term	
New Pocket Park at State and 3rd Street	■			Brightside Neighborhood Corp. Parks Committee
Brightside Library Relocation		■		BNC, Marian County Public Library
Retail Zone Development	■	■	■	Commercial Development Committee, George Anderson (building owner)
Proposed Bike Path/Greenway		■		
Charter School		■		BNC Parks Committee
Housing Development		■	■	BNC Education Committee, City Charter Schools Director
Multifamily Housing		■	■	BNC Housing Committee
Gateway/Greenspace	■			BNC Housing Committee
First Church Cleanup	■			BNC Parks Committee
Homeowner Education & Awareness Program	■			BNC Beautification Committee, First Church
Abandoned Industry Rehab/Redevelopment			■	BNC Housing Committee
Small Business Development		■	■	City Brownfields Program, BNC Commercial Development Committee
				BNC Commercial Development Committee

MAPPING Your Neighborhood

Here's an example of a fictional Brightside neighborhood map that highlights some of the major projects that the community envisions. LISC has resources and recommendations that can help create similar maps.

BRIGHTSIDE NEIGHBORHOOD QUALITY OF LIFE PLAN



What Should Be Included In Your Quality-Of-Life Plan?

Your finished neighborhood quality of life plan should be a written document that details your steps in preparing the plan and should also be a quality of life agreement because it has identified who is responsible and the timeframes for implementation of projects.

INFORMATION

What information was useful in preparing your plan?

VISION

What is your community's vision for the future of your neighborhood?

ASSETS AND OPPORTUNITIES

What are the community's strong points, and what needs work?

RESPONSIBILITIES AND TIMEFRAMES

Who will do what, and when will they do it?

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Who was involved in creating the plan?

LAND USE AND REDEVELOPMENT

What changes in land use, design guidelines or special districts are important?

ACTIONABLE STRATEGIES

What are the important projects your neighborhood can accomplish in the next five years?

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, PROJECTS, AND PROGRAMS

What priorities have you established for future improvements in your neighborhood? Include photos of existing conditions and drawings of how you envision the future, when available.

Creating Your Quality-Of-Life Plan

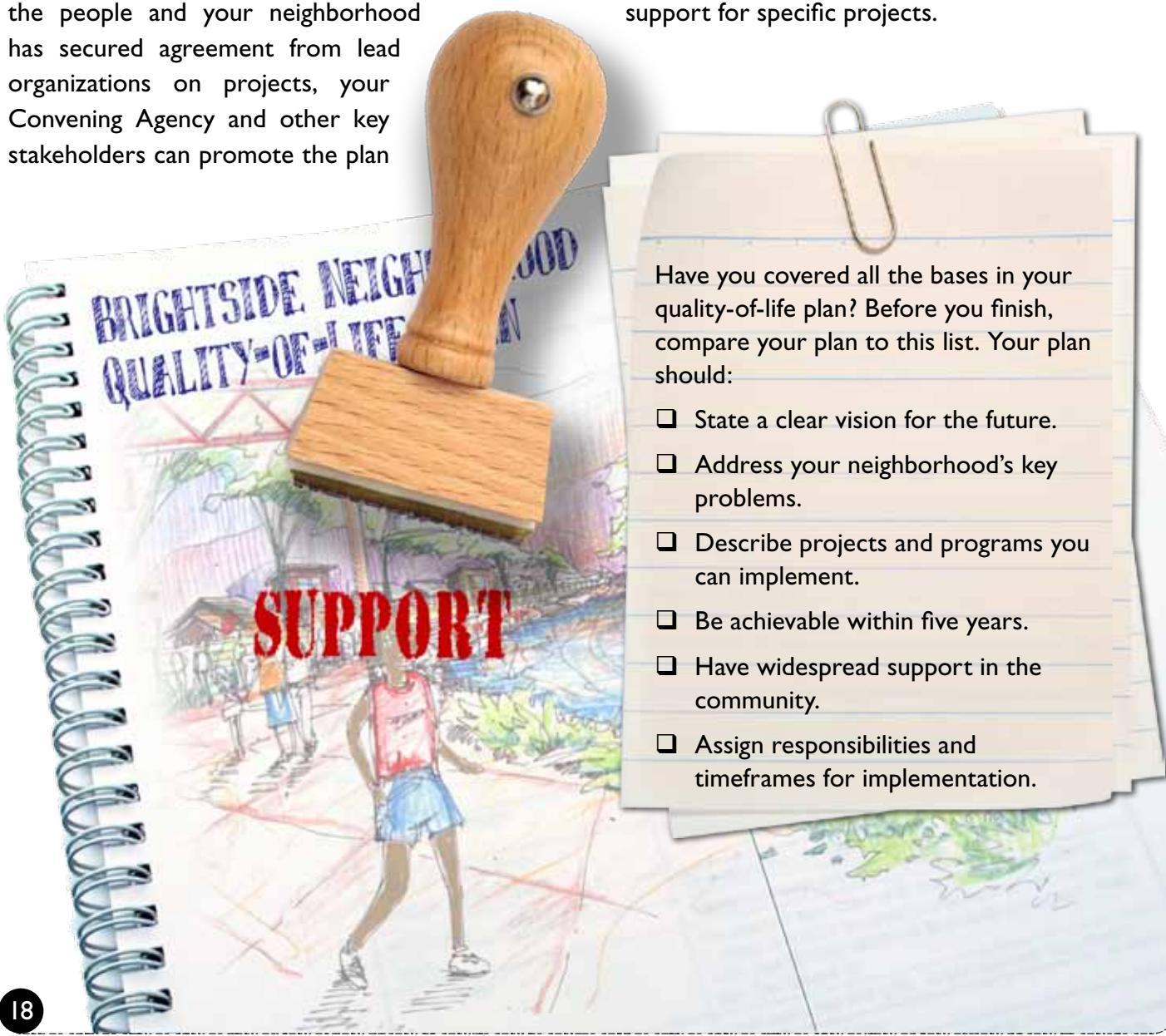
PRESENTING THE PLAN

You've labored mightily to draft a holistic plan, with a vision for your neighborhood and clear, measurable strategies for achieving your vision. Now you're nearly ready to take action. First, though, you need to present your draft plan to the broad community for further feedback—and to **SEEK NEIGHBORHOOD COMMITMENT AND SUPPORT**. Securing this support, especially regarding the strategies for neighborhood improvements, is **KEY TO THE SUCCESS** of implementing your plan.

Once your plan has been accepted by the people and your neighborhood has secured agreement from lead organizations on projects, your C convening Agency and other key stakeholders can promote the plan

to City and County officials as well as the Houston business and philanthropic communities. LISC will help you in this so that you can **ATTRACT MORE LOCAL AND NATIONAL RESOURCES** to implement your plan.

Your Quality of Life Plan and neighborhood agreements to implement projects should **SHOWCASE WHAT IS GREAT ABOUT YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD**. Now you can demonstrate that your neighborhood is actively involved in guiding redevelopment and, more importantly, has strong support for specific projects.



Have you covered all the bases in your quality-of-life plan? Before you finish, compare your plan to this list. Your plan should:

- State a clear vision for the future.
- Address your neighborhood's key problems.
- Describe projects and programs you can implement.
- Be achievable within five years.
- Have widespread support in the community.
- Assign responsibilities and timeframes for implementation.

Creating Your Quality-Of-Life Plan

IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN



The greatest comprehensive community development plan in the world doesn't do any good if it's sitting on a shelf. It's time to put all those hours of planning into **ACTION!**

If you haven't already done so, now is a good time to **ASSIGN PRIORITIES** to your projects. Some can be tackled immediately and accomplished within a period of months; these are your short-term projects. Others may require some building blocks to be in place, or demand resources that aren't yet available. These are medium-term projects that you may wish to tackle in years two and three of your plan.

Finally, you'll have some long-term projects you may not be able to start for several years. Work toward them—and keep them in your vision. They're the projects you'll need to complete to make your neighborhood truly great!

No comprehensive community development plan is ever really final—or ever really finished. **NEW CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES ARISE** every year. So you'll want to be sure to revisit your plan in its entirety periodically to track your progress, make sure the projects you identified still make sense, and add new projects to address new needs.

Remember, it's important to work on projects that offer measurable results. You'll need to **MEASURE YOUR PROGRESS** based on the yardsticks you agreed to in your planning process.

And don't forget that people and organizations change in your neighborhood, too. Revisiting your plan from time to time is a good way to **GET NEW PEOPLE INVOLVED** in helping you create a Great Neighborhood.

Creating Your Quality-Of-Life Plan

REVISITING THE PLAN



How Can LISC HELP?

That's an important question to ask as you consider strategies and projects for your neighborhood. As a national non-profit financial intermediary, LISC provides Houston Pilot Neighborhoods support through grants, loans and equity for real estate projects as well as other comprehensive programmatic efforts. LISC also offers training, technical assistance, communication tools and partnership facilitation. Our local office is a conduit to access national resources as well. Below are just some of the LISC national programs accessible through the local Houston office that is categorized by our Five Goals Areas. For a complete list go to www.lisc.org.

Goal 1: Expanding capital investment in housing and other real estate

Affordable Housing Preservation Initiative offers financing solutions to keep federally assisted rental housing affordable, provides technical support and maintains partnerships with other nonprofits to keep those properties safe and in good repair.

National Equity Fund, Inc. (NEF), is the nation's largest nonprofit syndicator of the federal low income housing tax credits, providing equity capital for multifamily housing projects which provide more affordable housing options in distressed neighborhoods.

LISC Financing is often the first money into a real estate development project and the last money out of the deal, helping it become more feasible to attract equity and permanent financing. We offer pre-development, acquisition, bridge and, in many cases, construction loans for projects in distressed Houston neighborhoods. We also provide technical assistance at any phase of development.

Goal 2: Building family income and wealth

Financial Opportunity Centers help asset-building, family assistance and workforce development service providers bundled their services and delivery them a one-stop neighborhood center. Neighborhood families receive career and personal financial coaching, employment placement and public benefits access all in one place which increases the chances for breaking the cycle of poverty and building wealth.

Goal 3: Stimulating local economic activity

New Markets Support Company helps community organizations attract equity capital into economic development projects designed to create new jobs, offer commercial retail options or new community service facilities in distressed neighborhoods.

Goal 4: Improving residents' access to quality education

Educational Facilities Financing Center (EFFC) gives families a choice in public education in distressed neighborhoods by providing public charter schools capital improvement financing that is not available through State education financing laws.

Community Investment Collaborative for Kids (CICK) offers financial and technical assistance to develop and improve child care centers. CICK brings public officials, child care providers, philanthropies, and other stakeholders to the table to devise comprehensive and innovative solutions to child care supply and quality problems.

Goal 5: Developing healthy environments and lifestyles

Green Development Center provides training, financial resources, technical assistance and partnership opportunities to promote the use of green design, construction, and management principles which reduce the operating cost of our structures and create a healthy place to live.

Community Safety Initiative (CSI) builds long-term partnerships among law enforcement, developers, and other key parties in troubled communities to reduce persistent crime, disorder and fear.

The **NFL Grassroots Program** facilitates youth recreation and health by funding the creation or redevelopment of community football fields.

LISC AmeriCorps

LISC AmeriCorps Members strengthen neighborhoods by engaging residents in revitalization efforts, by recruiting volunteers, forming local associations and forming partnership with other agencies.

Now It's Up To you!

We've given you the basics—but **ONLY YOU** can create and implement a holistic quality-of-life plan for your neighborhood. Only you understand what your neighborhood can and should become. It's going to take vision...collaboration...cooperation...compromise ...planning...and a lot of hard work!

But **IT'S GOING TO BE WORTH IT**. You have the power to make your neighborhood a healthy, sustainable community- **YOUR PLACE OF CHOICE AND OPPORTUNITY WHERE FAMILIES CAN LIVE, WORK, AND RAISE THEIR CHILDREN.**

GOOD LUCK—and stay in touch. We're excited to see what happens!



www.lisc.org/houston



www.go-neighborhoods.org



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