Strategic Neighborhood Improvement Planning:
Planning for the Whitely Neighborhood

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Strategic Neighborhood Improvement Planning: Planning for the Whitley Neighborhood

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I dedicate this work and all it has entailed to my friends and family for their love and support. To Mom & Dad, for all you have done and sacrificed for me; to Susie, forever my favorite sister; to Sue, for taking good care of the other half of our brain; to Jen, Tara, Jen, and Pegg, for many years of fun and friendship, and to Mumford, for keeping me company those long nights of writing.
I would like to thank the residents of Whitely for their support in this endeavor and their interest in their community.

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I also wish to acknowledge the contributions of my studio classmates. We have worked together for five years, night and day, laughing, crying, fighting... and learning the whole way. The varied thoughts and perspectives you have brought to our conversations are largely responsible for much of my growth as a planner and more importantly as a person. I thank you all for that. I feel assured that you will all reach your own personal measure of success.
Urban areas have historically been prone to a large array of problems unique to their environment. Low-income and ethnic minority neighborhoods have been especially disposed to such problems as poverty, unemployment, low educational achievement, crime and political disregard. The resulting situation is one of multiple problems, ineffective traditional solutions and little power to effect satisfactory change.

The objective of this study is to evaluate the most effective strategies for improving the quality of life in low-income, urban, black neighborhoods. The primary basis for this study is the premise that sufficient resources exist within almost all communities to achieve a desirable quality of life. What is missing from communities is merely the strategically planned utilization and exploitation of those resources in an effective and efficient manner.
The study will examine work by recognized community organizers and experts in the areas of urban problems and neighborhood dynamics and, based upon these findings, will attempt to adapt their experiences into the formulation of a neighborhood improvement plan, implementable from the grassroots level. The strategies contained in the plan are to be intimately linked to the internal structures and relationships existing within the community already. The community selected as the subject of this study is the Whitely neighborhood, a low-income, predominantly black area located on the northeast side of Muncie, Indiana. The basis for selection of this neighborhood was the racial composition of the area, the economic levels of its residents, its role within the larger city context and its present organizational structures.
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Introduction to the Project

Often low-income, urban neighborhood residents experience a lowered quality-of-life due to many problems commonly associated with such areas. Crime, unemployment, dilapidation of structures, and a general sense of hopelessness are some of the economic and social problems that these neighborhoods must face daily. Accompanying these problems is a lost sense of community, which in turn, works to further perpetuate those problems. Many times residents as well as city officials give up on such neighborhoods and little or nothing is ever done to solve the situation.

However, there are sometimes a handful of tenacious residents that work to alleviate some problems within a neighborhood. They may view the neighborhood as home and want to fight to reclaim their community. These residents harbor the best of intentions and work diligently, whether that work is true action or merely planning for action, to achieve their goals. However, often this work is undirected, and the goals are misdirected, serving the purposes and ideals of a few individuals,
with little or no consensus from other neighbors. These factors often result in minimal success due to a lack of neighborhood support and involvement.

What is needed in such a case is a clear strategic plan-of-action to guide any efforts by the residents. This plan should be based upon solid research and utilize available resources. It should also be guided by a specific set of goals, objectives and programs decided upon by the residents. This element of resident-developed goals helps involve the residents and build the support of the neighborhood.

Planning is typically performed on a much larger scope than an individual neighborhood; however, the integration of small scale strategic plans can be one of the most effective ways to achieve overall large-scale comprehensive planning. This can be especially true when referring to urban settings. Incorporating strategic neighborhood plans into the city-wide comprehensive master plan could be a very effective means of including more subareas of the urban environment, with a higher degree of detail, as well as empowering citizens. This empowerment occurs through allowing and encouraging resi-
dents to set their own agendas and goals and by having those agendas recognized within the larger political framework of a municipality.

In general, the purpose of any form or type of urban planning is to provide a means of improving the quality of people's lives. The significance of neighborhood planning in particular is the assistance it can offer in the creation of living environments that support the various social, economic, political, and religious aspects of life. Therefore, with knowledge gleaned from research and the application of creative problem-solving techniques, a neighborhood improvement plan can be developed for individual neighborhoods. The strategies devised in the plan can offer effective means of achieving an improved living environment in a previously declining area. A neighborhood improvement plan such as this will incorporate such aspects of a neighborhood as its strengths and weaknesses as well as known external opportunities or threats. It will provide for specific goals, objectives and, finally, strategies for achieving those goals.

For the purpose of this project, various forms that neighborhood planning has taken in the past will be researched and
evaluated based upon their relevancy to solving today's urban problems within existing frameworks. Those urban problems as well as where and why they exist, and persist, will also be examined. The findings of this study will be applied to a local Muncie neighborhood exhibiting certain characteristics delineated during the course of the literature review.
The methodology and design for this creative project tend to fall largely within the traditional models of research and planning processes with a few deviations allowing for the strategic planning nature of the project.

Phase I is highlighted by the selection of the topic and initial research to establish a working bibliography as well as the beginning of the literature review. The literature review consists of examinations of urban problems within the urban neighborhoods with predominantly minority residents and the various models used in neighborhood planning historically. The neighborhood for examination as the case study is identified in this phase: the Whitely neighborhood, Muncie, Indiana.

Phase II concerns conducting research on the case study neighborhood. Field work consisting of site visits, interviews and attendance at Whitely neighborhood meetings as well as addressing those present at those meetings is begun in an effort to gain familiarity with the area and the residents. Research into statistical data, such as U. S. Census figures, and readings about the
Whitely neighborhood are also initiated in this phase to gain a perspective on the conditions within the neighborhood historically.

Phase III

In Phase III, findings from the previous two phases are synthesized to reveal a picture of the neighborhood and to establish what type of neighborhood planning would adequately address the current issues. During this phase, also, goals and objectives for the neighborhood are established to better guide the planning process towards an effective end.

Phase IV

The fourth phase marks the beginning of the problem-solving activity that is to conclude with the final plan. Various strategies are devised and evaluated for their potential for use within a neighborhood improvement plan for the Whitely neighborhood. Those strategies thought to have the greatest effects on the problems previously deemed as highest priority are earmarked for inclusion in the plan.
Phase V is the final stage and culminates with the final draft of the study and neighborhood improvement plan for Whitely. During this phase editing and reevaluating are the main activities, ensuring that the document submitted will reflect the knowledge I have acquired through my coursework and experience and of the level to which I am capable of performing.
Part I.

Urban Problems and the Black Community.

Section Two provides background information on the content and extent of current urban problems in the United States. The relationship between these problems and the target population will also be examined.

Section 3

Overview of Neighborhood Planning.

Section Three provides a brief overview of neighborhood planning as well as various ways planners have addressed neighborhood issues. A connection between urban neighborhood problems and the utilization of planning techniques to solve these problems is also constructed.

Section 4

Conclusions.

Section Four examines the connection between neighborhood planning and the problems that urban neighborhoods and communities face. Links are made between the problems and possible strategies for finding solutions.
Part II.

The Whitely plan is the application of strategic neighborhood planning techniques to the problems found in the neighborhood. It is compiled specifically for implementation at the grassroots level by the resident-run Whitely Neighborhood Council. This is a strategic action plan giving specific directions and guidance for the solution of various problem situations.
Urban Problems in the Black Community

Urban neighborhoods in America today face a multitude of debilitating problems. These range from poor housing conditions and low academic achievement to accelerating unemployment rates, increased welfare dependency and a lack of political power. The communities hardest hit by these problems are low-income, predominantly black neighborhoods. In a 1989 paper, Dr. Catlin speaks of the problems of poverty, unemployment, illness, mortality and housing quality as indicators of the health of black neighborhoods. He states that presently, all of the national indices illustrate that black communities are losing ground in these issue areas. (14)

Our urban black neighborhoods are suffering from a combination of many things, and apathy and racism seem to act as catalysts to many of these problems. The apathy is a result of the many setbacks and obstacles that have troubled the black community in the United States for centuries, the managerial detachment on the part of leaders and the social detachment of the rest of the community from these neighbor-
hoods. Racism can be either blatant or seemingly unconscious. It appears in the form of redlining by financial institutions, the de facto segregation of schools, or, on a more individual scale, being overlooked for a job promotion.

Members of the black community have historically been refused high-skilled, high-paying employment, denied any real political power, forced to live in designated areas, and denied equal status within American communities. And while the general attitude within the United States has changed greatly over the past three to four decades on the issue of equal rights, many of the same problems that blacks faced three decades ago still exist.

In his book, *The Black Community* (1991), James Blackwell contends that it is through the historic white system of oppression, repression, and racism that the black community has suffered the injustice of inequality and the overall effect of a lower quality-of-life than their white counterparts. He specifically cites four pieces of evidence to illustrate his point. First is the issue of barriers to satisfactory employment opportunities for blacks. He points out that the unemployment, subemployment and un-
deremployment rates for blacks, both men and women, are consistently higher than those for whites. This unemployment is a result of a multitude of issues such as discrimination, lack of quality education and training, physical proximity to employment opportunities and more. And while legislation has been enacted in an effort to counter some of these problems, they still are very much in existence.

Secondly, Blackwell points out the logically direct relationship to this lack of employment and the general inequity of income distribution that is present in the United States today. Blacks have historically had a much lower median family income, as well as per capita income, than whites in the United States. The 1990 Census reports that the median family income for blacks in the United States in 1989 was $22,429* while whites enjoyed a 66% ($14,723) increase over that at $37,152*. Per capita figures read much the same at $8,859* for blacks and $15,687* (a 77% increase from blacks) for whites. These figures themselves illustrate that overall, blacks experience a lower standard of living than do whites, especially taking into account the typically elevated cost of living in urban areas, where 87%*
of the nation's black population reside. (*Note: all figures from U. S. Bureau of Census, 1990)

The lack of employment opportunities, and therefore lower income levels, is also exacerbated by the education system in place in the United States. With large numbers of whites having left the central cities for the suburbs decades ago and overall resistance toward complete desegregation of school districts, many blacks have been denied acceptable educational opportunities. This has created a "dual school system almost as severe as any that operated in the South prior to 1954" (Blackwell, 346). Without competitive educations, the future of many black youths is predetermined. The large majority of black high school graduates do not continue on to any type of higher education, which, in today's competitive job markets, virtually locks them into futures of low-paying, low-skilled jobs. And with the high school dropout rates escalating within our nation's urban areas, those without diplomas may face an even bleaker future of impoverished life-styles and dependence upon an inadequate welfare system.
This lack of opportunity for education and employment for the black community combined with escalating numbers of single parent (mostly female-headed) households and low incomes has led this nation into a situation where our welfare system has become an unmanageable monster fostering dependence, and often exploitation, by recipients. The very nature of our welfare system today, with its seeming advocacy of the dissolution of families and the continual unemployment of its recipients, gives little incentive to continue an education or find a decent job.

Blackwell’s third point hits upon one of the most tangible problems within urban black communities. It is the issue of housing. Regardless of the housing legislation enacted over the past thirty years, housing within lower-income, black, urban communities is historically substandard and remains so today. Absentee landlords, government subsidized complexes, low income levels, insufficient housing loans and vandalism all contribute to the poor state of housing in urban areas. The high number of abandoned structures and lots and those lots left vacant by 1950s urban renewal projects have rendered the landscape of
many urban neighborhoods desolate. One of the most important points brought up by Blackwell is the effect of the physical environment upon the psyche of those who experience it daily. He contends that "...no person can live in such a social and physical milieu every day without experiencing some form of alienation and discontent" (346).

Blacks in many communities still reside within certain perceived, sometimes delineated, areas they were forced into half a century or more ago by the redlining practices of lending institutions and real estate agencies.

While many residents within these areas have chosen to remain, the housing that was in poor condition thirty years ago, is typically worse today. The low incomes and low housing values prohibit many from borrowing sufficient money for repairs and rehabilitation or for moving elsewhere. This effectively locks these residents into living in often unsatisfactory and unsanitary conditions and can severely limit their housing choices and opportunities.

Many urban communities also suffer from other physical problems such as poor infrastructure, poorly maintained lawns,
junk cars and debris scattered on lots. These contribute to visual blight, and have the effect of lowering the community pride felt by individuals residing in these areas.

Blackwell’s fourth and final point deals again with the economic and employment situations facing blacks. The attempt of some blacks to discover the American Dream by beginning their own business ventures has generally failed. Blackwell blames this general failure of black capitalism as a whole upon crime, undercapitalization and the lack of support from government and American communities. As to the successes that did come about, he calls into question their effectiveness in furthering the cause of the American black community. Blackwell surmises finally, that despite all of the legislation and action taken on behalf of blacks in America, "a major portion of the black population did not achieve measurable benefits from the civil rights movement of the 1960s" (346). Unfortunately, this claim can be fairly well supported based upon current statistical trends concerning income, employment, housing conditions and education comparing blacks with whites.
Blackwell's contentions of racism and its enormous role in keeping black Americans from realizing the quality of life that most white Americans enjoy is reaffirmed by Bullard and Feagin. They cite a multitude of examples to support their theory on "institutional racism", such as:

- restrictions on voting for black Americans in the South,
- de facto segregated school systems,
- blacks largely excluded, through selection processes, from juries on cases involving blacks,
- employment discrimination--promotion barriers
- segregated residential areas with poor services and environmental threats
- informal discrimination when seeking housing

(Gottdiener, 58).

The ramifications of this "institutional racism" are national and even global in scope as they affect how our nation as a whole functions internally.

The social implications of this racism can be seen in the difficulties many blacks and whites have interacting with one another, leading to serious problems as whites, who historically
take on leadership roles within the city, are unable to effectively relate to the black residents. Fiscally, the nation is affected as well. Bullard and Feagin cite figures from the National Urban League estimating that racial discrimination lowers the annual GNP by nearly 2%, much of which is related to the housing market (Gottdiener, 73). And while legislation such as the Fair Housing Act (1988), Community Reinvestment Act (1977), Home Mortgage Disclosure Act, Equal Opportunity Employment, and the Civil Rights Acts of 1964, 1965, and 1968 have attempted to combat racism, they have experienced only limited success. Recently though, the 1990 Amendment to the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) has given new life to housing and reinvestment legislation and is greatly impacting new investment in low income areas by lending institutions.

A main barrier to deriving benefits from the civil rights legislation is the black community's lack of political and economic power. This powerlessness seems almost inherent in minority neighborhoods located in urban areas. In addition to the problems discussed throughout this section explaining the lack of economic power, there is a lack of power in the political arena,
largely due to municipal governments that are historically run by white, upper-middle class men. The residents of black neighborhoods and their concerns are oftentimes overlooked by these politicians due to their detachment, physically and socially, from predominantly black neighborhoods. These politicians do not know or understand the problems that plague these neighborhoods and are often given no incentive to concern themselves, as political elections are rarely impacted greatly by the votes from urban blacks. Stemming no doubt from the lack of enforced voting rights until the 1960s, blacks have always had very low numbers of registered voters and therefore typically pose little threat to reelection efforts, causing their concerns to be pushed behind those of others, seen as the politician’s constituency.

There are several factors that can help to explain why it is that politicians and other civic officials in general tend to have difficulty understanding the problems encountered by these neighborhoods and why many traditional remedies are largely unsuccessful. First, these leaders are not always well versed in the needs and desires of such areas as low-income minority
neighborhoods due to their unfamiliarity with their conditions and environment. Second, the issues that politicians and other civic leaders tend to endorse are typically high profile and broad-based in an effort to elicit support from the widest range of interest groups possible. This type of management and campaigning can result in the repaving of a street and sidewalk instead of installing efficient furnaces in needy homes. Third, the practice of shuffling politicians and other civic leaders around through various offices and agencies inhibits their ability to spend any significant time concentrated upon one particular issue or problem. The result of all this is a constant shift in political power with varying viewpoints and issue concerns dependant upon the current power structure and personalities.

With this continually changing political climate and the constant campaigning for reelection by politicians, the residents within the urban neighborhoods are often left out of the political arena completely. These residents are typically not highly educated and do not hold positions of great political power within the larger community. Due to this lack of political and
economic power, black urban neighborhoods often do not benefit greatly from the legislation that has been passed due to a lack of efficient and/or effective implementation.

The result of this lack of interest and understanding from civic officials is a section of the community left with little power to demand action or even support for their own actions from the municipality.

In the instance of a neighborhood that demands action from the city to solve various problems, often a city reacts by employing its planning department to write a plan or program for a neighborhood. This type of planning is often done with little or no regard for citizen involvement and input and can be ineffective due to a band-aid approach rather than addressing the root problems.

An article written by Robert G. Lee addresses the situations that may come about due to large-scale bureaucratic solutions to smaller-scale, local problems. Although his article relates specifically to watershed management practices, it is applicable in any situation where organizational conflicts may arise and hinder progress. He explains that sustainability in gen-
eral can only be arrived at if institutional stability exists. In other words, neighborhoods (or any other unit) can only be considered "sustainable" if there is a stable and manageable framework within which to resolve conflict. A main focus of his article is that the more divisible something is, that is, the smaller the units to be manipulated are, the more internal stability exists and therefore sustainability can be achieved.

This can easily be applied to neighborhoods and the planning processes undertaken by them. The small scale of neighborhood planning and the involvement of the residents in the process better ensures the accountability, responsibility and attention to detail that is desired, but typically unavailable through large-scale bureaucratic planning.

"Institutionalization . . . seems to work best at the level of relatively small social organization where disciplining of behavior is regulated by personal interactions, personal identity and pride in maintaining a reputation as a sound and respected local citizen" (Lee, 84--taken from Korten and Klauss, 1984).
Another major barrier for the residents living in these predominantly black, urban neighborhoods is the perception of the area by outside individuals. Often a neighborhood is classified as a "ghetto" merely because its residents are predominantly black. These areas are automatically labeled as impoverished, crime-ridden areas that are dangerous to visit. The reality in many such situations is merely that the neighborhood is in an older part of town where the housing is in need of repair, abandoned lots and structures dot the landscape; people are more likely to be on the streets; and the income levels are typically below that for a predominantly white neighborhood. These factors alone should not earn the neighborhood the label of ghetto, however. Unfortunately these perceptions do cycle back into the neighborhoods, as well as to other city residents, businesses and lending institutions, proving to be a stigma for the residents of the neighborhood.

After hearing such labels often enough, the residents begin to believe them and alter their behavior and interaction accordingly. The "ghetto" then becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. As people lose their sense of pride in their neighborhood,
lawns are left unkempt and littered, homes are not well main-
tained and the sense of security and trust between neighbors is
lost. In this way, the labels not only affect the psychological
well-being of the residents, but can severely affect the physical
well-being of the area also.

There are many social, economic and political factors
that affect urban black neighborhoods in the United States to-
day. This section specifically discussed unemployment, low in-
come levels, undereducation, discrimination, and the lack of
political and economic power as factors with the underlying
causes of apathy and racism. These are all issues that must be
dealt with and addressed before our cities can be saved. This
same challenge of advocacy planning was addressed by the
field of planning in the 1960s and 1970s but has since been nearly
abandoned for other planning pursuits. Dr. Catlin states that it
is the responsibility of planners to face the challenge of guiding
these communities and addressing these issues that seem to
disproportionately affect the black community (1989).
Overview of Neighborhood Planning

With the progression from Settlement Houses in large urban areas in the late 1800s, Clarence Perry’s Neighborhood Unit concept in the 1930s and the 1960s Community Action Approach, the field of neighborhood planning was defined. These three movements together cover the various issues now dealt with when planning for neighborhoods.

Settlement Houses were begun in England in the late nineteenth century to deal with the poor social conditions of the working class and quickly took root in America. These houses were the precursor to today’s community centers. They were organized in an effort to educate the low-income and immigrant groups in the cities. Those responsible for the establishment of these Settlement Houses felt society had failed the working class. The lower class, including the immigrant class, was not well assimilated to traditional American culture and values, specifically the work ethic, stable family life, recreation and cultural appreciation (Rohe, 15). These organizations attempted to address the poor living conditions of the underprivi-
leged through facilitating the development of strong personal ties among neighbors (Rohe, 17). Their impact was not long-lasting nor far-reaching; however, their studies succeeded in bringing to the attention of the general public, the living conditions of the low-income areas and in focusing upon the social unit (neighborhoods) as an important factor in solving urban problems.

Clarence Perry’s 1929 *Regional Plan for New York and its Environs* first brought to light the Neighborhood Unit Concept. In his plan he delineated six major principles that he felt were central to the design of successful neighborhoods. Before this time, neighborhoods had never been examined as separate physical entities.

Utilizing the then contemporary ideas of planned communities and garden cities along with the community centers from the Settlement Houses, Perry attempted to address the urban residential problems of poor recreational facilities and space and the social isolation created by the high-density, impersonal urban environments. Much of Perry’s neighborhood
unit concept can still be found in present municipal subdivision regulations.

The Community Action Approach was the first neighborhood movement to utilize federal initiative and support of programs to solve urban problems. Citizen participation and involvement was a large part of this type of planning. The Community Action Program and the Model Cities Program, both begun during the Johnson administration, were examples of this type of planning. These programs as well as many others initiated during this era were created to combat the problem of economic and political inequities of the low-income residents. It was felt that these inequities inhibited the poor from becoming more productive members of society. The programs were an attempt to address a broad range of issues thought to be plaguing the poor. The impact of these programs on today's society is evident in the number of strong neighborhood organizations and the concept of citizen participation as an integral part of the planning process.

These three eras in neighborhood planning have attempted to address the problems of urban living in a number of
different ways combining various techniques and focuses. Contemporary neighborhood planning has borrowed much from these different approaches and has applied them to new, more contemporary problems. Unfortunately, neighborhood planning has lost much of its momentum since the 1960s and has been replaced in large part by the comprehensive plan or master plan currently in place in most cities today. Often the needs of individual neighborhoods and areas are lost in the general policy statements of these comprehensive plans. All too often, the comprehensive plan is comprehensive only in the aspect of topics covered, not necessarily in terms of the individual, smaller-scale communities that makeup the larger city. According to William Rohe and Lauren Gates in a 1986 article, comprehensive planning has certain inherent "limitations." These limitations are (1) its tendency towards generality, (2) its typically commercial bias, (3) its apparent inability to deal with social and cultural diversity within the community, and (4) its ignorance of citizen participation and input. (p. 7)

In these ways the comprehensive plan, most often employed by city planning departments and other such munici-
pal agencies, pays little attention to the problems and needs of the smaller units that comprise all cities, the neighborhoods. In some cases it may actually work against neighborhoods, not merely ignoring them but impairing them in their ability to cope with their own problems successfully. Neighborhood planning often involves overcoming these limitations and working outside of the set background of city planning.

Plans and programs devised for neighborhoods must be specific to the needs and resources of a given neighborhood. The solutions and ideas formulated must be site specific, incorporating within this framework a unique understanding of the residents, recognizing their social, cultural, religious, political and educational differences. Paramount to all of this is citizen input and involvement. This invaluable resource must be viewed as an integral element in information gathering, problem-solving, decision making and, finally, implementation.

One of the more effective practices of contemporary neighborhood planning is the citizen-based self-help campaigns that utilize the technical and organizational expertise of professional planners and the familiarity and resources of the residents
of the neighborhood. Rothman refers to this form of planning, "locality development" (p. 26), as being parallel to what is commonly termed community development planning. This form of planning encourages citizen participation as well as voluntary cooperation.

In their book, *Planning With Neighborhoods* (1985), Rohe and Gates review four forms of neighborhood planning now practiced in the United States. They cite privately initiated efforts, Community Development Block Grant programs, local city-wide programs engaging the municipal planning staff, and local city-wide programs engaging the municipal planning staff including some form of neighborhood representation.

The first form of planning organization they cite, that initiated and carried out through private neighborhood organizations, offers the most autonomy but is drastically limited by the lack of available funding, policy making power and technical expertise. This form is also most like that described by Rothman as locality development. The second form, involving CDBG programs, avoids the problem of funding, but is often severely limited by the program's requirements and guidelines. It can also
face the problem of weak control over the nature of improvements within the neighborhood. Rothman also has a parallel to this form, his being labeled the social planning approach. The focus of this planning lies in supplying goods and services to those in need. The third form, that involving only municipal planning staff, often ignores the need for citizen input and support. It is however, the most expedient of the four as it is, by nature, pre-sanctioned by civic leaders thus avoiding potential political clashes at the higher level of municipal politics. The fourth of these forms, involving municipal planners working in conjunction with citizens and representatives, offers citizen involvement as well as needed technical expertise, typically proffered by the city planning staff or an outside consultant.

Rothman offers one other alternative not addressed by Rohe and Gates. That is the idea of social action. This type of planning is undertaken with the desired result being a redistribution of political power, community resources and/or decision-making power. This sort of organization assumes the concept of victimization and conflict as a way of solving these problems and is often undertaken by radical political groups involved
in large social movements (i.e., black power, women's movement).

There are pros and cons in each of the forms of planning organization just discussed. The most effective format for a planning organization, depending upon its purpose and desired result, is a careful and creative combination of different elements. No single means of organization works in all situations in its pure form, it must be altered to fit the specific problems and resources of each community.

In examining the differences of contemporary neighborhood planning relative to its historical precedents, Rohe and Gates (1985) point out that contemporary neighborhood planning views the neighborhood as a political entity. Historically it has been the social and physical dimensions of a neighborhood that were of interest to planners. Contemporary planning also allows for the involvement of all residents within a city rather than concentrating upon only certain subgroups. This leads to a broader base of citizen support. This newer form of neighborhood planning also emphasizes the residents' wishes and needs.
rather than imposing upon them a third-party ideal developed outside the neighborhood.

One important aspect overlooked, in part, by more contemporary styles of neighborhood planning is the social dimension. Physical characteristics still receive the most attention and thought, while the troubles of substance abuse, unemployment, poverty, lack of quality education and other social ills playing prominent roles in many communities are largely ignored. This ignorance of the social problems may simply be a function of scale and responsibility in many cases, with local organizations unable to effectively tackle such complex issues (Rohe, 32).

The potential for the more contemporary type of neighborhood planning, performed by a strong citizen-initiated organization and utilizing the technical knowledge of a professional planner, is great. This type of neighborhood planning allows for the opportunity to address issues specific to a neighborhood and to utilize the resources that are available within that area. It also results in a heightened sense of resident responsibility for the fate of the neighborhood and a bolstered community pride as things are accomplished.
Conclusions

After having examined both the urban problems most often faced by urban black neighborhoods as well as the various forms and methods of neighborhood planning, strong links can be seen. When discussing the problems of urban neighborhoods, apathy and racism were brought out as two extremely strong factors in the breakdown of the neighborhoods. The citizen-based method of neighborhood planning is designed to overcome these very things.

Presently, many residents of these neighborhoods feel powerless and have no hope that anything will change. What they do not realize is that the power to elicit change is found within themselves and their responsibility for the neighborhood. All too often people expect the government or other agencies to take care of problems like crime, unemployment, low incomes, poorly maintained properties. While much of this does fall under the responsibility of government, it does not always work this way. People need to learn to take responsibility for their living environment and to organize in an effort to tackle
these problems themselves. Using the neighborhood planning model that utilizes residents as well as planning professionals, this can be accomplished.

It is unrealistic to expect that the government or any outside agency can know all of the problems that plague a neighborhood, much less implement actions to address them. This is one of the strongest supports for involving residents in the planning process. The residents of a neighborhood are going to be very familiar with all of the problems in the neighborhood because they encounter them daily. Residents are also privy to information and resources that may not be readily available to an outsider.

The purpose of involving a professional planner is to not only guide and direct the process itself but also to act as an educator and information resource, as the planner may be availed to certain information the residents may not have known how to find. The planner is also involved in order to teach the residents about the planning process, the location and use of information, and the organization and management needed to implement a plan.
Also what is often needed in neighborhoods that are declining or have in the past, is a change in the residents’ attitudes. Many of them feel defeated and powerless to alter the changes that have occurred. In this case, the residents’ attitudes may not change even if the government or other agencies do attempt to address the problems. It is easier to change something that is tangible than something such as a thought or feeling. What residents need at this point is to take pride in the changes that may occur. There is probably no better way to achieve this than to have the residents take responsibility for their neighborhood and change it themselves. Witnessing the fruits of your own efforts gives a feeling of accomplishment and pride and will cause residents to view the neighborhood in a different light. This type of attitude alteration is what can make the difference between a neighborhood and merely the block where you build your house and park your car.

Encouraging neighborhood to undertake such efforts and then offering support and assistance to them, is one way planners can begin this healing process for both the neighborhood and the residents.
Part II.

The Whitely Neighborhood Improvement Plan

Kimberly C. Meyer

May 1994
Ball State University
Muncie, Indiana, 47306
--to all who are committed to the pursuit of "community"
Pray, as though everything depended on God; then

Work, as though everything depended on you.

-Unknown
Introduction

Everyone plans! People plan what roads to take on a vacation, they plan parties, they plan their tasks for a day, so it only makes sense to plan their neighborhoods and communities. After all, neighborhoods are where people spend much of their time. All elements of life can be found in almost any neighborhood. There are families and friends, places of employment and places for recreation, stores to buy groceries and to get your hair cut, religious institutions and governmental facilities, as well as the utilities that supply us with energy and ensure drainage of storm water. With all of these elements functioning together yet operating individually, the need for the planned use of these services and facilities becomes evident. The effects of these elements upon external factors that are as varied as environmental conditions or local politics also must be taken into consideration and addressed.

Planning is a seemingly never-ending process of problem solving. This process involves a number of steps that are traditionally followed in the field of planning. These steps are followed in an effort to answer a number of questions, which when working with a community or neighborhood, are typically: Who are we? Who do we want to be? How do we get there?
To answer the first question, an inventory of existing conditions and data collection are completed. This step often entails finding statistical data about a community as well as conducting interviews of residents and community business persons and leaders. This is the phase where community meetings are held. The result should be a comprehensive picture of the community with preliminary analysis of its needs.

The second question, What do we want to be?, is answered by analyzing the information just gathered and formulating a series of broad policy statements—goals—indicating the issues that are a priority. This phase is highlighted by the use of community input and participation. The residents are asked to envision the community in its ideal state. These "visions" are then used to form a better picture of what it is residents want their community to be.

The visions are used to develop various alternatives and scenarios. Brainstorming is a common technique used to generate as many ideas as possible. The alternatives are then compared with the goals and objectives as well as the available resources to evaluate their usefulness. They are then either refined or passed over. These actions mark the beginning of the third phase which ends with the selection of alternatives and their compilation into more specific recommendations for action. The final report is then written and implementation begins.
The Whitely Neighborhood

The issues and needs of the Whitely neighborhood are common to many urban neighborhoods. Residents and neighborhood leaders have taken the first step by reorganizing their neighborhood council and beginning to reach out to various community services and agencies for guidance and assistance. The basis for this plan is the attempt to further guide these and future actions and provide a framework for the division of the responsibility and the prioritization of actions for their timely implementation.

The Whitely Neighborhood Strategic Improvement Plan has been undertaken to provide the residents of the Whitely neighborhood with a framework for action to address issues in their community. The goal was for the residents to express the needs, desires, problems and issues of their neighborhood. The project is an effort to assist the residents by compiling a plan with recommendations for community problem-solving and self-help actions.

After careful analysis of issues within the neighborhood, several elements arose as major issues. Housing has been presented as one of the largest concerns within Whitely. Every-
thing from maintenance to financing to absentee landlords has been identified as barriers to adequate affordable housing in the area. Other issues range from the lack of recreational opportunities to the lack of employment opportunities. The goals and objectives have been stated according to these issues and the recommendations have been presented in an effort to rectify various situations and conditions within the neighborhood.

Those who have a stake in their neighborhood are more likely to be active leaders and bring about positive change. The successful implementation of this plan relies upon the continued and unwavering dedication and involvement of the residents and leaders of Whitely. It will be important to involve everyone in community decision-making and in the application of this plan. The goal of this project is not only to provide a framework for addressing the neighborhood's needs, desires, issues and problems, but also to provide a foundation for the management of change and goal achievement. It will also serve as a guide for residents to work together to better their community and neighborhood.
Community Profile

History

The Whitely neighborhood has been a part of the City of Muncie since 1916 when it was annexed into the city, with the later development being annexed in the 1960s. The neighborhood is located in the northeast quadrant of Muncie, just north of the White River. History has contributed greatly to the pattern of development and housing types as well as the characteristics of the residents.

The neighborhood is laid out on a typically urban grid system with the newer additions being less rigid in the application of that pattern. The housing types are predominantly 1930s and 1940s single-story bungalows with later homes displaying more modern styles. Most of the streets are small connector routes with few sidewalks or curb features.

The legal red-lining and restrictive covenants of a past era of civil rights violation have led Whitely to develop as a mostly black neighborhood. While some people have moved out as chance has arisen, many have chosen to remain among familiar people and surroundings. The desire to remain within the neighborhood, whether because of emotional ties, financial constraints or similar reasons, has made Whitely one of only two
neighborhoods in Muncie whose residents are predominantly black. As of the 1990 U.S. Census, twenty-eight percent of the total black population of Muncie resides in Whitely; while the neighborhood is 72% black.
The graph below illustrates the population trends by race over the past three decades. The total population figures are relatively stable with only slight increases and decreases from one decade to the next. The numbers of blacks in the neighborhood are shown to decrease from the 1960s to the present, while the numbers of whites dip in the 1970 Census only to rise in subsequent years.

Racial Trends in Whitely, 1960-90

The rise in the population of white persons in Whitely can be explained by the new developments that occurred in recent decades. Much of the land to the north of Centennial Avenue has been developed into apartment complexes, occupied by mostly Caucasians. The exception to this is the gov-
ernment-subsidized housing complex located on Centennial Avenue. Based upon casual observation, the neighborhood blocks north of Centennial seem to have a much larger percentage of white residents than in the older areas of the neighborhood. Beyond the racial distribution of Whitely are a number of other characteristics that paint a picture of the people of Whitely, the barriers many of them face daily, and the resources they possess.

According to the 1990 Census, in 1989, 28.9% of Whitely residents had incomes that fell below the poverty level. This has been an increasing trend since the late 1960s when it first was reported in the Census. In 1969, 21.3% of Whitely residents fell into this category; while by 1979, the percentage rose to
25.9%, representing an increase of 21.6%. For the 1979 figures and those of 1989, an 11.6% increase was seen. These figures represent substantial increases in the number of residents living below the poverty line.

Some of this could possibly be explained by the high unemployment rates that are historically found in Whitely. The 1990 Census reported that of the almost 1000 people in the labor force 12.4% of them were unemployed. This is a much higher number than that for Muncie, 9.1%; Indiana, 5.3%; or the United States, 5.5%.

In 1980, the Census reported an unemployment rate in Whitely of 18.9% while in 1970 the rates were calculated for male