PLANNING PROCESSES, PLANNING FUTURES, AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION TECHNIQUES

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THE PLANNING PROCESS[1]

1. Pages 10 and 11 of *The Practice of Local Government Planning* list "five major steps" of the planning process "at the most general level of planning and management…"

- **Basic goals**: Determine the municipality's basic goals (e.g., Do we want to grow? How?).
- **Study and analysis**: Study the municipality's land use, demographic, transportation, and economic characteristics and trends. Analyze its environmental and economic constraints.
- **Plan or policy preparation**: Develop a plan or policy statement that says how, where, and when the municipality will develop.
- **Implementation and effectuation**: Use tools such as zoning ordinances, subdivision/land development ordinances, growth management techniques, and capital improvement programs to implement the above plan or policy statement.
- **Monitoring and feedback**: Monitor the achievement of the above plan or policy statement. Adjust the implementation tools if necessary. Prepare for the next planning process.

2. Page 11 of *The Practice of Local Government Planning* states that "in reality, most local planning consists of three steps..."

- "examining inventories and trends in land use, population, employment, and traffic"
- "forecasting the 'demand'"
- "planning facilities and services of sufficient capacity to accommodate future demand"

3. Pages 12 and 13 of *The Practice of Local Government Planning* provide a more detailed nine-step planning process.

- Take inventories and identify trends in the municipality's land use, demographic, economic, and transportation characteristics.
- Forecast the municipality's land use, demographic, economic, and transportation characteristics on a "what if" basis.
- Identify goals and objectives with extensive public participation.
- Formulate, test, and compare alternative policies and plans.
- Compare and evaluate these alternative policies and plans. Look at the extent to which each meets the above goals and objectives, is environmentally acceptable, and is fiscally, politically, and legally feasible.
- Select the most acceptable policy and/or plan. Review the involved forecasts and assumptions to determine (1) how congruent the plan is with the data obtained in the first step, and (2) how much compromise was necessary to select the most acceptable plan.

[1] So, Frank S., and Judith Getzels, eds. *The Practice of Local Government Planning* (i.e., the "Green Bible"). Washington DC: the International City/County Management Association, 1988. Pages 10-16.

- Prepare detailed plan elements (e.g., for housing, transportation, and land use).
- Implement the plan through both public and private means.
- Continuously evaluate the plan and the processes that created it. Adjust the implementation measures and re-plan as necessary.

4. Pages 13-16 of *The Practice of Local Government Planning* list five "levels" or types of plans.

- **Comprehensive Plans (a.k.a. "master" or "general" plans)**: A comprehensive plan's geographic scope is usually an entire municipality, its "time scale" is usually long-term, and its elements usually address demographics, economic development, transportation, land use, community facilities, public utilities, environmental characteristics/constraints, and recreational opportunities. It is "comprehensive" in that it tries to link long-range objectives to a number of interdependent elements. Page 14 of *The Practice of Local Government Planning* states that recently, comprehensive plans "have tended not to be presented in map form… instead most plans are a series of policy statements."
- **System Plans**: A system plan sets the policies and programs for a specific network of community-wide facilities, such as a sewerage system.
- **District Plans (a.k.a. "area" plans)**: A district plan usually deals with the same subjects as a comprehensive plan. However, it does so in more detail, and its geographic scope is limited to only one part of the municipality (e.g., downtown). Lot-specific land use inventories and plans, full market real estate analyses (involving studies of both supply and demand), visual form surveys, land assemblage proposals, and detailed traffic circulation, parking, housing, economic development, and economic revitalization analyses and plans are more likely to be part of a district plan than a comprehensive plan.[2]
- **Subsystem Plans**: A subsystem plan is a detailed engineering plan for a subsystem of a community-wide facility.
- **Site Plans**: A site plan is a plan for a site or a specific component of a community-wide facility, such as a sewage treatment plant or a library.

5. In 1925, the City of Cincinnati became the first American municipality to officially adopt a comprehensive plan that meets the above definition.[3]
6. Each element of a comprehensive plan usually contains (1) a description of existing conditions, (2) a statement of goals and objectives, and (3) a description of future needs and proposals for meeting those needs.[4]
7. **"Goals** are value-based statements that are not necessarily measurable. **Objectives** are more specific, measurable statements of desired ends."[5]
8. "The recommendations of the plan – are usually described in the form of policies, programs, and projects. **Policies** are rules or courses of action that indicate *how* the goals and objectives of the plan should be realized. **Programs** are a series of related, mission-oriented activities aimed at carrying out a particular policy or group of

[2] So et al. Eds. (1988) Pages 95-107.
[3] So et al. Eds. (1988) Page 25.
[4] So et al. Eds. (1988) Page 81.
[5] So et al. Eds. (1988) Page 81.

policies. Programs often consist of a series of **projects**, which are specific actions or 'brick-and-mortar' recommendations."[6]

9. "Traditional planning was essentially a technical exercise. Modern planning practice is both normative and technical… **Normative planning** develops the broad, general basis for action, whereas **technical planning** is concerned with specific, established purposes and the procedures employed in achieving those purposes. One is concerned with values, the other with methods. An effective plan should deal equally with the normative and the technical… in the middle zone between the politician and the bureaucrat."[7]

SURVEYS[8]

1. A **cross sectional survey** is used to evaluate a point in time. A **longitudinal survey** is used to evaluate a situation *over* time.
2. The size of a survey's sample, relative to the population being surveyed, is crucial to the survey's accuracy.
3. The random nature of a survey's sample is also crucial to the survey's accuracy.
4. There are three commonly used types of surveys.

- **Mailed surveys**: Mailed surveys are inexpensive, do not involve training or recruiting interviewers, allow the subjects to respond at their own convenience, and provide the subjects with time to answer detailed questions that may require some research (e.g., How much of your monthly mortgage payment is escrowed for local property taxes?). However, they are slow, have a low response rate (15% on average), require clear questions, are inhospitable to open ended questions, and do not work well with the elderly or the poorly educated.
- **Telephone surveys**: Telephone surveys are fast, are cheaper than in-person surveys, and avoid biases caused by subjects reading ahead. However, they ignore people who don't have telephones, and they require trained interviewers – as well as the monitoring of those interviewers. Furthermore, the quality of telephone survey responses decreases if the questionnaire takes too much time.
- **In-person surveys**: In-person surveys work well with long questionnaires, can get to hard-to-reach populations, and can record the subject's visual clues. However, they are very expensive and the interviewer can introduce biases.

VISIONING[9]

1. Visioning is a public participation technique that is used to develop goals and objectives, which are often referred to as "themes" in the visioning literature. These themes are then compiled into a "vision statement," which is a preferred image of the community's long-range future.
2. Visioning is typically used at the beginning of the planning process.

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[6] So et al. Eds. (1988) Page 82.
[7] So et al. Eds. (1988) Page 74.
[8] So et al. Eds. (1988) Pages 483-485.
[9] Klein, William R. "Visions of Things to Come." *Planning*. May 1993: Page 10.

3. A representative sample of the community is assembled in an informal setting. An impartial group leader is used to direct the discussions. Projections and illustrations are often used to show the consequences of the group's choices.

FOCUS GROUPS[10]

1. The use of focus groups as a planning public participation technique was inspired by their use in the advertising industry.
2. A focus group – which is usually a representative sample of a community – is assembled in an informal setting. Like visioning, a group leader is used to direct the discussions. Unlike visioning, the discussions are typically directed towards a few, specific subjects.
3. A focus group is often an inexpensive and fast alternative to a large-scale community survey.
4. However, a domineering participant can skew the responses of a focus group.

PLANNING CHARETTES[11]

1. A charette is a short, intense, collaborative process that is usually used to design projects, plan communities, and/or build consensuses.
2. A charette involves a small group of professionals and/or citizens working in an informal setting to produce a product. If the product is more professionally-oriented (e.g., a subdivision), then the group should be mostly composed of professionals. If the product is more consensus-oriented, then the group should be mostly composed of citizens.
3. There are five commonly used types of charettes.

- **Professional design charettes**: These are used to design projects. The involved group contains only professionals – such as planners, architects, landscape architects, and engineers.
- **Participatory design charettes**: A participatory design charette is identical to a professional design charette, except that the group works in the full view of the public.
- **Academic design charettes**: An academic design charette is similar to a professional design charette, except that it takes place in an academic setting.
- **Professional planning charettes**: A professional planning charette is identical to a professional design charette, except that it addresses general planning concerns instead of a specific project's design. In a professional planning charette, pubic participation typically consists of occasional meetings between the group and public officials or citizens.
- **Participatory planning charettes**: A participatory planning charette is entirely composed of citizens – with the sole exception of a professional facilitator. The facilitator typically drafts a summary of consensus points at the conclusion of the process.

[10] Zotti, Ed. "New Angles on Citizen Particiption." *Planning*. January 1991: Pages 19-21.
[11] Russell, Joel S., and Andrew Meyers. "Planning Charrettes." *PAS Memo*. August 1995: Pages 1-4.

4. A **"design-in"** – in which professional planners (1) teach citizens how to design and/or plan communities, and (2) help the citizens design a project or develop a plan – is a close relative of the charettes.

POLICY DELPHIS (i.e., THE DELPHI TECHNIQUE)

1. A delphi is used to develop a consensus between two or more groups that are in conflict.
2. The views of each group are presented in successive rounds of argument and counter-argument. The rounds gradually work towards a consensus. Questionnaires may be used with larger groups.

BRAINSTORMING

1. The classic brainstorming technique can be used to formulate goals and objectives, identify issues, develop strategies, select alternatives, and resolve conflicts.
2. This technique roughly works as follows.

- A question is formulated and asked to a group.
- Each member of the group writes down an answer to the question.
- Then, each member of the group reads his or her answer in turn. Repeated answers are allowed, but discussion is not permitted at this point.
- Then, each member of the group discusses the group's answers in turn.
- Finally, the group prioritizes the answers.

3. The classic brainstorming technique places each group member on an equal footing. This makes it difficult for domineering personalities to skew the results.

FORCE FIELD ANALYSIS

1. Force field analysis – which is a variation of brainstorming – can be used to analyze and select policies and programs from a known group of alternatives.
2. Force field analysis roughly works as follows.

- Alternative number one is presented.
- Each member of the group lists his or her likes and dislikes concerning this alternative.
- The complete set of dislikes is then prioritized by the group.
- The group members then make suggestions on how they would overcome the highest priority dislikes.
- Then, alternative number two is presented – and so on…

NOMINAL GROUP TECHNIQUE

1. The nominal group technique – which is also a variation of brainstorming – can be used to formulate goals and objectives, identify issues, develop strategies, select alternatives, and resolve conflicts.
2. The nominal group technique roughly works as follows.

- A question is formulated and asked to a group.
- Each member of the group answers the question individually.
- The group's answers are recorded and then prioritized by the group as a whole.

WIRELESS COMMUNICATIONS ISSUES[12]

1. Since the *Outline of Subject Matter: AICP Written Examination* places "Impacts of new technologies" in the same category as "Visioning" and "Goal setting," we will discuss wireless communications issues here.
2. "The term **wireless communications** refers to a family of communication devices that can send and receive messages instantly – by voice in the case of cellular telephones or alphanumerically in the case of pagers… One of the newer forms of wireless voice communication is the **Personal Communications Service (PCS)**. PCS is similar to a cellular phone but operates at different radio frequencies and requires twice as many communications facilities." (Covington, Page 8)
3. "Wireless communications typically require **three components**: a **device** (telephone, pager, or portable computer), a **cell site/radio link**, and a **switching office**. Every major metropolitan area has one or more switching offices, where calls from cell sites are processed. The calls are then sent out through the telephone system… When a call is made, the device seeks out a radio link, also known as a cell site… Most cell sites include one or more antennas, a structure to support them, and a building to house radio and computer equipment. Cell sites can be located on the roofs of buildings, on billboards, atop wooden utility poles, and on metal poles. Lattice towers are considered a last resort." (Covington, Page 8)
4. **The Federal Telecommunications Act of 1996** (Public Law No. 104-104) set up most of the framework in which local governments address wireless communications facilities.

- Section 253(a) forbids state and local legislation that "may prohibit or have the effect of prohibiting… any telecommunications service." However, Section 253(c) states that "Nothing in this section affects the authority of a state or local government to manage the public rights-of-way or to require fair and reasonable compensation from telecommunications providers, on a competitively neutral and nondiscriminatory basis, for use of public rights of way."
- Thus, municipalities may regulate and require permits for the siting, design, construction, and modification of wireless communications facilities – provided that these facilities are not entirely excluded from the jurisdiction. However, municipalities may not regulate these facilities on the basis of the environmental effects of radio frequencies that have already been approved by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). Furthermore, municipal regulatory schemes must be impartial and reasonably fast. Permit denials must be in writing and "be supported by substantial evidence."

5. Ringwood, New Jersey, required all cell sites to be located on land owned or leased by the municipality. Medina, Washington, instituted a six-month moratorium on the issuance of cell site permits – which was upheld in federal court.
6. Many towns have used **wireless master plans** to (1) approve the areas where cell sites may be located, and (2) review individual site applications.
7. "Local legislation should also include provisions for **co-location** – the sharing of facilities (e.g., two or more cell sites sharing the same tower)… Local governments

[12] Covington, William. "Wireless World." *AND* Kreines, Ted. "What the Wireless Revolution Means." *Planning*. December 1996: Pages 8-12.

like the idea because it reduces site proliferation, and the industry likes it because construction and operating costs are reduced. There are some drawbacks, however. For one thing, co-location creates larger sites. The more carriers sharing a facility, the bigger (and potentially more intrusive) it will be… Wireless communications companies can share cell sites. They cannot, however, share the radio equipment that sends and receives calls and information. Should two carriers share a site, normally 10 feet of space must separate the antennas belonging to each company." (Covington, Pages 8 and 12)

8. Municipalities can encourage or "require when practical" the "stealthing" of cell sites. Camouflaged tree poles, steeples, and architectural elements are all commonly used to minimize aesthetic impacts and to avoid ugly towers.
9. Municipalities should review their zoning ordinances to make sure that they (1) do not exclude wireless communications facilities, and (2) do not permit such facilities everywhere under broad definitions such as "public utilities" and "telecommunications facilities."
10. The Telecommunications Act of 1996 also permitted cable companies to offer local telephone services, permitted telephone companies to offer cable services, deregulated cable operators, and deregulated the wireless communications industry in general.