CAMIROS

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CONSULTANTS IN PLANNING, ZONING, URBAN DESIGN, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING

Currently, Camiros is working with LISC in 10 Chicago neighborhoods to prepare community-driven Quality-of-Life Plans, which address physical, economic and social issues. Little Village, pictured here, is one of these neighborhoods. Camiros is working with the Little Village Community Development Corporation to identify issues currently affecting the community, which range from neighborhood safety to reinforcing the community's strong Latino heritage.

IN THIS ISSUE...

THE ART OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

It's been argued that planning is an art and a science. The science is relatively easy to discern - forecasting, mathematical modeling, survey research, and other techniques to draw out the facts, and test and evaluate the assumptions. But what is the *art* of neighborhood planning?

The art of neighborhood planning is knowing how to move from a vision to an agreement on what actions and projects will create a good neighborhood. It is evident in how planners balance conflicting positions and demands, and in how they create designs for future action. Neighborhood planning is more art than science because it deals with various constituencies where perception is often as important as reality. Therefore, the support of actions depends on popular and political consensus, as well as market analysis and factual measures of conditions.

What is a Neighborhood Plan?

A good neighborhood is healthy not only in the physical sense, but also in an economic and social sense. A neighborhood plan is a design for action that helps resolve those issues that stand in the way of building a "good neighborhood."

Every neighborhood plan is different because every neighborhood deals with different issues. For example, an upper middle class residential neighborhood may have access to educational and health care facilities, as well as easy access to commercial uses both in the neighborhood and some distance away by car. This differs from a working class neighborhood, which may be plagued by abandoned buildings, underdeveloped sites, a lack of local business, and an inadequate support system for health and educational services. Neighborhood plans are useful at both ends of this spectrum, but it is clear that plan structure and content will be very different.

Thus, the first step in the art of neighborhood planning is coming to an understanding of key issues. Most often these

(continued on page 5)

PLANNING I.T.: TECH LITERACY

WiFi, broadband, DSL, e-government… These terms did not exist a few years ago. Yet now, most people can provide at least cursory definitions. But this new language only hints at the knowledge planners must familiarize themselves with; the real concern is how these technologies will shape cities. With laptop sales expected to rise above the one-quarter share of the market that they currently hold, the proliferation of WiFi hotspots, the slow extinction of dial-up services, and the dominance of broadband, planning must begin to seriously study the evolution of technology and its impacts on people's lifestyles *and* their cities.

For one thing, the relationship between citizens and local governments will see a rapid evolution as municipal websites evolve from repositories of information into interactive sites. Planners have a place in this process, and will play a role in opening up new lines of communication and improving the ability of local municipalities to serve their citizens. But the impact of new technology will not stop there. Cities will change to accommodate new information technology (IT) and citizens will reshape their cities as their lifestyles adjust to technological advances.

Throughout all of this, it is important to keep one principle in mind: how cities approach IT will dictate both how much awareness there is of IT opportunities and how much support these opportunities can garner. With each IT advancement, the range of issues cities need to deal with are becoming more defined. In general, these can be categorized as:

- ***Physical infrastructure*** issues, such as accommodating new fiberoptic cable in built-out communities and bringing affordable telecommunication services to rural areas.
- ***Economic development*** issues, from retaining current businesses that rely on IT and require increased capacity, to attracting new IT-oriented businesses, which include not only dot-coms but non-IT firms who need the connectivity of cyberspace to function effectively.
- Investment in ***human resources***, as there will be a need for the workforce to be tech-literate and computer-savvy.
- Accomodation of ***new uses and users***, such as the proliferation of home occupations and residents who choose to telecommute.

Physical Infrastructure. To create a truly "wired" environment, proper physical infrastructure is a necessity. Here, municipalities need to look at where fiberoptic cables - the "highways" of IT - will go and whether other necessary systems, such as electricity, have the capacity to support both high-demand IT businesses and residents. The built environment should be examined to see which current buildings can accommodate, and eventually be marketed to, businesses which rely heavily on IT. New development should be required to plug in to the system, as well as contribute to its capacity if possible, which may mean looking at site development standards. A comprehensive assessment of physical infrastructure is needed and, to make these transitions economical, so is a vision for a fully integrated system. Piecemeal infrastructure additions will only add to costs.

Economic Development. There are reasons for updating physical infrastructure other than convenience; it is key to economic development. There is the risk of losing both current and future businesses because infrastructure is not in place. Simply put, businesses will leave if they cannot perform to full potential and new businesses will avoid areas that cannot accommodate required technology. While important commercially, it is also an issue for residents. For most families with a computer, dial-up is insufficient - instead, DSL, typically offered by numerous providers, is the first choice. Additionally, the number of telecommuters is expected to increase and homes must be adequately wired and designed to support such trends.

Human Resources. The loss of manufacturing, and increase in high-tech, employment means that planners need to look at

(continued on page 4)

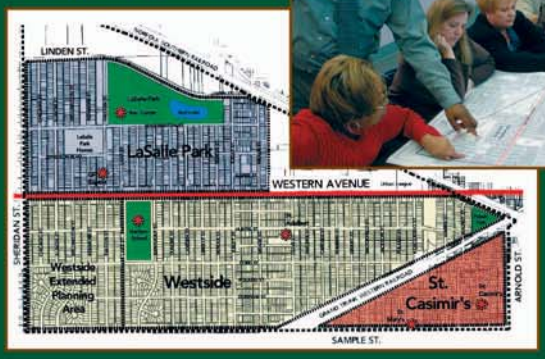
Wireless antennas, like those pictured here, can transform neighborhood businesses into gathering places. "WiFi hot spots," like this Starbucks in Chicago's Lakeview neighborhood, are popular among local residents with laptops; these kinds of establishments allow for both social interaction and computing time.

ON THE DRAWING BOARD...

Camiros is working with the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) to prepare neighborhood Quality of Life Plans in **10 Chicago neighborhoods**, including Englewood, Garfield Park, Chicago Lawn, Humboldt Park, Lawndale, Little Village, Logan Square, North Kenwood-Oakland, and Woodlawn. These plans will result from a "bottom-up" neighborhood planning process, which involves numerous community meetings to determine the most pressing issues and to formulate strategies to address those issues. The plans are strategic in nature, encompassing issues such as housing, economic development, health, safety, education and community resources.

The **City of Trenton, New Jersey** has engaged Camiros to prepare a Downtown Master Plan. Trenton already has a number of plans for the Downtown, some of which date back over ten years, but comprehensive revitalization of the City's Downtown has proved elusive. To this end, Camiros crafted a public participation component to bridge the disconnect that has occurred between previous plans, public desires and public input. This process begins with a synthesis of previous plans that will lead to a coordinated vision for the Downtown, addressing aspects from urban design to social, cultural and historic resources. An action-oriented plan is anticipated, which will outline specific implementation strategies.

As part of the US Department of Justice sponsored "Weed and Seed" effort, the **City of South Bend, Indiana** retained Camiros to assist its Neighborhood Restoration Committee to prepare a plan that would identify the needs of target areas and strategic programs necessary to bring about change in the LaSalle Park, Westside and St. Casimir's neighborhoods. The strategies and programs of the Neighborhood Restoration Plan build upon four key principles: collaboration, coordination, community participation and leveraging of resources. Among the key goals determined by the neighborhoods are infrastructure restoration to improve neighborhood function and appearance, restoration of housing stock to increase the amount of owner-occupied housing and improve the quality of rental housing, and increased community involvement.



Camiros is currently assisting the **City of St. Charles, Illinois** in the update of its zoning ordinance. A major aspect of this revision is to modify the residential zoning district regulations to maintain the established character and scale of these neighborhoods. Camiros and City staff evaluated data on residential lotting patterns, bulk standards and architectural characteristics, which revealed where the present requirements are inconsistent with the current development pattern. The Zoning Commission determined that additional residential districts and adjusted bulk standards are warranted to prevent out-of-scale development and to make existing neighborhoods conforming.

Sketch by Bondy Studio

Camiros recently completed the "47th Street Blues District Design Guidelines" for the **47th Street Blues District in Chicago**. Extending from St. Lawrence Avenue on the east to Prairie Avenue on the west, 47th Street served as the center of African-American culture and business within Chicago during the heyday of the Grand Boulevard Neighborhood. These guidelines reflect present day realities, yet build upon the strengths of the neighborhood's history. An illustrative plan and street elevations were prepared to suggest how the District might develop over time. The illustrative plan depicts site, landscape and building guidelines based on streetscape plans prepared by CDOT and currently under construction.

PLANNING I.T.: TECH LITERACY (cont'd)

how vacancies in the high-tech job market can be filled by community members in need of employment. Economists generally agree that, while globalization and the economic downturn have left many in dire need of steady work, the future will see this trend reverse. There seems to be indication that there will be high-tech job positions available and not enough highly-skilled workers to fill them. New jobs will require higher levels of education. Job training programs will need to change their content to fill these positions and create a computer-savvy workforce. This means arguing for a number of changes, such as better computer education in schools and community access to computer resources.

New Uses and Users. With more people working at home and the addition of new tech-related and/or tech-dependent home occupations, good connectivity is the key to success and survival of these businesses. But this trend will also alter the way residents use their city. Residents who work at home will utilize their physical environment differently. It may become more commonplace to see a "quick copy" shop located in or near a residential neighborhood, next to the corner pizzeria. There may be a need for a FedEx store to locate within the neighborhood. Residents will be out and about at different hours than we have typically become accustomed to. Zoning and development standards will need to accommodate these changes, so as to bring neighborhoods closer to maintaining the proper mix of uses for a balanced and active community.

Illinois, among other states, has recognized the importance of IT. The Local Planning Technical Assistance Act (ILCS 662), has a telecommunications infrastructure component as one of the required elements for funding under the Act. Municipalities in New Jersey and Massachusetts have looked to "Cyberdistricts" as a part of their future development. At the core of all these efforts is the fact that it is important to assess the current state of our communities in this framework now and to formulate a vision for how the community will look in the future with the full integration of IT.

STAFF NEWS

Pictured (left to right): Barry Gore, Shirelle Bland, Tim Scott.

New Camiros staff! Senior Associate ***Barry Gore, AICP,*** comes to the firm from Minneapolis, where he worked on the award-winning "Above The Falls" Riverfront Plan for the Mississippi River in Minneapolis. While earning his Master's Degree in Urban Planning and Policy at the University of Illinois at Chicago, new Associate ***Tim Scott*** worked in a planning capacity with the City of Highland Park, Illinois. Prior to becoming a planner, Tim enjoyed an eight year career as a senior marketing professional and holds an MBA from DePaul University. Camiros also welcomes new Administrative Assistant ***Shirelle Bland***, previously with Arthur Anderson.

Richard Wilson and Beth Hibner co-authored an article entitled "Rethinking Olmsted's Model Community - Riverside, Illinois" for the August/September, 2003 issue of *Planning*, the magazine of the American Planning Association.

Finally, there are a number of scholarly pursuits this year at Camiros. Les Pollock is again teaching a course in comprehensive planning at the University of Illinois at Chicago and a planning course at the Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT). Also at IIT are adjunct professors Jacques Gourguechon and Richard Wilson. Jacques and Richard are co-teaching a course, the "Principles of City Planning II," as part of the Masters Degree program in the School of Architecture.

Telecom "hotels," such as the Lakeside Technology Center in Chicago pictured here, provide opportunities for improving telecom infrastructure and, in some cases, for creative adaptive reuse. Lakeside's conversion of a former printing warehouse allowed for preservation of the historic building.

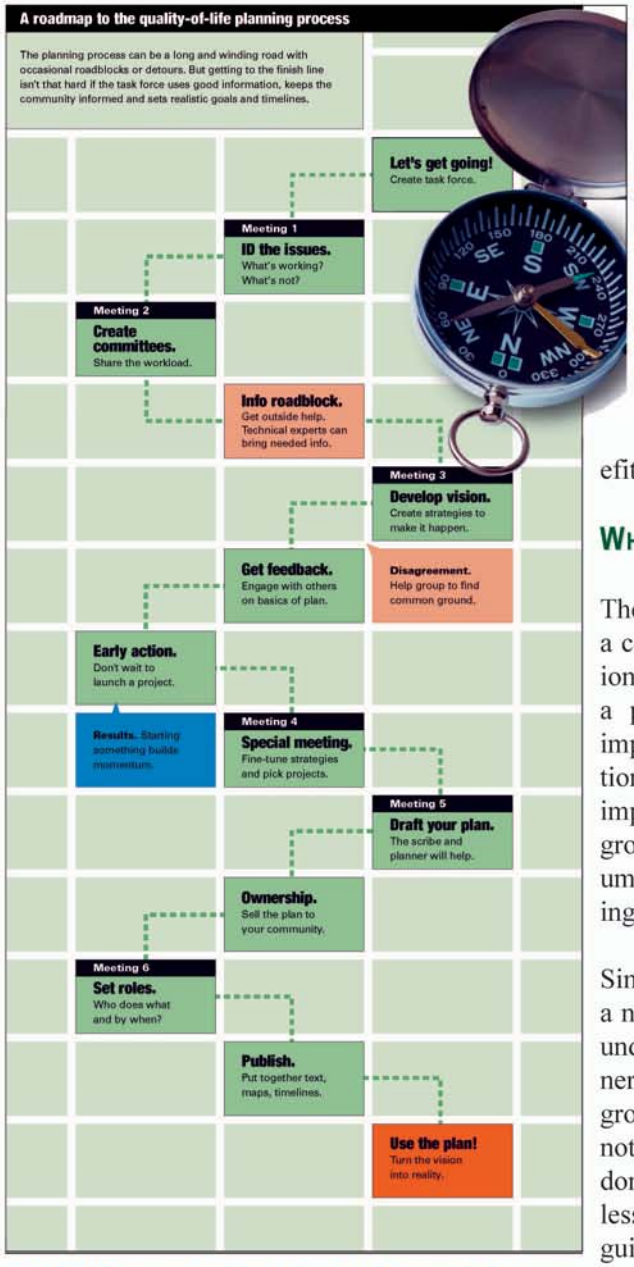
THE ART OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN (cont'd)

range across all aspects of a community - physical, economic and social - and so a plan must be organized in a comprehensive, yet strategic, format. Neighborhood plans are vision-driven and contain a range of projects, organized under specific strategies, formulated to address and resolve identified issues.

Whose Plan Is It?

In some communities, neighborhood planning is undertaken by the city and resides under the umbrella of comprehensive planning. This reflects a view that neighborhood planning simply refines the policies of the city's comprehensive plan in order to operate at the neighborhood scale. This works to a point, but tends to define the scope of the plan ahead of time and predetermines the neighborhood's planning issues. The neighborhood *participates* in the planning process rather than *generates* the process. Thus, this is termed a "top-down" approach.

Neighborhood planning can also be a tool to resolve issues as defined by the residents. Here, the scope and content of the plan may diverge considerably from the top-down approach. With a "bottom-up" approach, the sponsor of the plan - a community development corporaion or other organizing entity - is neighborhood-based, as are the constituents of the plan, such as residents, local businesses and institutions. As a result, the issues that drive the plan's vision and strategies focus completely on the neighborhood. This product can differ considerably from a plan prepared by the city, which may look at the neighborhood as only one of the many that comprise the city. This "bottom-up" approach can be seen in many of the neighborhood plans Camiros has - and is currently - preparing for LISC in Chicago.



The LISC "Planning Handbook," given to all members of a neighborhood planning task force, contains this neighborhood planning "roadmap."

These two models may respond to different sets of constituents and produce different products, but one does not necessarily represent the entire neighborhood more than the other. While a "bottom-up" process might draw broader participation, planners should not suffer under the delusion that the true client of this planning process is the *entire* neighborhood. No planning process ever involves the entire neighborhood; rather, it involves those who *choose* to be involved. The art of organizing any successful process lies in establishing a broad set of participation opportunities so that all neighborhood residents and businesses have an equal chance of participating and benefiting.

What Does the Plan Look Like?

The best neighborhood plans lay out what a community wants to achieve in a fashion that can rally support, make a case for a project and build confidence in its implementing entities. Good communication is key, as is a well-rounded plan with implementable actions that neighborhood groups can support. Creating such a document - and then marketing it to the funding community - is an art.

Since the plan is to provide direction for a neighborhood, it must be clear, easy to understand and not burdened with "planner speak." It stresses direction not background, content not rationale, and brevity not length. It emphasizes projects to be done, not just policies to be followed. It is less a guide to decision-making, than a guide to implementation. While the plan may help to influence city land use and zoning policy, as well as economic development and capital improvement policy, its true worth to the community is when things - desired things - get done. Every strategy must be supported by clear projects, tangible and visible to the neighborhood.

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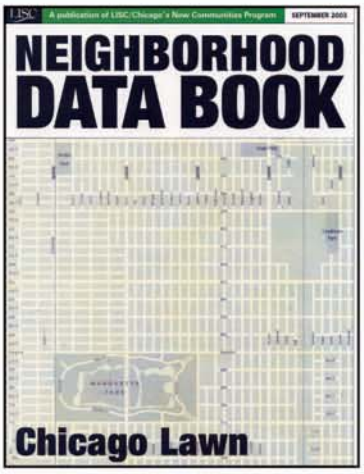
THE ART OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN (cont'd)

This is why a neighborhood plan must be strategic, rather than just comprehensive. And detailed plans that include illustrations of desired end results are often better at building local support and are most effective in lobbying the city council and the development community. The art is organizing a plan that addresses the full range of neighborhood issues, builds upon and influences city policy, and spurs new development.

Art and Science

The art builds upon the science of planning. Solid data assembly, tested forecasts, and clearheaded assessment of problems and potentials are for naught if not tempered by the art of synthesis, balance, and community involvement and consensus building. This is the art that is central to defining the content and direction of the neighborhood plan.



Each LISC neighborhood received a data book containing information on various aspects of neighborhood life - income, housing, safety, etc. This is the "science" that begins the planning process.

GALLERIA CENTER - ALGONQUIN, ILLINOIS...

Camiros was retained to formulate a master plan for a "lifestyle commercial center" that would provide an alternative to "big box" shopping. The plan provides for over one million square feet of space on 110 acres, located at the intersection of Randall Road and County Line Road. The lifestyle center concept emphasizes smaller stores set within an attractive, pedestrian-friendly environment. Camiros' plan incorporates a major public square, inviting streetscapes and a functionally integrated layout.

Village Square Central Plaza. A bird's eye view of the Village Sqaure depicts the central plaza, main focal point, performance area and perimeter lawns.

Village Square Performance Area & Colonnade. This view of the Village Square shows the colonnade defining the performance area and its relation to the surrounding retail space.

Streetscape. The view of a typical streetscape scene along the shopping boulevard illustrates the pedestrian-friendly setting.

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