

# Community Planning Events

How to organise  
a successful one

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Site Editor: **communityplanning.net**

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# Definitions

**Community Planning** = 'Planning carried out with the **active participation** of the end users.'  
(*Community Planning Handbook, 2008*)

**Community Planning Event** = 'Carefully structured **collaborative** event at which all stakeholders, including the local community, work closely with independent specialists from all relevant disciplines.'  
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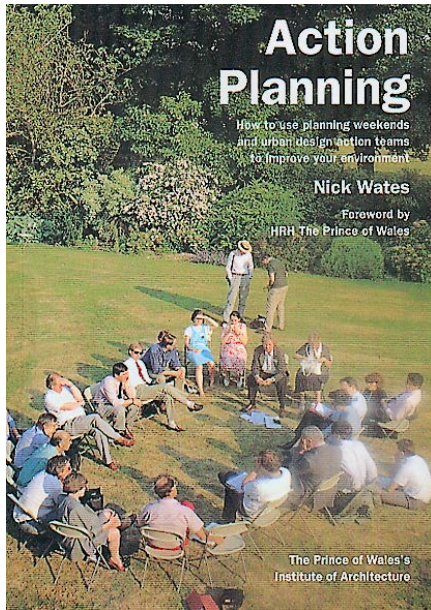
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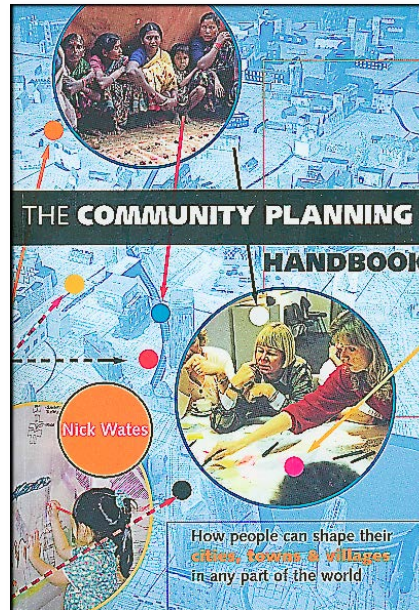


# Action research



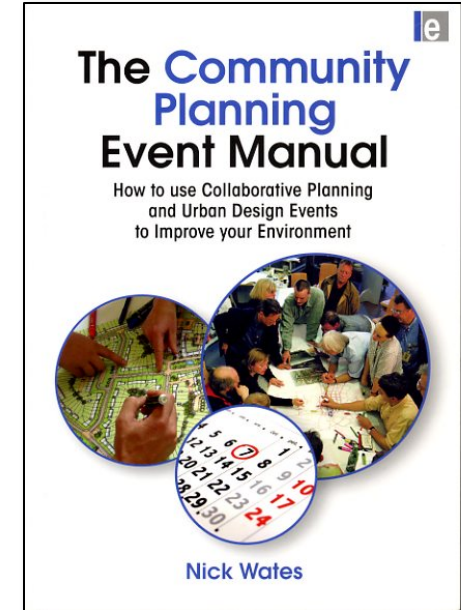
1996

- Academy of Urbanism
- Department for International Development
- Department of the Environment, Transport & the Regions
- English Partnerships



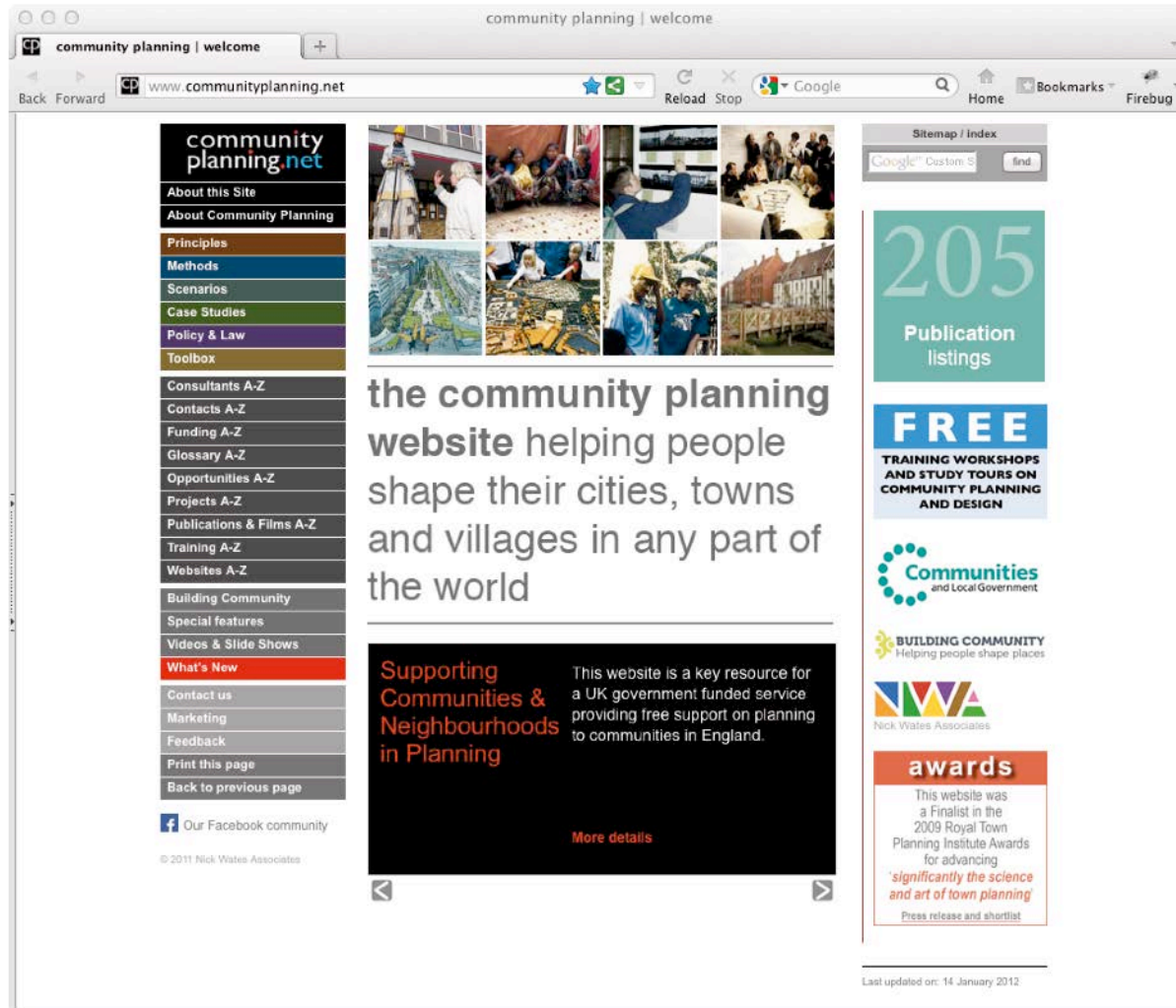
2000

- European Commission Humanitarian Office
- John Thompson & Partners
- The Prince's Foundation
- South Bank University
- Urban Design Group



2008

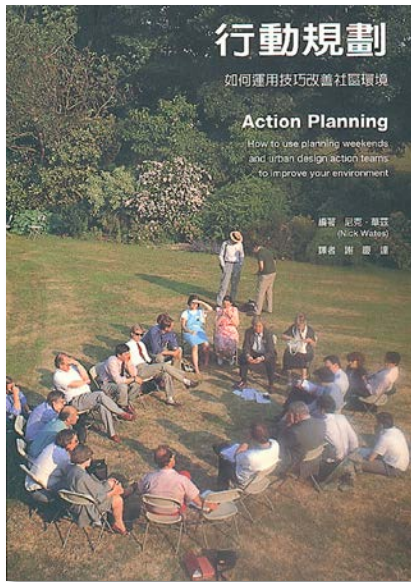
# Communityplanning.net



Launched 2001



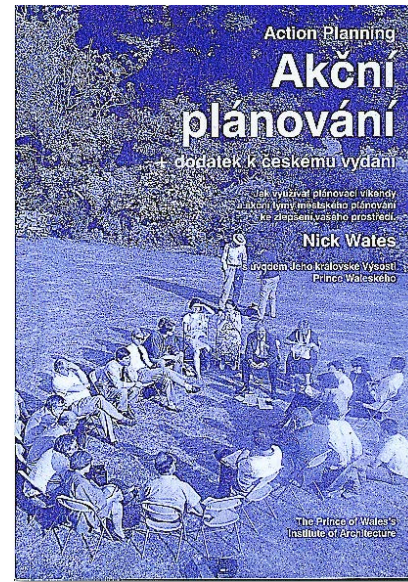
# Universal applicability



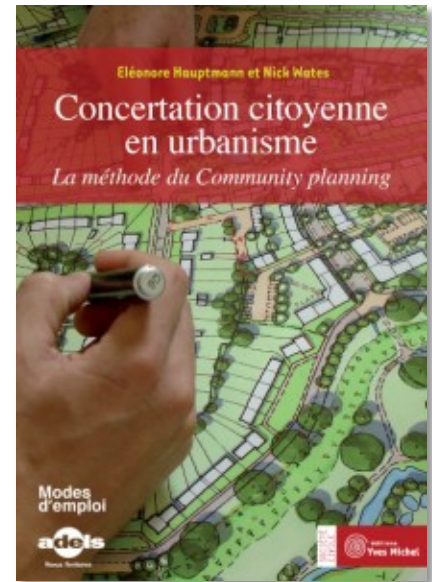
Chinese  
1996



German  
1997



Czech  
1999



French  
2010

# Key features of events

- Thorough preparation
- Intensive work programme
- Community participation  
(not just consultation)
- Broad mission
- Multidisciplinary team work
- Expert facilitation
- High profile communication
- Rapid and ongoing feedback
- Flexibility

# Sample Event

How one type of 5-day community planning event **might** work using images from twenty different real examples, mainly from the UK and Europe.



# The Team arrives



**Specialists** from a **range** of disciplines.

1 to 25 people.

Often from **outside** the area providing freshness and **independent facilitation**.

**Local specialists** equally involved, but different capacity.



# Setting up



The first thing the Team does is put finishing touches to the **venues**: erecting banners...

# Setting up



...preparing workshop signs...

...arranging equipment, furniture, models etc.

What is about to happen is a bit like a theatre production and the stage needs to be set.



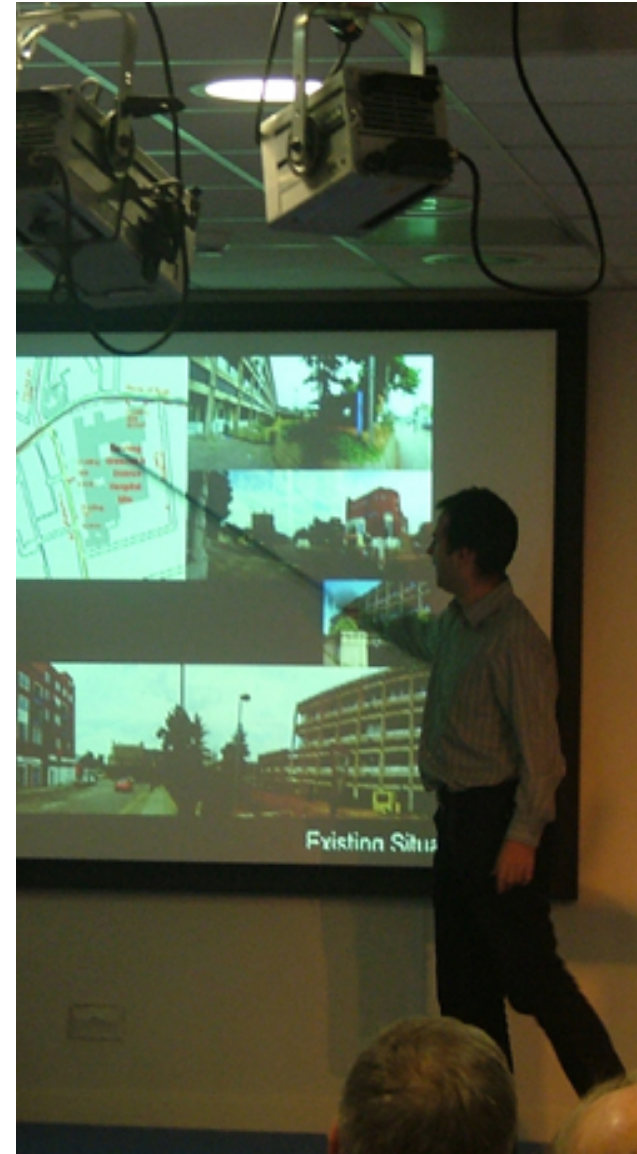


# Briefings



Event kicks off with **briefings** from key actors:

- residents
- businesses
- landowners
- planners
- urban designers
- developers
- politicians



# Reconnaissance



An important part of the briefing is a physical **reconnaissance** trip: looking at the area being dealt with.

This can be from a bus ....

...from the air in some cases...



...or on foot.



The **purpose** of all this is to quickly get a feel for the place and the key issues.

# Launch event



There might be a launch event: a **public meeting** and/or a **dinner** for hosts and guests with suitable speakers.



# Briefing or topic workshops

Next - probably the following day - **briefing or topic workshops**.

Open to anyone who wishes to take part. The aim is to clarify the main problems and opportunities. Participants are divided into small groups dealing with different topics - such as employment, housing, transport. Team members act as facilitators and notetakers but otherwise take a back seat and listen.



# Briefing or topic workshops



If the weather is good workshops can be held outside.

# Report back



At the end of the workshops, someone - preferably a **local** resident - from each workshop will be delegated to report back to a **plenary session** of all participants.



# Report back



What one has at the end of this is a clear picture of the problems and opportunities, and no doubt solutions will have begun to emerge.

# Design workshop



The next phase will be hands-on **design workshops**; the aim being to start devising real proposals and options for change.

These may start with inspirational presentations of relevant experience from elsewhere.

Then participants are again divided into small groups and will normally work around tables with maps, tracing paper and felt-tip pens.



# Design workshop



Different groups might look at different scales or different design issues.

**Models** can also be used, and although this involves more preparation, the process of making the models can itself be a good way to get people involved and thinking in three dimensions, (particularly children).

# Design workshop



The distinguishing feature of these design workshops is that the **focus of attention** becomes the drawing or model.

People are able to **think through** the development of design options in the same way that professionals do in their own offices.



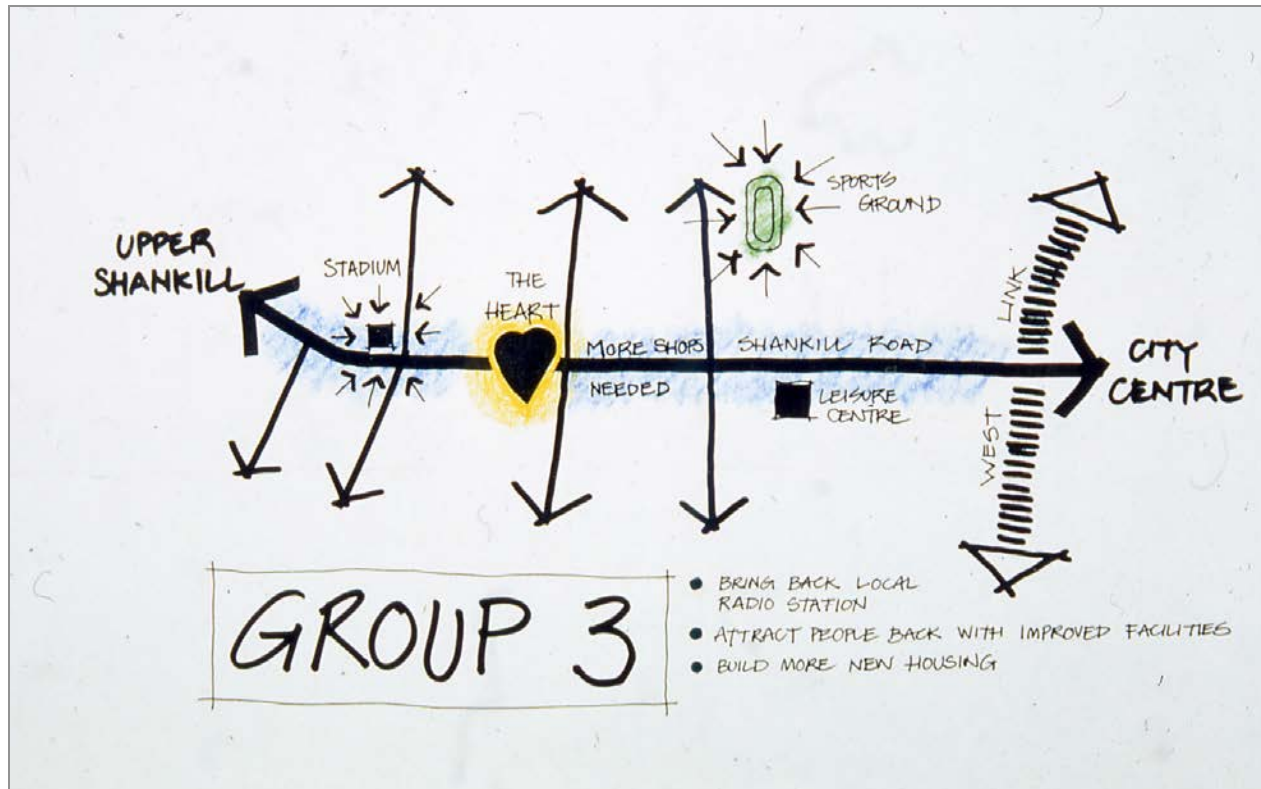
# Report back



As with topic workshops, this phase ends with each group making a **presentation** of their conclusions to a plenary session, followed by general discussion.



# Team summary



Afterwards, Team members may produce **summary drawings** of each group's proposals.

# Group photo



End of public sessions

Group photo symbolises sense of a collective exercise involving teamwork.

# Team working - brainstorm



After this interlude, the Team and Advisers will probably have a brainstorm. Brainstorming often works best somewhere atmospheric; for instance this hillside overlooking the site being dealt with.

....But never be without a flipchart!....

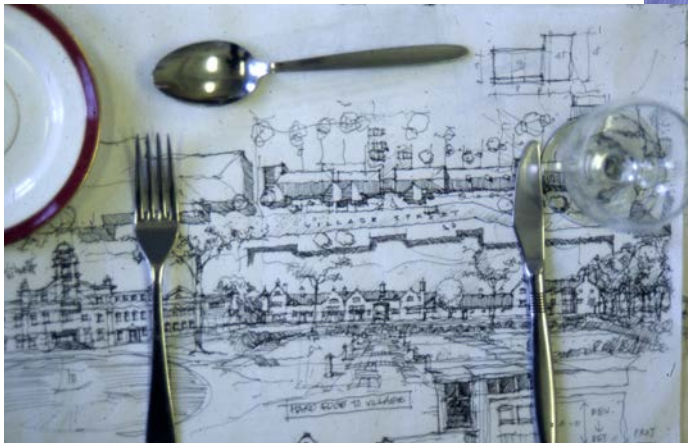




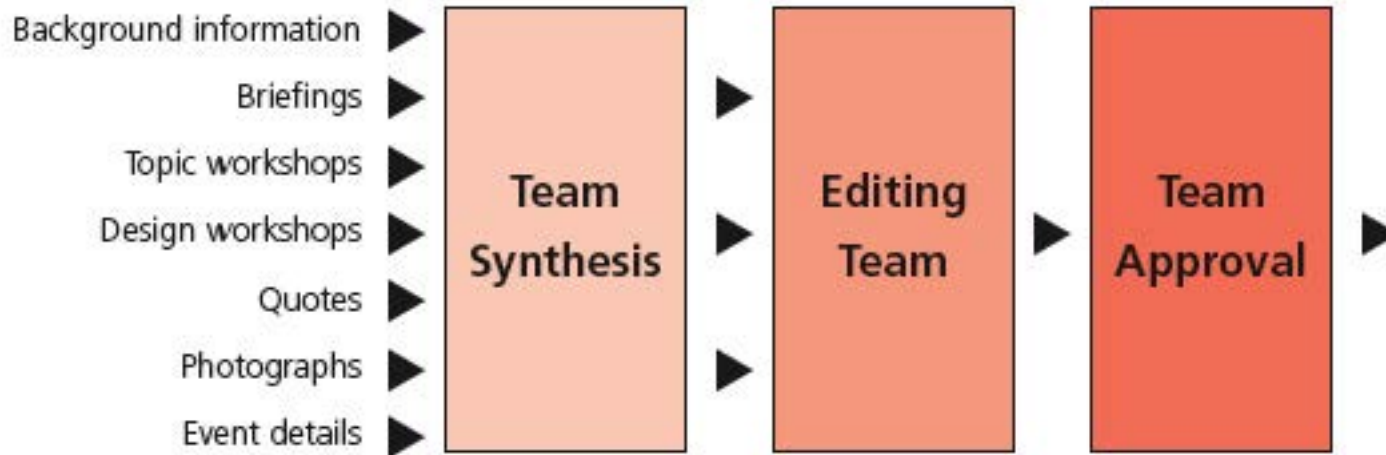
# Team brainstorm dinner

Another useful trick is the **brainstorm dinner**.

A tradition of these events is that there should be **paper tablecloths** so that people can doodle. This drawing, done at one event, was actually used in the final report and exhibition.



# Team analysis



This brainstorming is the beginning of the **analysis** that the Team has to do. Their job is to digest everything they've seen and heard and crystallise it into proposals for action. And there's normally less than 48 hours before these have to be presented back to the community.



# Team working



Phenomenal effort in team working but can be incredibly exciting.

Atmosphere a bit like a newspaper office with people working round-the-clock on different parts of a jigsaw which has to come together to meet an unmovable deadline.

Usually an editorial team is established to take charge of collating information, and making sure that people produce what is needed.

# Team working



A useful trick is to have the report structure on the wall so that everyone can observe progress and see how what **they** are doing fits into the overall picture.

Some team members will be producing **drawings**...

...Some will be **writing** and feeding stuff into computers....



# Report



All this effort culminates in a report containing the team's proposals and the thinking behind them.

The report, which is the collective responsibility of the Team, is likely to contain organisational and design proposals using a range of visual techniques. It's an important document and has to stand the test of time.

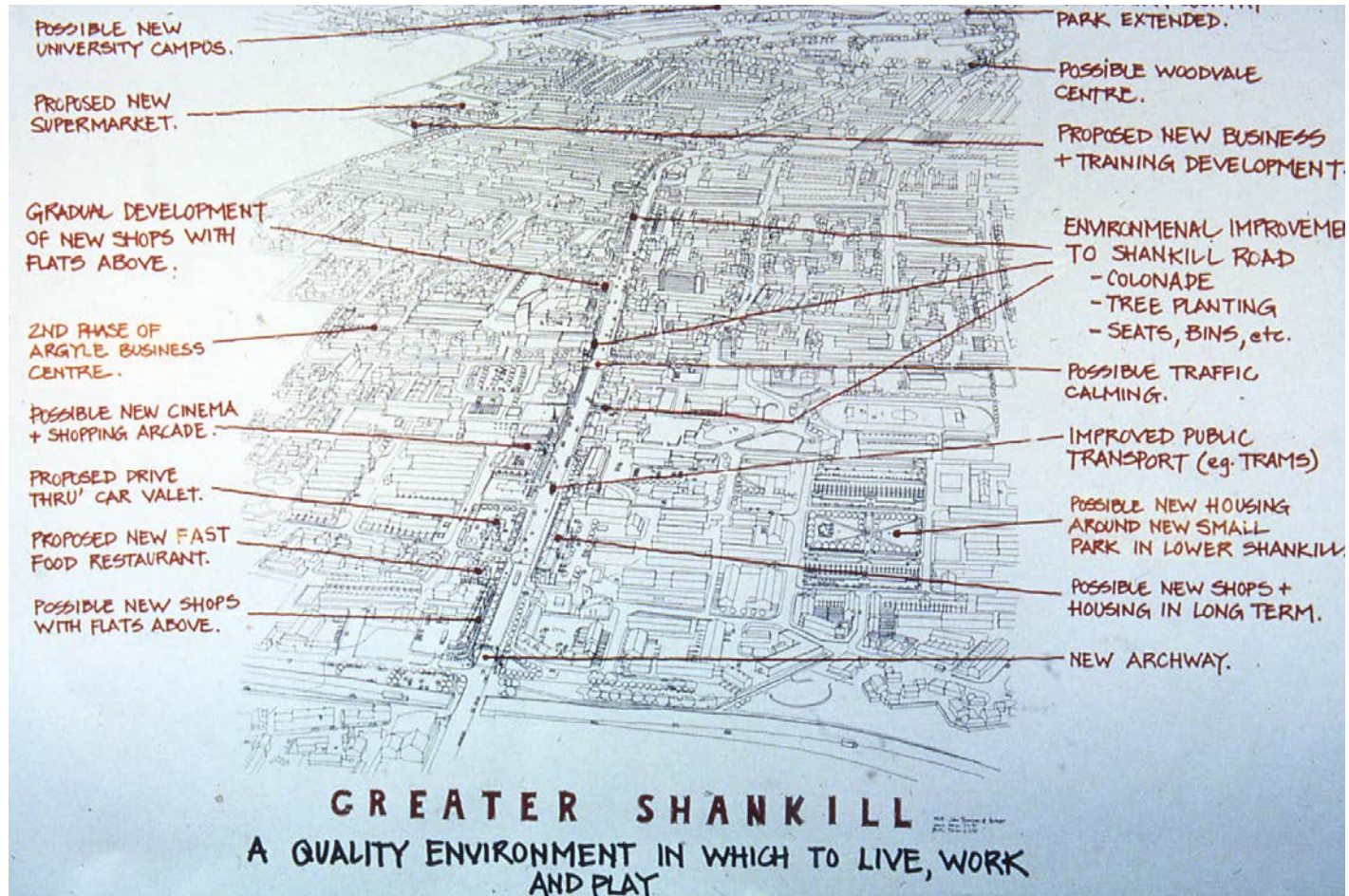


# Visuals



One technique often employed is to take an aerial photo and develop, over the course of the event, a birds eye drawing of the new proposals.

# Clear communication



Simple summary drawing can be highly effective.  
Clear communication important.



# Public presentation



The **finale** is a presentation of the Team's proposals to a public meeting of all those who have participated in the event and anyone else interested.

Normally done as a powerpoint, using images of both the process and the product – such as the ones I have been showing – followed by debate.

Report or broadsheet handed out.

After the presentation meeting, there maybe a **farewell drink** and that is the end.

Or rather the end of one phase; the 'event' itself.

# Context

**the overall  
framework for a  
community  
planning event**

# Community Planning framework

- **Principles**

Apply to almost any situation. Worldwide applicability

- **Methods**

Huge menu of different techniques and approaches

new ways of people interacting | new types of event | new support frameworks

- **Scenarios**

How one might use a combination of methods in a particular development situation - creating an involvement strategy.

process design | engagement plan | empowerment strategy



# Four stages

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or initiation - may take months or years.

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- **Getting started**  
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- **Preparation**  
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- **The Event**  
a few days
- **Follow up**  
months or years



# Process chart

## PHASES

PARTIES	PHASES			
	Getting Started ► 1–2 months*	Preparation ► 2–4 months*	The Event ► several days*	Follow-up ► ongoing*
	<b>Local Interests</b> Individuals and organisations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stimulate action</li> <li>• Establish Steering Group and Host (see below)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build momentum, enthusiasm and expectation through discussion and by focussing attention on the main issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participate in public sessions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyse proposals</li> <li>• Develop support for strategies and projects</li> <li>• Apply pressure for implementation</li> <li>• Ongoing participation</li> </ul>
	<b>Steering Group/ Host/Organiser</b> Main enthusiasts and technical advisors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formation/appointment</li> <li>• Explore options for action</li> <li>• Prepare proposal</li> <li>• Stimulate action</li> <li>• Secure commitment from all affected parties</li> <li>• Raise funds</li> <li>• Commitment to proceed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Select Team Chairperson, Team members, Advisors and consultants</li> <li>• Establish administration</li> <li>• Identify key stakeholders</li> <li>• Prepare publicity strategy</li> <li>• Prepare venues</li> <li>• Publicise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Event management and administration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess proposals and prioritise</li> <li>• Agree plan of action</li> <li>• Publicity</li> <li>• Spearhead and coordinate implementation</li> <li>• Maintain momentum</li> </ul>
	<b>Facilitators and Event Team</b> Specialists from complementary disciplines <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide advice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homework on the locality and the Community Planning process</li> <li>• Reconnaissance visit (by Chairperson at least)</li> <li>• Warm up events in local communities and with special groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arrive</li> <li>• Reconnaissance</li> <li>• Briefings</li> <li>• Topic workshops or plenary</li> <li>• Design workshops</li> <li>• Brainstorm</li> <li>• Prepare proposals</li> <li>• Presentation</li> <li>• Leave</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revisit and assist as requested</li> </ul>
	<b>Support Bodies</b> International, national and regional organisations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supply general information and advice</li> <li>• Evaluation visit if requested</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supply detailed information and contacts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observe</li> <li>• Participate</li> <li>• Assist if asked</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor and evaluate</li> <li>• Assist if asked</li> </ul>

On this chart we can also see the main parties

We now need to go back a few steps and run through the **overall** community planning process.

# Getting started

## Anytown Community Planning Weekend 4-8 April 2008

Organised by Anytown Environment Network in  
association with the National Urban Trust  
Supported by Anytown Town Council and  
Anytown Chamber of Commerce  
Sponsored by Shell and Greenpeace

- Consider various **options**
- Look at what others have done
- Think through precisely what process will suit you.

If you decide to organise an event:

- What's it going to be called?
- How long should it be?
- Who's going to organise and fund it?
- What's the end objective?

I will show you some worksheets for helping with this later.

A good way to focus thinking is to draft a **mission statement** and produce a sheet of **notepaper**.

# Funding

## Funding Sources

- ☐ Local and central government
- ☐ Local and national businesses
- ☐ Local and national charities and NGOs
- ☐ Developers and landowners
- ☐ Development agencies
- ☐ Community groups
- ☐ Arts funding bodies
- ☐ Professional institutes
- ☐ .....
- ☐ .....

Obviously a crucial consideration.

Costs can be considerable.

But remember savings, and costs of not planning properly.

Range of potential sources.

# Support in kind

## Support-in-kind Ideas

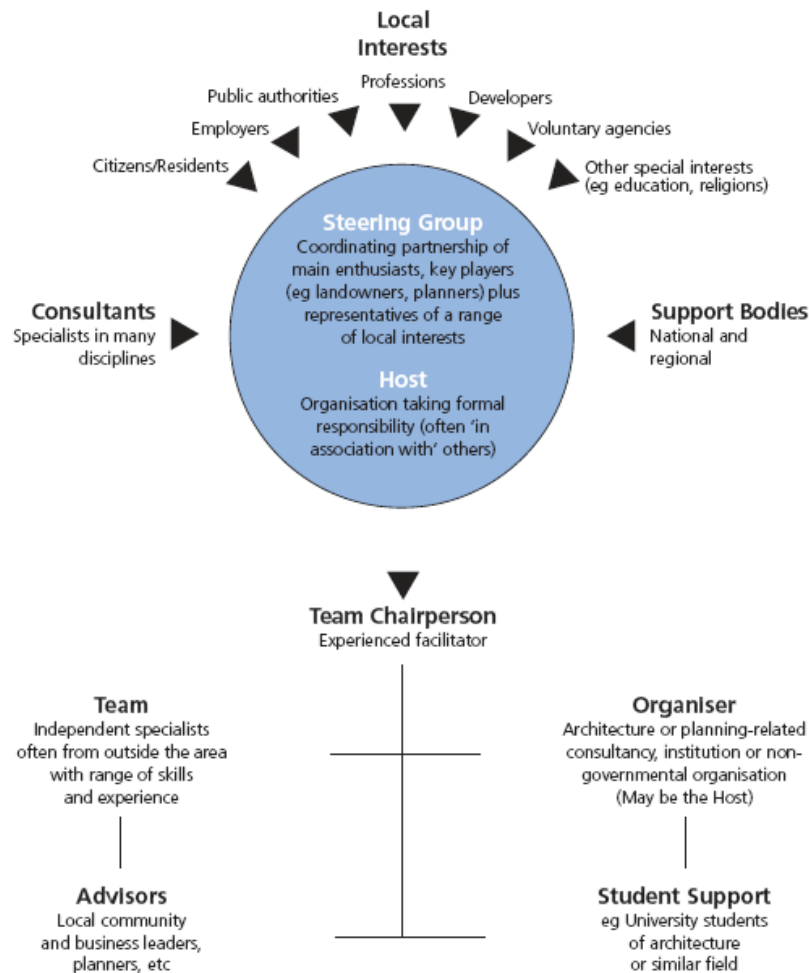
<input type="checkbox"/> Hoteliers	Rooms
<input type="checkbox"/> Printers	Printing
<input type="checkbox"/> Consultants	Admin
<input type="checkbox"/> Property owners	Premises
<input type="checkbox"/> Colleges	Students
<input type="checkbox"/> Businesses	Meals
<input type="checkbox"/> Bus companies	Transport
<input type="checkbox"/> Local press	Advertising
<input type="checkbox"/> Residents	Lodgings
<input type="checkbox"/> .....	.....

Lot of potential

Benefit of getting local organisations committed to the event and therefore to the outcome.



# Organisation



- Dedicated organisation
- Steering Group partnership of main stakeholders
- Organiser
- Support Bodies
- Consultants
- Formal Host
- Team Chairperson
- Team members
- Advisors
- Technical Support

# Preparation

**Getting  
everything ready**

# Timetable structure

## Timetable Structure

Note the common format regardless of length. Adjust to suit circumstances.

		5-Day Event		1-Day Event
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>Thursday</b>	Tour of area for Team members Briefings from key players Launch event	<b>Morning Session 1</b>	Introductions Briefings from key players Coffee
<b>PROBLEMS/ OPPORTUNITIES</b>	<b>Friday</b>	Open topic-based workshops to identify key problems and opportunities	<b>Morning Session 2</b>	Discussion/analysis of key problems and opportunities Lunch
<b>SOLUTIONS/ OPTIONS</b>	<b>Saturday</b>	Open design workshops to explore future options Team brainstorm over dinner	<b>Afternoon Session 1</b>	Design sessions to explore future options Tea
<b>SYNTHESIS/ ANALYSIS</b>	<b>Sunday</b>	Team analysis and determination of strategy Report writing and drawing	<b>Afternoon Session 2</b>	Drafting of notes on conclusions and next steps
<b>PRODUCTION/ PRESENTATION</b>	<b>Monday</b>	Produce report and presentation Present conclusions at public meeting or open house	<b>Afterwards</b>	Production and distribution of report
			<b>Few days later</b>	Public meeting or open house

The key to successful community planning events is skilful and imaginative **timetabling**.

However long your event, the timetable **structure** is likely to be the same, with 5 phases

# Sample timetable

## Community Planning Weekend

### DAY 1 THURSDAY BRIEFING

08.00	<b>Setting up</b> Room arrangements. Delivery of equipment and supplies. Erection of banners and signs
12.00	<b>Team assemblies</b>
13.00	<b>Buffet lunch</b> Welcome by hosts, sponsors etc
14.00	<b>Reconnaissance</b> By team of area by bus/train/plane/foot
16.00	<b>Political briefings</b> By local politicians
17.00	<b>Community briefings</b> By local inhabitants
18.00	<b>Technical briefings</b> By planners, engineers, developers etc
19.00	<b>Team briefing</b> By Chairperson on Team working processes
19.30	<b>Launch event (optional)</b> Public meeting and/or dinner/reception

### DAY 2 FRIDAY ISSUES

09.00	<b>Team briefing and preparation</b>
10.00	<b>Setting the scene</b> Presentations by local interests
11.00	<b>Topic workshops</b> Open to all, punctuated by lunch and tea breaks. Several parallel topic-based groups ending with plenary report back (or one single open plenary workshop).
17.00	<b>Team review</b> Detailed problem definition
18.00	<b>Breather</b> Minute writing, reading, exercise
20.00	<b>Team dinner</b>

### DAY 3 SATURDAY SOLUTIONS

09.00	<b>Team briefing and preparation</b>
10.00	<b>Report back on Day 2</b> By Chairperson and/or Team members
10.30	<b>Lessons from elsewhere</b> Presentations by Team members

### DAY 3 contd

12.00	<b>Design workshops</b> Open to all, punctuated by lunch and tea breaks and ending with a plenary report back. In parallel groups of 10-15
17.00	<b>Team review</b> Developing central themes
18.00	<b>Breather</b> Minute writing, reading, exercise
19.00	<b>Team brainstorm dinner</b> Imaginative solutions

### DAY 4 SUNDAY TEAM WORKING

10.00	<b>Team preparation</b>
11.00	<b>Team editorial meeting</b> Report, presentation and production structure
12.00	<b>Report and presentation production</b> Writing, editing, drawing, Powerpoint show: Review meetings as necessary. Team only. Sleep and eat as and when

### DAY 5 MONDAY PRESENTATION

07.00	<b>Printers deadline</b> Report and/or broadsheet to printers
All day	<b>Presentation preparation</b> Image and text selection. Exhibition mounting. Hall arrangements
All day	<b>Clearing up</b> Tidying up, packing equipment and supplies
17.30	<b>Press briefing</b>
19.00	<b>Public presentation</b> Powerpoint show followed by discussion and formal thanks. Distribution of report or broadsheet
21.00	<b>Farewell social event</b>

### Main Uses

Involving local communities in developing major neighbourhood regeneration and development proposals.

The basic framework has to be fleshed out with **specific activities**: presentations, workshops, visits, public meetings, working sessions and social events.



# Sample timetable detail

## DAY 2 FRIDAY

09.00	<b>Team briefing and preparation</b>
10.00	<b>Setting the scene</b> Presentations by local interests
11.00	<b>Topic workshops</b> Open to all, punctuated by lunch and tea breaks Several parallel topic-based groups, ending with plenary report back
17.00	<b>Team review</b> Detailed problem definition
18.00	<b>Breather</b> Minute writing, reading, exercise
20.00	<b>Team dinner</b>



# Sample timetable

## Stakeholder Participation Day

### DAY 1 FRIDAY SETUP

16.00	<b>Setting up</b> Room arrangements. Delivery of equipment and supplies. Erection of banners and signs
17.00	<b>Facilitator's briefing</b> For organisers and workshop leaders. Run through process
19.00	<b>Dinner</b> For organisers and facilitators

### DAY 2 SATURDAY THE EVENT

8.30	<b>Set up</b> By organisers and facilitators
9.00	<b>Registration, coffee and exhibition viewing</b>
9.30	<b>Welcome</b> By organisers or politician and facilitators
9.45	<b>Briefings</b> By politicians, officials, and consultants
10.40	<b>Coffee break</b>

### DAY 2 contd

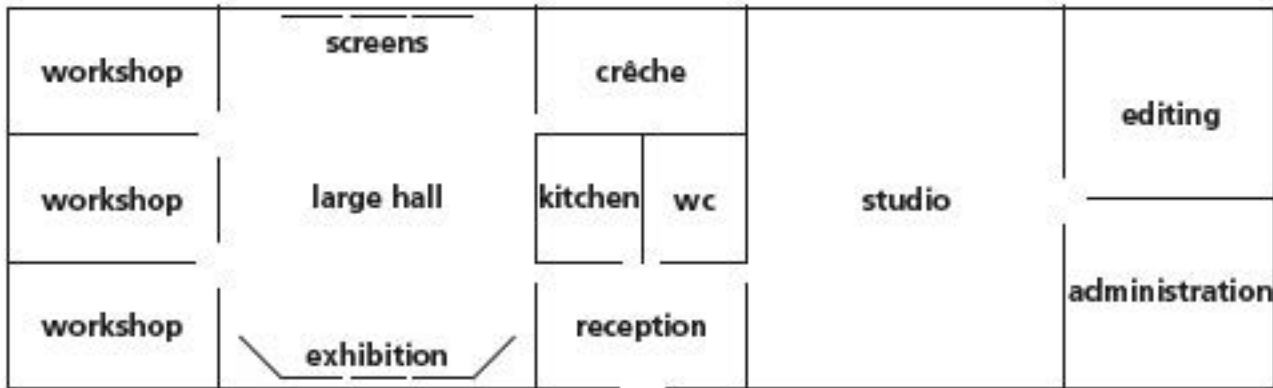
10.55	<b>Key issues workshops</b> Discussion in groups
11.25	<b>Key issues plenary</b> Report back from groups
12.00	<b>Site reconnaissance</b> Walk or coach tour
13.00	<b>Lunch and exhibition viewing</b>
14.00	<b>Design workshops</b> Working in groups
15.30	<b>Tea break</b>
16.00	<b>Design plenary</b> Report back from groups
17.00	<b>Next steps</b> Statement by organisers. Brief discussion perhaps
17.30	<b>Event close</b> Refreshments and networking (optional)
18.00	<b>Clear up and review</b> By facilitators and organisers

<b>Event report</b> Produced and circulated as soon as possible
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Example of a 1-day event



# Venues



Ideal venue plan. In practice one has to make do with premises available; EG a school or community centre.

Important to be **on location** – this may mean erecting temporary structures.

Need

- catering
- equipment

A complete **working environment** has to be created where people can function as well as in their own workplaces.



# Publicity



Above all, **get people motivated** and start the debate rolling. Once this happens the information starts flowing and the process develops its own momentum.

Most effective method is word of mouth but imaginative publicity can help.

Staged publicity photos can be useful for catching people's attention.



# Publicity

Generating a **public debate** before, during and after the event is an essential part of the process.

Local media can play a very important role.



# Follow up

What happens  
**after**  
the event is  
vitally important

# Follow up methods

- **Implementation workshops** held on a regular basis to monitor progress.
- **Team debriefing** shortly afterwards to assess the next moves.
- **Annual evaluation meetings** - organised by the Steering Group.
- **Team revisits** periodically to learn of progress and offer additional suggestions.
- **Newsletters** to provide updates.
- **Report reviews** - special meetings to run through the proposals with community leaders and others.
- **Project website updates** - Continual news updates and exchange of views (social networking sites too).

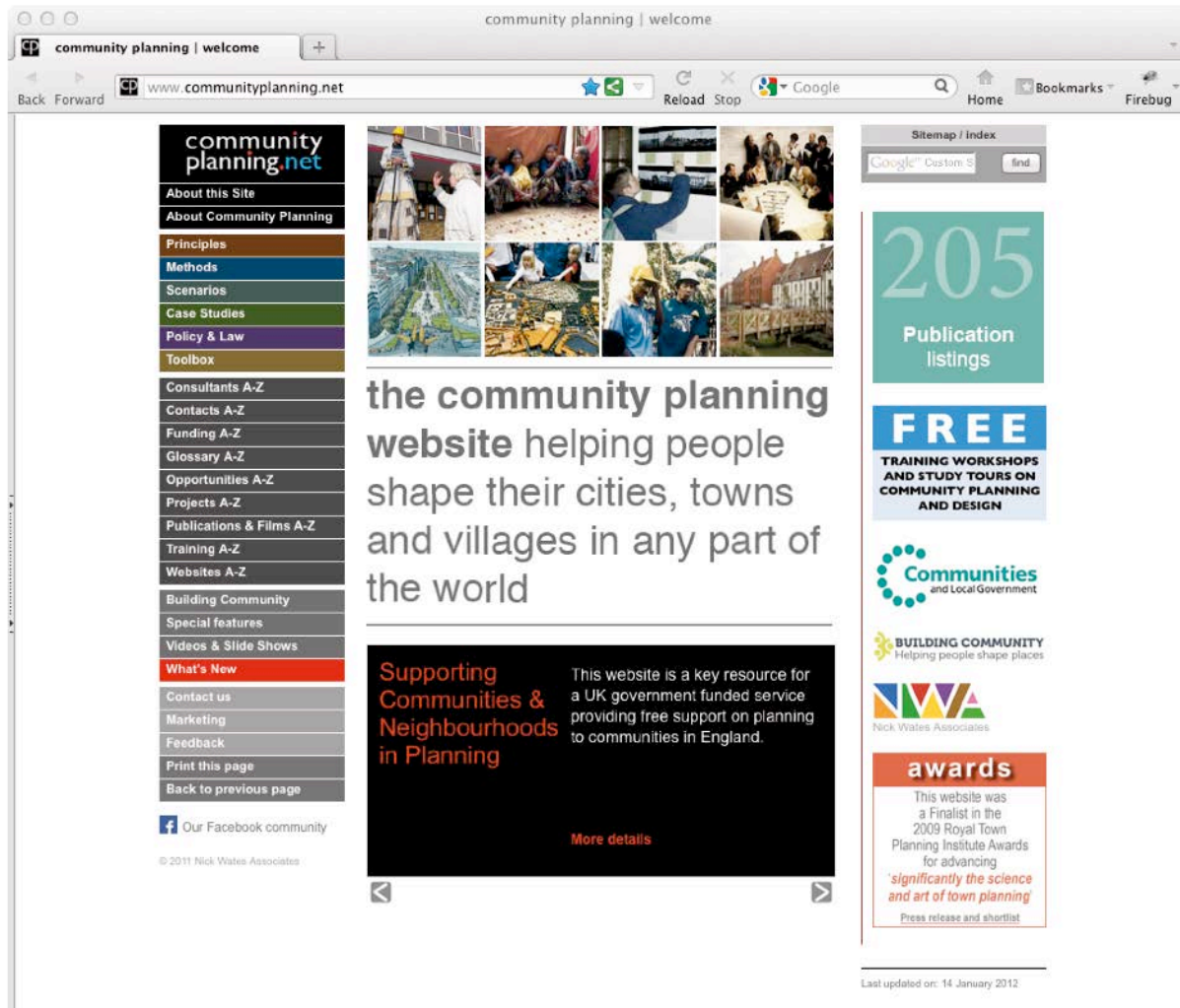
**[www.communityplanning.net](http://www.communityplanning.net)**

# **The Community Planning Website**



- Google's No 1 of over 250 million results for 'community planning'
- Over 200,000 hits per month
- Users from 93 countries
- UN-HABITAT study features site as good practice toolkit for urban governance
- Good framework to build on
- Develop partnerships to add content from more countries and on more issues

# www.communityplanning.net



# Plan *your* event

**For your local  
situation**

# Plan *your* event

resources on [www.communityplanning.net](http://www.communityplanning.net)

Download both versions of the **Community planning event planner** from the **forms** part of the **Toolbox**:

<http://www.communityplanning.net/useful/forms.php>

1. Print out the Blank and spend 10 minutes brainstorming and rapidly completing it for your chosen example.
2. Use the Template to work up your Event in more detail.

You can also download some Sample Timetables for Events from the website Toolbox.

# Plan *your* event

resources on [www.communityplanning.net](http://www.communityplanning.net)

## Process planning session

You can learn how to hold a workshop with key stakeholders to devise a community planning strategy which could include an Event.

1. Go to the **Methods A - Z** section
2. Select **Process planning session**

[http://www.communityplanning.net/methods/process\\_planning\\_session.php](http://www.communityplanning.net/methods/process_planning_session.php)



# Plan *your* event

resources on [communityplanning.net](http://communityplanning.net)

## Related methods

Explore the vast menu of methods available in the **Methods A - Z** section. Several are Events.

<http://www.communityplanning.net/methods/methods.php>

**and browse the rest of the site to see what others have done and are doing.**

# **Plan *your* event**

## **publications**

### **The Community Event Manual**

By Nick Wates, Earthscan 2008

[www.earthscan.co.uk](http://www.earthscan.co.uk)

### **The Charrette Handbook**

By The Charrette Institute, American Planners Association, 2006

<http://www.charretteinstitute.org/>

**See also publications A-Z on  
[communityplanning.net](http://www.communityplanning.net)**

<http://www.communityplanning.net/pub-film/pubfilm.php>

# Summing up

- Very **different** from conventional planning but now being integrated with it.
- End of **pilot** or experimental stage which has lasted some 40 years.
- Now have a **core process** that anyone can get involved in and that can be used in a great many different ways.
- **Capable of transforming** the way we plan, design and manage human settlements.

# Benefits 1

- **Creation of shared visions** for a community's future and identification of long- and short-term strategies for implementing them.
- **Catalyst for action** of all kinds by releasing blockages in the development process.
- **Resolution of complex problems** or at least a clearer identification of issues and goals.
- **Revitalisation of local networks** for community development.
- **Fostering of consensus building** among different interest groups leading to better integration and long-term partnerships.

# Benefits 2

- **Promotion of urban design capability** of local agencies and improvement of environmental standards.
- **Heightened public awareness** of development issues resulting from the provision of an open forum for debate.
- **Morale boost** for all those involved as a result of experiencing team working.



# Why community planning events work 1

So what's the magic? Community planning events **work** because the process combines a unique mix of ingredients which respond to the complexity of today's development issues

- **Open community involvement.** There's scope for **all** members of the community to participate in a **variety of ways**. This can lead to a new sense of cohesion and consensus, to the formation of new partnerships and to the development of a sense of equity.
- **Creative working methods.** Professionals of **all** disciplines work in a **hands-on** manner with each other and with non-professionals in a **neutral** environment. This breaks down conventional professional boundaries and creates a **chemistry** between people which can be magnetic; releasing spirit, humour, imagination, positive thinking and collective creativity.
- **Dynamism.** The carefully structured, intensive, defined timetable creates a **focus** of public attention and provides **targets** for results. A **critical mass** of activity is generated which is hard to ignore.

# Why community planning events work 2

- **Fresh thinking.** The independent Team provides an opportunity for new ideas to be put forward which can **overcome past divisions** and indecision.
- **Visual approach.** The use of urban design techniques of drawing and model-making provide an **easily accessible** way for people to think about, and communicate, visions for their community's future.
- **Realism.** The process addresses both the physical and natural environment **as they are**, rather than the abstract concepts which tend to result from specialism and departmentalism. The inhabitants' own concerns are placed on the agenda.

# Follow up

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