

## Lee's Summit, Missouri Strategic Planning Process Scope of Work

Lee's Summit wishes to update their strategic plan for the third time since the first effort in 1993. The National Civic League (NCL) is excited about the prospect of working with Lee's Summit for the fourth time (21<sup>st</sup> Century in 1993, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Update in 1999, the Legacy for Tomorrow Parks Plan in 1997 and this 2008 project). Lee's Summit has had a history of success as a result of their past projects and NCL feels the community is a model of civic excellence and achievement for the Kansas City region and nation.

In this 2008 effort, Lee's Summit desires to produce an implementable, updated plan that clearly identifies specific community priorities in the midst of today's challenging environment. In undertaking this process, the community strategic planning process will work to deliver the following products:

- Review and potentially enhance the 1999 vision statement to a 2008 version that inspires community members and plays a role in motivating them to action;
- An assessment that identifies the community's strengths and opportunities for enhancement;
- Identification of community priorities (called Key Performance Areas later in the proposal) and specific strategies for action;
- A community-wide strategic plan that will impact the priority areas and outlines the strategies, implementation steps, responsible parties, timelines and resource options for implementation;
- Development of an implementation structure to assist with putting the plan into action;
- A report that articulates the vision and the community-wide strategic plan.

In addition, NCL sees other "soft" outcomes emerge when the planning process models NCL's approach to community participation:

- Enhanced understanding of community issues and buy-in with the strategies to address them;
- Development of new relationships, networks and mechanisms for communication with the community;
- Enhanced credibility of local government and other institutions within Lee's Summit;
- Community-wide ownership of the vision and strategic plan; and
- Pride and ownership of the community of Lee's Summit.

Our understanding is that NCL may commence working with the City of Lee's Summit on a community-wide strategic planning effort commencing with the initiating phase in June of 2008

### The Strategic Planning Process Lee's Summit, Missouri

As Lee's Summit well knows, community-planning projects facilitated by the National Civic League have three phases.

Each phase of the process has specific purposes:

- **The Initiating Phase:** a pre-planning phase that focuses on the process and logistics for the project. This is crucial so that process matters are planned so the stakeholder planning phase can focus on the important content issues at hand;

- **The Stakeholder Planning Phase:** this planning phase convenes the large stakeholder group and focuses entirely on content – the vision and mission update, the action areas and the strategic plan itself;
- **The Implementation Phase:** the action phase that focuses on the implementation of the plan, monitoring results and ongoing adjustments of the plan.

When addressed effectively and efficiently, each of these phases proves invaluable toward helping create the desired change articulated in the strategic plan.

### Phase 1: Initiating Phase -- Pre-Project Planning

To begin the process, NCL will work with the city on the creation of a project Initiating Committee. This committee is a smaller group of 10-12 people that will work with NCL to address all project logistics to help ensure the stakeholder planning process runs smoothly. No content of the strategic plan will be addressed during this stage.

Initiating Committee Tasks include the following:

- Identification of Participants
- Having the right people at the table developing the plan together is absolutely crucial to the ongoing success of the plan. The credo, “people are more likely to support what they help create,” is true. Therefore, a primary task of the Initiating Committee is identifying and recruiting such residents to the process. Individuals that are needed at the table include:
  - People and their organizations who would be responsible for implementation of tasks;
  - Individuals who could potentially block the implementation; and
  - People directly affected by the action items.

This is all review, for Lee’s Summit has consistently been the model for convening people of diverse viewpoints to the table to address specific issues.

### Project Design

The process we will propose for this effort will be similar to the community-wide strategic plan but differ slightly to build off the previous planning effort in 1998. For instance, rather than recreating a mission and vision statement, we will work with the existing statements and enhance if/where necessary. We will also review and add to, drop or change the strategic goals based on the consensus of the stakeholder group.

### Selecting a Meeting Site

The Initiating Committee will select a neutral and welcoming meeting site for the stakeholder meetings. Criteria for a quality meeting space include: adequate and airy space, good acoustics, equipment onsite (e.g., chairs, tables), ample parking, breakout rooms for small groups or childcare, low cost or in-kind room rental, set-up and clean-up are all variables that need to be considered when selecting a site. We recommend that the same location/site be used for all of the Stakeholder meetings as this type of consistency will lend itself to a more stable stakeholder group. Churches and community centers are common sites for meetings.

### Selecting a Project Name

Lee’s Summit: 21<sup>st</sup> Century is a name that is already well identified with resident participation and success in the community. The Initiating Committee will decide whether to keep this name or select a new name for the effort.

Regardless, the name should remain optimistic, action oriented and indicative of the collaborative nature of the project.

## Project Structure

The Initiating Committee will start the formation of the following three sub-committees and staffing that play a significant role during the stakeholder process:

### *Coordinating Committee*

The Steering Committee is a diverse group of 10-12 people that represents a cross-section of the stakeholder group. This committee manages the stakeholder process, not the content. This committee works with NCL toward:

- Managing the project schedule;
- Supervising project staff;
- Coordinating research needs and community outreach efforts;
- Raising funds or in-kind donations to support the effort;
- Work directly with the NCL facilitators and;
- Anything else to generally help keep the project on track.

The Steering Committee will be the role models of the process principles for the broader stakeholder group and community: collaboration, consensus building and constructive participation. Often times members from the Initiating Committee transition into the role of the Steering Committee. Additional members are recruited from the stakeholder group to fill those positions vacated by past Initiating Committee members.

### *Outreach Committee*

This group of 10 people ensures residents outside the stakeholder group are engaged in a two-way information exchange throughout the project by developing feedback and “feed-forward” processes. In doing so, residents hear about the ideas being generated in the process and provide input on an ongoing basis.

The goal of the outreach process is to allow the community to feel informed and be involved throughout the process despite not being able to attend stakeholder meetings. It is critical that the Outreach Committee communicates that the visioning effort is community directed, not local government directed. This pre-empts any incorrect suspicions that those with “a hidden agenda” developed recommendations and action plans behind closed doors – charges that would potentially destroy the integrity of the project.

Specifically, NCL will work with the Outreach Committee to design and facilitate the engagement of certain segments of the Lee’s Summit community that may not, or choose not to be involved in the stakeholder process. The outreach will consist of informal processes (small discussions and conversations) as well as formal processes (surveys, town hall type of meetings or speakers bureaus). The general communication efforts should include a web site for easy access to information and input. The web site development and any costs associated with outreach will need to be considered in the overall project budget. The Initiating Committee will explore these areas, trying to find in-kind support wherever possible to save costs.

### *Research Committee*

A small research committee will be formed to provide the stakeholders with information to help them determine current assets and challenges the community faces. The Initiating Committee will identify the parameters of this information. The information will be used as a tool to help participants determine conditions, assets and needs.

## Staffing

Without question, adequate and competent staffing of the effort is crucial and can make or break any community project. The amount of logistical work and responsibility for the staff person is substantial. The work includes: phone calls to stakeholders; mailings; minutes/recording of stakeholder meetings; room/equipment set-up; assistance with outreach and research needs; and acting as logistical liaison with the chairperson(s) and National Civic League facilitators. **This position requires, at a minimum, a half-time person (20 hours a week).**

We recommend that if this staff person is an individual already employed by the city, that some existing duties be transferred to other individuals. Our experience has shown that if this staff person takes on this position on top of existing duties the project and the morale of the individual can be potentially impacted negatively due to conflicting priorities. Therefore, a half-time person who can focus on this project is highly recommended.

## Phase 2: Stakeholder Planning Stage (proposed framework)

The following section provides the proposed process framework for the Lee's Summit strategic plan update. It is during the stakeholder planning stage that the stakeholders identified by the Initiating Committee come together to discuss and develop the content of the project. The number of stakeholders will likely be in the range of 100-150 participants.

The components of the stakeholder planning process include the following:

- *Enhancing a Vision of the Desired Future of the Community* – As a step early in the process, we will review the existing vision statement and enhance it if the stakeholder group deems it necessary. The vision statement should provide an inspiring description of the desired future of the community. A quality vision statement reflects the common values shared by the whole community and inspires the community to help move the community to those higher levels of achievement. Reviewing and enhancing the vision statement presents an avenue for people holding different perspectives to openly discuss their commonalities and to recognize that despite their differences, they still share a common vision of the community. Building the vision statement early in the process also creates an immediate “win” for participants and sets a positive tone for the remainder of the project.
- *Community Scan and Trends* – As a crucial part of this process, it will be important that the participants have an understanding of the trends and issues that are impacting the community. It is during this point that data will be presented, analyzed and used as a tool to fuel discussions as to the underlying factors that are impacting the community and its future. This analysis will also include a discussion of the community's "likely future" should no changes or interventions take place in dealing with the trends of today and tomorrow. Without any intervention, what do these trends mean for the community, the community, our youth and our future? What will begin to emerge are areas that we must focus our planning on to “bend the trend” from this likely future to the desired future articulated in our vision statement.
- *Civic Index* – The Civic Index is a self-evaluation tool developed by NCL for communities. The Civic Index focuses on the Civic Infrastructure of a community. We will customize the Civic Index to focus on the community. If desired, we can also compare the 2008 results with the 1999 Civic Index results. Just as a physical infrastructure of telephone lines, sewer systems, bridges and streets are needed for a community or town to function, the community's Civic Infrastructure comprises the abilities, tools and skills a community needs in order to solve problems effectively. Our work has revealed that issues don't stop communities as much as communities stop themselves in HOW they address those issues. This analysis will reveal those processes and procedures that are currently working and those that can be enhanced to assist in improving problem solving within the community and the community.

- *Selection of Key Performance Areas (KPA) and Action Planning* – The assessments and the community vision will reveal the priorities that the stakeholders will target their planning. These priority areas, called Key Performance Areas, will clearly define the strategies and action steps that the community will implement to head toward the vision. At this point, the larger stakeholder group will break into work teams for each priority area. Stakeholders recruit additional expertise to participate. Each work team will meet in between the larger stakeholder meetings and complete an action plan specific to the respective KPA, complete with:
  - A mini-vision for their KPA;
  - Goals that target change in specific issue areas;
  - Rationale statements that communicates why targeting those goal areas is crucial for the community;
  - Specific strategies to create the desired change;
  - Action steps that when implemented, will accomplish the goal;
  - Responsible parties who will champion and take responsibility for implementing the action steps;
  - Timelines for implementation;
  - Resource options and targets for those strategies that require funding; and
  - Benchmarks to measure progress.

Throughout the planning stage, each work team will present its progress to the broader stakeholder group. These presentations provide an opportunity for broader buy-in and serve as important safeguards for the process, namely:

- Preventing one interest group from dominating the planning;
- Providing accountability for completing the planning tasks;
- Aligning the planning within KPAs with the desired future;
- Identifying areas of overlap among priority areas in order to integrate and coordinate action plans into one strategic plan; and
- Providing buy-in and consensus from the entire stakeholder group.

At the conclusion of these steps a comprehensive strategic plan will result for the community. A clear sense of direction, excitement, accomplishment and belief will exist throughout the stakeholder group. Most importantly, new understanding, advocates, networks and relationships will be enhanced. As Lee's Summit has demonstrated previously, this also means that the integrity demonstrated within the planning phase must continue through the next phase, implementation. Implementation of the plan will require the ongoing participation of the community and participants in order to ensure action and the desired change occurs.

### Phase 3: Action -- Implementation of the Action Plan

It is during this critical period of transition from planning to action that plans can either lose momentum or thrust themselves forward toward pointed community action and meaningful change. Lee's Summit has again proven to be a model for the region in this area of implementation. During the last stages of the planning process, the Steering Committee (working with NCL) will create an implementation structure that will provide oversight and coordination toward putting the plan into action. The most common structure is an ad-hoc committee made up of former stakeholders and implementers. This ad-hoc structure is usually housed and staffed within the community that convenes the committee throughout implementation to support and assist the parties responsible for putting the steps into action. The committee would:

- Recruit implementers if no responsible parties stepped forward in the action plan or if an implementer could not uphold his/her role;
- Convene key parties to address unforeseen barriers that arise during implementation by developing and implementing action steps in order to keep moving forward;

- Provide ongoing support to the implementers;
- Monitor achievement of the benchmarks and deliver progress reports to the community;
- Develop mechanisms to update the action plans.
- Important ingredient to success: NCL has observed that ongoing success is dependent on the fact that the key principles which drove the planning process must continue in order for the trust and credibility to continue. These include:
  - An expectation of results and accountability through ongoing teamwork;
  - Clarity and agreement on the charge, the expectations, the roles and responsibilities among all implementers;
  - An effective two-way flow of communication that continues among implementers, the implementation entity, the larger stakeholder group and the community;
  - Maintaining the integrity of the stakeholder process through the implementation stages (collaboration, open communication, inclusiveness);
  - Maintaining a long-term perspective among all responsible parties;
  - Ensuring the implementation mechanisms remain apolitical; and Maintaining a mindset of patience and perseverance (i.e., implementation takes time).
  - NCL will work closely with Lee's Summit in developing an implementation entity that fits its needs and works for the whole community.

## **Final Reports:**

NCL encourages that the community draft the final reports with NCL feedback and suggestions for the purposes of ownership. NCL's process makes the plan writing straightforward by providing a format and template, which as a result, the plan actually writes itself as it is developed. Editing is restricted to writing the plan in a common voice. The report outline will include, but is not be limited to the following:

- Project Background
- Process Description
- Vision Statement
- Action Plans
- Implementation Strategies and Entity
- Acknowledgments
  - Stakeholders
  - Sponsors: Financial and In-kind
  - Staff

## **Fee Scale**

The National Civic League's fees are \$2000 per facilitator, per day, plus expenses for senior staff. Expenses include mileage and meals. The National Civic League fee includes preparation time before each community meeting as well as any reasonable follow-up required. The National Civic League will work with the conveners of this effort to arrange an approach that fits within the Lee Summit's budget and needs of the community.

## **Facilitation Team and Responsibilities**

A lead facilitator will be assigned by NCL to facilitate each meeting. The lead facilitator develops agendas for each meeting and within meetings, promotes broad discussion, monitors group norms of participation, discourages personal attacks and group domination, and ensures that the process goals are being met. The facilitator meets with the different sub-committees, providing ongoing assistance both on-site and in-between sessions via phone, fax and e-mail. In addition, the Advisory Team composed of other talented facilitators within NCL will support the lead

facilitator. This team will meet prior to and following each session with the facilitation team to add insight and support to the effort.

## In Summary

The National Civic League's Community Services Department has had tremendous experience with visioning and strategic planning efforts around the country. We recognize that every project has to be unique to the community and situation at hand. Our tools and processes are only effective when our partner communities are open to learning and developing new ways of addressing complex issues with us. The National Civic League is eager to work with the Lee's Summit again to design and facilitate a process that will result in more positive change with the community.