

Section 2: Neighborhood Planning Process



The process of community planning involves the active involvement of citizens including the local residents and stakeholders, city departments, community organizations and institutions. It is necessary for successful planning that all parties are involved to address development, land use planning and service delivery issues. Each Good Neighbors' Planning Alliance follows a strategic planning process led by the community residents themselves and engages in the following activities:

- Establishing an organizational framework;
- Gathering information about their community;
- Creating a vision for their community;
- Establishing goals to achieve the vision;
- Developing a plan in partnership with community stakeholders;
- Implementation; and
- Evaluating progress and updating the plan when necessary.

Over the past five years, the East Buffalo GNPA has consistently sought out support for and input on the development of the neighborhood plan from all residents and stakeholders within the alliance's five distinct neighborhoods. The GNPA maintains a current database of block group leaders, community based organizations, local businesses, individual residents, local council members, neighborhood churches, local city service providers and community schools in order to disseminate key planning materials to all stakeholders. The East Buffalo GNPA gathered information for the draft neighborhood plan through surveys, community planning summits, a neighborhood and demographic trend analysis and a series of East Buffalo GNPA planning committee meetings.

- In Fall 2001, Mayor Masiello announces the Good Neighbors Planning Alliance initiative. The East Side GNPA forms and holds monthly meetings at the Lt. Col. Matt Urban Center. The GNPA reaches out to area residents, businesses, the non-profit community and stakeholders seeking their involvement and commitment to the neighborhood planning process.
- In 2002, the East Buffalo GNPA sets a year-long meeting calendar. The group decides to be identified as the East Buffalo GNPA instead of the East Side GNPA. The members decide that this, along with the design of a letterhead and slogan (*Preserving Our Heritage*

and Planning Our Future!), will allow the group to promote and get “buy-in” from the entire community for the planning process. Linda Farrow, neighborhood resident, serves as the first chairperson of the East Buffalo GNPA. The group sponsors an East Buffalo GNPA fall open house. Community stakeholders are invited to set-up tables at the Lt. Col. Matt Urban Center. Videos of other successful citizen-based planning projects are played and general GNPA information is available to the public.

- In 2003, the East Buffalo GNPA submits a Quality of Life agenda to the Office of Strategic Planning. The agenda outlines priority items that the group continues to discuss and intends to include in the neighborhood plan. The GNPA and the NY International African Institute co-sponsor a Multi-Ethnic Heritage Conference. The goal of the conference is to educate and reach out to all segments of our area. The City of Buffalo releases a copy of their Comprehensive Draft Plan. The group reviews and reacts to the plan and meets with Mr. Timothy Wanamaker, Executive Director of the OSP, to offer their suggestions for modifications. Yuri Hreshchyn and Norm Bakos volunteer to serve as interim co-chairs until the group selects official co-chairs. Linda Duvall and Christina VanGhle are elected to serve as the GNPA co-chairs. The group decides to alternate meeting sites between Iron Island Preservation Society office and the Matt Urban Center.
- In the fall of 2003, an East Buffalo GNPA neighborhood survey (see Appendix B) is created and distributed to block clubs and local churches. Approximately 50 surveys were completed. The surveys ask residents and community stakeholders how they feel housing, schools, parks, commercial districts and city services could be improved. The survey also asks individuals to comment on the strengths and weaknesses of their neighborhood and what changes they would like to see.
- On October 18, 2003, 40 East Buffalo residents in collaboration with Eastside PRIDE take a tour of East Buffalo’s parks. The residents evaluate each park’s frequency of use, condition, safety and quality of equipment.
- The GNPA held two community planning summits: one on Friday, April 23, 2004 at the Iron Island Preservation Society and one on Saturday, April 24, 2004 at the Broadway Market. Both summits were divided into sessions on the topics of (1) housing, schools, and vacant lots; (2) economic development and historic preservation; (3) parks; (4) police and public safety; and (5) environment and public works. Block group leaders, community based organizations, local businesses and individual residents as well as local, county and state legislatures and executives were invited to the summits. Approximately 30 residents and community stakeholders representing local non-profits and colleges and representatives from the City of Buffalo’s Office of Strategic Planning attended both meetings. Minutes from the summit were mailed to all attendees with an invitation to attend a meeting on May 3, 2004 at the Iron Island Preservation Society to further discuss ideas gathered at the summits.
- In May 2004, University of Buffalo intern Peter Lombardi completes the East Buffalo neighborhood and demographic trend analysis.

- Individuals who attended the May 3, 2004 meeting at the Iron Island Preservation Society form the East Buffalo GNPA Community Planning Committee. The planning committee members meet twice a month from May through August to review and finalize recommendations from the neighborhood priorities identified at the summits: police and public safety, parks, environment and public works, economic development and historic preservation, schools and youth, and housing and vacant lots. Each meeting focuses on a different topic. The planning committee also works to establish a timeline for the neighborhood plan as well as identify potential partners and resources. Intern Jill Shuey assists in writing the draft plan.



- Draft neighborhood plan completed the end of August 2004.

- At the end of September 2004, the East Buffalo GNPA planning committee holds three community meetings giving the larger alliance community an opportunity to review the draft neighborhood plan and provide feedback.



- The GNPA planning committee meeting on October 5, 2004 reviews the feedback from the September community meetings and incorporates those comments into the neighborhood plan.

- October 2004, an East Buffalo GNPA draft neighborhood plan is submitted to the City of Buffalo's Office of Strategic Planning (OSP) for review.



- January 25, 2005, OSP's review and recommendations are received.

- March 2005, Linda Hastreiter and Denise Herkey-Jarosch were elected as co-chairs.

- June 2005, OSP assigned Katherine Boger as intern to East Buffalo GNPA to assist in the revisions and updates to the neighborhood plan.

- January 2006, East Buffalo GNPA plan committee worked on revisions to neighborhood plan with the assistance of Lovejoy District NRS intern Jill Babinski.

- The neighborhood plan was re-submitted to OSP Planners on April 27, 2006.

- OSP Planners completed a review of the plan in June, 2006, and shared recommendations with representatives from the GNPA in August, 2006.
- Those recommendations led to a series of meetings to prioritize strategies in the plan, held by the Neighborhood Planning Subcommittee on November 13, 2006, December 11, 2006, and January 9, 2007. Those prioritizations were reviewed by the GNPA membership at the GNPA General Meeting on January 16, 2007 and approved.
- Revisions to the plan were completed in July, 2007.

During each step of the East Buffalo GNPA neighborhood planning process, consensus was built through open and honest communication and dialogue. Every attempt was made by the GNPA members to make sure residents and community stakeholders felt welcome to attend community planning summits and GNPA planning committee meetings. All concerns and recommendations were given equal value and seen as valid strategies and activities for the neighborhood plan, and all strategies were reviewed carefully as part of the strategy prioritization process undertaken as a result of OSP recommendations shared in August, 2007. The East Buffalo GNPA strived throughout the process to address the two development priorities identified in the City of Buffalo's Comprehensive Plan: **first to fix the basics and second to build upon the assets.**