

Planning4Real

Engagement range	Inform/Consult
Difficulty level	Medium to Hard
Cost	Medium (\$1,000 to \$10,000) High (over \$10,000)
When might you use it	To showcase product, plan, policy To communicate an issue To discover community issues To develop community capacity To develop action plan
Number of people required to help to organise	A team of people may be required (3- 12)
Time to organise	Medium (six weeks to six months) Long (over six months)
Size of audience	Large (over 30)
Issues/resources to think about	Publicity; Workshop location must be large enough to accommodate the model (common community spaces are preferred); Catering; Staffing; Moderator/facilitator; Audio/visual equipment; Artists; Photographer; Modelling equipment: Sheets of polystyrene are suggested as the model base, glued to cardboard or other hardboard for stability; Props for working in groups (markers, pins, tape, glue and access to photocopying facilities for duplication); Tables/chairs; Children's requirements
Innovation level	Medium to High, Low

Description

Planning4real offers local people a 'voice' to bring about an improvement to their own neighbourhood or community (Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation 1995). Local people begin by constructing a three-dimensional model of their neighbourhood or catchment area. From this, they construct their vision of their ideal neighbourhood or catchment by placing suggestions cards on a three-dimensional model, then sorting and prioritising the suggestions. The model of the neighbourhood or catchment is made so that it can be moved from venue to venue, allowing more people to participate. Used since the late 1970s in Britain, this planning tool is now used throughout the world. Participants are largely intended to be from the target community, with government officials, local councillors, and professionals present to answer questions, when requested.

Objective

- To increase community involvement and knowledge of proposed changes or planning issues through allowing them to place their suggestions and concerns directly on to a three-dimensional model; this also increases the chance that planning and decision-making will be made with a fuller knowledge and understanding of community issues and needs.

Desired Outcome

- A design or plan that incorporates community needs and issues, and that will therefore be more acceptable and useful to the community, and will give the community a sense of ownership of the plan that may incorporate elements of community monitoring and maintenance.

Uses/Strengths

- Provides a three-dimensional model that may help people better envisage the changes suggested for the neighbourhood.
- Offers a hands-on approach that allows participants to visualise the preferred future for an area.
- Particularly effective in mobilising community support and interest.
- Specific projects are identified and implementation is set in motion.
- Has an advantage for those who are more visual/tactile in their approach.
- Can help bridge language barriers in mixed language areas.

Special Considerations/Weaknesses

- Requires commitment from decision makers to follow through on suggestions.
- Needs commitment from participants to stay for two and a half hours to participate in the whole process.
- Can be expensive to develop a three-dimensional model.
- If building a model with volunteers and found materials, can take three months to collect materials and create the model in easily movable sections.
- Can take two-three months for follow up and feedback.

Method

1. Hire a knowledgeable moderator to start the process, although a community member with some background in community development could readily pick up the key concepts through the 'kit' which is sold by the Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation.
2. Assemble the three-dimensional model of the neighbourhood from lightweight material and in easily transportable sections (ask volunteers, a local club, students, or others as a way to involve key people). The model is usually best at a scale of 1:200 or 1:300, which allows people to identify their own home.
3. Use the model to publicise public meetings, by taking it around shopping centres and community meeting points for about two weeks to generate interest and begin the process of identifying problems and opportunities.
4. Begin training sessions with a few local residents to familiarise them with the process.
5. Hold public meetings where cut-outs are placed on the model as a way to identify issues of concern to the community.
6. Form small, ad hoc 'working parties' around these issues (e.g. traffic, shopping facilities, play areas, work opportunities, coastal zone management and planning). These working parties then meet to work out details and to negotiate between conflicting interests and priorities, using a 'now, soon, later' chart as a guide.
7. Plan a series of activities to develop a momentum that continues into specific practical proposals. Sufficient time is needed for an effective exercise. Three months is suggested for the initial stage of mobilisation, setting up a steering group, building the model and publicising the sessions.
8. Circulate steps taken in local newsletter and/or media.