

Advocating for a High Quality Transit Station Area Plan

The process of creating and adopting a transit station area plan (SAP) typically takes one to two years. This period may be longer if funding has not been secured for the planning process. Community advocates should drive the process from the outset, establishing themselves as both a source of information and political support for elected officials to adopt a high quality transit station area plan.

Outlined below are the basic steps in getting a jurisdiction to adopt a high quality SAP. These steps assume the planning process is already funded, either through city funds or through another agency, like the Metropolitan Transportation Commission. These steps are roughly in order though some may occur simultaneously.

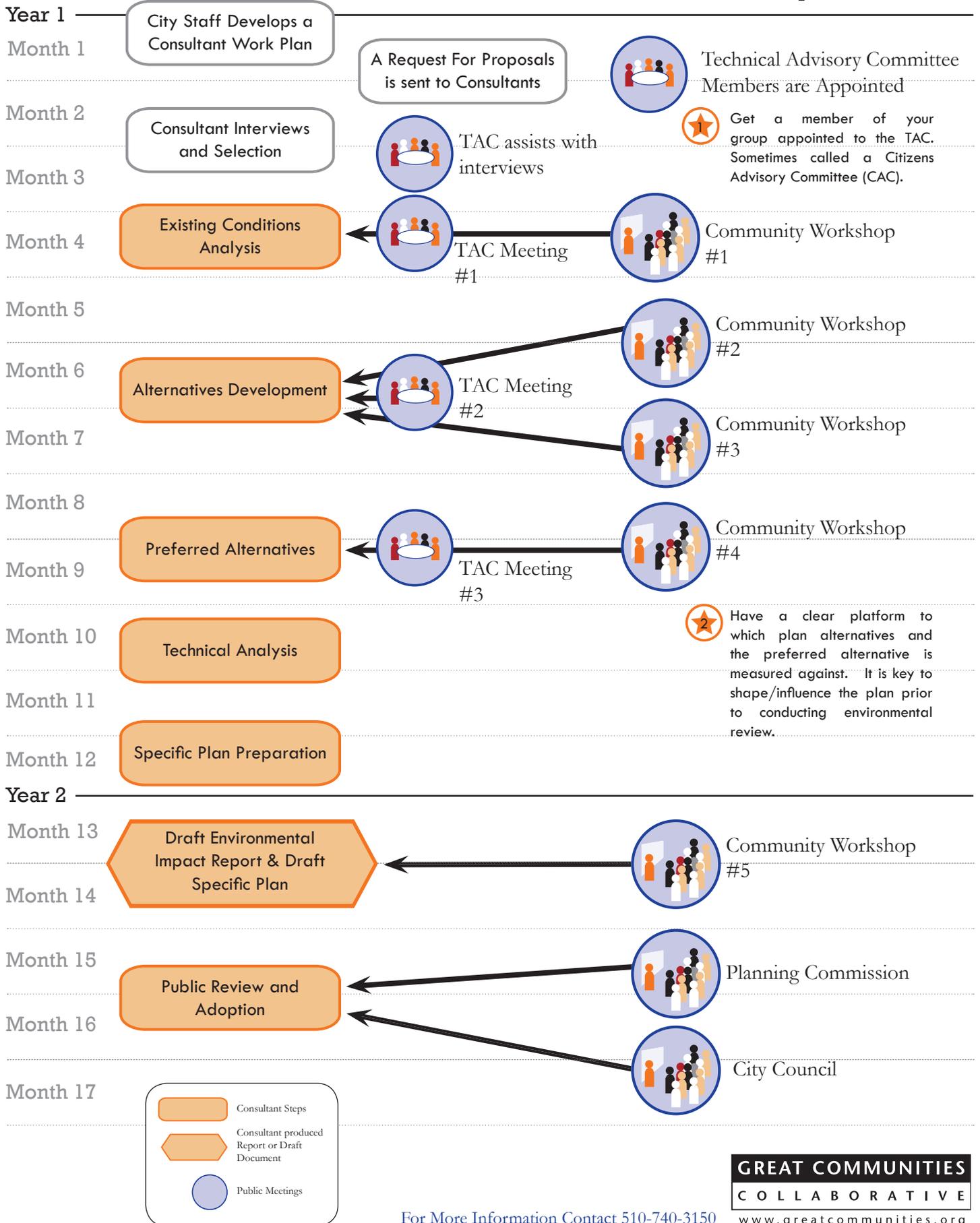
- 1. Set Goals for the Station Area Plan:** Along with core allies, envision what you would like the station area to look like. Develop a platform that includes your goals for the Station Area Plan. These goals can include a number of new homes (market rate and affordable), design principles, number and quality of jobs, building products, bike and pedestrian paths, public parks and other elements the community needs. See *Sample Platform* for more details.
- 2. Educate and Organize Your Base:** Organize and educate a base of supporters who will become advocates for a high quality station area plan that meets your goals. These supporters need to be vocal at every step in the process. Equip them with facts about the need for a high quality station area plan, talking points for public hearings, sample letters to the editor and media training, if possible.
- 3. Find a Champion:** Find a City Council member or members to be champions for a high quality station area plan that meets your goals. Talk with the Council member(s) about your goals and gauge their level of understanding and knowledge. If needed, help them seek out trainings for elected officials, provided by the Great Communities Collaborative, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission and/or other partners. Your champion may be able to get the City Council to outline goals for the plan before the staff starts working on it. Talk with your champion early on about this possibility.
- 4. Engage with City Staff to influence process:** Once the City has kicked off a planning process, staff will often carry out community meetings and hire consultants to do studies and analyses. Often the city will hire a consultant to do the entire planning process. If the City does hire consultants, ask to see the Request for Qualifications (RFQ) before they are released. By influencing the RFQ, you can influence how the analysis and community outreach is done. See *Sample Request for Qualifications* for more details.
- 5. Understand the Process:** Meet with City Staff to understand the process and the opportunities for public input. Cities generally hold a series of community meetings where information is presented and input is sought. Then the City releases a draft preferred plan and draft environmental impact report (DEIR) for public comment. The

Planning Commission will review these drafts and City Council will ultimately adopt the plan. It is important to understand the process, know important dates, and be informed if dates change. Stay in contact with City staff and make sure you know when decisions will be made and where to insert yourself into the process to influence the plan. Although the process may drag out, activists must stay vigilant to oversee the process and ensure a quality plan is adopted.

6. **Build Alliances for Good Planning:** People with many different interests have a stake in good planning near transit. Environmentalists, bike advocates, affordable housing supporters, faith leaders, union members, businesspeople, health care representatives and many others can benefit from smartly planned development. Think broadly and identify people that share your goals. Contact these people to see if they are interested in working together to support a high quality station area plan. See *Coalition Building* for more information.
7. **Contact the Media:** Contact the media at key milestones during the campaign, including when the City receives money for the planning process, when they City kicks off the planning process, community meetings, and when drafts are released. Find out which reporters will likely cover this issue and begin contacting them early to show them why the station area plan is so important to the whole community's future. Refer to the *Message and Media* section for more details.
8. **Shape the plan through community meetings:** Community meetings are an opportunity for your base and your allies to shape the plan to meet your goals. Ask city staff how the meetings will be run, prep your members and allies beforehand with talking points and get high turn out so that your goals are well represented.
9. **Review and Respond to Analyses and Drafts of the Plan:** As the City releases analyses of the station area and the draft plan, you should be prepared to review and respond to them. If your organization or coalition has the expertise to review these studies and plans, do them in house. If not, you may be able to hire your own consultants to help review the plan, see how well it measures up to your goals, and recommend policies to improve the plan. (see *Additional Resources*). You should also prepare your base to be able to respond quickly to the draft plan, as time is often limited to 60 days or less.
10. **Opposition:** Some interests may oppose some of your goals for the plan, including affordable housing, increased density, and reduced parking. Stay in close contact with your supportive Council members and participate in the community meetings to ensure your goals are represented.
11. **Adoption, Monitoring, Implementation:** After the plan is adopted, monitoring and implementation are the next steps. Monitor the City to make sure the plan is followed. Encourage the City to take creative steps to implement the plan, including seeking out additional funds to spark new development. And finally, don't forget to publicize and celebrate the newly adopted plan.

A Typical Timeline of Events for a Station Area Planning Process

Public Participation



Designing a Campaign Plan

A campaign plan and timeline is a critical part of a successful campaign; it helps identify measurable goals, strategies and tactics. With a campaign plan, an advocate can anticipate milestones and workloads ahead of time, ensuring smoother management of time and resources. Instead of planning event-by-event, planning your campaign ahead helps you to successfully carry out effective tactics for meeting your goals.

Campaign plans are also an essential tool for coordinating with other advocates and community leaders. A campaign plan allows groups and individuals to share work with many people, creates opportunities to recruit new people to your efforts, and helps develop new leadership.

The following template will help you create a campaign plan to use with your primary coalition partners. When adapting the template to fit your local campaign, make sure to include the people that will do the campaign work in the planning process. Your campaign timeline should reflect the adopted timeline, which is either within the RFP or approved contract between the city and consultant.

Campaign Plan Template

1. **Background:** Lay out the basic political picture. Explain why this station area plan with these particular elements is needed. Identify potential obstacles to overcome as well as advantages that will make the work easier.
2. **Campaign Goal:** To get (#) of elected officials to vote in favor of a station area plan that includes (#) specific policies.
3. **Votes:** List the decision makers (usually the City Council members). Do a vote chart of the City Council. Rate each elected official based on how you think he/she would vote today on a plan that meets your goals, without any additional information (1 is completely opposed, 3 is neutral, 5 is a champion). Do the same with the Planning Commissioners.
4. **Targets:** Identify who will be your swing votes (not champions, not completely opposed, but could potentially be a vote on your side). These are primary targets. Determine: what influences their decisions? Who do they listen to? Who do you know that has influence with them? The people who influence your primary target are your secondary targets.
5. **Allies and Potential Allies:** Identify the groups that are already working with you and groups that are not opposed to you AND that might influence your targets.
6. **Opposition:** Identify the groups and organizations working against your goal.
7. **Organizational capacity and responsibilities:** List what each organization or advocate can offer in terms of time, resources and skills and what is expected of each organization.
8. **Primary strategies and tactics:** Identify your primary strategies for the campaign, including grassroots organizing, media, coalition building, events, and lobbying. Think about your resources and who you need to influence. See the next page for more information.

Goals, Strategies and Tactics

Your campaign plan should include a campaign goal and then interim goals, strategies and tactics that will lead to achieving the campaign goal. The table below can be used to help layout the campaign plan by identifying your goals, strategies and tactics.

Goals: The measurable outcomes of a campaign; there is the overall campaign goal and there are interim goals along the way.

Strategies: The methods of obtaining the goals.

Tactics: All activities (big and small) used to implement the strategy

When possible, use **numeric** goals for specific strategies and assign people and deadlines to tactics. One goal may have multiple strategies and one strategy may have multiple tactics.

Decide on your main strategies by looking at the strengths in your own organization and within the coalition of allies. Finally, don't be afraid to be creative!

GOALS	STRATEGIES	TACTICS	WHO	DEADLINE
1 newspaper article	Build relationship with reporter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet reporter for coffee • Send reporter background info 	Joe	1/12/06 (one week before the hearing)
	Send out press release	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft press release • Send out press release • Make follow up calls to reporters 	Mary	1/19/06 (day of the hearing)
(# of people attend community meeting	Mobilize our base	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send letter to members • Call members to give them information and gauge interest • Provide members with talking points • Call members to remind them of Community meeting 	Sam	12/15/05 send letters 1 month before, call two weeks before and week before meeting
	Mobilize people living in and near station area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canvass neighborhood with information about planning process and gather people's info • Make presentations to neighborhood groups and collect info • Contact people before meeting and provide talking points. 	Don, Nancy	12/01/05 canvass six weeks before, contact people one week before meeting
(# of letters to City supporting platform	Solidify priority demands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formalize group presence before Council 	Carol	Prior to finalizing alternatives selection
1 detailed response to draft plan	Verify changes made to accommodate first letter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlight additional items to include in Final Plan 	Ed	Prior to Final Plan adoption or end of DEIR comment period.

Developing a Platform

To achieve a high quality station area plan, you need to identify your goals for what should be included in the plan. This list of goals is your **platform**. Develop the platform early in the campaign, before the City's planning process has started and in collaboration with your core allies that are committed to the campaign.

In developing your platform, you should consider:

- What are the key ingredients to making this station area a vibrant community?
- What policies does the city already have in place that will regulate the station area?

Remember, the station area plan is only one tool for revitalizing your community. You won't be able to use it to do everything that you want, so consider what policies are most important for making the station area vibrant and encouraging people to ride transit.

Making the station area a vibrant community

The first section of this toolkit provides a wealth of information about the key ingredients to making the station area a great place to live, work, and play where transit is accessible and walking and biking are easy. Key ingredients include:

- Including homes for people with a mix of incomes
- Building homes compactly
- Preventing displacement of existing residents
- Including community benefits like good jobs, affordable homes, parks and services
- Providing a rational amount of parking
- Designing for pedestrians and cyclists

Each city and station area is unique, so the combination of key ingredients will be unique as well. Check out the handouts section of this toolkit or go online at www.greatcommunities.org to learn more about each of these ingredients and the policies that will make them happen.

City policies already in place

The City may have policies in place that will regulate development in the station area. These policies may help you to know which ingredients are missing that you should advocate for strongly. You can talk with City staff about which policies are in place, how well they are working and how they will work once the station area plan is in place. In some cases, like parking and density, the station area plan is an opportunity to set a new standard.

Inclusionary Housing: Requires new residential development to include a percent of below market rate homes that are more affordable. In some cases, it allows developers to pay a fee in lieu of building affordable homes.

Job-Housing or Commercial Linkage Fee: Requires new commercial development to pay a fee towards the creation of affordable homes for workers.

Park Proximity Policy: Requires the City to plan for usable public parkland, squares, or plazas, which shall be located within less than a mile of all city residents.

Mixed Use Zoning: Allows horizontal and/or vertical mix of commercial and residential uses in new development throughout the City or in specific areas without special approvals.

Parking Reductions: Reduces parking requirements for developments within a certain distance of transit without special approvals.

Parking Maximums: Identifies maximum parking ratio for development within certain areas.

“Unbundling” Parking: Encourages or requires developers to separate cost of parking from cost of housing (either rent or sales price).

Development standards

- “Build-to” Lines: Requires new developments to build structures up to the property line or up to the sidewalk.
- Active Street Fronts: Requires storefronts to be “active” with windows, displays and street furniture to create pedestrian-friendly atmosphere.
- Minimum sidewalk widths defined and appropriate to desired pedestrian volumes.
- Adapted Bicycle and Pedestrian Plans: Identify projects that fill in gaps to station access.

Living Wage: Requires commercial tenants of new developments in certain geographic areas or of specific industries to pay workers an established living wage.

Building a Coalition

A coalition is a group of organizations working together towards a common goal. Coalitions are used when a single group cannot achieve a goal alone. Increasingly, broad coalitions are necessary to move decision makers, get media attention, and achieve goals. In a campaign for a high quality station area plan, a coalition can bring together diverse interests that share common goals for a vibrant community in the station area.

Coalitions are different depending on needs of the campaign. They can be:

- Loose networks or very structured
- Short-term or long-term
- “Out in front” or “behind the scenes”
- Multi-issue or single goal

Pros and Cons

When considering creating a coalition, consider the pros and cons. In general, while coalitions can build power and increase resources, they generally require more time to build and manage relationships. Usually coalitions require compromises on some level and they should increase your likelihood of achieving your goal.

Pros	Cons
Increases people and resources	Relationships require maintenance and work
Broadens base of potential members	Expands or changes goals of campaign
Brings new expertise and skills	Lack of member accountability to tasks
Brings access to different decision makers	Difficulty making decisions
Builds new relationships	Differing tactics
Eliminates double efforts	Lack of protocol may lead to miscommunication

Coalition Structure

If you decide to build a coalition, start with your **core allies**. These are people you have worked with on past campaigns, organizations that share nearly all of your organization’s values and/or people with whom you have already built trust. Begin developing the goals and platform for the campaign with these core allies. See page 3-6 on *Developing a Platform* for more information.

Discuss the idea of building a broader coalition. Think about who you need on your side to win. Remember:

- Be strategic and political about who you approach. Who cares about this issue? Who influences decision makers?
- Don’t be afraid to approach unlikely allies. Just make sure that you can clearly articulate your goals and ask them to articulate theirs.
- Maintain a careful balance between building a broad coalition and maintaining your goals.
- Remember that building coalitions means building relationships between people. This requires trust and will take time.

Broaden the group to create a **coalition**. These are groups that participate in activities, respond to calls for action, take on tasks and mobilize their members. Even once the coalition is formed and working, the core allies should still be in contact and set the strategic direction for the coalition. It is good to be upfront with the coalition about the core group and the work they do. This way, people don't feel left out of decisions.

Creating a Network

When trying to influence the content of a plan, a loose network may work better than a tightly structure coalition. In a network, allied organizations may each take on a specific issue (ie: affordable housing, parking, green building, jobs) that is most important to their base. These organizations stay in contact about how their issue is being dealt with in the plan and may support each other publicly, without taking every action in lockstep. In certain situations when a tight coalition is not feasible or desirable, a looser network may build a limited power without the work of coalition maintenance.

Successful Coalitions

To build a successful coalition, try to set up structures and expectations early on. Remember these important guidelines:

- Have clear, unified goals. Make sure everyone agrees what a win looks like.
- Understand what each group brings and that each may be different. If possible, have each group tell the coalition what they expect to contribute.
- Determine a clear decision-making process early.
- Set up communication tools – listserves, phone trees, websites – so that all groups stay informed.
- Ask for the same representatives from each group to maintain consistency and build relationships and trust.
- Use tactics that all groups are comfortable with.
- Ask people to agree to disagree when you hit issues that can be divisive.
- Stay focused on the goal. Other issues will come up during the course of the campaign. If it is not directly relevant to the coalition's goal, don't let these issues interfere.
- Share the work and share the credit. Each member wants to achieve the coalition goal and wants to build their own organizations. Find ways to give public credit to each member.
- Watch for members with competing interests or for members that may be feeling left out.
- Keep member engaged and celebrate victories along the way!

Event Planning

Organizing an event or action can educate and mobilize your base, raise awareness of the need for a high quality station area plan, move a campaign forward, increase the visibility of your effort and your group, build and strengthen your volunteer base, and develop leaders.

Different events or actions can be used at different stages of the campaign. You may do an open house or an urban outing to educate the community and generate interest in the planning process. You may organize a group of residents to provide public comments during a City Council meeting to urge a stalled planning process to move forward. You may coordinate a forum to educate decision makers about what it takes to make a successful station area.

Below are the steps for organizing a successful event.

1. Develop a concept for the event:

Work with your members and/or coalition partners to find out what would be an effective event. Be creative! Ask your coalition partners these critical questions:

- What are you hoping to accomplish through this event?
- How will your event bring about the change?
- Who will be the participants and/or the audience?
- What resources (time, money, people) do we have to put towards the event?
- What event would accomplish your goals? What should the tone and content be?

2. Create a plan (including timeline) and goals for the event:

- How many people do you want at the event?
- When do you want the event?
- Who else can you get involved to help with the event?
- Who will do which task when?

3. Build the event team and assign tasks:

Delegating tasks is an important way to develop leaders, share the work, and ensure a successful event. Assign people to key roles. Match natural strengths and interests to tasks. Below are suggested roles you may need for your event.

- **Central Organizer**—Person that checks in with each coordinator leading up to the event and coordinates the master timeline leading up to the event.
- **Volunteer Coordinator**—Coordinates the volunteers prior and during the event, recruits volunteers and matches them up with tasks.
- **Phone Coordinator**—Coordinates phone banks to call people to attend event. Manages phone lists, develops call scripts, and works with volunteer coordinator to recruit callers.
- **Door-to-Door Coordinator** (or team)—Coordinates door-to-door outreach to recruit volunteers and people to attend the event. Creates materials for door-to-door outreach.
- **Site Coordinator**—Secures the location, manages the food for the event, and makes sure all materials for the site are ordered (microphones, camera, decorations of the room).
- **Press Coordinator**—Coordinates pre-event publicity, sends out press advisory and press release, calls major press outlets, checks in with the press the day of the event, and

creates and distributes press packets at event (See following Chapter on Message and Media).

- **Outreach Coordinator**—Talks to other organizations that might want to participate, cosponsor or attend the event.
- **Transportation Coordinator**—Works on transportation to the event (if needed), such as getting buses donated from the local union or renting vans to pick up people who cannot attend otherwise.

Example Event Plan – (Excerpt)

Date and Time: 2/8/07 “Envisioning a vibrant downtown”

Goal: Educate and engage residents about how the station area plan can create a vibrant downtown by organizing a community meeting with 75 people attending.

Event Team: 5 people (include names and phone numbers)

Tasks & Assignments:

- Identify site in the downtown area by Dec. 15 (assign a person).
- Design outreach materials by January 5th: flyer, pledge to attend, and call script (person).
- Contact media to get event listed in calendar by Jan 5th (person).
- Coordinate door-to-door recruiting on January 20th: food, calling, and location (person).
- Call existing lists on January 25th, 28th February 5th, 6th and 7th to invite people and remind them to attend (people to recruit callers).

4. Check the plan and assignments:

- Is the event appropriate to meet the end result?
- Make sure the event is reasonable given the resources you have.
- Look for opportunities to simplify the plan.
- Look ahead for times that are too crowded and try to adjust the timeline in advance.

5. Choose a site for the event, keeping in mind:

- The location: do people know the site? Is it in the station area? Is it transit accessible? Is there good handicap access?
- The symbolism: does the site reflect the type of development you want? Or does it represent an opportunity site for a new type of development?
- Presence of a built-in crowd: How many people are normally at the site at the time of day that the event is scheduled?
- How many people will it take to fill the site? Better to have an overcrowded small room than a seemingly empty large one.
 - Each person takes roughly five square feet (including the press area). A 50 ft by 100 ft site (5,000 square feet) needs 1,000 people to fill it.
- Can you get permission to use it? How much does it cost? Could the space be donated?
- What kind of visual can the site create?

6. Build A Crowd:

Once you’ve set a goal for your crowd, you have to build it. Remember the rule of 2’s: If you want 75 people attending, you will need 2 times that many pledging to attend. To get 150

people to pledge, you need to talk to 300 people. To talk to 300 people, you need to contact 600 people. You must build in time to talk to these people to reach your goal.

Also consider, who do you want at the event? Do you want residents living near the station area? Residents of the whole city? Decision makers? Once you figure out who your audience is, then you can think of the best ways to reach them. Below is a list of strategies for building crowds. Volunteers can be involved with any of these. Pick the ones that work best for you!

- **Phone Banking**—Calling existing lists is still one of the most effective ways to get people to events. These are usually people that have been involved with your organization(s) in some way in the past.
- **Door-to-Door**—Recruiting people one-on-one, especially in targeted neighborhoods helps build relationships between activists. This is a very effective way to start with a small base and get new people involved over a short amount of time. Make sure you schedule in time to do reminder calls.
- **One-on-One Meetings**—Set up one-on-one conversations with people and recruit them to the group. This is time- and people-intensive and builds strong relationships.
- **Presentations to Organizations**—Contact classes, churches and other community groups to ask for a few minutes of their time. Tell people about a specific event and your overall campaign and invite them to get involved. You can dramatically increase the number of activists in a group without taking much time.
- **Leaflets**—Drop off leaflets and reinforce with calls and door-to-door work.
- **Posters or flyers**—Place in visible spots where your audience is likely to see; this can also help reinforce phone-calling and door-to-door work.
- **Free Media**—Either public service announcements, letters to the editor, or a feature story can help bring attention to your issue as well as your event and help get supporters you never even thought of.
- Other techniques including mailings, paid media, personal invites from someone the audience knows, and tabling in front of grocery stores, libraries, or at farmers markets.

7. Design the Event Flow and Program:

Make sure your event doesn't have any surprises. Put together an "event flow" that describes the event from the time the first person shows up until the debrief is over. This event flow will help ensure that leaders have a common idea of what to expect during the day, help avoid disasters, and give everyone tasks for the day.

Include the Program in the Event Flow. The program is the actual presentation to the audience, discussion by the group or action by the participants. Make sure the people involved are clear on their content and time allotment.

Also, things to include in the event flow:

- Arrival times for set-up, speakers, audience, press.
- Room set-up including where decorations should go and who is in charge. Where will the food go? Where is the stage? Where will the childcare area be located?

- How the event will be most inviting to the public? Are there translation needs? How can the room be set up? How can teens or youth be welcomed?
- Assign one person to oversee time for the day to make sure things are happening when they should. This person should be able to politely interrupt a speaker and move the agenda along (especially when you invite elected officials to speak).

8. Walk Through the Event:

As you get closer, keep walking through the Event Flow with the team. This will help you see gaps or holes, and help you remember key items (like the power cord for the microphone). Give yourself plenty of time to walk through with the volunteers who will help staff the event.

Example Event Flow	
<i>2/8/2007 Envisioning a vibrant downtown</i>	
<i>Location, address, directions, contact # just in case</i>	
3:00 – 4:00 PM	Event team arrive to set up of event <i>Decorations and tables: Cindy, Sarah, Food: David, Max Set up Registration: Claudia, John</i>
4:00 – 4:30 PM	Registration & Reception <i>Registration: Claudia, John Greet Participants: Jenna Greet Media: Juanita</i>
4:30 – 4:45 PM	Welcome and Introductions <i>Welcome: Cindy Late registration: John</i>
4:45 – 5:00 PM	Featured Speaker: Tommy (notes sent – reviewed speech) <i>Intro: Cindy Speaker: Tommy Food clean up: David, Max</i>
5:00 – 5:45 PM	Break out Groups <i>Directions: Sarah Lead groups: Jenna, Claudia, David and Max</i>
5:45 – 6:00 PM	Report backs and wrap up <i>Moderate: Sarah Take notes: Cindy, Carol</i>
6:00 – 7:00 PM	Clean up and Debrief <i>Event team meets and discusses event</i>

9. Debrief and celebrate:

Take time after the event to debrief what worked and what didn't. Doing this with the whole team immediately after the event is best. And celebrate your hard work!

Sample Letter to City Council



January 26, 2007

To: Ken MacNab, Santa Rosa City Planner

Re: Comments on Draft Santa Rosa Downtown Station Area Specific Plan

Mr. MacNab:

Greenbelt Alliance is the Bay Area's land conservation and urban planning non-profit. Since 1958, we have worked throughout the Bay Area to protect open space and create livable communities. We have worked in Sonoma County for the last several decades to improve the quality of life, through planning for community-enhancing development that makes efficient use of our urban lands, and protects the natural areas and working farms that surround them.

The station area planning process taking place in Santa Rosa has tremendous regional significance, as the Downtown Santa Rosa Depot will be a main station for the Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit. With good transit-oriented planning at this station, the whole SMART rail line will benefit. Thus, it is extremely important that this plan lays out an achievable vision of a community that will lead the way for the cities in the SMART corridor.

In our review of the Draft Downtown Station Area Specific Plan (hereafter referred to as the dSAP), we were pleased to see many of the ideas from the community meetings of spring and summer 2006 incorporated into the plan. The Plan's broad goals paint a picture of the Station Area as a place where:

- The whole diversity of the community can live, work, shop, and play
- Where walking, biking, and riding transit are as easy and accessible as driving, and
- Where the natural environment is enhanced through the built environment.

We are pleased to share in this vision. However, in reviewing the document, it is clear that there remain some important policy areas where language needs to be added, revised, or strengthened in order to ensure that this vision becomes a reality. These comments seek to do just that in four main policy areas:

- **Create housing for the whole community**
- **Develop buildings that enhance the natural environment**
- **Design safe and interesting streets for pedestrians that reduce auto-dependence**
- **Improve bicycle and transit usage**

The following are our policy recommendations. In order to meet the goals of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission grant to the City, and to truly create a downtown core that serves all of the community's needs, we ask that these changes be made in the SAP before the final draft is approved by the City Council.

HOUSING FOR ALL

- The need for affordable housing is great. Important community members, such as seniors, teachers, police officers, young families, the disabled, retail workers, and daycare providers, cannot afford to live in the community where they work.
- Santa Rosa's area median income for a family of 4 is about \$75,000/year. For a single individual, it is about \$52,000/year. Many important members of our community fall below these levels.
- Low-income individuals are more likely to ride transit than those with incomes above median. Thus low-income housing supports transit ridership if it is located close to a transit station.
- The Metropolitan Transportation Commission has asked cities to plan for development around their new transit depots, and to include the affordable housing in these areas.
- Development of publicly-owned properties must result in community benefits in order to serve the community.

Policy recommendations

- 40% inclusionary requirement for the Station Area: 20% moderate-, 20% low and very low-income housing
- Mandate that all in-lieu fees collected in the Station Area be used to construct affordable housing within the Station Area
- On-site construction requirement for all development larger than 5 units
- Abolishment of the mixed-use exemption in the inclusionary ordinance
- Mandate that developments on publicly-owned lots include 20% moderate-, and 20% low and very low-income housing

IMPROVED ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

- Santa Rosa's was recognized as the fifth Greenest City in the US in early 2006.
- Water scarcity is gaining recognition as an important countywide problem.
- Additional development in the downtown core worries residents due to concerns about loss of sunlight and views, and increased levels of concrete ("urban jungle").
- Increased development can be done in a manner that improves the environment, creates enjoyable surroundings, and is economical.
- An integrated design approach can help to minimize costs and maximize benefits to the community and environment from green buildings.

Policy recommendations

- Green building design be incorporated into all new development in the Station Area – specify a minimum level of points for a green building certification system. Provide incentives for achievement of higher levels.

- Mandate reduced water usage and wastewater creation use of both water-saving landscaping (language already included) and plumbing innovations in buildings
- Strengthen language to mandate stormwater run-off reduction through permeable hardscape, green public spaces, swales, on-site catchment, etc. Emphasize solutions that enhance the natural atmosphere around the building.
- Mandate an integrative design approach for all development at the beginning of the design process, to best make use of innovations and economics to improve the “greenness” of new buildings
- Mandatory publicity of Santa Rosa Build It Green standards at beginning of development approvals process to all potential developers in Station Area.

DESIGN FOR PEDESTRIAN ORIENTATION

- In order to promote walking and transit use, pedestrians must be easily and safely able to access the various neighborhoods in and around the Station Area.
- A diverse and interesting street environment promotes pedestrian usage of streets.
- Making streets accessible for the whole community, including the disabled, is an important community value.
- Creation of public plazas and parks is important to create a space for the community to gather and mingle.
- Reduced parking requirements will de-emphasize the automobile and leave more room for amenities that appeal to pedestrians.

Policy recommendations

- Support the development of pocket parks throughout SAP
- Support using SCAPOSD to preserve Imwalle Gardens as open space
- Increase percent transparency of store- and office-fronts to 40% for Boulevard and Entryway street types to enhance pedestrian environment
- Strong compliance with ADA regulations (see SP-LU-2.3-4)
- Create Wilson and 4th Streets and Sebastopol Ave as Pedestrian Connectors
- Insert language to reduce parking requirement to 1 space/unit for new residential development in Station Area
- Specify maximum width of storefront to keep pedestrian environment interesting
- Encourage building diversity on blocks in order to maintain interesting and diverse pedestrian environment

BIKEABLE STREETS

- In order to de-emphasize automobile use, bicycles must be a better alternative.
- Bicyclists must be able to get to the commercial core and around within the core to be able to access shops, services, and jobs.
- Bicycles must be provided with adequate amenities in proportion to those for automobiles
- When biking and walking are easier in the Station Area, transit usage will be increased.
- Recent biking deaths highlight the need for bike routes and a safer biking climate.

Policy recommendations

- Mandate bicycle parking at all new residential developments, and in front of retail establishments. Commercial-area bike parking shall be in public, easily-accessible areas, with 4 spots/1,000 sf.
- Stronger language to support creation of Class II bike lanes on Entryway and Boulevard street types – to be consistent with bicycle route map in SAP
- Language that allows for creation of Class II bike lanes on streets not identified in Plan as bike routes

These are important and necessary ways to improve the development planned for our city's core, in order that the whole community benefits as our city grows. Please include them into the next version of the SAP.

Sincerely,

S. Daisy Pistey-Lyhne
Sonoma-Marin Field Representative

Cc: City Council
Planning Commission

How to Engage Your Constituency: Focus Groups

Why Hold Focus Groups?

As discussed throughout this toolkit, the end-goal of the TOD process is a plan for how the area near a transit hub could look after significant investment and development. It often includes both general hopes for the area's resulting economic development, traffic congestion management, pedestrian-friendliness, and transit use, as well as specific suggestions for zoning, housing affordability, parking, and street design. It can also include parcel-specific plans, called Development Plans, which have detailed designs for particular 'opportunity' sites. Given the broad range of considerations in a TOD plan, it is important to gather detailed and far ranging community input for it to be meaningful. One way to do this is through facilitated conversations with small groups of people or focus groups.

More About Focus Groups:

Focus groups are essentially group interviews, conversations facilitated by a researcher, involving 6-10 people that last 1 to 1.5 hours. Often about five or six main questions can be covered in this period of time. See the sidebar for tips on planning a focus group session.

Sidebar

Planning the Focus Group Session

1. **Scheduling** - Plan meetings to be 1 to 1.5 hours long. Hold them at various times such that people with different work or school schedules can attend.
2. **Setting and Refreshments** - Hold sessions in a comfortable, neutral space that is conveniently located. The setting should have adequate air flow and lighting. Configure chairs so that all members can see each other. Provide name tags for members, as well. Provide substantial refreshments or a meal.
3. **Ground Rules** - Consider the following ground rules to encourage full participation while also maintaining a focus on the questions at hand: a) keep focused, b) maintain momentum, c) get closure on questions, d) everyone gets a fair hearing, e) share "air time," f) one person speaks at a time- don't interrupt, and g) speak for yourself, not for others.
4. **Agenda** - Consider the following agenda: welcome, review of agenda, review of goal of the meeting, review of ground rules, introductions, questions and answers, wrap up.
5. **Membership** - Group focus group members by age, gender or other common characteristic to increase the level of comfort and group synergy. Look to active survey respondents or to community partners for referrals. Select members who are likely to be participative and reflective.
6. **Plan to record the session with either an audio or audio-video recorder.** Don't count on your memory. If this isn't practical, involve a co-facilitator who is there to take notes.

Sources: Free Management Library website, <http://www.managementhelp.org/evaluatn/focusgrp.htm> and the Study Circles Resource Center, <http://www.studycircles.org/en/DiscussionGuides.aspx>

Sample Focus Group Discussion:

Introduction: Start the session with a brief introduction of yourself and the other facilitators. Then give everyone a chance to introduce themselves. Explain the purpose of the focus group

and its importance to the planning of the TOD. Review ground rules, remind everyone that their answers are confidential and that they are being recorded. Answer any questions participants may have before you proceed.

Discussion: Begin by focusing on the neighborhood's assets, or those things that residents want to keep and preserve for future generations. Following the spirit of Community Asset Mapping, this approach reveals a common view of what is important and unites the group around a collective cause.¹ In contrast, a "needs approach" or focusing on the "problems" in the neighborhood, can be divisive and demoralizing. Once the group has identified the neighborhoods' most important assets, it is in a strong position to dream together about what the neighborhood could look like in the future.

1. What do you like best about this neighborhood? Why?
2. What strengths does the neighborhood possess?
 - What organizations are located in the neighborhood (schools, businesses, churches, clubs, agencies, associations, etc.)?
 - What services or amenities (like parks or libraries) exist here?
 - How do these organizations or amenities contribute to life in this neighborhood?

Next move into what they would like their neighborhood to look like:

3. What do you want the neighborhood to be like in 10 years? That is, what are achievable dreams that can be built on the neighborhood's strengths that you just identified? (It may help you to think of other neighborhoods that you like.)
4. To help achieve your vision for the community, what should be included in the TOD? What organizations, businesses or services would you like to see more of (ie: retail stores, grocery store, child care, library, medical clinic, housing, office space, parks)? What kinds of activities or events would you like to see happen in that space (ie: fairs, parades, farmers markets)?

You may want to drill down to gather information about particular needs on housing, transportation, safety or youth issues:

5. Housing: What do you look for in a home? Are you satisfied with your housing options now? Why or why not? Do you feel as if you have sufficient housing choices? Do you think that housing should be included in the TOD? If the TOD were to include housing, what kind of housing should be built? In other words, what should the housing be like to meet residents' needs and desires?
6. Transportation: Do you currently use the transit service in this area? Why or why not? What would make you more interested in using the transit service here? What could be included in the TOD to make you more inclined to use the transit?
7. Safety: Do you feel safe in this neighborhood? Why or why not? What could be included in the TOD, what organizations, people or things could be included, to make the area safer?

¹ Canadian Rural Partnership: Community Asset Mapping, A Guide Book.
http://www.rural.gc.ca/conference/documents/mapping_e.phtml#1

8. Youth: What is our neighborhood like for young people? What sorts of things do they do with their free time, on weekdays, evenings and weekends? What could be included in the TOD that could improve the lives of young people?

Conclusion: End by allowing last comments about what they would like to see in the TOD, thanking them for their time and valuable input, and by asking if they are interested in remaining involved in the process (you may want to do this last part anonymously).