

TOWN OF BELLEAIR INC. 1925



Town of Belleair Strategic Planning Process
DRAFT Report to the Community
October, 2019



Draft of Final Community Report Town of Belleair Strategic Planning Process

Prepared for the Town of Belleair

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TOWN OF BELLEAIR

INC. 1925

Town of Belleair, Strategic Plan Executive Summary

To view a digital copy of the plan, visit www.townofbelleair.com/stratplan.

In the fall of 2018, the residents of Belleair came together to produce our town's first strategic plan. It took the whole community to assemble this plan, and we, the Commission of the Town of Belleair, can not thank you all enough for the time, dedication, and passion you have shown to our local government throughout the process.

In its essence, this plan is by, from, and for you - Belleair's residents. For over a year, we and our consultants engaged with you through interviews, community forums, surveys, and conversations that informed the outcomes of this plan.

Now, we are ready to hit the ground running with a plan that reflects our

community's needs, wishes, and goals. This plan will help us make better, more informed decisions based on data and achievable goals, and will set us on a path to achieve a future that we have envisioned together. Some of the key takeaways from the plan are displayed below.

6 MAIN THEMES



5 TOP OBJECTIVES





Introduction

The USF Florida Institute of Government was contracted to design a strategic planning methodology for the Town of Belleair. This project kicked off with Town leadership in the fall of 2018. Throughout this approximate nine month process, Town residents, Town Leadership, and Town Employees were engaged in various ways in order to provide input about the desired strategic direction of the Town of Belleair. The overarching purpose of this project was to provide the Town of Belleair with strategic direction by using stakeholder input and analysis in order to establish strategic objectives, a mission, and a vision for the Town to use as a planning tool for future growth.

This *Report to the Community* is a high-level overview of what took place throughout this process, who was involved, and the overall outcomes. A comprehensive data report will be made available upon request. The comprehensive data report is inclusive of data collected, analysis, and much more detailed information.

Methodology

In order for the research team to engage and capture feedback from all stakeholders, this project was designed to allow for many opportunities and methods of feedback that would drive the content of each of the subsequent phases. For example, the major themes from stakeholder interviews were used to frame the conversation at Community Forum I, and the Community Feedback Survey results were analyzed and used to drive content at Community Forum II.

The following will give an explanation and overview of each of the phases included in this study, a description of the events therein, and the data/outcomes that came out of each of these phases.

Stakeholder Interviews

The research team conducted 21 interviews with Belleair stakeholders via in-person meetings and telephone calls. The team met with key individuals, businesses, and organization stakeholders identified by Town staff as having particular insight into issues facing the Town or into the views and opinions of segments of the Belleair community. These were conducted in October of 2018. The issues and priorities for the Town of Belleair that came up during these meeting could be categorized into seven major themes. These themes were used as starting points for discussions at the community forums.

Stakeholder Interview Themes

High Level of Initial Satisfaction/Desires for the Future of the Town

While all interviewees cited some issues to address in the strategic planning process, most began their accounts with expressions of satisfaction with the quality of life in the Town of Belleair. As they thought about what they might want the Town to be like in ten years, the overriding theme was “Just like it is now, but with a few issues taken care of.”

Infrastructure

Virtually all of those interviewed cited infrastructure as the most pressing issue facing the Town. When asked to elaborate, all of those who offered “infrastructure” as an answer mentioned roads and most mentioned water supply and sidewalks. A few mentioned the desire for undergrounding utilities.



Hallett Park

A majority of those interviewed mentioned stabilization of Hallett Park as an issue the Town would have to address. This issue was sometimes mentioned in conjunction with infrastructure, and sometimes with parks.

Public Safety

Approximately half of those interviewed perceived that the Town had experienced a string of recent burglaries and expressed concerns about public safety as a result.

Relations with Surrounding Communities

A few of those interviewed thought that, at some point in the future, the Town should reexamine the feasibility, positives, and negatives, about merging with Belleair Bluffs.

Community Life

Many of those interviewed said that community events such as concerts in the park, holiday celebrations, and family-friendly recreational programs were important opportunities to interact with other residents and build a sense of community.

Town Services

Most interviewees were positive about the Town services they experienced. Town parks, staff, and the Police Department are well-regarded. The Police Department in particular received many expressions of support.



Belleair residents participate in planning activities at Community Forum I

Community Forum I

On November 28, 2018 the Town of Belleair hosted the first community forum in the Town's strategic planning process. The specific objectives of the workshop were to:

- Introduce and provide an overview of the Belleair strategic planning process
- Develop a shared sense of the history of Belleair
- Identify those aspects of the Town and life in it that should not change
- Begin to identify and discuss residents' hopes for the future of Belleair

Over 60 residents of Belleair and the immediately a surrounding communities attended the workshop. Through a social media campaign, word-of-mouth, and an article in the local newspaper, residents, businesses, and other groups affiliated with the Belleair community were invited to participate. Elected officials were invited, but requested they attend only to list listen and observe, but not participate.

The data collected throughout the various discussions and participant exercises allowed the research team to better understand the vision and priorities of the Town of Belleair. This data was used to drive subsequent phases of this project.



Belleair residents participate in planning activities at Community Forum I



Community Survey

The 2018-19 Community Feedback Survey was conducted by the Town of Belleair in an effort to obtain public input as part the Town's larger strategic planning initiative. It followed and was informed by previous information-gathering efforts, including extensive stakeholder interviews and a community forum, each conducted in the fall of 2018. The survey sought feedback from residents of the community pertaining to a number of issues, including (1) the quality of life in Belleair, (2) the accessibility of Town leaders and their staff, (3) the quality of local public services/amenities, (4) the Town's current strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, and (5) the most pressing public priorities, as perceived by residents of the community.

The survey results summarized include data from 171 completed questionnaires – a response rate representing roughly 10% of all Belleair households. The survey was administered in a web-based format, and citizens were encouraged to participate via a postal mail invitation, social media, a local newspaper article, and the Town's official strategic planning website.

Major Themes and Findings of the Community Survey

Several consistent and noteworthy trends emerged from the survey responses. Key themes included:

- ✓ Respondents had an overwhelmingly positive perception of the Town, including a general sense of satisfaction with the quality of life and services that residents experience in Belleair.
- ✓ Local infrastructure improvements were identified as the most important public priority by a decisive margin. The maintenance and upkeep of roads was particularly emphasized by a substantial majority of respondents.

- ✓ Respondents placed a much greater emphasis on investments in physical infrastructure than economic and/or cultural investments.
- ✓ Respondents placed a high premium on retaining locally-owned-and-delivered public services, such as the Police Department, the water treatment plant, and the Solid Waste Department.
- ✓ Along with the improvement and upkeep of roads, transitioning to underground utilities was identified as a top priority by a majority of respondents.
- ✓ While there was not strong support for increasing taxes to pay for these public investments, many respondents indicated their openness to the Town creating new revenue sources to cover the cost of upgrades and improvements.
- ✓ The results showed that a large contingent of respondents would like to see the Town become more pedestrian and bike friendly. These opinions were often accompanied by concerns over the volume of traffic on local streets, as well as accompanying safety concerns.
- ✓ Several respondents voiced concerns over the perception that a few influential residents wield unequal influence over public decisions. These concerns were echoed on several occasions throughout the survey responses.



Belleair residents participate in planning activities at Community Forum I



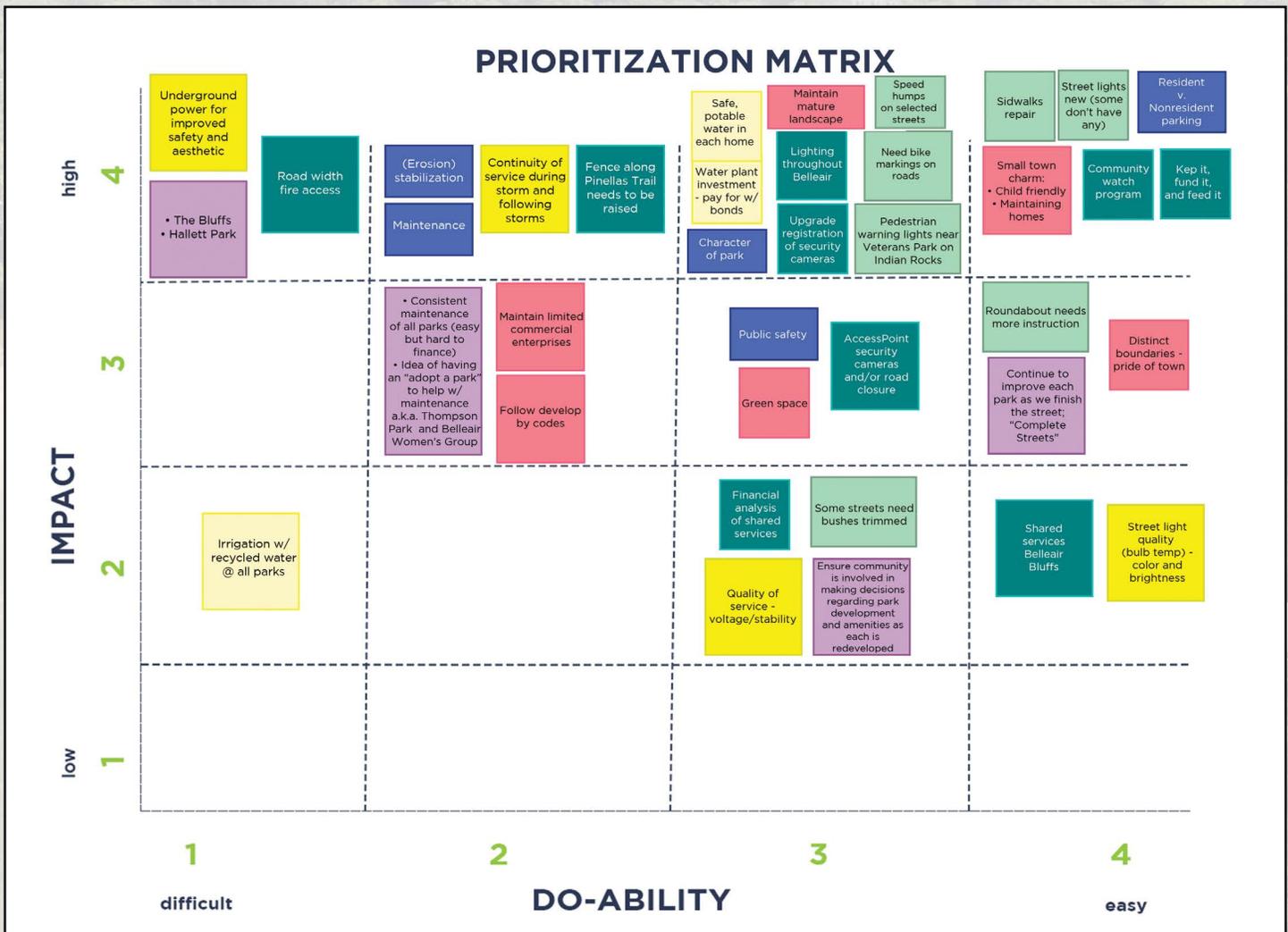
Community Forum II

On January 9, 2019 the Town of Belleair hosted Community Forum II. The objectives of the workshop were to:

- Provide a brief overview of the “State of Belleair”
- Review Strategic Planning Process input to-date
- Review and confirm issues to be address in the strategic planning process as identified through the stakeholder interviews, Community Forum I and the Community Feedback Survey
- Develop and preliminarily prioritize potential outcomes for the Town Commission to consider

Over 110 residents of Belleair and the immediately-surrounding communities attended the workshop. Participants were presented with the issues as identified in the Community Survey and asked to brainstorm desired objectives for those issues they would like to see in Belleair. Then, participants were asked to, in groups, discuss the difficulty of achieving the outcomes they had prioritized. Lastly, each group placed their desired outcome on a matrix of impact versus “doability”.

Below: Digital replication of prioritization matrix created by community input from Community Forum II





Belleair residents participate in group activities at Community Forum II

Hallett Park

On January 24, 2019 the Town of Belleair convened a meeting to discuss the future of Hallett Park. The specific objectives of the workshop were to:

- Review the process for planning Hallett Park renovations
- Hear and understand the range of resident perspectives on how renovations should be approached
- Explore support for different approaches to renovations at Hallett Park

Over 75 residents of Belleair and the immediately-surrounding communities attended the meeting. The group discussion portion of the meeting was divided into three sections: park character, park design, and park access. The objective of this discussion was to not reach agreement, but to seek to understand differing perspectives.

After the group discussion, participants were asked to reflect on the discussion and complete a worksheet. The worksheet posed two sets of questions. The first was about the importance of certain considerations

(access, ownership, and additional public safety measures) in the design of the renovations. The second focused on the acceptability of four different approaches to the renovations (no upgrades, minimal upgrades, some upgrades, and high level of upgrades).

Responses from participants indicated that on a scale from 1-5, with 5 being very important, 2.64 was the average response for “retaining public ownership of the point”. Followed by 2.07 average for providing additional “public safety measures” and 1.75 average response rate for “providing safe access to the waterfront”.

Respondents indicated with an average of 3.71 that they would support “minimal upgrades” for the park, followed by a 3.63 response average for “no upgrades” and a 1.79 for “some upgrades”.

Employee Survey

To foster employee engagement, and assess employee readiness for change, the research team worked with Town staff to develop a town-wide, web-based employee survey. Employee feedback was anonymous, 100% of employees participated. Survey questions focused on:



- Identifying internal and external strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) that are influencing Belleair
- Suggestions for improving organizational effectiveness
- Overall employee engagement and readiness for change
- Employee desires for the future of Belleair as an organization and as a workplace

EMPLOYEE SURVEY FINDINGS



STRENGTHS:

- 99% of employees believe they have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to do their job well.
- 98% of employees believe Belleair has an environment free of harassment or discrimination.
- 96% of employees find meaning in their job.
- 94% of employees believe there is an atmosphere of trust and respect among Town staff.
- 91% of employees look forward to going to work every day.
- 88% of employees plan to still be working for the Town in the next two years.



- 93% of employees believe their job is important to the mission of the Town.
- 92% of employees know what is expected of them.
- 92% of employees believe Belleair has a positive work environment.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- 30% of employees often experience stress at work. (We later learned this response may have been skewed by the Police Department.)
- 17% of employees do not believe employees communicate effectively with one another.
- 13% of employees do not receive regular recognition or feedback about their performance.
- 13% of employees do not see themselves being promoted within the Town.
- 13% of employees do not believe leaders communicate problems facing the Town.

Overall Readiness for Change: 4.306 (5.0 Scale)

Employee Forum

An Employee Focus Group took place on February 20, 2019, with 13 employees in attendance. It was a representative sample of employees across all departments and all levels of the organization and included both long-term employees and recently-hired employees. At this forum, the research team debriefed the employee survey results and prioritized the SWOT analysis results from the employee survey.

This was an opportunity for Town Manager, JP Murphy, to work closely with his staff to review internal and operational issues to be addressed in the strategic planning process, and to develop and preliminarily prioritize potential outcomes that the Commission should consider in the strategic planning process.



EMPLOYEE FOCUS GROUP RESULTS

Staff Ranked Priorities:

1. Develop employee cross-training opportunities
2. Evaluate and decrease health care costs
3. Improve project planning
4. Stay current with technology
5. Offer more community events for residents
6. Ensure the Town has adequate financial reserves
7. Try to attract millennials to the Town



Employees brainstorming and discussing ideas at the employee focus group.

Leadership Forum I

Leadership Forum I included leadership across Town department's and consisted of:

- A debriefing of the citizen forum/survey results
- A debriefing of the employee forum results
- A debriefing of initial citizen and employee desires for the future of the Town, including potential goals, objectives, and recommendations related to the vision
- Activities to develop the mission, vision, values, and strategic SMART goals for the Town government as an organization

The research team started the forum by reviewing the input received from interviews with key stakeholders

and from residents and others at the two community forums and the Community Survey. This data led to the identification of a preliminary list of issues to be addressed.

Commissioners worked with data input to identify additional key issues, and to provide guidance to staff on the amended list of issues. Direction included potential goals and objectives, and additional direction which staff could use to develop additional goals and objectives.

Below is the composite list of issues collected through the various prior phases of this planning process, as presented at Leadership Forum I.

COMPOSITE LIST OF ISSUES

Infrastructure

- Road maintenance
- Traffic management
- Water supply plant (retaining and updating water treatment plant)
- Underground utilities
- Sidewalks
- Visibility (streetlights and trimmed foliage)

Services

- Public safety - maintaining current Police Department
- Parks - consistent aesthetics and maintenance, permitting, (resident vs non-resident access and use of parks)
- Trash collection

Community life/character

- Focus on single-family housing
- Town-wide events and recreational programs
- Sense of community with less stratification

Relations with and to surrounding communities

Environmental sustainability



Section A – Communication

Goal A1: A connected and engaged community

Goal A2: A Town commission and staff that is accessible and responsive to communication from residents

Section B -- Community Character

Goal B1: Public facilities and spaces, programs, and services that encourage residents to know each other and identity as part of the Belleair community

Goal B2: Preservation and protection of the bluff and natural resources

Goal B3: An attractive, park-like atmosphere throughout the Town of Belleair optimizing aesthetics, planning, and development to maintain a natural/ native green appearance

Goal B4: Emphasis on low-density development in future land use decisions

Goal B5: Historic preservation

Section C – Infrastructure

Goal C1: Consistently high levels of pavement quality throughout all areas of Belleair

Goal C2: Street designs that control speed and minimize traffic volume throughout Belleair

Goal C3: A system of multi-modal safe routes (sidewalks, trails, bike lanes, and crosswalks) throughout Belleair

Goal C4: Secure and reliable supply of high-quality potable water at a consistent and reliable cost

Goal C5: Data collection on feasibility of underground utilities



Leadership Forum II

On May 16, 2019 the Commission and senior staff of the Town of Belleair met in a second leadership forum as part of the Town's strategic planning process. The specific objectives of the forum were to:

- Review and refine draft goals and objectives
- Prioritize goals
- Review and refine draft vision and mission
- Discuss and agree on next steps

Town leadership participated in a goals and objectives evaluation exercise, prioritization of goals exercise, and an exercise to refine the mission and vision of the Town of Belleair.

26 goals were identified through the strategic planning process as priorities. These goals were categorized into the following six themes: Communication, Community Character, Infrastructure, Leadership and Management, Partnering and Intergovernmental Collaboration, and Town Services. Town leadership was then asked to prioritize these goals in order to allocate potentially scarce resources from year to year.

Commissioners individually identified their top five priorities (in priority order) among the 26 goals using adhesive dots. Immediately following are the 26 goals that were voted on:



Goal C6: A stormwater system that provides protection of roadways, persons, property, and public health

Goal C7: A proactive system of stormwater treatment that meets or exceeds federal water quality standards to promote environmental sustainability

Goal C8: Town services integrated with information and communication technology

Goal C9: Consistent system of well-lit streets



Town Commission participate in a group activity at Leadership Forum II

Section D – Leadership and Management

Goal D1: A data-conscious approach to making better decisions at the staff and commission level about financial resources

Goal D2: A high-quality workforce that is engaged, well trained, and retained

Goal D3: Strong financial reserves to meet unforeseeable issues

Goal D4: A stable and strong financial position

Section E – Partnering and Intergovernmental Collaboration

Goal E1: Mutually-beneficial relationships with surrounding agencies

Section F – Town Services

Goal F1: Community-oriented, “proactive” police services for the safety and security of all residents

Goal F2: Maximize intergovernmental relationships

Goal F3: A consistently, low response time and excellent fire prevention services using a contracted entity for the provision of fire and EMS services

Goal F4: High-level service delivery (trash collection)

Goal F5: Town-wide events that foster a sense of community in Belleair

Top Five Priorities

Among the 26 high-priority goals adopted by the Commission to address the five themes it identified as strategic, the following five goals were selected as the highest priorities during the prioritization exercise from Commissioners present.

- Financial Responsibility (Goals D3 and D4 combined during session)

Financial responsibility and proactive policing were priorities since the Commission viewed them as necessary to all other activities the Town does (financial responsibility) or central to the Town’s responsibility for public safety (proactive policing).

- Proactive Policing (Goal F1)

Commissioners also noted that the level of police services provided by the Town was highly appreciated by residents, and dependent on the Town retaining its own police department.

- Pavement Quality (Goal C1)

Pavement quality, by contrast, was a priority because it was important to quality of life, and viewed by residents as important, but also because current conditions were seen by Commissioners and residents alike as deficient.

- Preservation and Protection of the Bluff (Goal B2)



- Preservation of the bluff is viewed as not only important, but urgent. The process to develop a plan to preserve the bluff is beginning, but not under the Town's exclusive control.

- **Water Supply (Goal C4)**

Water supply is also viewed as not only important, but urgent. The information the Town needs to make a decision on whether to retain and upgrade its water treatment plant or transfer ownership of it to Pinellas County is already underway.

Other Considerations

As the discussion progressed, it became clear that several other issues were also very high priorities, particularly the importance of the high cost of health insurance for Town employees and infrastructure issues, and especially storm water drainage and street lights.

Review and Refinement of Vision and Mission

Commissioners reviewed and refined a draft vision and mission statement for the Town, prepared by the facilitators based on earlier Commission discussion. Commissioners emphasized their desire for the statements to be not just aspirational but also inspirational. Commissioners preliminarily agreed on the following mission and vision statements with the understanding Town staff would wordsmith the language and present it back to the Commission for final approval.

Mission

To be the best place to live on the west coast of Florida.

Vision

Option 1

Our vision is to promote and improve our quality of life, enhance our sense of community, and preserve the integrity of our small town – a beautiful, safe, secure, community focused on creating environments where people know their neighbors.

Option 2

The Town of Belleair is a beautiful, well-designed community where people know their neighbors. We are friendly and inclusive. We are rich in history, anchored by a safe, small town atmosphere, while enhancing the quality of life for all residents and a place where people know their neighbors.

Option 3

We are rich in history, anchored by a safe, small-town atmosphere, while enhancing the quality of life for all residents and a place where people know their neighbors.

Conclusions

This section presents the conclusions of the strategic planning process by the research team. The recommendations are cast here as the research team's, but they are really the work of those Belleair residents, commissioners and staff who gave generously of their time over a period of ten months to develop the results. The research team helped with support and direction, but the credit belongs to the participants. Ultimately, The Town of Belleair Commission will make the final decisions about the recommended goals and objectives.

Certain themes arose repeatedly from the variety of discussions and input opportunities throughout the process. Commissioners worked with these to develop a list of six key strategic issues – issues central to the future success of the Town of Belleair. Those issues were:

- Communication
- Community Character
- Infrastructure
- Leadership and Management
- Partnering and Intergovernmental Collaboration
- Town Services



With Town staff, Commissioners then developed a total of 26 recommended goals, together with related objectives. They concluded by exploring and identifying the highest priorities among the 26 goals.

Highest Priorities

Among the 26 high-priority goals adopted by the Commission to address the six themes identified as strategic, the Commission determined the following five goals to be the highest priorities.

- Financial responsibility
- Proactive policing
- Pavement quality
- Preservation and protection of the bluff
- Water supply

Next Steps

By using the Participatory Approach Planning Tool (1), all participation was welcomed and respected, and the process was not dominated by any individual or group or by a single point of view. All participants became an important contributor throughout the planning process; hopefully, providing community ownership

and support of the process with information about the community's history, politics, and past mistakes, with respect and a voice for everyone. This approach must be maintained over time, so that momentum will not be lost.

In an effort to continue moving forward, these additional next steps are crucial to the completion and implementation of the strategic plan:

- ✓ Commission adoption of the recommended goals and objectives
- ✓ Staff and advisory boards completion of action plans/tasks for each of the objectives, outlining in detail actions that will be taken to achieve the objectives
- ✓ Staff development of a “score card” checklist, allowing the tracking of progress toward completion of each of the action plans
- ✓ An annual Commission retreat to review and evaluate score cards, priorities, and successes

(1) <https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/analyze/where-to-start/participatory-approaches/main>