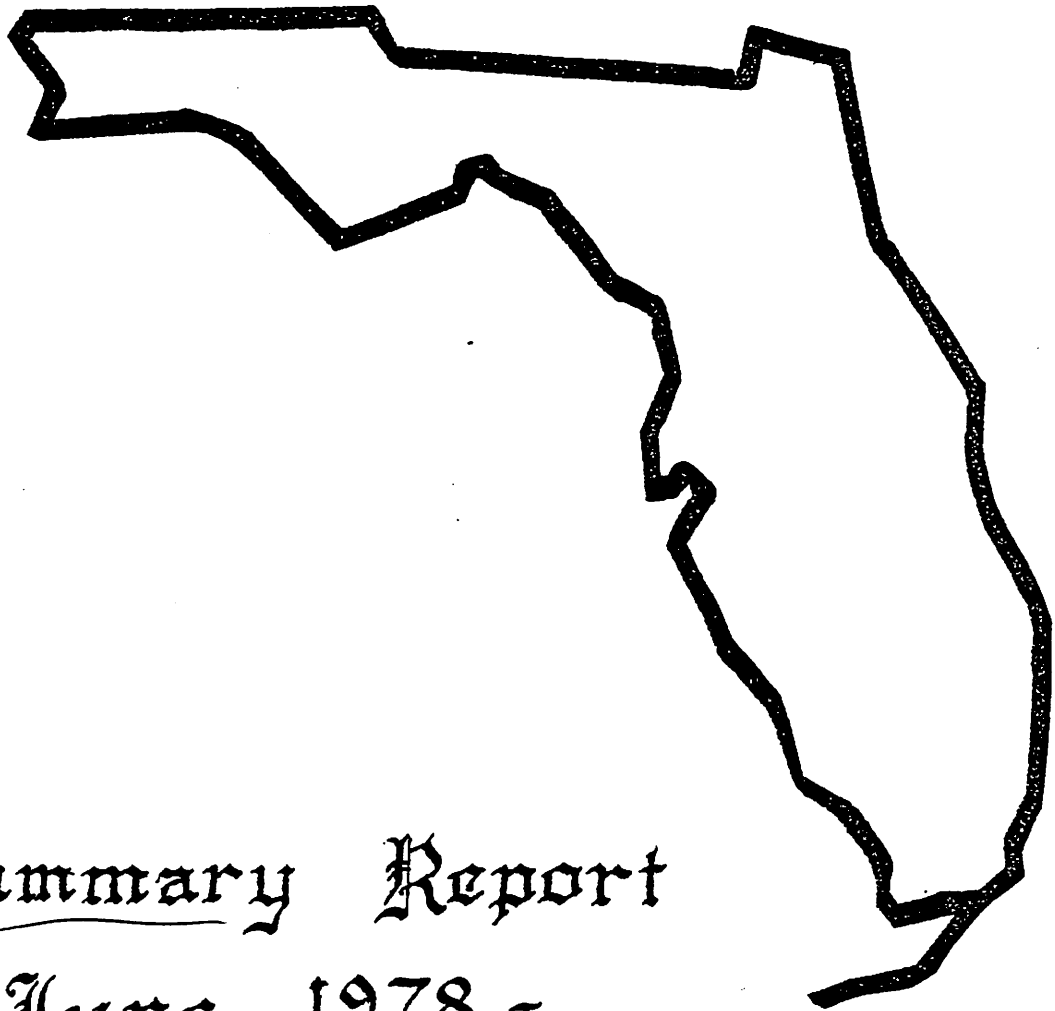


# Town Meeting Florida



Summary Report

- June 1978 -



STATE OF FLORIDA

Office of the Governor

THE CAPITOL

TALLAHASSEE 32304

REUBIN O'D. ASKEW  
GOVERNOR

November 17, 1977

Mr. David Reese  
The Institute of Cultural Affairs  
777 West Lancaster Road  
Orlando, Florida 42809

Dear Mr. Reese:

The series of town meetings being held in various areas of Florida under the sponsorship of the Institute of Cultural Affairs can be a most important factor in awakening in individuals a realization that it is the duty of citizens to actively participate in governmental affairs.

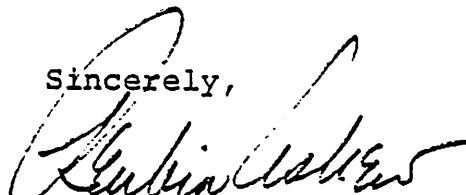
Our American society is built upon the foundation of citizen responsibility and involvement. In an effort to assist our citizens in carrying out this responsibility, the town meeting provides an opportunity for each one to be involved directly in the decision-making process.

Only through citizen participation and cooperation can we expect our democratic system to survive.

Town meetings have always played an important role in this great tradition of neighborly cooperation in solving local problems in order to improve our cities and towns. During the early days of our Nation, town meetings provided the means for citizens to meet and settle problems. Such town meetings are needed now more than ever before.

Local leaders across Florida should support the sponsorship of town meetings and encourage all citizens to attend and actively participate.

Sincerely,



Governor

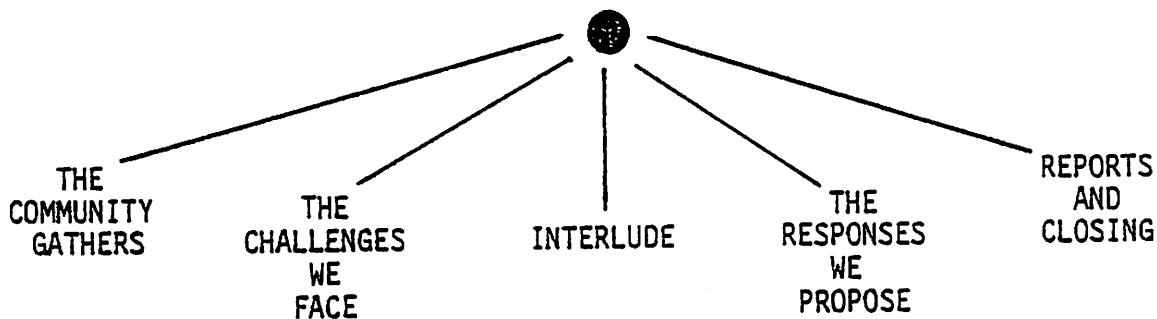
ROA/tsv

## THE PURPOSE OF TOWN MEETING

Our society is at a crossroads between the past and the future for local community. Citizens experience the loss of the neighborliness, family disintegration, chaos in educational institutions, the increase of crime, and cynicism about the political process. At the same time, the ability of local community leadership to deal with these challenges helpfully is diminishing as its sense of identity and unity are eroded by the growing urban complexity. Apathy among citizens which results from this dilemma often robs communities of valuable initiative and creativity.

A serious question facing small and large towns alike today is how can more local people be motivated, trained and effectively engaged in the vital task of meeting these challenges. Or, how can the flame of community pride and local initiative be rekindled.

The Town Meeting is one answer to the dilemma. A locally sponsored one-day or three-hour evening community forum provides an opportunity for a representative group of citizens to meet those challenges using resources available within the community.



TOWN MEETING FLORIDA is contemporary recasting of the town meetings in the early days of this country. At those meetings, citizens gathered to discuss the challenges facing their community, to create proposals to deal with them, and to organize themselves to implement the decisions they had made. TOWN MEETING FLORIDA is designed to recapture the vitality and enthusiasm of those early town meetings and thereby rekindle the spirit of citizen participation and pride in their own community.

\* \* \* \* \*

*"We're going to change from a 'what's the use, anyway' attitude to one of 'now we're moving forward together'." Lacochee Town Meeting*

*"With people caring and knowing their input can help, we might get this county running a little more efficiently, and that would save money." DeSoto County Town Meeting*

**TOWN MEETING FLORIDA---A FIVE-PHASE PROJECT**

I INITIATION	II DEMONSTRATION	III EXPANSION	IV SATURATION	V SIGNAL PROJECT
1976	Fall/Winter 1977/1978	Spring/1978	1978/1979	1979/1980
2 Town Meetings	25 Town Meetings	41 Town Meetings One per County (67 Total)	Available to All Communities and Groups	2-year Human Development Project

PHASE I: INITIATION: 1976

The Town Meeting program began in Florida as "Town Meeting '76", during the bi-centennial year, with two Town Meetings being held in Miami, both using the all day Saturday format.

PHASE II: DEMONSTRATION: November, 1977 to February 1978

Twenty-five Town Meetings were held during this time in small communities in central and southern Florida, using the three hour format. Most of these were held in the evening hours. Communities ranged in size from 300 to 4,500 population.

<u>COUNTY</u>	<u>COMMUNITY</u>	<u>COUNTY</u>	<u>COMMUNITY</u>
Broward	Coconut Creek	Okeechobee	Okeechobee
Citrus	Chassahowitzka	Orange	Tildenville
Flagler	Flager Beach	Osceola	Intercession City
Hardee	Bowling Green	Palm Beach	Pahokee
Hendry	LaBelle	Pasco	Lacoochee
Hernando	Istachatta	Pinellas	Oldsmar
Highlands	Sebring	Polk	Davenport
Indian River	Gifford	St. Lucie	Fort Pierce
Lake	Monteverde	Sarasota	Venice
Levy	Inglis/Yankeetown	Seminole	Jamestown
Marion	Reddick	Sumter	Bushnell
Martin	Indiantown	Volusia	Lake Helen/Cassadaga
Monroe	Layton		

\* \* \* \* \*

Jamestown Slogan

**"ON THE MOVE TO IMPROVE"**

Pahokee Slogan

**"DON'T HESITATE! PARTICIPATE!"**

PHASE III: EXPANSION: April, May 1978

By May 6th there had been at least one Town Meeting event in each of the 67 counties of Florida, with the northern county meetings being held in April and May. These were held with various community groupings of all ages and backgrounds but with the common concern of improved community life.

<u>COUNTY</u>	<u>COMMUNITY</u>	<u>COUNTY</u>	<u>COMMUNITY</u>
Alachua	Gainsville	Holmes	Esto
Baker	MacClenny	Jackson	Alford
Bay	Cedar Grove	Jefferson	Wakeenah
Bradford	Lawtey	Lafayette	Mayo
Brevard	Titusville	Lee	Fort Myers
Broward	East Lake <i>East Lake?</i>	Leon	Fort Braddon
Calhoun	Altha	Liberty	Bristol
Charlotte	El Jobean	Madison	Lee
Clay	Keystone Heights	Manatee	Bradenton
Collier	Naples	Nassau	Callahan
Columbia	Lake City	Okaloosa	Destin
DeSoto	Arcadia	Putman	Interlachen
Dixie	Cross City	St. Johns	Hastings
Duval	Baldwin	Santa Rosa	Bagdad
Excambia	South Flomaton	Suwanee	Live Oak
Franklin	Carrabelle	Taylor	Stienhachie
Gadsden	Greensboro	Union	Lake Butler
Gilchrist	Bell	Wakulla	Sopchoppy
Glades	Brighton Reservation	Walton	Paxton
Gulf	St. Joe Beach	Washington	Ebro
Hamilton	Jennings		
Hillsborough	Wimauma		

\* \* \* \* \*

STORY from Precinct One Town Meeting (Istachatta, Nobleton, Forest Hills, Deer Haven)

Once upon a time, the community met together on all holidays and any other time a reason could be found for getting together. Picnics were held down by the old bridge on Thanksgiving, parties were given on the Fourth of July when everyone played baseball or pitched horseshoes or took part in the horse races. A dance floor was built by the community and dances were held whenever live music could be secured.

Many new people now live here in several newly created communities of Precinct One. Our Bicentennial Hall was built in 1976, which has a fine library as part of it. A new post office building was acquired by each of the communities, Istachatta and Nobleton. A volunteer fire department is active. Potluck dinners for the community are being held regularly, sometimes with over 120 folks attending.

Greater things will happen in Precinct One in the future as a real process of unification among the people takes place. Good times from the past will come again through sharing and caring.

## A SUMMARY OF CHALLENGES FROM 67 TOWN MEETINGS

A CHALLENGE is an underlying issue that blocks the hopes and dreams of the people.

### LIMITED CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

- nobody comes to civic meetings unless they have an "axe to grind"
- they say they're afraid to stir up trouble
- "I'm retired"

### NO COMMUNITY PLAN

- no shared vision by citizens
- growth, no growth conflict
- keep it small and quiet
- land use plan costs too much

### CONFLICT BETWEEN TOWN AND COUNTY

- "we're a stepchild in the county"
- no services from county
- facilities they provide are inadequate
- don't keep up the parks, etc.

### NOT ENOUGH PUBLIC SERVICES

- sewer system limits growth
- water system wearing out
- no recreation for the youth
- library is inadequate

### INCONSISTENT LOCAL LEADERSHIP

- have to beg somebody to run
- decisions made by a few people
- "they won't listen to us"
- negative, tired or inactive leaders
- satisfied and complacent

### COMMUNITY NEEDS NOT RECOGNIZED

- one group has run this town for 50 years
- roads in minority area not paved
- city council is a closed shop
- can't get representatives to County Commissioners' meetings

\* \* \*

LaBelle Slogan

*Our Home - Our Responsibility*

*"The stage is well set for future action,  
it was good to see people so enthusiastic".  
Oldsmar Town Meeting*

### LITTLE PRIDE IN COMMUNITY

- run down buildings
- trash scattered over streets
- neglected street signs
- missing street signs

### INADEQUATE CULTURAL RESOURCES

- school too small for music, art, etc.
- over dependence on TV
- no community social events
- low reading level

### VANDALISM OF PUBLIC PROPERTIES

- park properties torn up
- school windows broken
- graffitti on walls
- civic center uncared for

### LIMITED ECONOMIC RESOURCES

- 80% of us are retired
- limited tax base
- no industry to employ our youth
- one industry town

\* \* \*



## A SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS FROM 67 TOWN MEETINGS

A PROPOSAL is a plan of action that meets the Challenge.

### GET TO KNOW OUR COMMUNITY

- do a community survey
- organize a historical society
- hold a community picnic, Bar-b-Q
- have a town dinner

### MEET RECREATIONAL & CULTURAL NEEDS

- bring a proposal to town council
- hold public hearings
- form a planning group
- get town officials to cooperate

### DEVELOP PRIDE IN OUR COMMUNITY

- support our local civic clubs
- clean up our town
- create a system of communication
- make our town pleasant & attractive

### DEMONSTRATE PRIDE IN OUR TOWN

- name streets, put up signs
- begin an annual festival
- hold a city beautification day
- activate the community club

\* \* \*

### PUSH FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH

- get adequate sewer system
- set goal for jobs
- improve our image with industry
- invite industry here

### NAME OUR CHALLENGES AND SOLVE THEM

- participate in council meetings
- get our clubs involved in solving issues
- get newspaper to write about issues in depth
- hold more town meetings

### GET MORE CITIZENS INVOLVED

- do a publicity campaign
- form a Jolly Gee Club to unify us
- get school students involved in public meetings

### COMMUNICATE WITH EACH OTHER

- hold monthly town meetings
- have a community fish fry
- create maps and brochures
- have a beauty contest and races

### IMPROVE OUR MEDICAL SERVICES

- start first aid classes
- list local retired nurses and doctors who would volunteer to help
- visit a town that built own clinic
- get a doctor

### DEVELOP A LONG RANGE PLAN

- invite citizens to land use plan meetings
- look together at projected growth
- meet with potential developers
- submit proposal for sewer funding

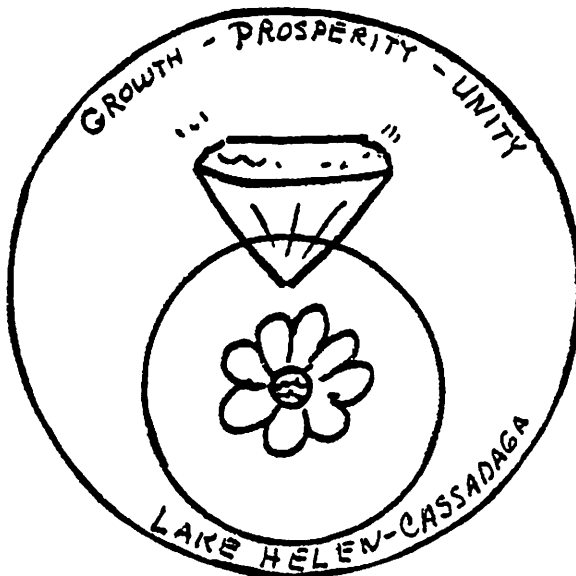
\* \* \*

Esto Slogan

*The Community of the Concerned*

Interlachen Slogan

*Progress Through Perseverance.*



## SONG, STORY, SYMBOL AND SLOGAN

Four ways for local people to affirm their community and express their pride in it.

### Bushnell, Our Little Town (Tune: Happy Wanderer)

Bushnell is a little town  
That's got a lot to give.  
And if you'll come and join  
us here,  
You'll find your place to live.

#### Chorus:

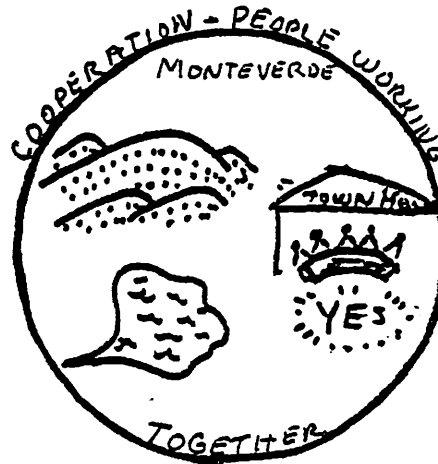
Bush-nell Bush-nell, Bush-nell,  
Zip 3 3 5 1 3,  
Bushnell, Bushnell, Bushnell,  
It has a lot to give.

We people here are nice and kind,  
But not always so wise,  
When opportunities have knocked  
We've often closed our eyes.

#### Chorus:

We are free to overcome  
The things that hold us back,  
And if we join together now,  
Our future's on the track.

#### Chorus:



### Our Lovely Indiantown (Tune: Around the World)

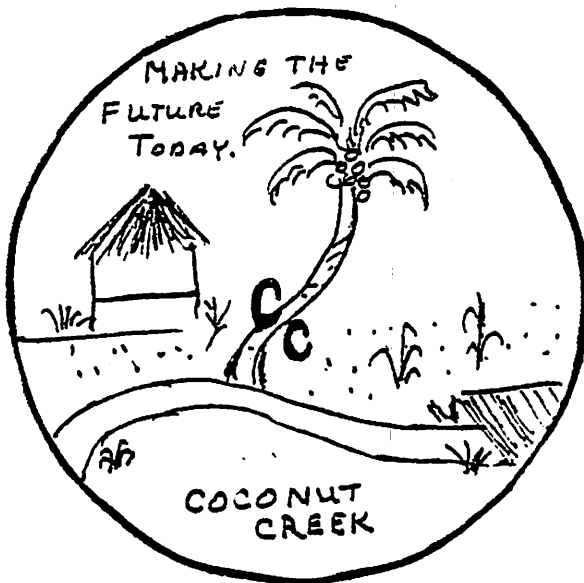
Around the groves of Indiantown  
The people came to settle down  
In Annie Platt's small town.

The Seaboard came to build our town  
No Indians found, but cowboys came  
And brought rodeo fame.

Our challenge is community pride,  
From that we will not step aside,  
Our duty to our lovely Indiantown,  
To love and share what's around.

Ft. Braddon Slogan

People Sharing - People Caring



### Layton's Song

(Tune: Deep in the Heart of Texas)

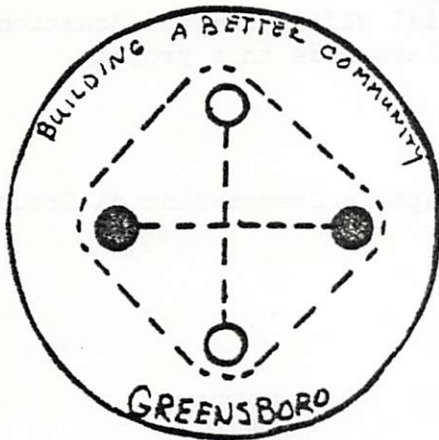
At Zane Grey Creek  
Catch shrimp to eat,  
Deep in the heart of Layton.

No taxes here,  
We're all volunteer,  
Deep in the heart of Layton.

The sun is bright  
Some nights are quiet,  
Deep in the heart of Layton.



SONG, STORY, SYMBOL AND SLOGAN



North Lake City  
(Tune: Battle Hymn of the Republic)

Do we in North Lake City  
Want to see some changes made?  
In conditions of our streets  
And in the housing and the schools?  
We've waded in the mud  
And jumped the ditches long enough  
We Must now make a change.

Chorus:  
Glory, glory it is time to make  
a change.  
Glory, glory it is time to make  
a change.  
Glory, glory it is time to make  
a change,  
Before we're all destroyed.

It is time that we should see ourselves  
a going to the polls,  
To vote to save our children as well  
to save our souls.  
You took the schools and moved them out,  
and won't put a thing back in.  
We're out to save our souls.

Chorus:  
Let's forget the days of yore, and  
let us come now to the fore.  
We've heard your promise, saw no action,  
tell it here no more.  
Now, let's get ourselves together in  
this community,  
And do what needs to be.

Chorus:

\* \* \* \* \*  
Coconut Creek Slogan  
*Making the Future Today*

Jamestown is Beautiful  
(Tune: God Bless America)

Jamestown is beautiful  
Place that we love.  
Our people pull together  
Turning dreams into signs  
that we care.

Chorus: So, get out there  
Trust each other,  
Be a leader, DO IT NOW!  
Building our tomorrows  
In our hometown,  
We can work miracles  
Our faith shows how.

Jamestown is planning  
For what we need,  
Bus shelters, paved streets,  
Recreation that shapes neighborhood.

Chorus:

THE BRISTOL STORY

Back in the early and middle 1800's  
this town was called Wrigglysville,  
around 1855 it was established as  
Bristol.

Timber and related activities are the  
main economic base of Liberty County.  
Bristol is known as the place of "Tupelo  
Honey". The town is a quiet, hospitable  
community of 600 folks. Eight churches  
provide the spiritual strength of the  
people.

In the future we vision more cultural  
and educational opportunities for all  
and jobs for our youth so they can stay  
here and live. As we become more civic  
minded our town will be a lovelier place  
to live.

\* \* \* \* \*  
Bushnell Slogan  
*A Little Town With a Lot to Give*

## CONTRIBUTIONS

The TOWN MEETING FLORIDA Project appreciates the financial gifts, in-kind donations, and the advice and support from across the state which have made this project possible.

## GRANT SUPPORT

Martin-Marietta Corporation

United Telephone System-Florida Group

Xerox Corporation

## CITIZENS IN SUPPORT

L. K. CANNON, JR.  
V.P. & Mgr.  
Withlacoochee Office  
Levy State Bank  
Inglis

LEWIS CHAPMAN  
Dist. Mgr.  
Southern Bell  
Miami

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Sunrise

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Catholic Diocese  
Orlando

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Southern Gas & Hardware  
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Dist. 47, Area 3  
Gov., Int. Toastmasters  
Miami Shores

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ROBERT SHERWOOD  
General Counsel  
Pfizer - Latin America  
Coral Gables

CHARLES STEWART  
Withlacoochee-Gulf Area  
Chamber of Commerce  
Inglis

DAN STOWE  
Central Packing Co.  
Center Hill

ANN WOOD  
Coral Gables

## MEALS

Barnaby's Family Inn, Tallahassee  
Bonaza Steak House, Jacksonville  
Burger King, Jacksonville, Crestview  
Captain's Galley, Tallahassee  
Duff's Smorgasbord, Tallahassee  
Frisch's Big Boy, Gainesville, Orlando,  
Jacksonville, Tallahassee  
Hardee's, Flomaton, Panama City  
Howard Johnson Restuarant, Jacksonville  
Krystal's, Jacksonville, Lake City,  
Orlando, Tallahassee  
Lucy Ho's, Tallahassee  
McDonald's, Jacksonville, Lake City,  
Okeechobee, Orlando, Tallahassee,  
and many others.  
McWaffles, Jacksonville  
Mr. Taco, Panama City  
Pizza Hut, Orlando  
Sambo's, Jacksonville  
Shakey's Pizza, Orlando

## LODGING

Hilton Motel, Crestview  
Holiday Inn, Jacksonville, Miami,  
Orlando, Panama City.  
Motel 8, Lake City  
Raintree Inn, Jacksonville  
Rodeway Inn, Lake City  
Quincy Motor Lodge, Quincy

## TRANSPORTATION

Don Mealey Chevrolet, Orlando  
Ford Zone Office, Jacksonville  
Duval Ford Motors, Jacksonville

## OTHER CONTRIBUTIONS

Orlando Art & Frame, Orlando  
Huggins Business Machines, Tallahassee  
Hughes Supply Company, Orlando

## WHAT'S NEXT?

### MORE TOWN MEETINGS (PHASE IV)

The Town Meeting Florida project will continue to hold Town Meetings across the state where communities make requests. Volunteers from towns where these meetings have been held who want to participate in the program beyond their own communities are invited to assist.

### SPECIAL FOCUS TOWN MEETINGS

Town Meetings with a "special focus" will be held, also. Senior Citizen groups, youth organizations, businesses, churches, crime prevention agencies, and several other socially concerned groups may want to use the method as a way of focusing their vision and their goals for the future.

### HUMAN DEVELOPMENT PROJECT (PHASE V)

In addition, within the next year, it is expected that one community in Florida will be selected to be the host community for a Human Development Project (HDP). With training assistance of on-site ICA consultants, the community will engage in a two-year demonstration project. This will provide a laboratory to demonstrate how towns and communities in our state can meet economic, political and cultural challenges with resources available to them.

Already, across this country, 16 of these projects are underway. Nearest to Florida is Gibson, North Carolina which held its initiating consult on June 18, 1978. The planning process for these consults is similar to that of a Town Meeting. Its greater, week-long length, however, allows for a much more careful and full analysis of data and future planning by the community.

These consults are attended by community residents and volunteer consultants from this general area of the nation. Many people choose to spend vacation time or free time in such a demonstration project working with local people and with ICA staff while contributing their skills in a program which helps local people take responsibility for making their communities better places in which to live.

Interested persons may write to:

The Institute of Cultural Affairs  
P.O. Box 307  
Gibson, N.C. 28343

\* \* \* \* \*

*"It was so good to see so many of our citizens thinking along constructive lines and actively participating in solutions."* Inglis-Yankeetown

*"They gave us new methods so we can tackle our own problems."* Callahan

TOWN MEETING: FLORIDA was created for local communities by the Institute of Cultural Affairs, a not-for-profit research, demonstration and training group concerned with the human factor in world development. The ICA staff and volunteer consultants in 103 American cities and overseas locations work with local sponsoring groups to coordinate program development and provide resources, training and follow-up services upon request. For further information, contact:



THE INSTITUTE OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS

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226 East Lake Drive SE  
Atlanta, GA 30317  
Phone; (404)377-0669

777 West Lancaster, C-53  
Orlando, FL 32809  
(305)857-2744

# How To Celebrate The Bicentennial

*Town Meeting '76 is an imaginative program designed to engage some 5,000 American communities in one-day Bicentennial Era forums.*

# TOWN MEETING 76

## How One Community Came Alive

Town Meeting '76 was developed by the Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA), a not-for-profit research, demonstration, and training group concerned with the human factor in world development. The program was recently awarded recognition by the American Revolution Bicentennial Administration and the Minnesota American Revolution Bicentennial Commission.

The Town Meeting '76 format was tested for feasibility in 39 communities across the nation on a single day, June 8, 1974. The Whittier neighborhood in Minneapolis was one of them — its story appears below. In each case, the meetings were sponsored locally by community and municipal organizations and agencies. Over 3,000 citizens participated. A cross section of each community's population was represented.

The response to this experiment exceeded all serious expectations. The excitement generated in each of the 39 Town Meetings indicated that local citizens have a strong desire to voice their concerns where they feel their ideas can make a difference. Follow-up efforts indicate that



Town Meeting '76 — at first blush it may look like a hackneyed idea punched up, but it takes only 14 seconds to realize that this new format for citizen participation is a vital, viable vehicle whose time has come. Whittier, a neighborhood in South Minneapolis, tried it and found that it fit like a custom made suit.

### Whittier's Character

Whittier is a community that sports opulent mansions and plush tree lined streets that speak eloquently of its luxurious past. Today many of these homes house funeral parlors, apartments, half-way houses and small businesses. They sit side by side with high rise senior citizen complexes, large modern apartment buildings and gasoline stations.

In this community of 15,000 you find wealth and welfare; blue collar and executive; white, black and red, with a rich

**Minnesota Municipalities**

the Town Meeting catalyzed a significant sense of responsibility, as reflected in new local initiatives.

Nationwide Town Meetings have been held in urban neighborhoods of major cities (such as Minneapolis; Washington, D.C.; Chicago; Newark; Philadelphia; Kansas City; San Francisco as well as in rural communities (including Ada, Oklahoma; Lacey, Washington; Clarksburg, West Virginia; Bethel, Alaska; Fayette County, Ohio). Town Meeting formats identical to that used in the United States have also been used across Canada. The ICA has been invited by officials in Australia, the Phillipines and Korea to bring the same format to their countries, indicating its universal applicability.

### Minnesota's Participation

ICA has agreed to make available 90 Town Meetings in urban neighborhoods and rural communities across Minnesota. Some Minnesota communities have experienced or have already begun plans for Town Meeting '76. Farsighted officials of these communities have perceived the need for the kind of constructive citizen

mix of ethnic backgrounds; established residential and an ever-growing number of apartment dwellers and group home services; a constant flow of students, working singles and retired citizens; and a past of wealth and stability and a present with the lowest per-capita income for Minneapolis and highest transiency and crime rate.

Whittier's early beginnings are generously sprinkled with notable names like senator W. P. Washburn, George Brackett, Dorilus Morrison, Charles Pillsbury, George H. Christian, R. I. Mendenhall — people who carved out this community and its identity. Yet, in recent years, Whittier had become the "hole in the doughnut" of Minneapolis. Its historic identity was no longer relevant to the present residents and was too narrow to honor gifts of the neighborhood's wide diversity.

August 1975

participation which results from Town Meeting '76. The utility of this vehicle for discerning the issues and concerns of the people and of obtaining local input for community solutions to community concerns has been shown to be invaluable. Community officials have made use of the results to clarify current issues and to determine the nature of the community's vision for its own future. An additional benefit has been the citizen-established tactics, or practical steps and priorities of accomplishing the stated goals for their future.

### The Town Meeting Format

The agenda of the one-day Town Meeting focuses on morning and afternoon workshop sessions. The meeting opens at 9:00 a.m. with a community welcome and closes at 5:00 p.m. with a general reporting session. The format has been designed so that it can be used in all 5,000 communities, providing a common basis for comparing and evaluating the results, yet allowing emphasis upon points of local interest and uniqueness. While the activities of the day are structured, the celebrative atmosphere is informal.



Once again Whittier was faced with the challenge of carving out its future, but now the task included such issues as zoning, comprehensive design, neighborhood communication and cooperation, rehabilitation of housing, poor distribution of goods and services and age stratifications, all of which demanded broad-based citizen participation in the decision-making process.

### Whittier's Town Meeting

On June 8, 1974, this community held a Town Meeting, inviting local citizens from all over the community to come together. Provided with a way to get at common concerns, to look at the past, present and future of Whittier, to talk about problems as challenges, and begin the process of long range planning, the people that met that day agreed on three central directions for the future:

*"All the great civilizations had one thing in common, a positive image of the future infusing the present with purpose and expectation."*

**ROBERT BUNDY**

Town Meeting '76 is not a complaint session. Its focus is directed toward creative proposals for future directions by building upon the gifts and strengths of the community. These proposals are arrived at through innovative think-tank processes. The morning session is an analysis of the underlying challenges facing our nation and the community. The afternoon session is the writing of practical proposals for meeting those challenges. A short talk sets the stage for each workshop and a festive noon-time luncheon interlude marks the transition from the present to the future with songs and local entertainment.

The participants of each Town Meeting create a document which consists of 15 or 20 defined challenges and resolved proposals. They also create a story, a song and a graphic symbol that relates



1. Building community identity and responsibility;
2. Preserving the community's architectural heritage and natural beauty; and
3. Beginning a community organization to join people together in work on continuing community needs.

#### **The Whittier Community Organization**

On Wednesday following the Town Meeting, 30 Whittier residents met to evaluate the Town Meeting challenges and proposals. From that meeting and the weekly meetings that continued thereafter, a core group evolved which saw its purpose as being to implement the new vision of Whittier to demonstrate to the whole city how local residents can creatively participate in decisions which affect the community's future.

One of the major challenges to be directly addressed in the year since that

their community to the nation's future. This document is reproduced during the day and distributed at the final session.

ICA will act as a research and program consultant in the project — helping sponsoring groups by producing materials, providing operational designs, training local leadership, and participating in the major task of summarizing the resulting proposals for publication.

Although the specific results of the pilot Town Meetings have varied from community to community, three dominant themes seem to emerge:

1. Grassroots citizens recover a deep sense of confidence in the value of their own insights and intuitions;
2. People are astounded to discover how broadly their concerns are shared by others;
3. There is a realization with some astonishment, that the proposals form a practical community plan which the creators have a particular responsibility to carry out.

#### **Creating the Future**

The implications arising from the pilot

first Town Meeting was the recovery of the identity of Whittier as a distinct neighborhood in South Minneapolis. A series of events planned by the core group (now called the Whittier Community Organization) rekindled this community identity. The events included "Sunday in Whittier", a full day community celebration on September 8, 1974, in Fair Oaks Park which involved 3,000 citizens in a festive celebration of Whittier's past, present and future; a "Whittier Clean Up Day" in November; "Whittier in Harmony," a community sing in December; "Whittier's Young at Heart", a Valentine's ball for community elders in February, and a second Town Meeting held at historic Whittier school in March.

Seeing the community as a definable, historic and viable neighborhood has been the result witnessed by Whittier citizens. This new vision brought new demands and

Town Meetings are numerous. Some mentioned are use of the Town Meeting format as a regular vehicle for citizen participation in community decision making; expanded and more effective citizen participation in community events and programs; coordination of service clubs and public and private agencies to avoid duplication and to allow concentration of services on the critical community needs; community problems being solved from within by the use of community resources, without waiting for or depending upon outside experts.

As in Whittier, communities across the country have found Town Meeting '76 to be useful in uncovering the community's previously untapped human resources.

Because of a long history of pioneering in citizen involvement, Minnesota is particularly well suited to the Town Meeting program. The Minneapolis Office of the Institute of Cultural Affairs has found citizens and public and private service groups receptive to sponsoring a day for their community. Its futuristic emphasis has led the Horizons Panel of the Minnesota

American Revolution Bicentennial Commission to recommend it to the full commission, where it has been unanimously endorsed with a grant to provide partial funding for the first 41 meetings. Public endorsements include the Minnesota-Dakota District of Kiwanis, the League of Women Voters of Minnesota; the Minnesota Department of Economic Development; the Governor's Office of Economic Opportunity. Interest and encouragement have also been expressed by staff of such organizations as Minnesota Commission for the Future, the Minnesota Association of Commerce and Industry, the Minnesota Bankers Association, and the Minnesota Agricultural Extension Service. Nationally, in addition to adoption by the official national body, Kiwanis International has endorsed the day-long construct as a meaningful way for citizens to participate in the Bicentennial Celebration.

A common response to Town Meeting '76 is "Any town can do this... and needs to!" "What a good way to celebrate our 200th birthday." ■



a new dimension for the community organization. Time had come for a plan of concrete, effective structural care for community residents on a comprehensive basis. This necessarily meant bridging gaps between citizens, political representatives, local businessmen and all existing social programs and agencies. The creation of a long-range plan to build these

bridges delineated 15 programs to be initiated with three implemented each year. Excitement began to build as plans were proposed for "Whittier University", which could offer accredited courses in subjects directly applicable in the home, business or community. Other proposals include block clubs, a community center, annual community celebrations and a community communications network.

The transformation which has occurred in Whittier was initiated by an event — the Town Meeting held on June 8, 1974. The format presented local citizens with a vehicle to get beyond immediate concerns to the underlying root issues and challenges facing the community. The basis of this transformation was the experience of individual citizens who began to see themselves as creative participants, rather than observers, in deciding the future of their community. ■

*"We hold this annual celebration to remind ourselves of all the good done in the process of time, of how it was done and who did it and how we are historically connected with it. And we go from these meetings in better humor with ourselves — we feel more attached to the one to the other and more firmly bound to the country we inhabit."*

ABRAHAM LINCOLN