

TOWN MEETING



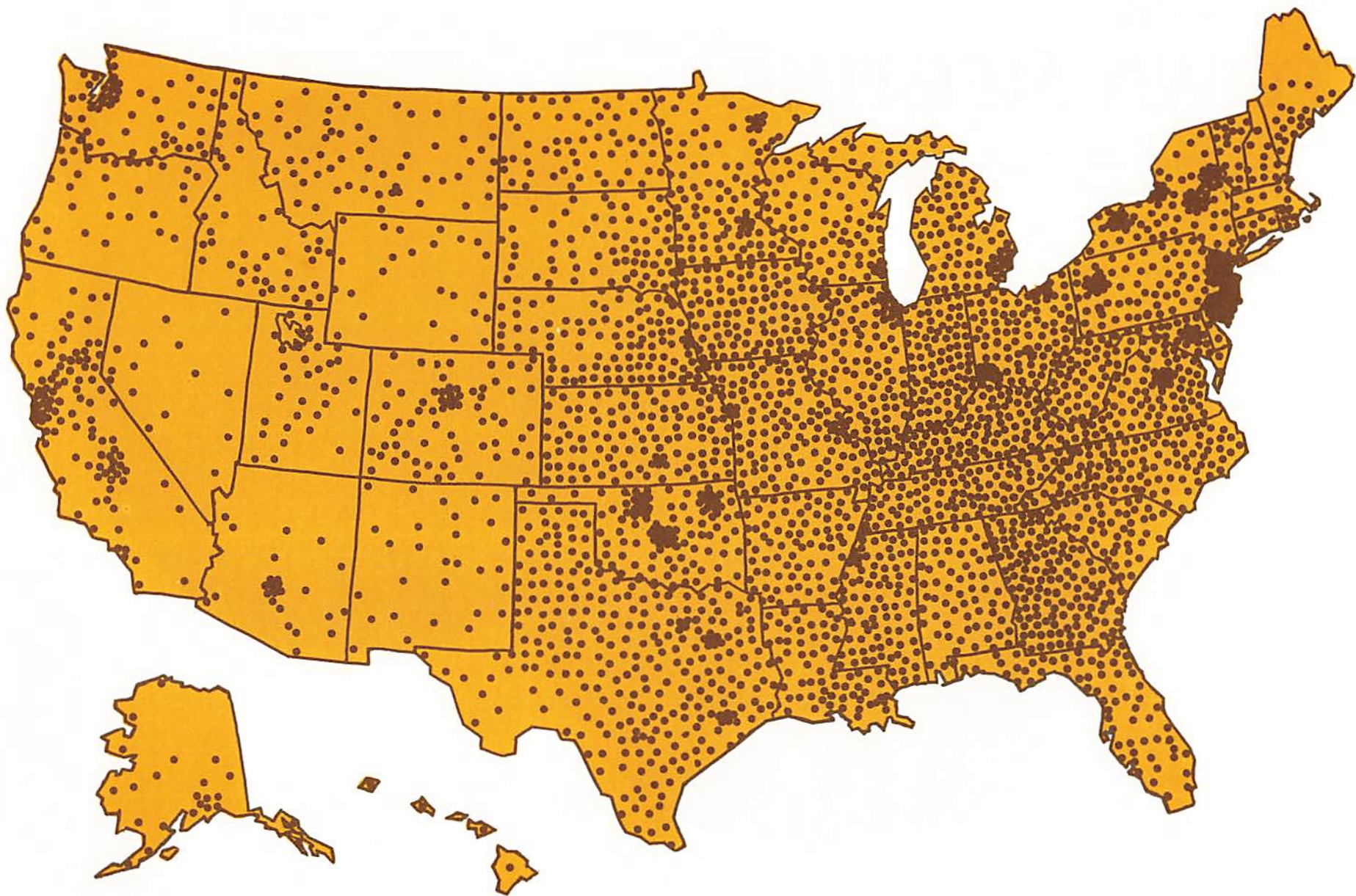
AN HISTORIC WAY OF PULLING TOGETHER

During the last two years, Americans of all ages, in all walks of life and from all across the nation—suburbanites from Shaker Heights, Native Americans from New Mexico, blue collar workers from Chicago, farmers from Emmetsburg, Mexican Americans from San Denadids, Mormons from Koosharem, school children and elders from Oklahoma City, Chinese Americans from Nob Hill, prison inmates from Richmond, Hawaiian Americans from Maui, Blacks from Cohoma, to mention only a few—participated in the Twentieth Century version of the old New England Town Meeting.

From KODIAK to the KEYS across every state, in every county at least one town held a TOWN MEETING

The contemporary Town Meeting is a community event designed to release citizen participation. It allows people to consider the major challenges facing their town and to discover the possibilities at hand to respond to these challenges. It motivates participants to begin active cooperation in various projects, such as clean-up days, building renovation, community service structures, and significant services for youth and elders. Its effects are felt as a renewed spirit pervades the whole community and as citizens begin to put their care into action.

This report is dedicated to the 275,000 Americans who have now participated in 3,600 Town Meetings—spread geographically across the nation, at least one in every county.

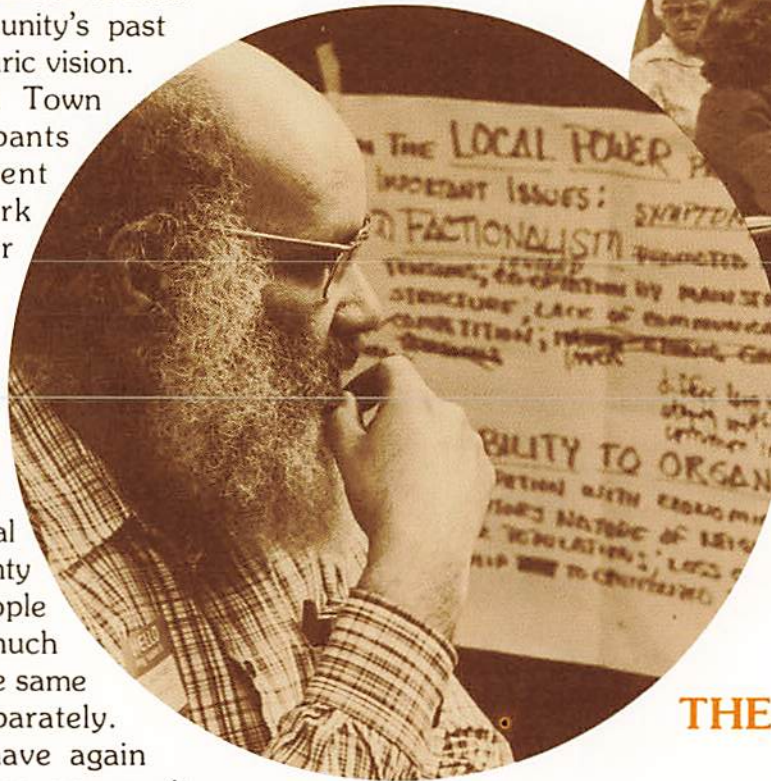


At each TOWN MEETING

. . . local citizens defined the key challenges facing their communities and wrote proposals to engage the whole community in solving them. Working in teams, they created a song and symbol commemorating their community's past achievements and futuristic vision. At the end of each Town Meeting the participants produced a document containing their work and celebrated their corporate decisions.

Through the Town Meeting people rediscovered that local citizens are those best qualified to discern and resolve local problems and that twenty or two hundred people working together are much more effective than the same number working separately. These participants have again demonstrated that true community development depends upon local citizens.

THE PROPOSED DIRECTIONS



THE CHALLENGES



*Long unspoken hopes and dreams
burst into community spirit and action!*

**THE COMMEMORATIVE
SYMBOL**



**THE COMMUNITY
CELEBRATION**

And across the 50 states people entered into the spirit of Town Meeting . . .

ALABAMA Mobile

We realized that "they" is "we" and "there" is "here" and our community is a great one because we decide.

ALASKA Mulato

This meeting is exactly what our village has needed.

ARIZONA Phoenix

Town Meeting made it possible to bring the people together for an open discussion on economic, political and cultural structures. Town Meeting made it possible for wonderful things to happen in our community.

ARKANSAS Nenana

I have never been involved in such a rewarding community experience.



CALIFORNIA Pixley

Our town is unincorporated. During the Town Meeting it was proposed that we form a community council which would meet regularly with our County Supervisor. At the Town Meeting plenary we chose the members of this council. Since that time, this group has met regularly with our County Supervisor on behalf of the total community.

COLORADO Brighton

It was an unusual experience to see so many factions of the community sit down and relate to each other concerning the problems in Brighton. I know many of us were surprised to find just how much common concern we shared.

CONNECTICUT Cromwell

We pay 20,000 to 30,000 dollars for outside consultants to do what we've done today. It usually starts with 'Cromwell is composed of 7.4 square miles, etc.' all of which we already know. I plan to use this document as the basis of the Cromwell Master Plan.

DELAWARE Dover

One proposal was to start a Welcome Wagon program for newcomers and we now have a Welcome Wagon.



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Residents followed up their Town Meeting by filling potholes in the neighborhood streets.

FLORIDA Lacoochee

Enough talking . . . let's start doing! What else is new? A new post office, a new auto parts store in the old post office building and two new used furniture stores have come to town. A pool hall and a lunchroom with real good eats have also arrived.

GEORGIA Grayson

That evening we had people take part who had never participated in a community activity before.

HAWAII Hanakua

It's a start to working together as a community again.

IDAHO Paul Area

The input from the general public was great, not only during that particular day but since that time also. It is obvious that the citizen is ever becoming more interested in the operation of local and state government today and in the future.

ILLINOIS Robbins

After today we can do anything.

INDIANA Spurgeon

It's the first community meeting in our town where we have gone home excited and happy rather than angry with each other.

IOWA Lake City

We residents of Lake City feel that we have one of the most progressive communities for our size in the nation. However, I cannot recall a single event in the recent history of our community that has led to such a positive and enthusiastic feeling among the members of our community.

KANSAS Wichita

The work Town Meeting did whetted the appetite and helped to develop leadership.



KENTUCKY Covington

Being involved is the name of the game in the Town Meeting process. It is an exciting process, one that can improve the area where you live. A chance to do a little dreaming of the future; a chance to review the past; and a chance to be in on the decision making of the present.

LOUISIANA St. Bernard Parish

A community Citizens' League was formed to develop better government in the community and solicit improved voter participation.

MAINE Portland

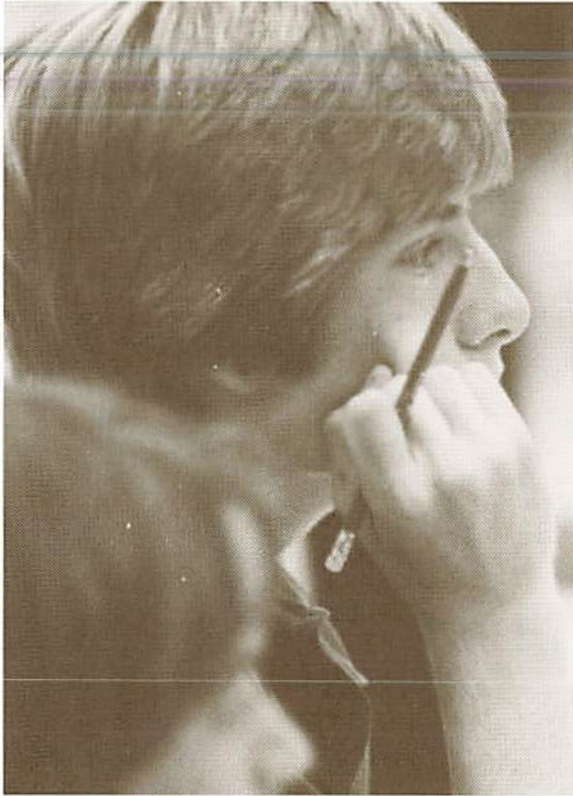
You know how we do things—Everybody contributes!

MARYLAND Hagerstown

We have forgotten some of the things our forefathers did to organize our country. Tonight, we remembered them.

MASSACHUSETTS New Bedford

People of different ages, color and ethnic backgrounds can hardly agree on anything. To get 375 of them from 36 different ethnic groups working together for one day is the greatest achievement.



MISSOURI Princeton

In 1958 our mayor took three of those present at the Town Meeting to Kansas City to bring an industry to this community and they turned us down. If we'd had the Town Meeting here a week before that trip, this would be a different town today.

MONTANA Butte

We got together, teenagers to senior citizens, and came to group decisions and proposals without arguing and taking all day.

NEBRASKA Omaha

Rat and trash sources were eliminated by combined citizen effort and for the first time the city rat control agency could do an effective job in our neighborhood.

NEVADA Carson Valley

It takes dynamite sometimes to get people involved in something positive. But we saw a lot of positive energy at Town Meeting and I don't think it is going to dissipate.

NEW HAMPSHIRE Laconia

People joined in a community effort and put their lives for that day into the effort of creating a vision for the future.

NEW JERSEY East Hanover

We are not here to tell our politicians what to do; we're here to decide what we can do ourselves.

NEW MEXICO Animas

I really believe some of our community problems will be solved due to the renewed interest generated at the meeting.

NEW YORK Bangor

The local school was closed and up for sale. Thirty people from the Town Meeting got together and distributed a flyer telling the pros and cons of selling and keeping it. The resulting vote was for keeping the school which is now being turned into a community center.

NORTH CAROLINA Greenville

The Town Meeting enabled a cross section of our citizens to exchange ideas in a format that encouraged all to speak and share openly.

NORTH DAKOTA Stanley

I believe we have made a new beginning.

OHIO Martinsville

*A broken down school building refurbished . . .
Sixty people hauled away 13 truckloads of trash . . .
Abandoned cemetery cleaned up . . .
A parade and a festival all followed as Martinsville citizens celebrated Holiday at Home.*

OKLAHOMA Kaw City

Kaw City erected new traffic signs, created a bi-weekly paper, blacktopped Rte. 119 from Kaw City to Rte. 77, started a children's corner in the library, funded eight acres for a city park, held several street clean-ups, printed a brochure on Kaw City, conducted a community census, funded a Senior Citizens Program, paved the parking lot next to the school through 100% donation, and started a Chamber of Commerce.



MICHIGAN Tecumseh

I have found large amounts of personal satisfaction and have been inspired by the way this gratifying experience has taken its hold on the community.

MINNESOTA Whittier

Through these Town Meetings a new spirit and motivation pours forth from local citizens which is vital to the resurgence of our city's neighborhoods.

MISSISSIPPI Saucier

This is the greatest experience I've had in this community since I first moved here.

OREGON Oregon City

Would it be possible for us to have your help in putting on a similar meeting here the same time next year?

PENNSYLVANIA Union City

I honestly can say that this was one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. Somehow through this type of interaction, people come to life when they experience the fact that someone values their thoughts, ideas and dreams.

RHODE ISLAND Warren

Town Meeting created in its participants a long-dormant spirit of community, a realization that the people of Warren, by working together, can make important things happen. In a very real sense, Town Meeting was not an end but a beginning.

SOUTH CAROLINA Greenville

A whole bunch of suggestions from a whole bunch of heads is mighty good sometimes.

SOUTH DAKOTA Oelrich

I think the main result that came from our Town Meeting was the creating of a new interest in the community and getting new people interested and involved.

TENNESSEE Longview Heights

You've got to start somewhere; just getting them together is good.

TEXAS Trinidad

Some of the improvements following the Town Meeting have been: an Industrial Foundation Committee formed, progress made on the construction of a new sewer plant, new homes built, federal housing apartments initiated, and a night watchman hired for the school.

UTAH Parawan

The Town Meeting resulted in funding of a new medical facility through donations, establishment of eight chapters of the Utah Association of Women, establishment of a Meet Your Candidate Night and three new businesses.

VERMONT Pittsford

It is amazing what people can do when they put their heads together.



VIRGINIA Clifton Forge

I know that those people in attendance were challenged by the sharing of ideas, and with some practical directions identified, they are motivated for action in the future.

WASHINGTON Lacey

Our Town Meeting has breathed new life into our community. The town has not been the same since. We found talent we didn't know we had.

WEST VIRGINIA Terra Alta

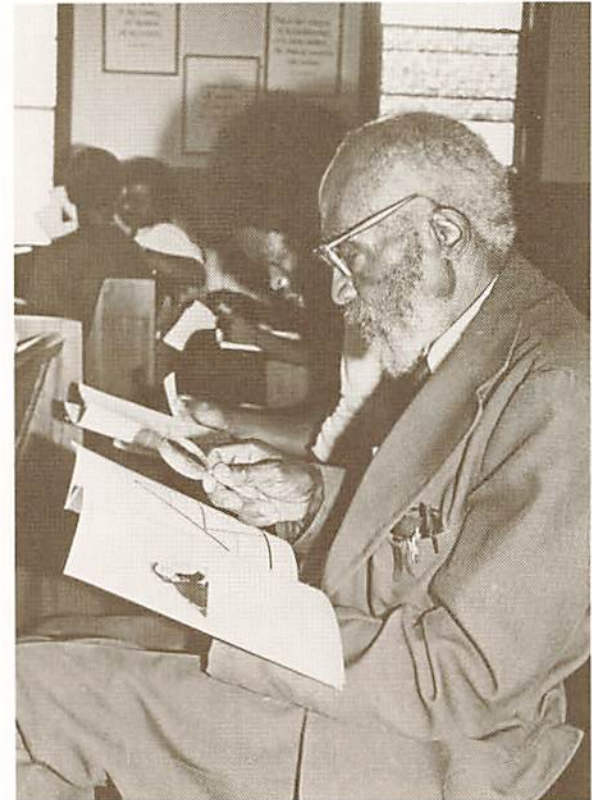
Our little community received a shot of revitalization when we held our Town Meeting in November. We discovered quite a few people had the same hopes and fears for the town. At the close of the meeting, we decided to hold another in April or May and continue onward and upward with the town.

WISCONSIN Brillion

Following Town Meeting, our town invited all the presidential candidates to come to Brillion as a way to create citizen interest in voting. Mrs. Carter came to Brillion and 67% of the electorate voted in the primary campaign.

WYOMING Torrington

We felt comfortable working together in a community effort such as this and much trust was gained as a group. I think all of us would venture into future community activities with less hesitation and more confidence.



AND AFTER
TOWN
MEETING,
THINGS
HAPPEN!





North Carolina

Old Fort

It's like getting a new chair.

Old Fort, North Carolina, a community of 700 located in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, held a Town Meeting in October, 1976.

Ten months later, the following accomplishments were proudly listed by a community resident as results of the Old Fort Town Meeting:

- A new gift shop
- An enlarged Western Auto store
- A new restaurant
- A new emporium building
- A new car wash
- A new drugstore
- A newly-painted Blue Ridge Ethan Allen factory building
- Sub-division housing completed
- An old house moved with plans to convert it into an apartment building
- A new fire station created by renovating an old garage
- A new community theatre under construction
- A new mini-park
- Improvements to the town museum

One resident of Old Fort said: "If someone asked me, I think I would have to say this is all due to the Town Meeting. It's like getting a new chair for your living room. Once you put the new chair into the room, you start to look at the whole room in a different way. You see that the curtains need to be changed or that the couch is a bit tacky.

"Our Town Meeting was like that chair. Everything that has happened was not directly proposed at the Town Meeting, but the Meeting gave us a whole new perspective on our town."



It's a way to effect needed changes.

Santa Margarita

Santa Margarita, California, an historic rural community of 1,000 residents located in San Luis Obispo County, held a Town Meeting in November, 1977.

"During our Town Meeting," one participant said, "while we were brainstorming community issues, our deep concerns really came forth. We argued with each other and faulted each other's insights. Soon the chaos subsided in the fascination with what we were doing. The group realized that too long they had allowed individual interests to get in the way of community needs."

The Town Meeting proposed that the existing Civic Association be transformed from a social organization to a decision-making body that would become an effective community sounding board. When the Town Meeting participants discovered that the Civic Association had been unable to find people to run for four of its five offices, four participants volunteered to fill the slots. One said, "I know it will take a group of us like those here tonight pulling together to make this thing work." A second Town Meeting was held by the Civic Association in February, 1978, in a further effort to obtain total community participation.

Santa Margarita is on the move. Said one resident, "It is the first time we have channeled our energies. We who have always cared about our town and its quality of life now have a way to effect the needed changes."



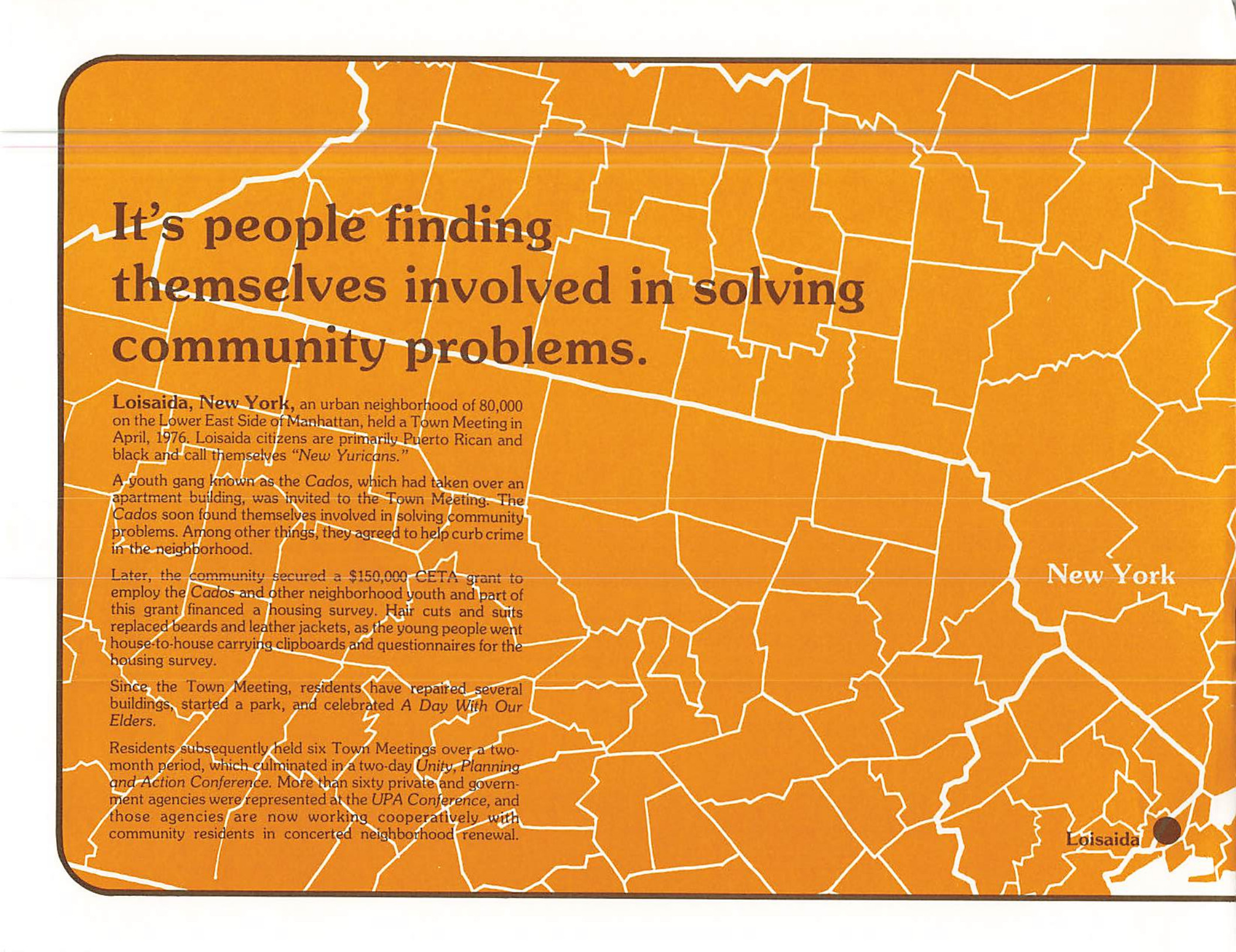
It's people who don't have anything to give . . . giving.

Depew, Oklahoma, a rural community of 760 on Highway 66 between Oklahoma City and Tulsa, held a Town Meeting in October, 1976.

After the Town Meeting, Depew citizens decided that the old theory of "Let George do it" wouldn't work because, as one of them observed, "George never does it." Following a suggestion of "Let's bury George," Depew residents organized a funeral ceremony and an effigy of "George" was formally interred.

With George out of the way, community meetings have been held each month at the Depew High School. Concerted community action resulting from these meetings has included the rebuilding of the fire station and numerous community clean-up days.

When one family home was burned to the ground, the community held an old fashioned "Pounding" in which residents donated food, coffee, sugar, and other items to the burned-out family. One resident noted that "People who don't have anything to give . . . give so much." Another resident said that "The coming together of our people through Town Meeting has awakened a small town that has been asleep for too long." Since the citizens of Depew decided that George never does it, they've done it themselves.



It's people finding themselves involved in solving community problems.

Loisaida, New York, an urban neighborhood of 80,000 on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, held a Town Meeting in April, 1976. Loisaida citizens are primarily Puerto Rican and black and call themselves "New Yuricans."

A youth gang known as the *Cados*, which had taken over an apartment building, was invited to the Town Meeting. The *Cados* soon found themselves involved in solving community problems. Among other things, they agreed to help curb crime in the neighborhood.

Later, the community secured a \$150,000 CETA grant to employ the *Cados* and other neighborhood youth and part of this grant financed a housing survey. Hair cuts and suits replaced beards and leather jackets, as the young people went house-to-house carrying clipboards and questionnaires for the housing survey.

Since the Town Meeting, residents have repaired several buildings, started a park, and celebrated *A Day With Our Elders*.

Residents subsequently held six Town Meetings over a two-month period, which culminated in a two-day *Unity, Planning and Action Conference*. More than sixty private and government agencies were represented at the *UPA Conference*, and those agencies are now working cooperatively with community residents in concerted neighborhood renewal.

New York

Loisaida



It's Main Street, USA.

New Britain, Connecticut, a blue collar community of 80,000 in West Central Connecticut, held a Town Meeting in June, 1976.

Eighty citizens of all ages and backgrounds, including representatives from the Chamber of Commerce and from the Prudence Crandall Society, a women's rights group, attended the Town Meeting, which was sponsored in connection with the nation's Bicentennial celebration. Noteworthy events which occurred during the Town Meeting included a variety of musical presentations, several of which included participation by those attending the Town Meeting, and a Children's Town Meeting for youngsters to the age of twelve. The Children's Town Meeting created a fifteen-foot mural which pictured New Britain's past and its hopes for the future.

The most notable Town Meeting proposal acted upon by the participants was "Main Street, USA," a festival highlighting New Britain's downtown shopping opportunities. This proposal had followed a conclusion by Town Meeting participants that downtown business development was a critical New Britain economic problem.

Sponsored by the New Britain Chamber of Commerce and supported by local businesses, "Main Street, USA" attracted 2,000 people, despite a rainstorm which occurred on the day of the festival.

The "Main Street, USA" festival coordinator commented a year later: "Most of the constructive things that happened in New Britain during the past year can be traced back to the Town Meeting."



It's moving forward in strength and dignity.

Curtis Park, Colorado, a multi-racial community of some 7,000 located near the central business district in the City of Denver, held a Town Meeting in April, 1977.

One of the proposals at the Town Meeting, which was attended by 300 residents, was to establish a community newsletter. In response, the Curtis Park Area Project initiated the *Curtis Park Tiempo*, a free monthly newsletter with a circulation of 2,500.

Other proposals dealing with public safety, a community center and civic participation were also put into effect. The *Curtis Park Tiempo* has played a valuable role in these arenas by keeping citizens aware of current activities and encouraging their participation. Recently, a large group of Curtis Park residents attended a Denver City Council meeting. Afterward, a tour of Curtis Park was arranged for members of the Council and media representatives.

Another result of a Town Meeting proposal was *Education Expo '78*, held in February, 1978, and designed to inform Curtis Park residents of vocational and educational opportunities available to citizens of all ages.

The slogan and symbol created at the Town Meeting now appear in the banner of the *Curtis Park Tiempo*, proclaiming that Curtis Park is "Moving Forward in Strength and Dignity."

Colorado

Curtis Park



It's seeing that it's time to do something.

LeClaire, Iowa, a community of 2,500 located on the banks of the Mississippi River, held a Town Meeting in March, 1977.

The last time, prior to March, 1977, that LeClaire's most notorious citizen, William F. ("Buffalo Bill") Cody, was in town, he reportedly told the townspeople, as he was leaving, "Don't do anything until I return."

On March 5, a LeClaire citizen, riding a beautiful palomino horse and wearing make-up and a wild west costume which gave him a marked resemblance to Buffalo Bill, rode through the streets of LeClaire proclaiming: "I'm back. It's time to do something. Come to the Town Meeting."

Although LeClaire had done little while Buffalo Bill was away, within weeks after the Town Meeting, a weekly community newspaper, *The River Pilot*, rolled off the presses; more than \$10,000 was collected in a fund-raising drive to build an elderly housing project; a recreation committee was formed and a part-time director of youth recreation and activities was hired; and thirteen truckloads of junk and four loads of scrap iron were collected for disposal during *LeClaire Clean-Up Week*. Later, LeClaire civic organizations, in cooperation with the City Council, worked with a bi-state metropolitan planning commission to lay out sewer extension plans in anticipation of city expansion.

The 1977 LeClaire Town Meeting received the first place award for governmental affairs in the State of Iowa from the Jayces. In March, 1978, LeClaire held its second Town Meeting.

Many LeClaire citizens view all this activity as only the beginning. As one observed, "I think we've just seen the tip of the iceberg."

A map of the state of Illinois, colored in a solid orange hue. The map shows the outlines of all 102 counties. The word "Illinois" is printed in white at the top center. A black dot is placed in the northwestern part of the state, with the word "Yorkville" printed in white to its right.

Illinois

Yorkville

It's lifting the morale of the entire community.

Yorkville, Illinois, a changing rural community of 3,000 in a growing industrial area fifty miles west of Chicago's Loop, held a Town Meeting in May, 1976.

Following the Town Meeting, Yorkville's mayor wrote in the *Illinois Municipal Review*: "The Town Meeting demonstrates to the people of any community that they can make a difference by involving themselves in city affairs. The Town Meeting itself made people aware of the love, concern and problems of their neighbors and friends. The very tangible results will go on indefinitely . . .

"Various proposals are: To promote public education; to encourage patronizing of local business which, in turn, promotes the community; a Good Government Organization; accountability sessions or quarterly workshops with local officials; and a park district. A Human Resource Bank has already been established. Many other proposals were developed, all of which have made the community richer and more of a cohesive citizenry.

"The great thing about most of these proposals is that they do not cost any money, yet the community benefit is great. The cooperation of so many lifted the morale of the entire community."



Ohio

Mt. Airy

It's the changes in people's hearts.

Mt. Airy, Ohio, a bedroom community of 10,000 within the City of Cincinnati, which referred to itself as *the home of the silent majority*, held a Town Meeting in February, 1976.

Residents acted quickly on a Town Meeting proposal to create a Town Council. The Town Council has worked with community groups in the last year and has attracted \$99,000 in government funds to the community.

After extensive efforts, the Town Council ultimately convinced the Cincinnati city government to erect traffic lights on the only road leading from a Mt. Airy apartment complex housing 2,000 residents. Drivers formerly stalled for as long as two hours in traffic jams at the apartment complex now have a maximum delay of fifteen minutes.

Other community improvements include the development of a recreation area, establishment of new businesses, construction of a senior citizens' apartment complex and the development of a master community plan.

Notes one community leader, "People always want to see what we've done. And we're glad to show them. But you can't show them the changes in people's hearts."

*Looking toward
the future—*

Motor City



citizens probe Town Meeting's potential.

The Far West Side, Detroit, Michigan, with approximately 100,000 residents, held a cluster of Town Meetings at the neighborhood level in April and May, 1978, followed by a Far West Side Town Meeting Assembly on June 10, 1978.

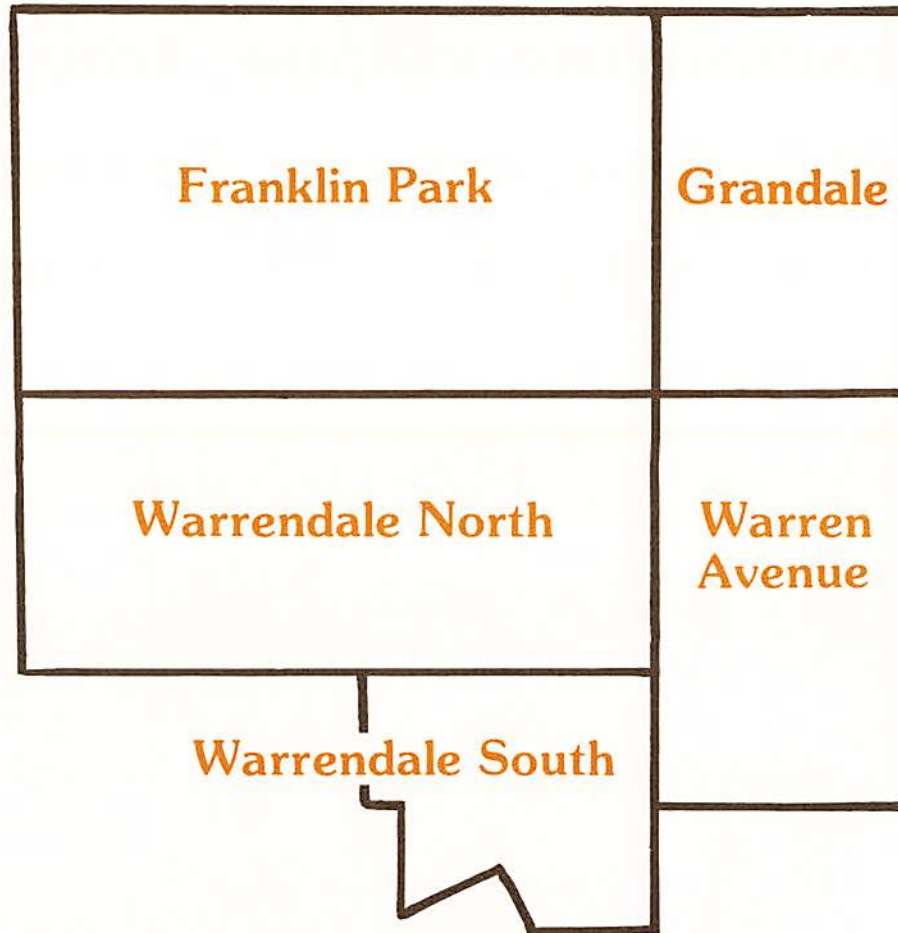
During the Michigan *Every County Town Meeting Campaign*, five Town Meetings were held throughout Detroit. Subsequently, a citywide advisory committee helped select Detroit's Far West Side as the community in which to offer Town Meetings at the neighborhood level.

Their selection was based on the desire of business, civic organizations and church groups to work together in dealing with what they perceived to be the community's fragmentation and ineffectiveness.

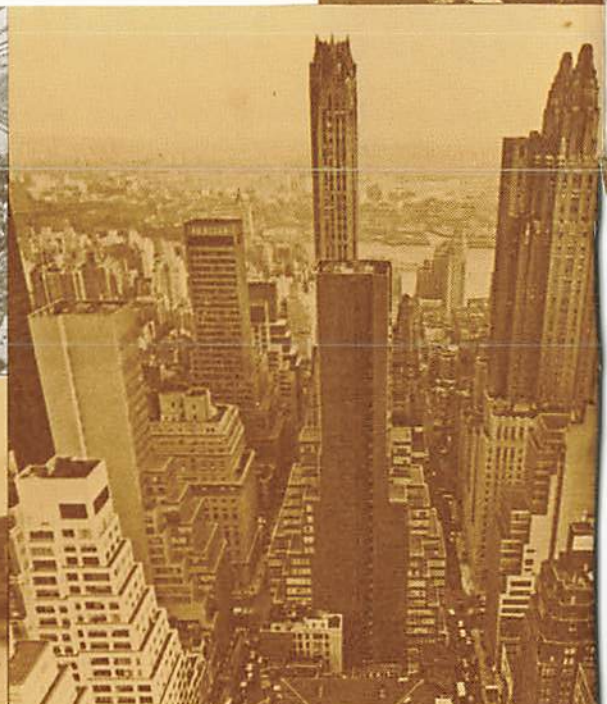
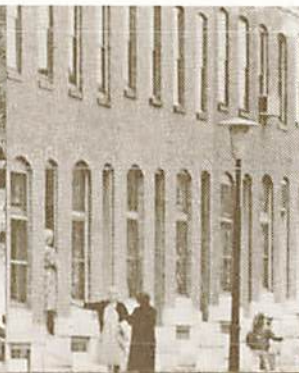
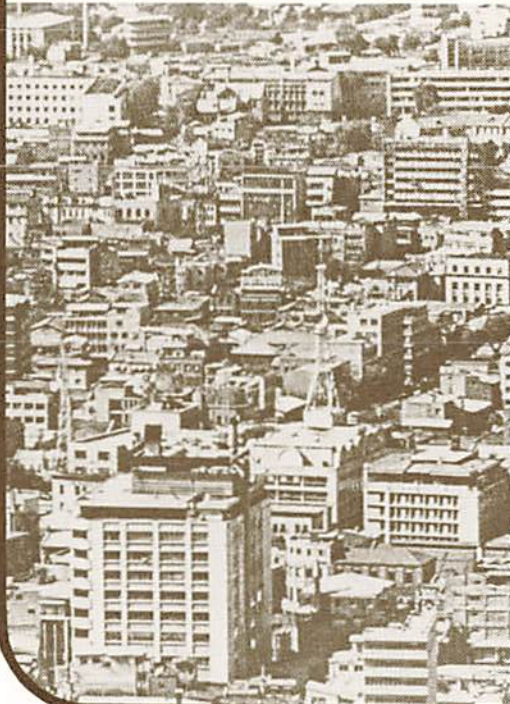
Concurrent with the Town Meetings, 40 women from the Far West Side participated in a Global Women's Forum. The intent of the Forum was to make more effective use of the talents and influence of the women of the community in caring for the Far West Side, the City of Detroit, the nation and the world. LENS, Leadership Effectiveness and New Strategies, was scheduled for business leadership of the area to clarify their role in neighborhood development.

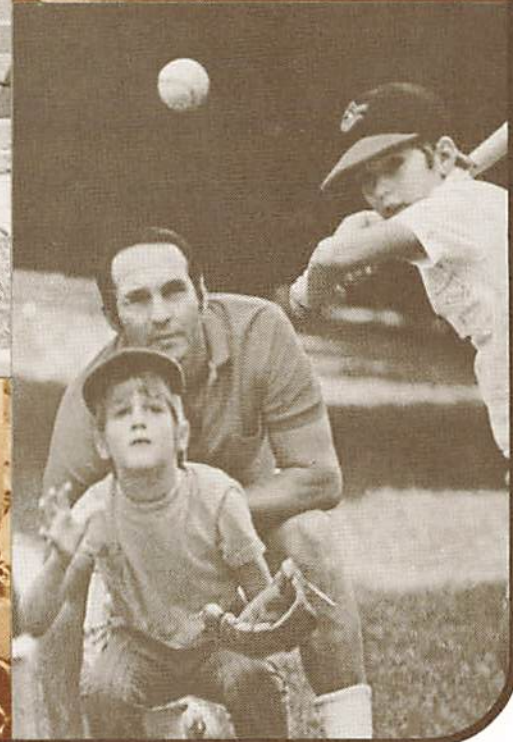
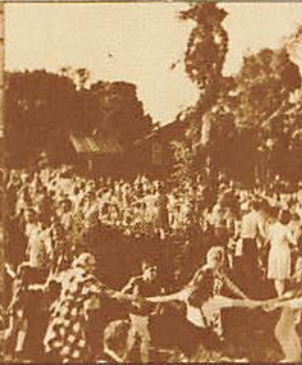
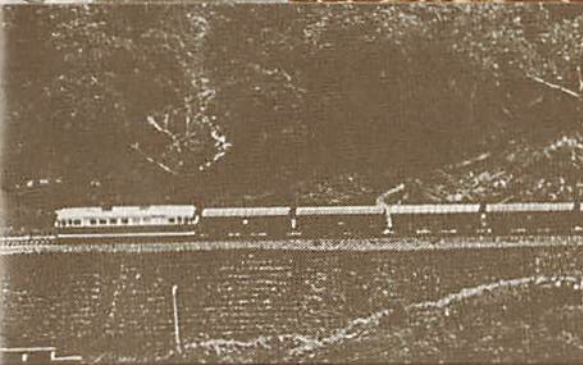
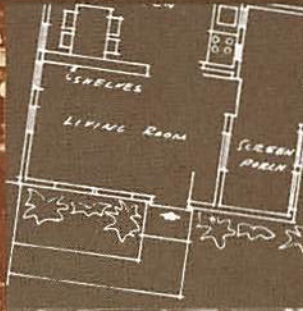
As the next move toward effective community involvement, a series of Community Youth Forums will be held in the neighborhood schools. This forum is an opportunity for the youth to express their responsibility for the community's future.

With the enthusiasm born of a new resolve, Detroit's Far West Side citizens are demonstrating that they can get a community moving.



Across America, people are seeking that special something which transforms village, town or city neighborhood from “home address” into vital human community.





TOWN MEETING is offered under local sponsorship by a nationwide volunteer staff of specially trained community leaders. TOWN MEETING was developed 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 consultants in 47 American cities work with local groups to coordinate program development and provide resources, training and follow-up services upon request.

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49 Claremont Avenue
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San Francisco, CA 94110

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CONCERNED WITH THE HUMAN FACTOR IN WORLD DEVELOPMENT