

TOWN MEETING '76:  
-ITS INTENT, ITS AUDIENCE,  
AND ITS METHODS

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A Statement on the Intent of  
TOWN MEETING '76

Program  
Design

TOWN MEETING '76 is a design for conducting a series of local one-day meetings in cities across the nation. The format design developed for nationwide use utilizes these common elements:

1. a trained volunteer staff of community leaders recruited both locally and nationally.
2. a single research methodology embodied in single meeting construct and creating a common data base.
3. a national followup program for summarizing and publishing the results of the town meeting programs across the nation, and for services to ongoing groups.
4. a local followup program making available on request tools, training, and consultation with local groups after the town meetings.

Local  
Implementation

The local implementation of TOWN MEETING '76 is insured by a coalition of local sponsorship which uses existing community networks to stimulate broad-based community participation in the town meetings.

Citizen  
Participation

While TOWN MEETING '76 is totally non-partisan, and espouses no political bias, it is an effective form for recovering the experience of the great American tradition of grass-roots democracy at work. In the context of the American Bicentennial Celebration, the TOWN MEETING '76 experience offers local citizens the often exhilarating chance to participate actively in thinking through for themselves the challenges and practical directions for shaping the future of America at this moment in her history.

Local  
Impact

The local impact of TOWN MEETING '76 upon the communities where it has been tested indicates that a systematic, coordinated implementation of this program in a delimited geographic area multiplies its residual benefits in changing the climate of community involvement and commitment to the American democratic process and to the improvement of the quality of life in the local community. It is expected, though not directly measurable as of yet, that the impact of TOWN MEETING '76, if utilized systematically, will facilitate the gradual process of shifting the interrelationships of the various ethnic communities in an urban complex. Specifically, TOWN MEETING '76 has demonstrated that existing tensions between community groups, rather than being lessened, are being transformed into an emerging creative interplay when placed in a context of the future of the whole community.