MAKING COMMUNITY DESIGN WORK

A GUIDE FOR PLANNERS

Umut Toker

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常州大学图书馆
藏书章
Umut Toker

American Planning Association
Planners Press

Making Great Communities Happen

Chicago | Washington, D.C.

For my family – my sister, Sıdıka Mine Toker; my mother, Nedret Toker; and my father, Mithat Toker

In loving memory of my grandparents Sıdıka Toker, Ömer Toker, Türkan Usta, and Osman Usta

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205 N. Michigan Ave., Suite 1200, Chicago, IL 60601-5927

1030 15th St., NW, Suite 750 West, Washington, DC 20005-1503

www.planning.org/plannerspress

ISBN: 978-1-61190-002-6 (pbk.)

Library of Congress Control Number 2012930446

Printed in the United States of America

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Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the following individuals who made this book possible. I am grateful to Henry Sanoff for his constant guidance and trust throughout my career. I thank Bill Siembieda and Hemalata Dandekar for their support. I would like to thank Denis Gray for his mentorship and his continuing support. I thank Whit Blanton and Frederick Steiner for spending time to talk with me about their experiences in community design. Finally, my special thanks go to APA Planners Press editor Timothy Mennel, for his continuous support and encouragement throughout the writing process.

Introduction

Throughout history, people have shaped their built environment to benefit their individual and community lives. Deliberation over how to shape the built environment is embedded in our past. At different times and in different contexts, however, the participation of different groups in this process has ranged widely.

With the increasing complexity of issues surrounding human settlements, especially in the second half of the 20th century, participatory planning and design today occupies a central place on the agenda of many community groups and institutions. Political governments and built environment professionals have sought to generate technical solutions to problems of accommodating increasing populations and related urban issues, while developing ways to involve people in decision making about the environments in which they live and work. Involving individuals and groups in decisions about their built environments has proved to be a strenuous but rewarding effort. Although participatory decision making in planning and design requires specific techniques and time commitment, it yields environments that are well suited to the needs and wishes of their inhabitants.

This book is a guide to the participatory planning and design of the built environment at various scales. Its goal is to provide a concise but comprehensive overview of community design for professional planners, designers, and students in built environment–related disciplines. The book accomplishes this goal through four parts. In Part 1, the history of and social motivation for community design are presented. Part 2 focuses on steps in the process of participatory decision making in planning and design. In Part 3, conventional and contemporary community design methods are examined, and some applications are introduced. Finally, Part 4 focuses on applying community design processes and methods to the built environment at four scales: urban, community (the entire town or city), regional, and the individual site, such as parks or buildings. Examples of applications in communities of various sizes are provided to demonstrate the concepts discussed.

Although this book is intended primarily for professionals and preprofessionals working in city and regional planning, architecture, and landscape architecture, the concepts, processes, and methods are presented in lay rather than discipline-specific language to the extent possible. This way, those receiving planning and design services may also find it a resource in working with professionals providing services. Those outside the ambit of the profession are encouraged to review the material in Chapters 4, 5, and 6 in particular and to apply it to the advantage of their projects.

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PART 1
History and Social Motivation

Part 1 of this book introduces the historical background of and social motivation for current trends in community design. Chapter 1 explores the concept of participatory decision making and reviews the legal background that has prompted the turn to participatory decision making in planning and design. Chapter 2 introduces the objectives, stages, and outcomes of community design. Chapter 3 looks back to the origins of community design in the grassroots human-rights movements of the mid-20th century and forward to the role of social forces in fine-tuning participatory design practices and the role of the community designer.

1 Working with People for Their Future

It is pragmatically and psychologically beneficial for people to shape their environments to benefit their individual and community lives. In the case of a house, pragmatic concerns such as privacy or room proximity could define the benefit. In the case of a neighborhood, the location of commercial services in relation to major circulation axes could benefit all residents and business owners. In antiquity, people found efficacy in locating a temple dedicated to the veneration of a deity in a spot considered sacred.

The individual and community benefits to be derived from shaping the built environment, especially the urban environment, have usually accrued to those in power, however. In ancient Greek cities the agora, the city square where male landowners (but not slaves or females) gathered, would be situated prominently for exchange of political information and commercial goods. In cities of the Roman Empire, the building and location of stadiums, public baths, and other civic structures were understood to be part of the incumbent emperor's display of power. The medieval cities of Europe were not very different. While the ruling class and important personalities were centrally located in cities, sometimes residing in fortified structures for protection, field laborers usually had to work outside the walls of the city to grow food crops. From antiquity to the present day, moreover, uprisings by people against power have always included attacking the physical structures that symbolized and upheld the social system people were fighting against.

In the 19th and 20th centuries, the social and political implications of shaping neighborhoods and cities were more complex. In 19th-century Paris, the shaping of streets and plazas was influenced by efforts to minimize uprisings against the emperor while generating visual axes that reified grandiose governmental power. Perhaps one of the most dramatic examples of the shaping of urban environments is Berlin, where for decades, families and neighbors were separated by a wall and lived under two different political regimes. In one of the most celebrated episodes of people expressing their wishes concerning the built environment in which they live, the Berlin

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