

Stewardship Committee Report: INTRODUCTION

In February of 1993, the City of Noblesville, assisted by Indiana University's Center for Urban Policy and the Environment, began "Benchmarking" as a means to update the city's comprehensive plan. The purpose of the initial stages of Benchmarking was to give all of Noblesville's citizens a role in the formation of the city's public policy by asking them to create clear statements of the goals of the community and to design a means of assessing the community's movement toward those goals. The premise of Benchmarking is that a community that pursues quality of life standards that have resulted from consensus will have the best chance of reaching an attractive future.

To determine the collective vision of its residents, a 61-member Benchmarking Committee was selected to begin the process. For two years, Committee members attended meetings, study sessions, and a series of presentations examining applicable state, national and international trends. City staff made numerous presentations to local community groups and surveyed over 3000 Noblesville citizens in order to determine a vision statement for the community. Overarching goals, more specific subgoals, and finally measurable benchmarks were determined through discussion and consensus and, in September 1994, the Final Benchmarking Report was published. The report organized the community's goals into three areas - Land, People, and Economy - and collected information and data for each of the benchmarks.

In early 1996, a five-member Steering Committee was appointed by the Mayor and by the City Council to begin the next stage of the process, the first review of the community's progress toward its stated goals. The Steering Committee formed a 26-member Stewardship Commission. These volunteers were divided into teams, organized by the three main goal areas - Land, People, and Economy. Each team was responsible for collecting and reviewing the data identified as measurable in the 195 benchmarks of the original Benchmarking Report. This first phase of the Benchmarking process culminated with a meeting of the entire Stewardship Commission in February 1997. At this meeting, data collected by each of the teams were shared with the rest of the Stewardship Commission to create an assessment of the community's progress towards the first interim benchmark goals. The following sections compose the first of a series of "report cards" on the direction of the community. Further periodic reports are planned at 5-year intervals beginning in 2000.