



The New Metropolis

Event Planning Guide

**A two-part documentary series
about America's First Suburbs**



A Crack in the Pavement
Rebuilding America's
First Suburbs

The New Neighbors
How One town created a
vibrant, integrated neighborhood

Torrice Productions

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To purchase the films, please visit:
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INTRODUCTION: HOW TO USE THIS EVENT PLANNING GUIDE

This guide is designed to help your community organization or group organize and host a successful screening event that sparks discussions that can lead to increased participation and action. A part of *The New Metropolis* Community Action Toolkit – which also includes a downloadable Viewer’s Guide, stories and web videos in Communities Taking Action, and a downloadable Educator’s Guide - the **Event Planning Guide** is broken down into three sections and an appendix.

The first section – “Five Basic Steps for Planning and Building Participation in Your Event” – lays out the key elements to help make your event successful, engage other organizations as partners, build participation and get the word out, structure your agenda and facilitation approaches to promote interactive dialogues, and the importance of follow-up opportunities. The second section – “Planning Checklist” - breaks these key elements down into specific tasks according to a timeline leading up to your event. Section three - “Getting Your Local PBS Station to Air *The New Metropolis* Series” – discusses ways to engage your local public media station. Please also see the downloadable **Event Planning Guide Appendix** for additional samples and resources.

If you are planning to do a community screening, you are required to purchase a “community licensed DVD” from Bullfrog Films, the distributor for *The New Metropolis* films. Bullfrog Films has made this an easy and affordable process; for more information, please see “Buy the Film” under the “Planning Checklist” section or visit www.bullfrogfilms.com.

If you have questions or need additional assistance, please feel free to contact us via our website, where you will also find additional resources. Also, if you tell us about your event in advance, we can post it on our “Screenings” page. Working Films, Inc. (www.workingfilms.org), a non-profit organization dedicated to advancing community engagement through documentary films and other media resources is an excellent resource for additional event ideas and examples.

We hope that your event is successful and productive. Don’t forget to let us know about your event, both before and after, so that we can share you experiences and lessons learned with the larger “new met” community!

***The New Metropolis* Community Engagement Team**

FIVE BASIC STEPS FOR PLANNING AND BUILDING PARTICIPATION INTO YOUR EVENT

Before you get started we want to encourage you to have a look at the following Five Basic Steps. We put them together to make it easy for you to plan your event and build in as much participation as possible. The steps are tried and true, so use them to engage your planning team and partners.

#1: THINK ABOUT WHAT YOU WANT ACCOMPLISH

Figuring out what you want to accomplish is the first step in planning a great event. To create your event goal(s), ask yourself how this film relates to and will advance the mission of your organization or campaign.

- Are you interested in building community and regional awareness about the consequences of inequitable land use policies?
- Are you trying to energize your membership base for a particular infrastructure or land use campaign?
- Do you want to engage your community leaders and politicians in a dialogue about policy issues important to your region, such as: land use, transportation planning, community leadership training, approaches to revitalization, inclusionary zoning, fully realized housing markets, and more?
- Do you want to heighten your organization's profile?
- Do you want to build a coalition or bring in new partners?

Once you are clear about what the film can do to advance your goals, you will have a better sense of what you would like people to take away from their screening of *The New Metropolis*. This will be critically important to help you plan and set a good tone for your event. Ask yourself what a successful outcome for your event would look like. Here are some sample outcomes:

- **Build coalitions and forge new alliances “beyond the usual suspects.”** If you represent a new organization or effort, this may be an important goal for you. Be sure to recruit co-sponsors for your event, and think outside the box! Identify new policy stakeholders and potential leaders in low income and community development organizations, particularly amongst growing immigrant populations, African American and other communities of color. Make sure that commitments and expectations between co-sponsors are clearly defined; ask everyone involved to agree to (and sign) a Memorandum of Understanding. After the screening, also ask participants to identify other organizations who might want to get involved and plan more events; use social networking to spread the word and encourage participation.
- **Raise public awareness:** Use the example of public policies that contributed to the decline of the inner ring suburbs raised in the films to help people understand the causes and consequences of policies that support continuous outward expansion away from the older, more urbanized core communities. If your main objective is public education, create focused talking points to guide the panelists so that the message is focused. Also, plan to set aside at least half an hour for Q&A with the audience, and have fact sheets handy. If you are uncertain about the quality of questions you might get from your audience, ask people to provide questions on index cards and select the best questions for the panelists. A screening of this type might help to build visibility for an existing organizing effort to affect local planning or legislation.

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- **Encourage ongoing debate and highlight current land use struggles and connect motivated audiences with ways to get involved.** For an action-oriented event, frame the talking points and discussion on models for action that have been tried in other communities so that the event focuses on what needs to be done and how audience members can contribute. Ask participants what messages are particularly relevant and convincing for them to frame future campaign work or media outreach.
- **Raise the visibility of your organization.** If your goal is to showcase your organization's work to important stakeholders, invite people who can raise the profile of your event, including press, potential funders and other influential decision makers. Or consider including the screening in an existing extent where you know your targeted audience will be present.

#2: IDENTIFY YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE AND RECRUIT PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

Do you hope to engage an audience that is motivated around the issues and ready to get more involved? Local civic organizations can be powerful allies and partners. Think of where people gather on a regular basis such as business organizations, Rotary Clubs, churches, cultural groups, rural development organizations, planning organizations, environmental groups and conservancies, and women's clubs. Networking organizations like business, professional, and minority associations, faith-based groups and ecumenical church alliances, as well as Masonic organizations and school associations can also be effective.

Partners can get involved in a variety of ways. Ask them to contribute ideas, time, and resources. Every little bit helps, even if it's as simple as getting the word out about the event through their listservs, websites, or Facebook pages. To really broaden your reach, try contacting an organization you've never worked with before that will share an interest in *The New Metropolis* films. This will help you reach new potential participants and supporters and bring your messages "outside the box."

#3: GET THE WORD OUT

Publicizing your event is really important and will attract participation from unexpected places! We have put together some sample marketing materials in Event Planning Guide Appendix. Here are five basic things you need to do to publicize your event:

- **Make personal contacts.** The surest way to secure the desired attendance for your event is for you and your partners to identify who needs to be in the audience and reach out to them through phone calls or one-on-one meetings. Encourage all of your partners to commit to making sure there is good sized audience that is full of the people you all have identified as important. Each organization can create a list of who they want to see in the room and then commit to personally contacting them.
- **Publicize online.** The simplest way to promote your event is to create an email blast and send it out widely via listservs. We recommend you send out the email twice: the first two weeks before, followed by a reminder several days prior to your event. If your organization has a website, be sure to post information about your event there, and ask any co-hosts to do the same.

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- **Post fliers in your community.** Create a *The New Metropolis* flyer to advertise your event. Make copies (in color if your budget permits) and post them in high traffic areas, such as shopping malls, grocery stores, churches, public libraries, college campuses, and recreation centers.
- **Contact local media.** Ten days before your event, send a press release to local media outlets, including ethnic media. Try to target reporters who cover issues that reflect your event's goals - such as civil rights, economic development, land use, transportation or political issues - and customize your press release to highlight the film's relevance to your community. If your event will feature prominent panelists or local heroes, make sure to mention them! Several days before, send out a press advisory, repeating the critical aspects about the event that will be of interest to the media.
- **Make calls to local television and radio programs,** including local news, public affairs programs and talk radio stations. Let them know about your event, explain its importance to your community, and if possible direct them to a local expert or advocate who can be available for interviews. Try contacting assignment editors (for local TV news) or producers (for public affairs programs or talk radio).

#4: SET THE MEETING AGENDA

Once you have done your planning, partnership building and publicity, think about what will actually happen at the screening. What kind of event do you want your screening to be? You may want to decide on the agenda before you do publicity so you can publicize a special speaker or panel. You can always send out a second press release. Here are some ideas for how to structure the event:

- **Invite filmmaker Andrea Torrice.** She can talk about a range of topics, from the history of federal policy, to the making of the films, and will tailor her comments to fit your needs.
- **Invite a Keynote Speaker.** Invite a local leader, scholar or someone who has been personally impacted to speak about some of the themes the film raises, such as the fairness of current land use and transportation public policy, and the economic and social inequalities enacted by poor public policies in the United States.
- **Host a Panel Discussion.** Panelists can help put the film in context, whether it's providing historical background or connecting the issues in *The New Metropolis* to current conditions and to your local community. It is always a good idea to have a range of perspectives represented. Panelists might include representatives from environmental and social justice organizations, planning and economic development professionals, municipal officials, community organizers, and legislators. Co-sponsors are great resources for potential panelists for the discussion, and they will be even more eager to promote the event if they are being represented (see below for tips on how to prepare for a great panel).
- **Hold a Public Reception.** Plan a special post-screening meet-and-greet to allow opportunities for networking and continued discussion after the screening. (If you have a budget for refreshments, even better.)

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- **Highlight Current Advocacy Efforts.** Highlight a local situation or legislation concerning one or more of the issues pertinent to your region and provide concrete steps audience members can take to join the effort or show their support. (Possible post-event activities might include inviting people to participate in a public meeting or a letter-writing or Facebook campaign targeting elected officials in order to initiate a specific legislative change.)
- **Suggest Further Outlets for Action.** Offer audience members concrete ways they can get involved and support the work of the organization(s) hosting the screening. These might include visiting your website to find out about upcoming events, volunteering for a specific initiative, becoming a member or making a donation.
- **Stay In Touch.** Have a system for collecting email addresses and phone numbers at your event. Follow up with audience members and co-sponsor organizations in the days after. You have worked too hard to let those relationships disappear. Encourage everyone to connect with other *The New Metropolis* participants on Facebook by logging into www.Facebook.com and searching for *The New Metropolis*. You can also take pictures at your event and send them to torriceproductions@yahoo.com and we will post them on our Facebook page.

#5: FACILITATING THE EVENT

(Make sure you take a look at *The New Metropolis Viewer's Guide* at www.thenewmetropolis.com)

Tips for a Successful Panel

Make sure you carefully think through how each panelist can help provide a critical piece of the message you want to convey. If possible, arrange for them to see the film and receive talking points in advance. Ask them to arrive a half-hour early so they are properly prepared and understand the goal and context of the event.

- Give your panelists an idea of who will be in the audience, so they can tailor their comments to the audience's needs and interests. (For example, if you anticipate a general audience, ask panelists to avoid any sector-specific jargon.)
- Provide talking points for the panelists that help track them to the goal of the event. Depending on time, you may want to ask each speaker to give a brief reaction to the film; suggest that they choose specific scenes from the film and link them to their message. If time is limited, just jump straight into the discussion.
- Have an experienced moderator keep the discussion moving and field questions from the audience. (Distribute handouts to the audience with the panelist's bios so the moderator does not have to provide lengthy introductions)
- Remember to reserve as much time as possible for Q&A with the audience!

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Facilitating Group Discussions

This is the exciting, interactive part. If you are hosting a large screening of *The New Metropolis*, breaking out into small groups of 6-8 people may be a good way of generating more intimate conversations. If you go this route, identify a handful of facilitators well in advance and make sure to go over these guidelines with them before your screening. The facilitators' basic job will be to guide interesting conversations and ensure that everyone participates. Ask facilitators to encourage people to share their reactions, provide some background information, and help the group generate ideas for continuing engagement with the issues by determining their "next steps." This also encourages future networking! Please review both the sample facilitation sheet used for a community engagement discussion in Pittsburgh following a screening there as well as the Viewer's Guide. Additional tips:

- **Explain the purpose of the conversation.** To keep the group on track, clearly articulate your goals for the dialogue at its outset. Why did you bring everyone together?
- **Take a Minute to Reflect.** Right after you screen *The New Metropolis*, ask people how they felt about it. Let people speak from their hearts before you move the conversation into the discussion questions. *The New Metropolis* is a powerful experience, and sharing it on an emotional level is one great way to build group cohesion.
- **Provide a few brief examples of what other communities have done to create change.** There's no reason to re-create the wheel and these examples can give people the confidence to move forward. Visit the "Communities Taking Action" pages at *The New Metropolis* website for examples from around the country.
- **Set ground rules.** Encourage people to participate, actively listen, and leave enough time for others to speak.
 - **Consider the structure of the question and answer section.** Make sure you have a contingency plan for circumventing audience members who have an "axe to grind" and take over the floor to move their own agenda. One strategy that can be a helpful way of avoiding this common problem is to ask audience members to write their questions on index cards which are given to the moderator for screening.
 - **Distribute options for follow up to every audience member.** The goal of most screenings will be to move attendees to consider participating in the "next steps." Ending your session by creating a set of actions or next steps is a good way to ensure that the conversation does not end with your screening event. You can provide a simple follow up survey with three or four options to check off. In addition, you can create a calendar or list of community events that are linked to the regional issues explored at your event

Need more ideas? Try contacting the local branches of *The New Metropolis* partner organizations listed on *The New Metropolis* web site.

PLANNING CHECKLIST

Hosting a public *The New Metropolis* screening event is easy if you plan ahead. Use this checklist to keep track of where you are in your planning.

“We have the opportunity to not only say what we’re against – we’re against sprawl, we’re against squandering, we’re against the loss of our capacity in our older suburbs to create the kind of life we want to support – but we have the opportunity to actually invent what we’re for...and take steps together to make it happen.”

- Carl Anthony, Founder of Breakthrough Communities

BUY THE FILM

A note about purchasing the films: Independent public interest films like *The New Metropolis* are very labor intensive and expensive and would not be possible without the support of institutions and communities who use the work. This is why we ask that you purchase a “community licensed DVD” for your community event. The film’s distributor is offering a special discount rate of \$59 for community organizations, which gives unlimited use for public screenings. DVDs licensed for educational and for home viewing uses are also available. Bullfrog’s unofficial price list (subject to change) is:

Institutions/Universities/Corporations - \$250 plus shipping

Community Groups/Unions - \$59 plus shipping

Individuals - \$29.95 plus shipping

Shipping and handling \$7

Special rates available for multiple purchases.

For more information or to obtain the discounted DVD visit www.bullfrogfilms.com or call 800.543.3764.

10 WEEKS PRIOR | PRELIMINARY PLANNING

Create a Participatory Planning Process:

1. Meet with representatives of local organizations who might be interested in participating in the planning of an event.
2. Show them the film and discuss why it might be important to their organizational mission.
3. Develop a specific goal with partnering organizations about what the event will accomplish for all of you. Discuss how the planners may work together, what resources they might bring to the process, what is expected of each, and how they will be represented in the media and events.
4. Create lasting relationships without misunderstanding. Create a brief Memo of Understanding describing what each will be doing, the benefits, and media representation.
5. Determine whether you want to work with a local PBS station or hold an independent community screening.

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10 WEEKS PRIOR | PRELIMINARY PLANNING, CONTINUED

- Book the venue and date for your screening.
- Recruit more local organizational partners to broaden your reach and help identify roles for each partner, such as publicity, panelist coordination, and reception planning (reference #3 above).
- Determine speakers, panelists, and moderator (if applicable).
- Develop a plan to make sure audience turn out is sufficient to meet your goal.

3-4 WEEKS PRIOR | LOGISTICAL PLANNING AND INITIAL OUTREACH

We have created free customizable fliers, sample press releases and other resources that are available in the downloadable *The New Metropolis* Event Guide Appendix.

- Begin personal outreach to desired audience members.
- Create an email blast and get the word out electronically. Make sure to include your website, Facebook page, and/or RSVP information, as applicable.
- Choose the format for your screening (TV broadcast or DVD), and check out your equipment well in advance.
- Find your local TV station and search for broadcast times on the local PBS website or purchase your copy of *The New Metropolis* DVD licensed for community screenings through Bullfrog Films at www.bullfrogfilms.com or by calling 800.543.3764.
- Secure food for reception.
- Draft event agenda and vet with partners.
- Contact community calendars about your event.

2 WEEKS PRIOR | MORE LOGISTICAL PLANNING

- Contact press, including local television stations and/or radio programs. (See “Step #3: Get the Word Out” for more information.)
- Create a flyer to publicize your screening, and post in high-traffic areas.
- Confirm all details with event staff (caterer, venue, IT, etc.).

10 DAYS PRIOR | MEDIA OUTREACH

- Send out press releases to media outlets.
- Make calls to local television and radio programs.
- Write talking points for panelists and the moderator and distribute for their review and comment.

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SEVERAL DAYS PRIOR | FINAL DETAILS

- Test screen your event equipment one last time to avoid any glitches.
- Send a reminder email blast.
- Follow up with press who expressed an interest in covering the story and send out a media advisory.
- Finalize agenda.
- Make copies of handouts (facts, partner profiles, panelist bios, Work Plan Grids, web site info) to distribute at the event.
- Organize registration table with name tags, sign in sheets, organizational information and campaign information if relevant.

DURING THE EVENT

- Take photos!
- As people arrive, ask them to sign up to receive updates from your organization.
- Have a timekeeper so that panelists/speakers remain within their assigned time.
- Announce planned follow-up activities and have materials about coming opportunities for action and additional resources available for attendees at the end of the event.
- Let audience members know that they can learn more about the film on *The New Metropolis* website, and invite them to host screenings of their own!

AFTER THE EVENT

- Distribute the participant information to everyone who attended.
- Follow up with audience members to invite them to participate in activities that grow out of the event. Encourage them to organize a screening, panel discussion, or meeting.
- Ask everyone to join the Facebook page.
- Send your event photos to **torriceproductions@yahoo.com**. View them and connect with other participants and fans on *The New Metropolis* Facebook!

GETTING YOUR LOCAL PUBLIC MEDIA STATION TO AIR *THE NEW METROPOLIS* SERIES

The New Metropolis will be airing on PBS affiliate stations across the country through 2013. If you want to find out if your station has aired the program, you can call up the station's programming department to find out. This information may also be available on the station's website. If they have not yet aired it, you can request that the station consider airing the shows. If they have not heard of the programs, but want more information, please refer them to our website (www.thenewmetropolis.com); or send us an email (torriceproductions@yahoo.com) with their contact information, and we can send them the programming information. Please keep in mind that each station often has programming objectives, and may choose not to air the programs. However, your input as a viewer is always invaluable.

Some communities want to do more than simply air *The New Metropolis* programs. Or airing the programs has generated interest in locally produced tie-in programming. Talk to your PBS local programming department to see what the requirements are to produce such a program. Unfortunately, because of shrinking budgets, many stations do not have the resources to produce such a program on their own, in which case local sponsors may be able to help.

To see some examples of stations that did local tie-in programming, read the stories and watch video clips of events that stations and community organizations put on together in Scranton, Pennsylvania and in Cincinnati, Ohio:

Scranton, Pennsylvania: http://www.thenewmetropolis.com/cities/scranton_PA.html

Cincinnati, Ohio: http://www.thenewmetropolis.com/cities/cincinnati_OH.html

Have more questions? Please contact us at:
<http://www.thenewmetropolis.com/contact.php>