

In November 2021, the East Phillips Improvement Coalition put out a call for proposals for a strategic planning consultant. In February 2022, they hired me (Devika Ghai) as their facilitator. In addition to being a professional facilitator (more about me and my approach at www.facilitationbydevika.org), I also live within the East Phillips neighborhood. Here is the process I have facilitated with the EPIC board and East Phillips community:

Feb 6 2022 - EPIC's Vision Committee (Nikolas, Sarah, Karen, & Mary) met in a 2 hour virtual session that I facilitated. They set group agreements (which were continually held throughout the process) and proposed 5 priority areas of intervention (aka focus areas) for EPIC, towards building a joyful, vibrant and holistically safe neighborhood:

1. Building neighbor involvement and facilitating connections to resources & opportunities
2. Addressing impacts of trauma in our neighborhood via access to culturally relevant healing resources
3. Walkable access to quality and affordable food
4. Defending truly affordable & healthy housing
5. Improving the quality of our outdoor environment

...all in the spirit of working towards justice and change.

Feb 27 2022 - EPIC's vision committee met to begin thinking about long-term goals (aka "horizons") in each of these areas. I facilitated this discussion. Then Nikolas & Karen met separately to draft the long-term goals.

March 5 - The rest of the board gave input on these, and made some edits.

March 10 & April 14 2022 - At the March & April EPIC Community meetings, neighbors brainstormed specific short- and medium-term goals / projects that would help us get to these long-term "horizons". I facilitated this part of the community meetings; the meetings overall were facilitated by Nikolas.

In between the March and April community meetings, we also solicited input in Spanish and English via [a google survey](#) that Sarah set up.

Mar 26 2022 - At the EPIC Annual meeting, neighbors gave further input, generating specific ideas and proposals. L.R. joined the board and also the Vision committee. I did not have a facilitation role, and participated in the annual meeting as a neighbor only.

May 3 2022 - The EPIC board met for a one hour hybrid session during which they completed a capacity assessment facilitated by me (identifying what capacity the board has to execute its plans, so that the plans could be realistic and could build on current strengths).

May 14 2022 - At a 3 hour in person meeting, the EPIC Vision committee (Nikolas, Sarah, Karen and LR) met and organized the neighbor input into categories according to: (1) how aligned the ideas were with the vision / mission / values (2) how feasible the ideas were based on the capacity of the board. Ideas that had low alignment with the vision and values were deprioritized. Eg: Buying video games.

The Vision committee also clubbed similar ideas together, and picked a few ideas that had low feasibility but high alignment with vision and values, to set as possible long-term goals. Eg: East Phillips Basic Income Program. I took all of these notes and drafted [the first draft of the plan](#).

This was the only stage where the direct language as submitted by neighbors was changed at all (eg: I combined three suggestions “create outreach to help keep streets cleaner” + “deal with trash” + “create a dedicated task force that tackles trash and needle pickup 7 days a week, street by street” into one short term goal: “Develop ongoing system to deal with trash and litter.” Most of the suggestions were not edited at all, but some were combined and synthesized in this way.)

In summary:

Ideas that had low alignment with vision and values → discarded

Ideas that had high alignment with vision and values and high feasibility → short- and medium-term goals

Ideas that had high alignment with vision and values and low feasibility → some discarded and some set as possible long-term goals by Board.

Jun 4 - Board finalizes & adopts plan