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Most of the material of this book was derived from material submitted by the following students in response to the requirements for a term project report required for the CRPL 810 Qualitative Techniques in Planning Class:

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Whereas the project report fulfilled minimum expectations of academic and scholarly work, the material had to be reorganized, edited, and modified by Professor Mutunayagam for presentation to the Panama community to assist them in understanding, interpreting and considering recommendations made for the Fire Barn and the Community Hall.

This project has benefited substantially from the efforts of several key stakeholders who have made substantial contributions to this project through their valuable community insights, clarification and confirmation of facts derived from the collection and analysis of data, and feedback necessary to validate realistic and workable Action strategies that could be incorporated into the Action Programs, Projects and tasks that make up the Action Plan. The editor wishes to thank the following stakeholders without whose participation, this project could never have been completed on schedule.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The "Panama Project" was initiated by Yelena Mitrofanova, former Extension Educator in Lancaster County, who contacted Professor N. Brito Mutunayagam, Professor of Community and Regional Planning and Extension Specialist, University of Nebraska Lincoln Extension, seeking his partnership towards providing technical assistance and guidance to the Village of Panama, NE, in their efforts to build a community center. Bill Bryant and Eric Johnson, representing the Village of Panama, NE, entered into follow-up discussions with Professor Mutunayagam together with Dennis Kahl and Phyllis Schoenholz, Extension Educators with University of Nebraska Lincoln Extension, to explore this possibility further. Following a meeting at Panama, Professor Mutunayagam agreed to provide technical assistance and guidance to the village and assigned this task to the students of CRPL 810 Qualitative Techniques in Planning in the Community and Regional Planning program at the University of Nebraska Lincoln as their term project for the Fall Semester 2006.

The project was organized and undertaken in three phases as follows:

Phase 1 involved the Assessment of Needs for the community center in Panama, NE. It involved fact finding and data gathering, systems analysis of the village to determine its spatial resources, social and economic assets, community values, decision making structure and processes of communication and interaction with or without the use of information technology. The outcome of Phase 1 were presented to the village stakeholders at a Town Hall meeting in Panama on October 5<sup>th</sup>. 2006.

Phase 2 involved the articulation of Goals and Objectives and the formulation of a draft vision for the community center, stemming from the findings of the Needs Assessment and the clarifications and feedback from the first Town Hall meeting in Panama. This draft vision was presented to the village stakeholders at a second Town Hall meeting in Panama on November 9<sup>th</sup>. 2006.

Phase 3 started out with a meeting between the students and Bill Bryant and Eric Johnson on November 16<sup>th</sup>. 2006 whose insights helped the students overcome some apparent community apprehensions that they had sensed at the second Town Hall meeting relating to financial resource and spatial location issues. Their insights further paved the way for a drastic revision of the draft vision and the formulation of a proposal for a Fire Barn and Community Hall in Panama, NE as a more workable alternative. An outline strategy for implementation of the proposal for a Fire Barn and Community Hall in Panama, NE was also meticulously designed with the intent of assisting the community in translating the proposal into reality. An Action Plan for the Fire Barn and Community Hall at Panama, NE was presented to key stakeholders who attended a video conference hosted in the College of

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Architecture, University of Nebraska Lincoln, either in person or on line on December 7<sup>th</sup>. 2006.

This document contains a detailed report of the proceedings of all the circumstances and events that culminated in the Action Plan for the Fire Barn and Community Hall at Panama, NE, and is presented to Bill Bryant and Eric Johnson for further necessary action in partnership with the community.

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## **DISCLAIMER**

This project was undertaken with two key priorities in the order that they appear below:

1. to fulfill curricular requirements for CRPL 810 Qualitative Techniques in Planning for graduate students in the Community and Regional Planning Program.
2. to provide technical assistance to stakeholders of Panama Village in their efforts to develop and build a community center at Panama;

Since the project was undertaken by graduate students as part of a learning process, the product of this work should not be misunderstood as equivalent to professional work undertaken by a professional community and regional planner. This product reflects edited material derived from original graduate student work which is expected to meet or exceed the standards of academic rigor, critical thinking, creativity and scholarly excellence expected of a nationally accredited graduate program in Community and Regional Planning. The recommendations contained in this report are intended to be advisory in nature, and intended to educate and assist stakeholders of Panama, NE in the process of making better informed choices and decisions. No part of the recommendations are mandated in any way.