



BuildNeighborhoods

Resources for Communities

Community Rejuvenation

Community Rejuvenation is about improving a city by investing in the residents, coordinating service providers, and creating a strategic plan for the **Future of the Community**.

Only through civic engagement, capacity building, service, and providing direction will the efforts of all stakeholders **Be Maximized**.

Contents

Community Rejuvenation refers to a program or approach allowing a Community to reach their full potential. We propose four main elements geared to create a successful community effort: Civic Engagement, Provide Direction, Build Capacity, and Provide Service. Success is accomplished by engaging the stakeholders of the community in an assessment, capacity building, planning, and creating a strong network capable of achieving the plan. In our process, local government, nonprofits, churches, and neighborhood residents bring existing and future services to the neighborhood in the context of the plan. Through training and coaching, the capacity of neighborhood leaders and organizations increases allowing for greater participation from the community's neighborhoods. Together, the stakeholders of the neighborhood to include local government, nonprofits, and churches can have the maximum impact possible.

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Introduction

Cities have historically looked to their edges for both growth and new opportunities. With the new realities of city growth brought on by the economy, many cities are looking inward. Mayors, city managers, and planners are recognizing the older areas of the community hold possibilities. They also recognize the challenges of these areas. Poor performing neighborhoods can hinder development throughout the city with signs of aging and neglect. Neighborhoods old and new are the very core of our cities. If your community is seeking internal growth and positive change, rejuvenation of your community is necessary.

Rejuvenation of community requires the active participation of the people who live there. Neighbors are often unprepared to engage city officials or nonprofits in both discussions or activities designed to improve their neighborhoods. Larger efforts to make their community better are largely something they simply read about, but don't participate in for the same reasons. Without their participation, the expenditures and efforts of local government and nonprofits may have little impact on their vitality.

There is an answer to this situation; however, it can be very time and energy intensive. Engaging the community in such an approach can be daunting; however, a rejuvenation process involving listening to input, providing direction, and building the capacity of neighborhood residents is what it takes to make a difference with their efforts.

Build Neighborhoods

Build Neighborhoods is a resource of information, training, and framework to achieve community and neighborhood rejuvenation. The materials they offer have been designed over the course of many years working in challenged communities. Their manual and handouts are free to use; however, the real challenge is to have the local capacity to implement the process.

Components of Community Rejuvenation

Civic Engagement

- ◆ Resident participation
- ◆ Education on issues

Civic Engagement

Individual and collective actions designed to identify and address issues of public concern.

Community Rejuvenation strives to engage the citizens of a city in a productive process of neighborhood improvement. Cities are made up of a wide variety of neighborhoods to include residential, business, industrial, or a combination. A majority of neighborhood residents have become passive in the management of their neighborhoods and participation in local government. This type of civic engagement is necessary to have healthy and safe neighborhoods.

The primary approach is to encourage neighbors in targeted areas to build working relationships with community resources to address the identified needs. Along the way, neighbors will develop social ties with others both in and outside of their neighborhood. When this level of civic engagement occurs, neighbors will be able to play a role in making improvements on their street and in their neighborhood.

The process offers a series of forums for neighbors to not only become familiar with each other, but to discuss opportunities and issues in their neighborhood.

It is our hope neighbors become more aware of what is occurring in their neighborhood, within their council district, and at the city level.

Goals

1. Neighborhood residents will voice their concerns for the neighborhood
 2. The neighborhood will form a group to address the issues as a collective and not as individuals
 3. Neighbors will participate in neighborhood meetings
 4. The residents will meet and communicate with their elected officials
- City residents will form committees both at the

Activities

1. Hold public meetings
2. Sponsor outreach events to encourage residents to get involved
3. Provide opportunities to allow neighbors to meet each other
4. Encourage active participation by neighbors in their community

Components of Community Rejuvenation

Provide Direction

- ◆ Neighborhood Planning
- ◆ Coaching

Since changes are going on anyway, the great thing is to learn enough about them so that we will be able to lay hold of them and turn them in the direction of our desires. Conditions and events are neither to be fled from nor passively acquiesced in; they are to be utilized and directed.

-John Dewey

Neighborhood Rejuvenation strives to provide direction to residents as they take steps to improve their neighborhood. The most efficient method is to lead the neighborhood through a planning process where stakeholders can build consensus on goals for the neighborhood.

Participation in a neighborhood planning process informs the participants of what the real issues are and how to solve them. The planner gathers all possible solutions and presents viable options to the residents in the form of recommendations.

The plan process requires the neighbors to get involved and to take action to improve their neighborhood. Participants will receive coaching from experienced city staff or other organizations as they work to improve their neighborhood.

Coaching is an important element to the neighborhood revitalization process. Coaching strategies include leadership development classes and study materials. Without this type of assistance, the momentum of the effort can easily stall.

Goals

1. A unified plan for the neighborhood is created and pursued
2. Neighborhood leaders will have an understanding of where their efforts are leading
3. Leaders will have a sounding board for ideas and receive advice on how to make their efforts better
4. The efforts of the residents will compliment those of the City and other entities

Activities

1. Lead the neighborhood through a planning process
2. Meet with leadership before, during, and after the process
3. Provide general directions and share best practices
4. Design helpful leadership classes and material and make it available on our web site

Build Capacity

- ◆ Leadership Development
- ◆ Skill Building

Unless a capacity for thinking be accompanied by a capacity for action, a superior mind exists in torture.

- **Benedetto Croce**

Neighborhood Rejuvenation strives to increase the capacity of both neighborhood organizations and their leaders. The ability of residents to engage their neighbors to improve the neighborhood is a key component of Rejuvenation. To accomplish this, there will be a focus on developing leaders and educating the neighborhood about available city services.

Neighborhood Rejuvenation calls for neighborhood leaders capable of leading change in their neighborhood. Although the City plans to address some of the issues identified through the planning process, neighbors will also be empowered to create their own plan of action and address their own needs.

For example, an action plan may call for leadership to run productive meetings, build consensus about what needs to happen, and design projects to accomplish the desired outcome. Project management and follow-up by the leadership will greatly increase the success of the activity and the neighborhood.

Goals

1. Neighborhood leaders will hold meetings independent of the city's efforts
2. Leaders will be able to break down projects into manageable segments and make assignments within the group
3. The neighborhood will complete selected recommendations from the neighborhood plan

Activities

1. Offer classes on leading a neighborhood effort
2. Evaluate neighborhood leaders to identify additional leadership needs
3. Provide leadership training documents

Components of Community Rejuvenation

Provide Service

- ◆ Housing Appearance
- ◆ Infrastructure
- ◆ Public Safety

Try to forget yourself in the service of others. For when we think too much of ourselves and our own interests, we easily become despondent. But when we work for others, our efforts return to bless us.

- Sidney Powell

Neighborhood Revitalization strives to provide services necessary for neighborhoods to reach their full potential. There are three specific topic areas directly affecting any given neighborhood.

Housing Appearance

Local housing agencies will use available programs to improve the appearance and condition of the housing in a neighborhood. In a Neighborhood Rejuvenation project, their efforts will be highlighted in the plan and promoted throughout the neighborhood. Elected officials, relevant departments, and nonprofits will review the neighborhood plan and contribute to the efforts listed in their area of responsibility.

Infrastructure

The condition of streets, sidewalks, and alleys has a great impact on the neighborhood. The Public Works Department of a city will be engaged in the process. They will review the findings of the neighborhood study and plan to identify improvements they may provide.

Public Safety

The safety of the neighborhood requires the involvement of both the neighborhood residents and related departments. Public safety is affected by criminal activity, fire protection, and vehicle traffic. All will be asked to review the plan, make recommendations, and work to incorporate the stated solutions.

The neighborhood planning effort will identify the needs of the area and will inform service providers of areas of need within the neighborhood.

Goals

1. The average resident will know more about what the city offers and how to access services
2. City services will be fully utilized within the targeted areas
3. Departments will be better informed about the needs in the targeted neighborhood

Activities

1. Offer educational meetings in the neighborhood to explain how different departments work and what they offer
2. Circulate information about city programs within the neighborhood
3. Include departments in the planning discussions for each targeted neighborhood

Civic Engagement: Block By Block

City administrators may look upon neighborhoods as large expanses of houses, with no way to get a foothold. If only they could make contact with the neighbors and get them in a position to be a partner in the rejuvenation of the neighborhood. Contacting them is one issue, what to do with them next is a big question.

To get to the people, the city needs to encourage *civic engagement* to see the results they are looking for. By holding an outreach meeting within the neighborhood, it is quite possible to attract the interested and the curious. Even a small turnout is beneficial to the city as they try to create the foothold they seek. The purpose of the meeting would be to recruit people who want to see things change on their street and in the neighborhood around them.

A presentation of what can be accomplished if each street had their own block captain can start the minds of the audience to make the connection between the proposed activity and what they want for the place where they live. The presenter will make it clear what is being proposed goes well beyond forming a simple crime or block watch. The block captain will engage their neighbors in beautification, social, code enforcement, and other activities designed to strengthen their street.

As the organizer of the neighborhood gets people involved, they will need to train them in the fine art of being a block captain. This training provides training to the residents with the purpose of building their capacity to address concerns in their neighborhood. The increasing of their capacity will allow them to be the partner of the city in rejuvenating their neighborhood.

What we offer

Visitors to our website can download our Neighborhood Builder manual for free and find out more about how to get started. Build Neighborhoods send a trainer to your community to provide workshop classes and coaching to residents, nonprofits, and city staff.

Resources

- ◆ **How to Create Strong Block Groups**

Workshop Materials

A PowerPoint presentation on how to get block groups started in your community

- ◆ **Block Captain Guide**

Workshop Materials

A brief manual with tips for people wanting to become a block captain. This can be customized to include information specific to your community.

- ◆ **Crime Prevention**

Workshop Materials

A PowerPoint presentation and handout to explaining crime prevention activities to residents

- ◆ **Neighborhood Builder**

A pdf manual

We offer a free manual on building an organization with block captains in our Neighborhood Builder manual available for download at our website.

Provide Direction: Neighborhood Planning

Each of the four elements described in the introduction are enhanced by the neighborhood planning. A neighborhood plan establishes the context in which civic engagement, capacity building, direction, and service operates.

Encouraging *Civic Engagement* without a clear rallying point can create a confusing environment. The neighborhood plan captures the consensus of the people who live there, providing a set of common goals and clear *direction* for all to pursue. *Capacity Building* is meaningless without a purpose. The neighborhood plan provides the reason why increased capacity of neighborhood leaders is necessary. *Providing Service* in the absence of a plan may not be as affective as having a plan in place. The neighborhood plan reveals the needs of the neighborhood. The process of planning brings the service providers together and further increases the effectiveness of the services as a whole.

Neighborhood Planning Process

Although neighborhood plans are most likely a city-initiated effort, all stakeholders stand to benefit from the effort. The process will engage as many stakeholders as possible in formulating a plan for the neighborhood. The neighborhood plan will describe the agreed upon goals of the neighborhood and present possible solutions. Included in the planning document will be a neighborhood study with all the information gathered during the planning process.

Because it is difficult and at times unreasonable to include commitments from various groups under one inclusive plan, each entity showing interest in contributing to the effort of improving the neighborhood will be asked to complete their own “action plan”. These action plans will be a statement of commitment from the participating entities and include details such as timing, cost, who will lead the process, and how they will complete their respective tasks.

Separation of actions from the plan allows for several things to occur. First, it allows for the neighborhood to state what is needed for the neighborhood without worrying about responsibilities and specific resources. Second, stakeholders are not asked to approve other groups actions; instead they focus only on their own actions in response to the plan. Stakeholders can then make adjustments to their own action plan without altering the larger neighborhood plan.

What we offer

Build Neighborhoods can lead a neighborhood through this process and write the neighborhood plan. Our firm can also provide direction to city staff as they take on the process.

Resources

♦ Plan Builder

Workshop Materials

We offer a free guide on neighborhood planning within our Neighborhood Builder manual available for download at our website.

Capacity Building: Committees

There is a great amount of work to do in just about any neighborhood. As these needs are identified within a neighborhood organization, committees should be formed. One of the biggest complaints of neighbors getting involved in efforts such as these is the lack of action and progress. Forming a committee within a neighborhood organization should not be take likely, for it will be the main implementer of neighborhood plans.

So how does a committee become effective? The city's rejuvenation program will need to increase the *capacity* of committees in similar ways it approached block captains. A well trained committee can make great strides in tackling their topic. It starts with the chair person understanding their role and how to make progress. Too often they are left with a vague topic such as crime reduction and no instructions on where and how to begin. If a chairperson is armed with this information, they can lead the committee to reach their full potential.

Strong committees provide the best vehicle for local government to interact with. A committee on Housing will provide a focused partner who can engage the city's Community Development staff to get to the heart of what needs to be done. In the absence of this, the Community Development staff will try unsuccessfully to engage community residents. The result will be disastrous, with both sides walking away frustrated.

What we offer

Visitors to our website can download our Neighborhood Builder manual for free and find out more about how to create effective committees. Build Neighborhoods can send a trainer to your community to provide workshop classes to residents, non profits, and city staff.

Resources

- ◆ **Neighborhood Game**

Workshop Materials

A workshop exercise designed to engage the audience in how to plan a proper event

- ◆ **Neighborhood Builder**

A pdf manual

We offer a free manual on building strong committees in our Neighborhood Builder manual available for download at our website.

The Internal Change

Much about the rejuvenation process is about the exterior changes for a city government; however, the internal is equally important. Many cities are not neighborhood oriented, creating the need for internal changes. Neighborhood Rejuvenation requires changes starting at the top of the organization. Cities attempting this type of transformation run into a variety of roadblocks and difficulties such as challenges to the way departments conduct day to day business.

There are steps a city administration can take to minimize these internal conflicts. The first is to help all departments to realize the need of the employees directly engaging the neighborhood. They will need support and this means resources in the form of staffing, a budget for the program, and larger funding for neighborhood improvements. Progress will be slow; however a good place to start is staffing. The neighborhoods will have a wide variety of issues facing them. Make sure departments are making their expertise available to the person acting as lead staff member.

The neighbors will be looking for an increase in city services either during or following a neighborhood planning process. The city organization should identify what they will be able to provide and instruct the project leader to manage expectations from the start. It is unlikely there will be a large amount of funding available and even if it is, the neighborhood would likely require larger amounts of funding to be brought up to an acceptable standard. To address this situation, the staff should make the city's position one of "here to make things better" instead of "here to fix everything."

The following pages provide insight and direction for internal changes a city's management should consider when designing a neighborhood rejuvenation effort.

Neighborhoods are a growing focus of cities. Most cities offer funds and services to distressed areas but lack an inclusive approach that organizes the different approaches of departments. Cities have a need for a unifying program designed to bring departments together to maximize their efforts. The following pages offers eight elements of a program to create strong neighborhoods.

1 Vision from Leadership

A Clear Message

What does your city want to accomplish? It really starts as a simple concise message. How will your city accomplish this? This needs to be simple and short, so everyone can understand how it will be done. This is the basis for your Neighborhood program. To get the attention of staff, a clear message must be formed and delivered in several different mediums at various times during the year. The message must be delivered in three message lengths: A one minute, a 2-5 minute, and a 10-15 minute message. The highest ranking city official needs to deliver these different length messages often during the year, using the most appropriate length message.

From the Top Down

Don't get confused with the "Top Down and Bottom Up" debate. The desires of what the end product or goals should come from the top down. Let it be known the management wants the organization to make great inroads to creating stronger neighborhoods. Solutions and ideas will come from your line staff and middle management and will come up through the organization. The management is required to compare the suggestions against what they said originally would be the goals of the effort. Be careful of good ideas that do not fit the vision. Keep the organization focused on the leader's vision.

Quarterly Check-ups

Stop and evaluate the efforts your city is making. Gather your upper managers and review the steps and results of what the organization has been doing. It takes this constant check-up to keep things on track.

2 Fluid Management

Things Change

Flexible management of the process is required. No one can get it right on the first try. When red flags start waving, make changes on the fly with the best information you can gather. Think through a process to determine whether changes to your approach are necessary. Be clear who has the power to sign off on minor changes and major deviations from the process.

Going with the Flow

Try to make your program bend with changes without breaking. Direct managers and staff to find ways to accomplish the desired end result even in the face of changes. Remember the organization and process will mature in the face of difficulties. When working with neighbors, you need to have people on the ground who will go with the flow until they find a way to plot a new course to your desired outcome.



Stay with Principles

In the end, hold on to adopted principles rather than procedures; neighborhood work changes too quickly for set rules of engagement. Don't abandon concepts like "keep communication open with neighborhood groups" or "show respect and support for line staff". These will be your strongest anchors when the sea gets rough.

3 Good Services

Evaluate

Your city most likely has a variety of services affecting the quality of life in neighborhoods; from trash pick-up to street repaving. These need to be evaluated from the view point of the customer and the effectiveness in achieving your goals. Having quality services puts you in a great position with the neighbors. You might not have all the services needed, but the ones you have are top notch. The city will never be able to offer all the services a neighborhood needs. Aim for quality over quantity.

Stress Improvement

Even where services score high, push for them to find ways to improve. Go beyond the norm or the expected. Neighbors often have low expectations of the level of service they will receive from staff. When a city employee puts effort into helping them, they are often surprised. Earn their surprise!

Make Changes

As the manager of the city's effort, ask for suggestions. When good ones come forward, give the manager or line staff a chance to make it work. Provide them the support they need and let them loose. We can't expect new results by doing the same thing over and over.

4 Neighbor Oriented Staff

Identify Them

To get things going internally, you need to identify the staff from different departments demonstrating a real connection to neighborhood groups and leaders. Usually they are called upon to attend neighborhood meetings to make presentations or answer questions. They will be the ones neighbors already seem to know and trust.

Recruit Them

Using this list of people, invite them to form a committee tasked with improving how the city works with neighborhoods. Stress to them the importance the upper management is placing on this effort and their participation is key to the success of not only the program but the health of the city.

Train Them

Allow them to learn job responsibilities from each other so they have a more comprehensive understanding of other departments. There is also national training for neighborhood revitalization offered each year from a variety of organizations. This type of training combined with a thorough knowledge of the city organization will increase your level of success.

5

Active Neighbors

Attract Them

Hold a special meeting or training for residents who want to make a difference in their neighborhood. You should bring in a speaker to address the group and encourage them. Get their contact information and look for clusters of people.

Encourage Them

The mayor or city manager should address the attendees and provide encouraging words regarding the importance of their efforts to compliment the services offered by the city. Explain how both parties have a vested interest in the improvement of the city.

Train Them

Bring training from outside or sponsor local talent to provide training to both start up groups or existing groups. There is excellent training out there designed to improve the effectiveness of neighborhood leaders.

6

Customer Service

Evaluate

Ask a task force to evaluate the quality of your customer service at all the different points the public contacts the city. From the web site to your utility payment center; are there things the City could improve. This evaluation will help you understand how the public sees your organization.

Ask for Improvement

Start an internal campaign to reward departments taking steps to upgrade their customer service. Push for excellence and the people will see you as an ally in their efforts to improve their neighborhoods.

Involve Them

As the city makes efforts to work with neighborhood groups, bring your customer service people out into the community. Stretch the vision of people who never leave their office or the counter. Let the service providers connect with the public they serve.

8 Funding for Improvements

Start Small

Before you start throwing money at an untested program, give it time to breath. A small amount of very flexible funding will be more useful in the beginning. Trying to assemble infrastructure type funding is a big undertaking and will be the center of a lot of questions you will not be able to answer so early in development. Small funding is easier for everyone to work with in the beginning.

Create Department Set Asides

In time, the neighborhood program should have some substance with regard to funding. Some cities ask neighborhoods to go through a process leading a large allocation of spending in their area. Others will ask departments to allocate a portion of their budget to be directed by the needs identified in neighborhood plans. Either way, an infusion of spending in conjunction with the neighborhood efforts will grant credibility and progress to your neighborhood effort.

Sustainability

One concept to keep in mind regarding the funding is the sustainability of the funding level. Large amounts of money always attract those seeking funds for the latest need or want of the city. It will become a struggle to maintain large allocations for the program over time. Small amounts can be more sustainable; however in the end, positive results are the best defense from competing interest.

Build Neighborhoods

The Build Neighborhoods a system designed to organize neighbors into a productive role in the rejuvenation of their neighborhood. It provides a model built on block captains on every street who belong to a larger neighborhood organization.

The materials found on the site will help supplement your existing and planned services to neighborhoods. Roger Sexton, the author, is available for consultations and training sessions. You can find more information at our web site: BuildNeighborhoods.com

What We Offer

Public Engagement

- Outreach
- Public Meetings

Build Neighborhoods has a strong history of getting the community involved in the planning process. Using a variety of techniques, we feel strongly the end product will be significantly

Training

- Block Captain
- Committee Training
- Neighborhood Leadership

Build Neighborhoods increases the capacity of neighborhood leaders to participate in the implementation of their plan. The above courses are designed to build confidence and skills in

Coaching

- Neighborhood Leaders

Once leaders and active residents have attended the training, there will need to be guidance provided to keep their efforts moving forward. Build Neighborhoods will help them work through short range projects in relationship to the neighborhood plan.

Planning

- A useful plan for all stakeholders

Build Neighborhoods creates practical plans with reasonable recommendations made to reach the identified goals. The plan is designed to guide the efforts of different stakeholder groups as they attempt to improve the neighborhood. Once the neighborhood plan is written, stakeholder groups can follow a simple template to document what recommendations they wish to pursue. The stronger the commitments listed within the individual action plans, the more impact the overall neighborhood plan will have.