

NEIGHBORHOODS

FIRST

ENGAGEMENT MODEL



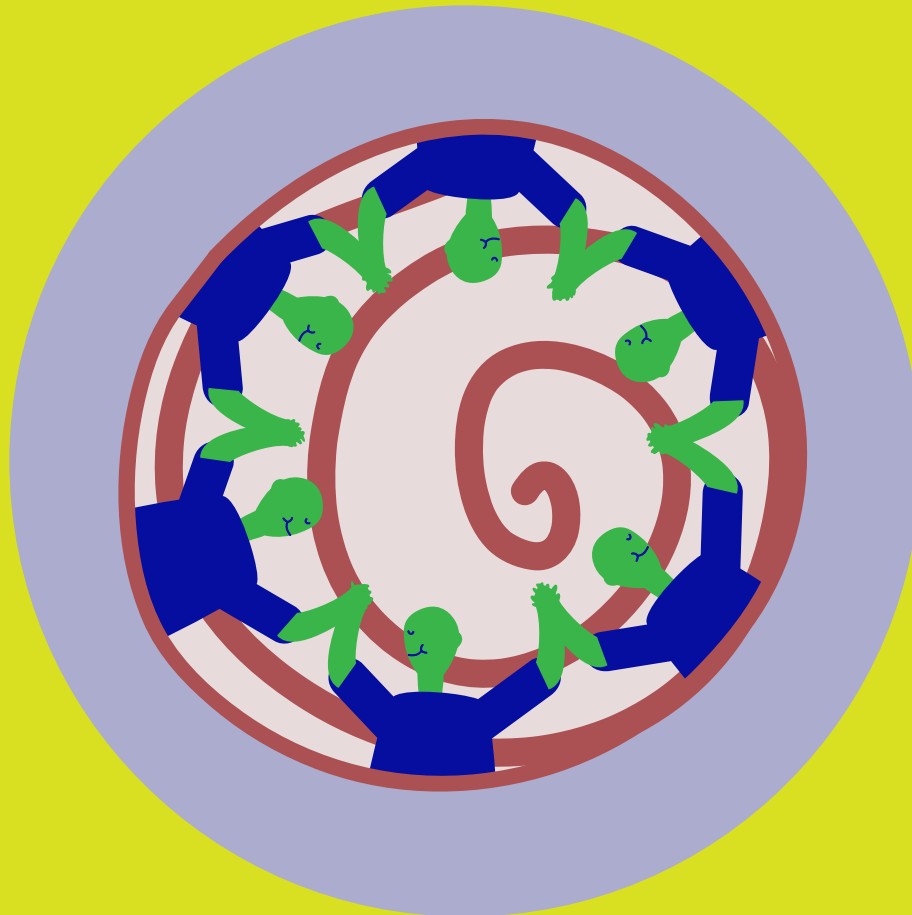
EASTSIDE
COMMUNITY
NETWORK
STRONGER, TOGETHER



(ECN)

★ **COMMUNITY WISDOM**

Neighborhoods are made up of organized people focused on the common good.



“

We need access to more knowledge and more resources. It makes a difference and it uplifts us.

”



WELCOME TO

Neighborhoods First Engagement Model (NFEM)



This training tool documents the process of the Neighborhoods First Engagement Model (NFEM), a resident-led method of creating positive community change. This model encourages participation of all stakeholders in advocating for a better quality of life in all neighborhoods and improved communications among neighborhood groups, community development organizations, city officials, institutions and businesses.

It is intended to be used by the Leaders or Board Members of Volunteer Neighborhood Organizations, or staff of Neighborhood-Based Community Development Organizations.



Flipping the Model

Most neighborhood plans or strategies tend to be created at the top – by government, by corporations, or by institutions. Then, a meeting is held and residents are asked to react to those plans or strategies. Decisions get made, often without any discussion or feedback on whether the residents' opinions or thoughts were included. The Neighborhoods First model flips that script. It starts by creating a plan, strategy or solution with residents, and it includes government and technical support in that process. The final decisions are made together so that everyone knows how the decisions were made.

Our process is not always linear, you can choose your own problem-solving path depending on your community needs.

Traditional Community Engagement

Residents Engaged = Neighborhood Success

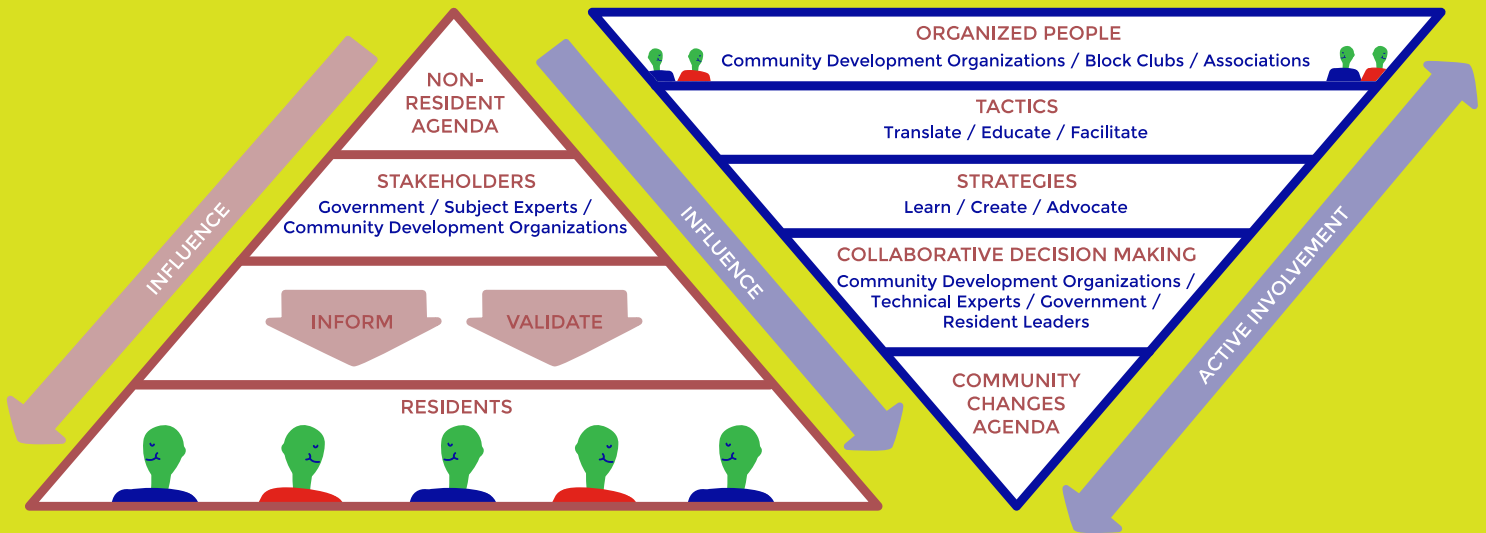


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How it all works

STRATEGIES

The overall direction that the organized group should always **take**, to build as much trust as possible in order for relationships to develop over time.

PROBLEM-SOLVING PATHWAY!



TACTICS

The actions that are **always necessary for staff or volunteer leaders to use**, to set up the process and give it a good chance of success.

INGREDIENTS

These elements help the group get organized so they can activate the tactics and strategies. The **group should choose** the combination of ingredients that have the best chance of getting to the goal.

TOOLS

What the group uses to activate the ingredients into something real. The **group should choose** the combination of tools that have the best chance of getting to the goal.

SECTION 1: Explaining how we do what we do best

OUR FOUNDATION



Where did this model come from?

“ECN is a strong, diverse coalition with a track record of community development that has masterfully evolved to meet changing conditions in one of the most challenged areas of the country’s most challenged but promising cities.”

– Jodee Fishman Raines,
Fred A. and Barbara M.
Erb Family Foundation

How and where did “Neighborhoods First” really begin? It began in the late 1970s when the first seeds were planted to create the Warren/Conner Development Coalition (W/CDC) among residents and local businesses and institutions. Meetings held from 1978 to 1983 catalyzed W/CDC and the creation of a plan led by a volunteer group called “Southeastern Community Association.” Our plan called for relationship-building among residents, businesses, and institutions, and it encouraged everyone to invest in whatever way they could – with money, time, talent, or their voice.

When W/CDC was formally created in 1984, we believed that our neighborhood plans, energy, and investment were going to make the difference. We understood early on that no one was going to make change happen for us. “Neighborhoods First” is not rocket science, it is about respect for the residents. It hinges on the belief that although we may need certain kinds of external expertise, our communities fundamentally hold the wisdom, faith, and brainpower to help solve problems. Our model continues to be rooted in these shared convictions and underlying philosophy.

Over the years, with various forms of special support, our persistent beliefs, and collaborative work through the Lower Eastside Action Plan process, we have professionalized our engagement process so that it is more consistent and replicable. This training tool documents our process to better communicate about it and share it with others. ECN hopes those who use it will find it helpful. To those who do use it, please let ECN know what you think, and together we will make this an even better tool to move our neighborhoods forward.

– Maggie DeSantis, founder of WCDC/ECN

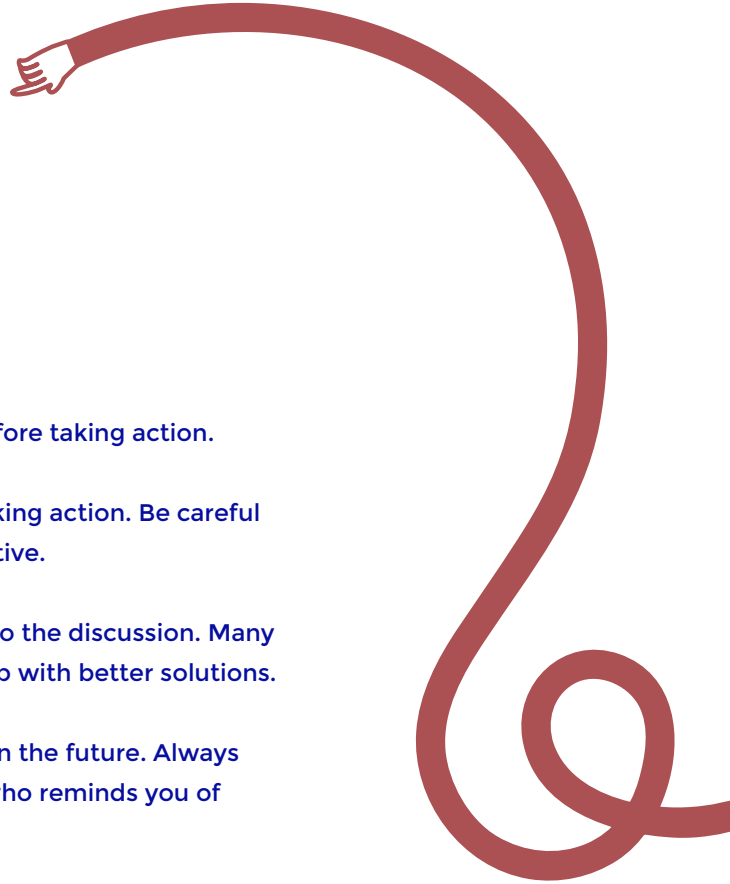
“

Neighborhoods First Engagement Model is an approach that puts tools in our neighbors' hands to better organize and solve neighborhood challenges through collaborative learning, creating, and advocating.

”



What are some of the core guiding principles behind the Neighborhoods First Engagement Model?



- Learn as much as possible before taking action.
- Talk things through before taking action. Be careful not to get personal or combative.
- Invite different viewpoints into the discussion. Many brains and hearts will come up with better solutions.
- Be realistic but keep an eye on the future. Always have someone in the group who reminds you of the big, positive vision.
- Focus your community organizing strategy on relationship building. You have to maintain trusting relationships – among neighbors, between professional staff and neighbors, between neighbors and businesses, and neighbors and government.
- Don't fly solo. Neighborhoods only change when neighbors get together and decide to talk, think, learn, and act collectively.
- Investment comes in many forms. It is not just money – it can be time, wisdom, tenacity, and creativity.
- Follow through. When residents see their ideas put into action and see that they've had influence on those ideas, they stay excited and they stay at the table.
- Accept technical help and support. There's always a way to put these resources to use. But don't think that because you are not an expert, that you can't push back and debate with the technicians.

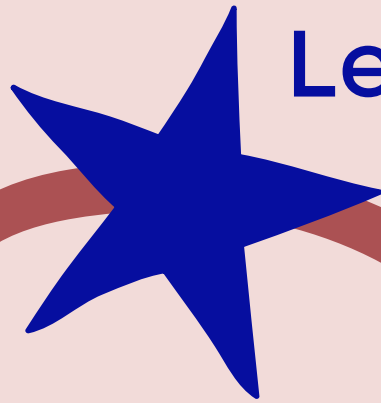
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During the planning process neighbors and technicians developed a shared language free of judgement and jargon and made it part of their language. There was no intimidation. Because of the trusting relationships, people were not afraid to ask questions.

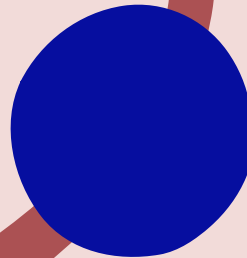
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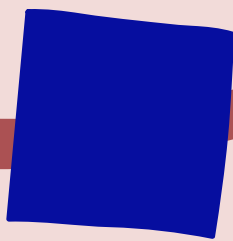
Learn



Create



Advocate



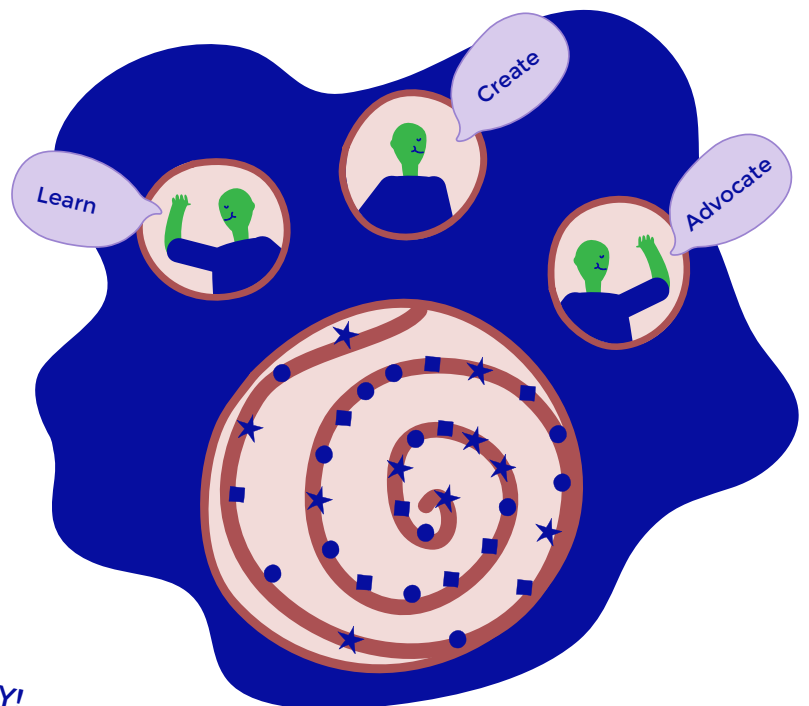


Strategies and Tactics

Three Simple Strategies

- ★ Learn: Collective Community Education
- Create: Collective Projects
- ◆ Advocate: Collective Organizing

This process is about building trust. Our collective relationships are critical. We make positive change by learning, creating, and advocating together – at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end, and then we do it again! As we repeat this process, we collaborate and build trust, our relationships grow to include more people and more organizations and slowly but surely positive change starts to show.



PROBLEM-SOLVING PATHWAY!

Three Simple Tactics

Translate: Create a shared language that is accessible to everyone

Educate: Welcome mutual learning and open information sharing

Facilitate: Nurture conversations and bring diverse perspectives together in safe spaces

Translate principles

- Work on common language for all stakeholders
- Remove jargon from written and spoken word
- Create and maintain neutral terminology
- Simplify policy language

Educate principles

- Residents teach technicians
- Technicians teach residents
- Make decisions based on data plus resident insight
- Use multiple methods for constant community education
- Raise awareness of various issues, policies and resources
- Dialogue face to face with public officials
- Identify and nurture resident leaders through training and support
- Use information to motivate residents to act

Facilitate principles

- Bring technical partners, government and neighborhood partners together
- Encourage collective decision making
- Provide resource opportunities
- Capture and provide common data to measure progress
- Share stories to motivate and inspire others





Ingredients: What you use to activate the Strategies and Tactics

Ingredients

These are the elements that bring the expertise and influence necessary to carry out the strategies and tactics.

1. Neighbor-to-neighbor outreach and education
2. Institutional and other partners with influence and relationships
3. Governmental entities
4. Local leadership structures and organizations
5. Technical expertise

★ COMMUNITY WISDOM

Sometimes we don't utilize what we've got until tragedy happens. Why do we have to wait for a tragedy to happen in order to get something done? Find the money, it's out there!

Ingredients

“People Organized for the Common Good” use these ingredients to collectively learn, create and advocate!



Neighbor-to-neighbor outreach and education

Organized residents who are trained and supported to engage other neighbors to educate, disseminate, document, gather information and help collect data.



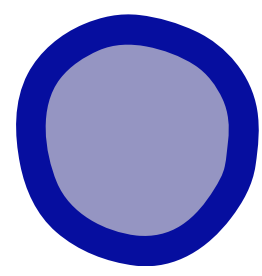
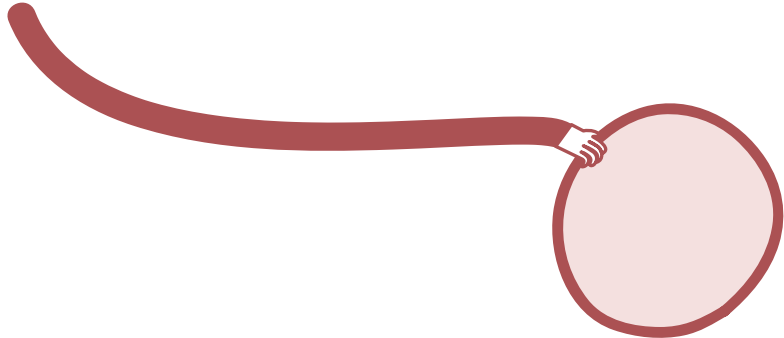
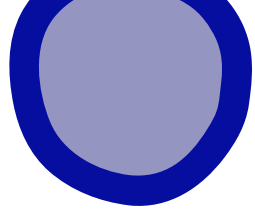
Governmental entities

These are public authorities like the Building Authority, Land Bank Authority, Planning Department, Department of Neighborhoods, and other City, State, and Federal Departments.



Technical expertise

Specialized knowledge and skills that add value to problem solving. These skills can include (but are not limited to) urban planning, urban design, data, law, graphic communication, business planning, marketing, architecture, and accounting. The best strategies and plans result when specialized knowledge and skills are combined with wisdom, experience, creativity, and common sense.



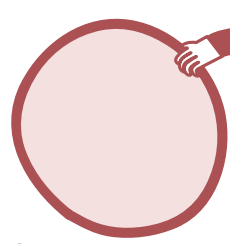
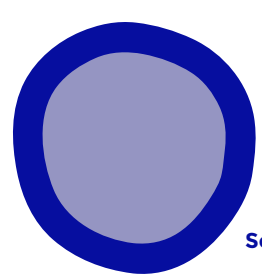
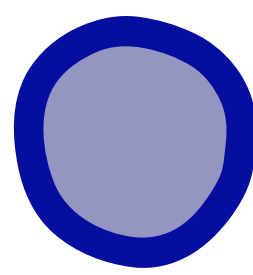
Institutional and other partners with influence and relationships

Partners with strong spheres of influence often include human service institutions, corporations, elected and public officials, and philanthropic supporters.



Local leadership structures and organizations

Neighborhood-level steering committees, subcommittees, work groups and neighborhood boards that provide a structure and process for consensus-building and/or decision-making.



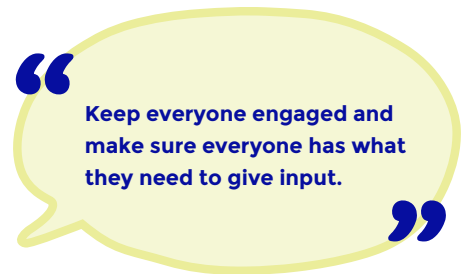
★ COMMUNITY WISDOM

We break down that fine print into something simple that people can understand.



SECTION 2: Learn about our engagement tools

OUR TOOLS



Motivation and Inspiration

Identifying and nurturing leadership

Every neighborhood has leaders who want to make a difference. Residents who feel that attachment to their neighborhoods aspire to make their neighborhood better. Drawing those aspirations out, encouraging people to speak out and organize with their neighbors, gives residents motivation to come to the table. And that motivation – to make a real difference – inspires other neighbors to come to the table.



The rest of the Tools described here help to keep neighbors at the table.

“

This is absolutely necessary, some individuals in the community want to make a difference, but they don't have the means or tools to do this. [The Neighborhoods First Model] gives them the tools to bring back to the community and organize through workshops and community meetings. This makes us more accountable.

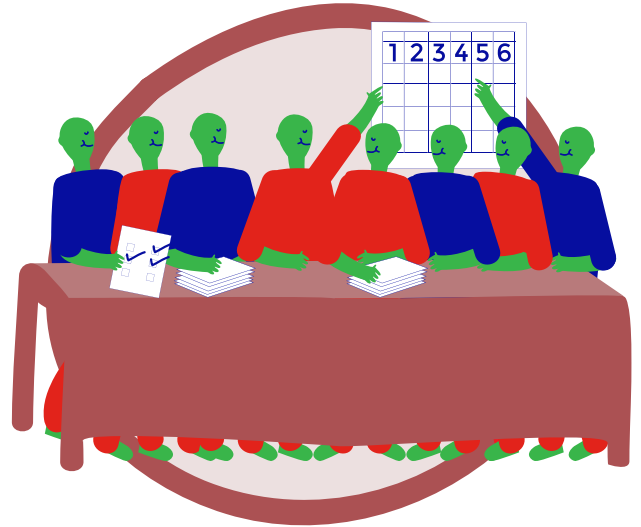
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Constructive Dialogue

Well-planned and facilitated meetings

Take time to plan and prepare for meetings. Start by figuring out your “desired outcome.” What do you really want to accomplish at this meeting? Once you decide that, figure out what the agenda looks like to assure the desired outcomes are met. Then pick a good facilitator – someone committed to allowing for all points of view to be presented and discussed without drama, and with a focus on the main goal.



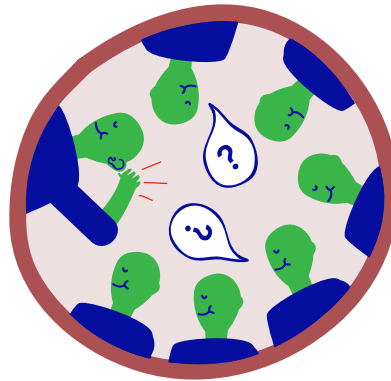
“ [A facilitator’s goal is] to keep everyone engaged in the conversation and not allow one or two people to dominate. ”



Community Education

Listening sessions

An important verbal form of community education where information on an issue, a specific public policy or a resource is translated and presented to the community to increase community knowledge, give residents a chance to speak directly to public or private officials, and learn how residents feel or think about an issue.



Educational materials, websites & social media

Community education collateral materials (flyers, brochures, postcards) are used to promote an event or educate the community on a specific topic or issue. Websites are often the primary online presence while social media is used as a form of mass communication to inform and reach online constituents on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, and LinkedIn.



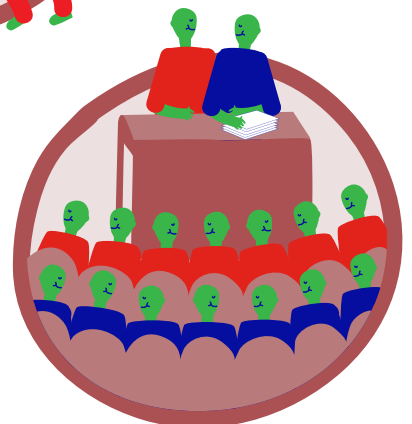
Data

The collection of information regarding land condition/ownership, demographics, economics or resident perceptions that provides a sampling of qualitative and quantitative information for a specific project. Residents should be trained to help gather data.



Town hall meetings

Larger, facilitated community meetings that are important for conveying information and getting feedback from participants. They may focus on multiple topics. This differs from Listening Sessions, which are smaller sessions, focused on a specific topic or issue of concern, where facilitators help residents understand topics in plain language or ask experts to break down a complex issue.



★ COMMUNITY WISDOM

We are all conduits of information.

“

There's so much that we need to learn. Break it down. Make it simple. Not too many people want to read the fine print. Instead let's give them something they can understand. It's a learning experience. Knowledge is power. If you don't ask for anything, you don't get anything.

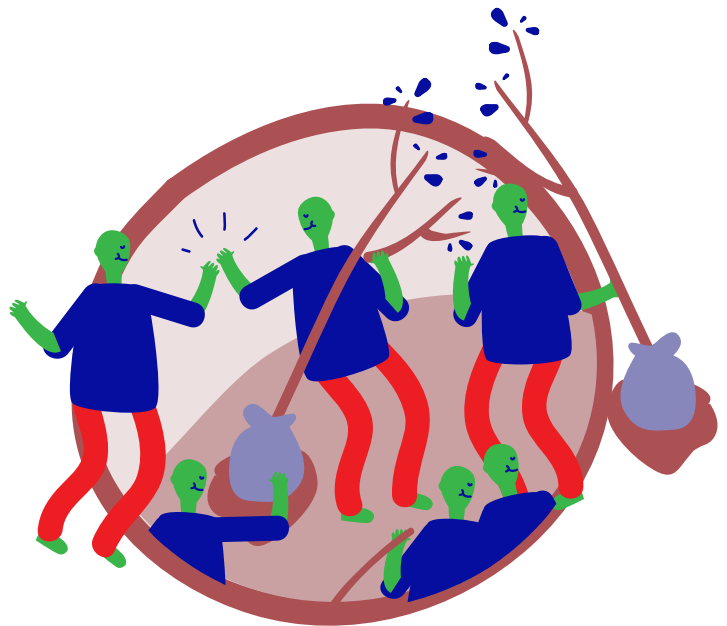
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Relationships

Neighborhood mediation

Asking smaller neighborhood groups or individual neighborhood leaders to meet together to resolve disputes and disagreements, and facilitating that conversation. This method can also spur collaboration on an initiative where groups were previously working in silos. For example, one person may have been working alone to reclaim a vacant lot while one block away another person was doing the same. Or several block clubs might have been fighting over how to reclaim adjoining vacant lots. Now these individuals and groups can work together to address vacant lots in their neighborhood.



Relationship building

A specific pervasive way of working that should always be the goal in resident engagement – encouraging, facilitating, and connecting neighbors to neighbors, neighborhood groups to other groups, staff to neighbors, and neighbors to government/businesses/institutions.

Collective organizing

The coordination of collective neighborhood voices among neighborhood groups, or among individual residents, in order to work together to plan projects, to do projects, and advocate for systemic change in the community.





COMMUNITY WISDOM

We want to know what the residents want, what changes the residents want, and who we can work with at the City to get those changes done.

“

We leave literature on our residents' doors and let them know “Hey, there's a meeting! Please come and see us.”

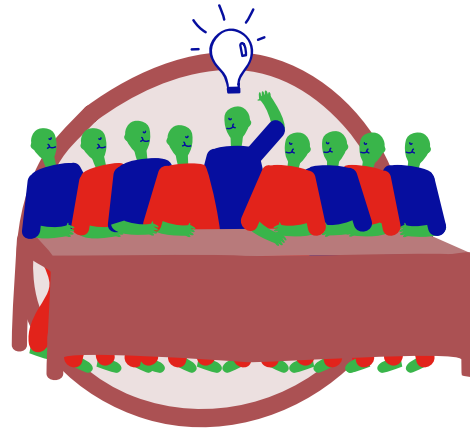
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Leadership and Community Change

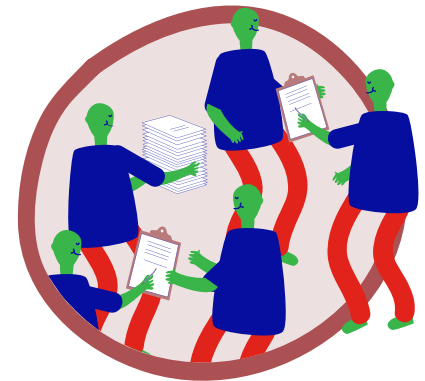
Leadership development

A way of working whereby we a) constantly look for leadership traits in residents and encourage them to take on leadership roles, b) support resident leaders in their roles as committee leaders or campaign leaders, and c) eventually ask them to go through formalized leadership training.



Advocacy campaigns/petitions

An advocacy campaign is a coordinated set of strategies aimed at trying to persuade or influence government, businesses, or institutions to accept or reject an issue or initiative. Petitions are one component of an advocacy campaign that give evidence of how a large number of people feel about an issue or initiative. The collection of signatures in support or opposition of a specific issue can help persuade officials toward the neighborhoods position, and at the very least confirm that the neighborhood has organized people who are paying attention and who care.



Advocacy campaigns/ marketing & messaging

A marketing and messaging strategy is another component of a larger advocacy campaign. Taking the time to distill a short, clear, compelling main message – then finding creative ways to convey that message – can be a powerful tool to help officials understand what you want, but also to inspire your neighbors to join the campaign.



“

It's a wonderful thing to be a spokesperson for the community and the people within a district because I reach out and get information, learn the pattern of what's going on in the community, and bring it back to the City and advocate for the people.

”

 **COMMUNITY WISDOM**

We need to see quick wins. People are not going to just keep coming to meetings, spinning their wheels and picking at their brains. If you need residents to be positive, upbeat, and make suggestions, they need to see change happening in their neighborhood.

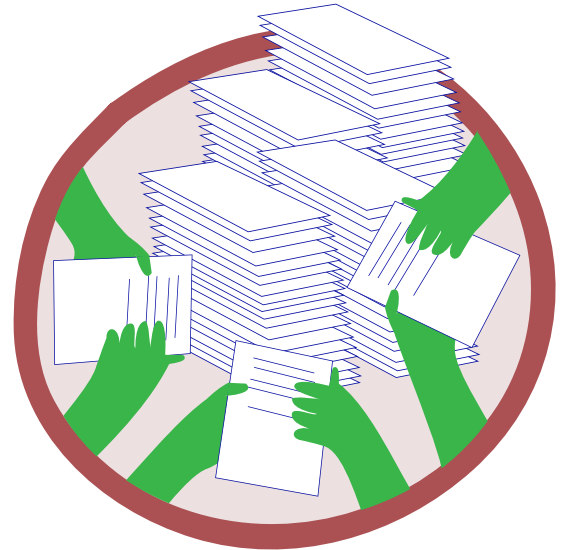
 **COMMUNITY WISDOM**

Try to keep everyone informed about what's going on in the neighborhood. If they want to get involved, they do.

Resident Opinion, Perception and Insight

Surveys

One method to get resident insight on a given issue or proposal. A survey is a community questionnaire delivered through neighbor-to-neighbor outreach to gauge community perception and support around a specific subject. For example, pre and post perception surveys for a grant application process can reveal how resident's insights have changed in the course of a revitalization project.



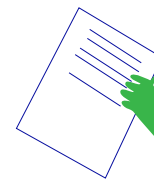
Focus groups

Another method to get resident insight on a given issue or proposal. A focus group is a small convening of residents to get assistance/insight for a targeted purpose, i.e. focus groups can be used in the development of questions for a survey to make sure the right tone and messages are being delivered. The community provides essential feedback about each question to gauge how likely residents will be to respond and the value of the questions.

“

If we don't reach out to the neighbors, we don't know what the neighbor's situation is when they close their front doors.

”



Resources

Money

It's no secret. We need monetary resources to get this work done. The more resources we have and the better we manage them, the more impact we will see. Monetary resources come in many forms like grants from philanthropic foundations, donations, money we raise ourselves, or State or Federal funds. These resources can then be broken down to fuel the cost of staff organizers, meetings, marketing, stipends or incentives for residents, and neighborhood-level mini-grants.

Mini-grants

A system by which small grants are competitively distributed to neighborhood groups. This creates an opportunity for neighbors to literally create community change on a small scale. By “seeing” the results, residents are motivated to stay engaged.

Stipends

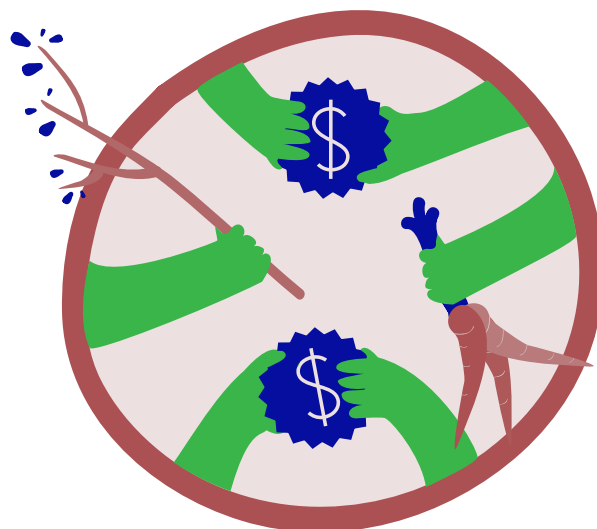
Payments and other benefits should be given to residents or partner organizations for their involvement in achieving the collective goal.

Access to land

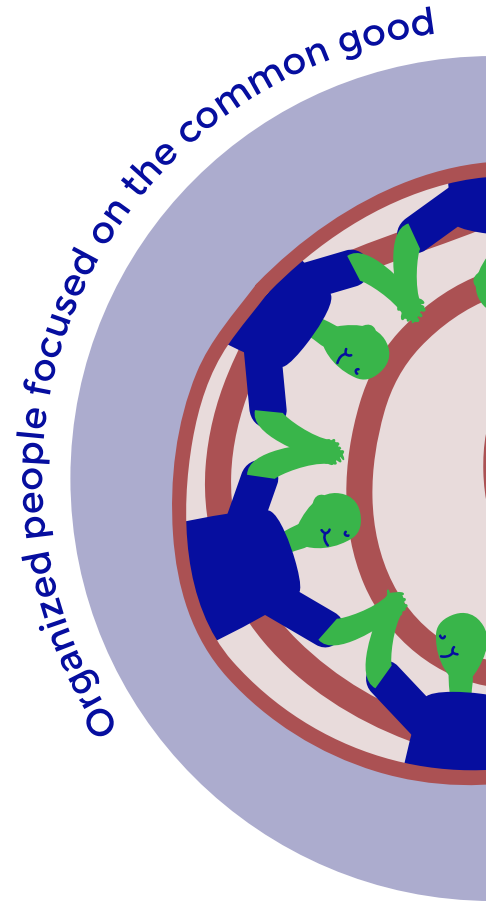
Neighborhoods are the nexus of land and people. When neighbors can access land to beautify it and upgrade it – to steward it – the whole neighborhood becomes a better place, owners build more equity, neighbors can see quicker wins, and that can be the impetus to continue organizing for positive change. Providing user-friendly access to land and property, through special grants and partnerships with city government and other institutions, is an important tool for resident to make real change.

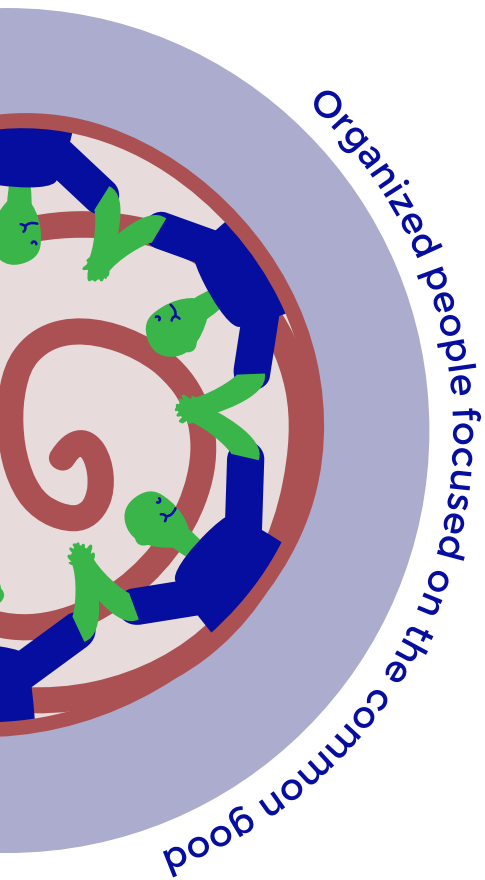
Food and fellowship

There is no simpler or better tool to nurture relationships than food and fellowship. Using resources to provide a meal and the time to gather around the meal and exchange stories or get acquainted, is an important step for neighbors and other stakeholders to build trust – and trust is the fundamental element for Neighborhoods First.



Organizing with the right ingredients





Scenario

- Below is a scenario that you will use later in an exercise.
It is a real scenario that ECN staff and residents experienced.

The City's Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Consolidated Plan for how to spend federal Community Development Block Grant money was recently approved by City Council with very few, poorly-publicized public hearings and little to no input from residents in the neighborhoods. Provisions in the consolidated plan eliminated popular programs like free home weatherization and home repair grants, and they targeted neighborhoods where the dollars will be invested to the exclusion of other neighborhoods. Your organization must use the NFEM strategies, tactics, ingredients and tools to organize a neighborhood response and advocacy campaign.

TIP: Remember that a core NFEM tactic is “translate.” Does everyone in your neighborhood know what “HUD” or “Community Development” means? Do you think it means the same thing to all of your neighbors? Translating complex language is a big part of this work.

Clarify a problem

Little to no resident input was considered before the City created its plan for how to use federal Community Development Block Grant funding, even though this new Consolidated Plan has a significant impact on quality of life for residents.

Identify a goal

Community organizations needed to find a way to work with local government to educate the community about the Consolidated Plan.

Tools + Ingredients

1. Educational materials + Technical expertise
2. Educational materials + Local leadership structures and organizations
3. Well-planned and facilitated meetings + Neighbor-to-neighbor outreach and education
4. Well-planned and facilitated meetings + Governmental entities
5. Listening sessions + Governmental entities
6. Collective Organizing + Governmental entities
7. Surveys + Neighbor-to-neighbor outreach and education

How did you use them?

TOOLS

Well-planned and facilitated meetings:

Allowed for information about the Consolidated Plan to be clearly explained to residents and allowed for honest feedback from participants.

Listening sessions:

Residents were able to share feedback and provided a forum for City officials to communicate directly with neighbors.

Educational materials:

Detailed copies of presentations were distributed so that meeting attendees could easily follow along.

Collective organizing:

Residents called the offices of City officials who did not attend meetings in order to hold those officials accountable.

Surveys:

Given out after the meetings to capture resident feedback which were then given to the City.

INGREDIENTS

Governmental entities:

The Consolidated Plan was released and approved by the City despite a lack of awareness by the residents. City officials were invited to resident listening sessions to explain the new plan and how it has changed, but they did not attend.

Local leadership structures and organizations:

Community Development Organizations worked together to coordinate neighbor education and outreach.

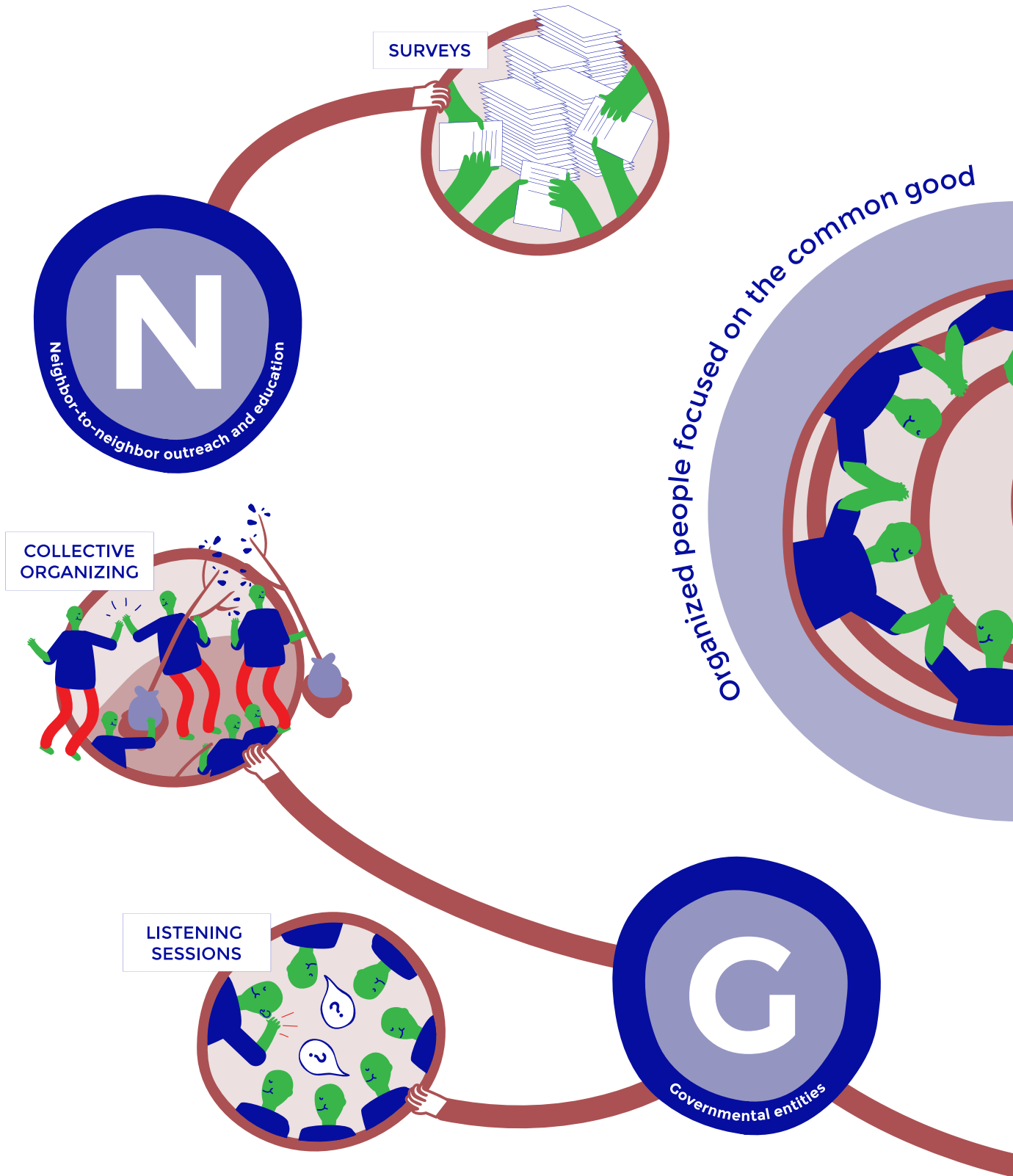
Technical expertise:

The Community Engagement Team (staff of professional community developers) translated every aspect of the Plan and educated residents on its technical components.

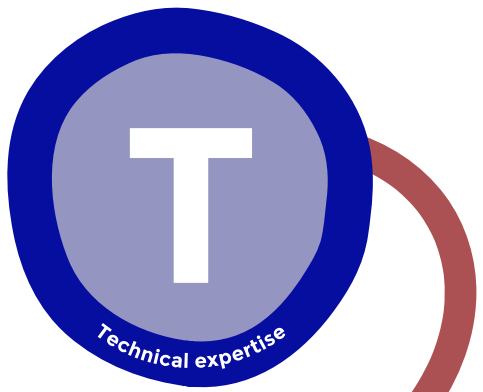
Neighbor-to-neighbor outreach:

Resident leaders canvassed neighborhoods door-to-door, informing people about the Listening Sessions and inviting them to come and learn, and give feedback.

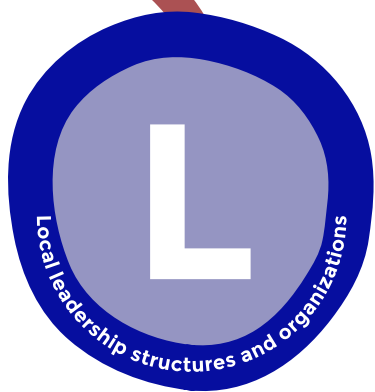
Using tools to activate the ingredients



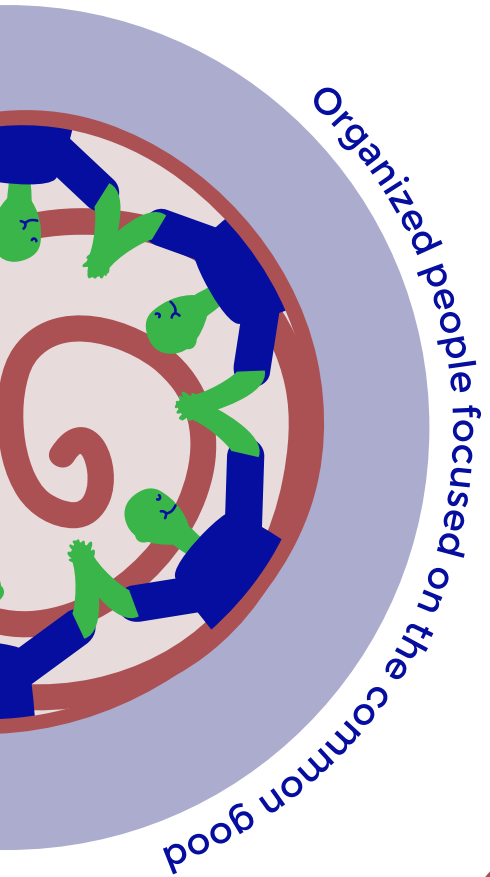
Start here!



EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS WEBSITES & SOCIAL MEDIA



WELL-PLANNED AND FACILITATED MEETINGS



SECTION 3: Put the model to work

USING THE MODEL

Activity – Map a Solution

Get ready to collaborate with your neighbors!

This “Map a Solution” activity provides you with the opportunity to use the NFEM to solve a problem from a given scenario. This is a real scenario experienced by ECN staff and residents.

Learn how to cultivate relationships in your community by navigating the tools and the ingredients outlined in this Training Tool. Upon completing this activity you’ll be better prepared to act as a catalyst to influence local change!

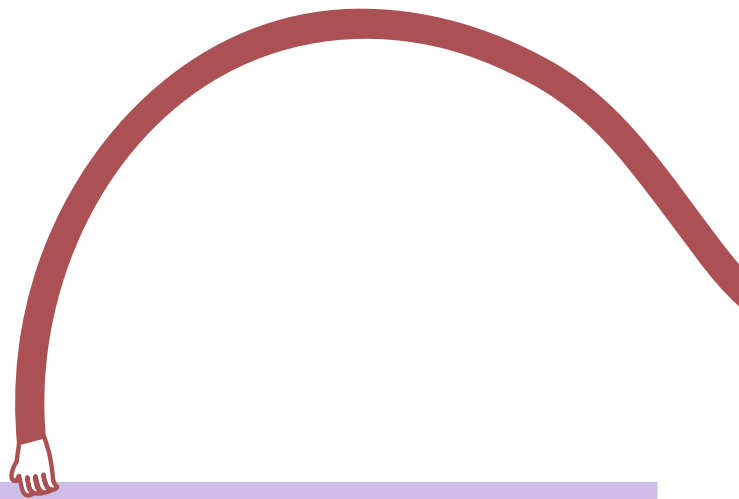
Amplify your collective brain power by working collaboratively with the members of your community. The NFEM is meant to be used by multiple people who work together around a shared vision. Together, we can harness our wisdom to make our vision of a diverse and inclusive neighborhood come true.

Goals

- Communicate the NFEM model in simple, clear steps
- Recognize that modular parts can be activated in different ways to respond to each unique scenario
- Understand the tactics, ingredients, and tools like the back of your hand

Outcomes

- An understanding of how Ingredients and Tools can be used to produce solutions to complex problems
- Use Ingredients and Tools to address a specific community issue, while understanding how each one is defined
- Use of flexible thinking and a willingness to adapt the process to respond to unexpected situations



Steps / what to do?

1. Working alone or with a group, read the scenario.
2. Clarify a problem in the scenario, and a reason for convening residents. Write this down.
3. Identify a goal you wish to achieve based on the problem you have identified. Write this down.
4. Identify the tools and ingredients needed to address the problem to achieve the goal. Refer to pages 16-25 to refresh on the list of tools. Write them down.
5. Draw lines to plot which tools activate the ingredients. Write down the names of the tools you are using next to their path. Use a pencil so you can erase!
6. Remember to use the strategies and tactics while working through the problem.
7. Fill out the reflection.

Notes

A large, empty purple rectangular area intended for taking notes, positioned to the right of the 'Steps / what to do?' section.

Scenario

- The scenario below was described earlier with a description of how ECN residents responded. Below is the same scenario – but this time imagine your community, with its unique dynamics; or imagine it is a different city. In other words, it's a blank slate!

The City's Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Consolidated Plan for how to spend federal Community Development Block Grant money was recently approved by City Council with very few, poorly-publicized public hearings and little to no input from residents in the neighborhoods. Provisions in the consolidated plan eliminated popular programs like free home weatherization and home repair grants, and they targeted neighborhoods where the dollars will be invested to the exclusion of other neighborhoods. Your organization must use the NFEM strategies, tactics, ingredients and tools to organize a neighborhood response and advocacy campaign.

TIP: Remember that a core NFEM tactic is “translate.” Does everyone in your neighborhood know what “HUD” or “Community Development” means? Do you think it means the same thing to all of your neighbors? Translating complex language is a big part of this work.

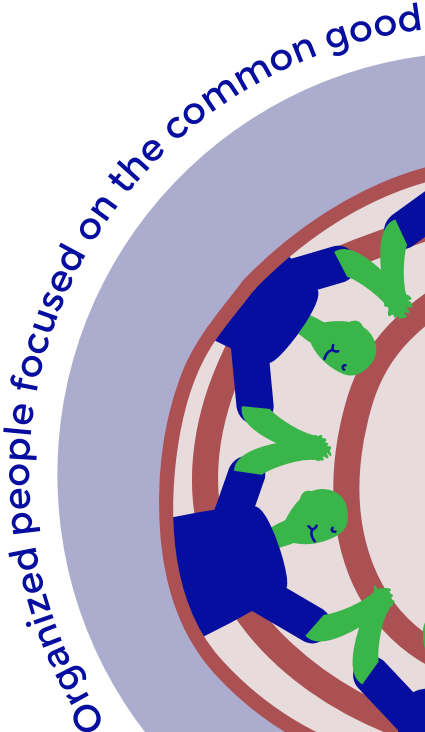
Clarify a problem

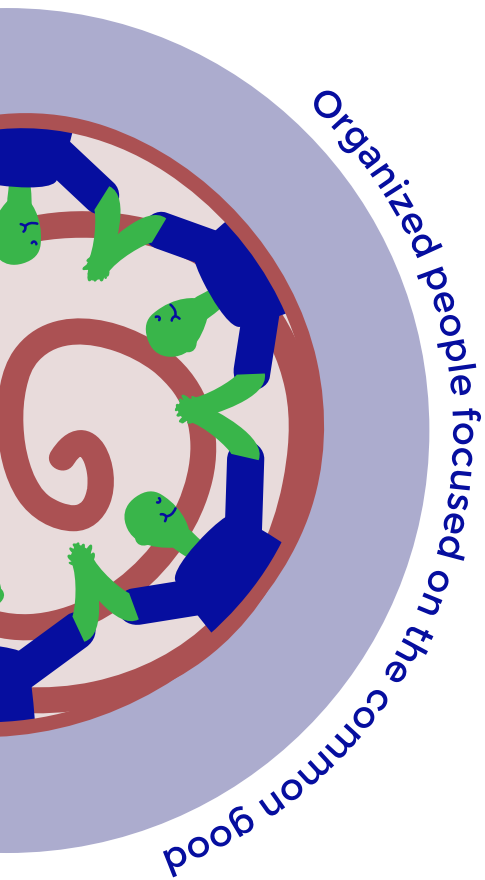
Identify a goal

Tools + Ingredients


How do you imagine using them?

What tools should be used?





Reflection



Consider the following questions and write your response on the following page.

- Which tactics did you use?
- What tools were needed, and why?
- How did the tools activate the ingredients?

Write your response here



About this Project



Credits

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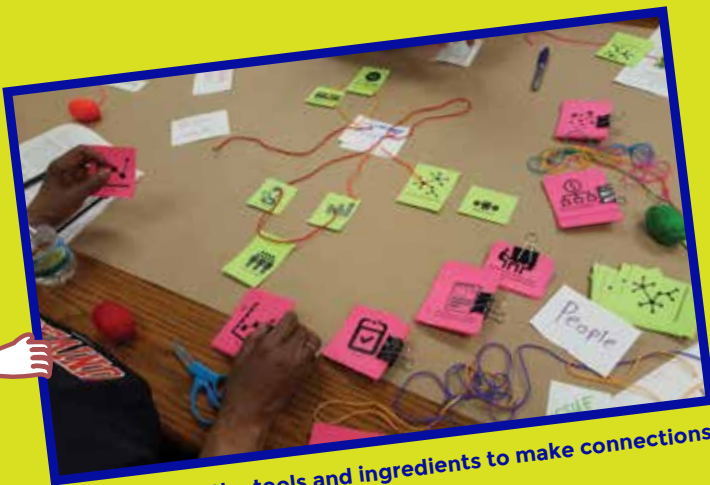
How this training tool came together

ECN Staff, Resident Leaders, and The Work Department (a women-led social innovation firm) worked together to thoroughly dissect and describe this model. Residents reflected on their experience with LEAP, and helped define the strategies, tactics, ingredients and tools. They worked through the scenarios and they provided the pearls of wisdom. Through this process, we created what we hope will be a clear and functional tool.

This training tool has been produced thanks to generous gifts by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan.



Design lab focused on visualizing the engagement process.



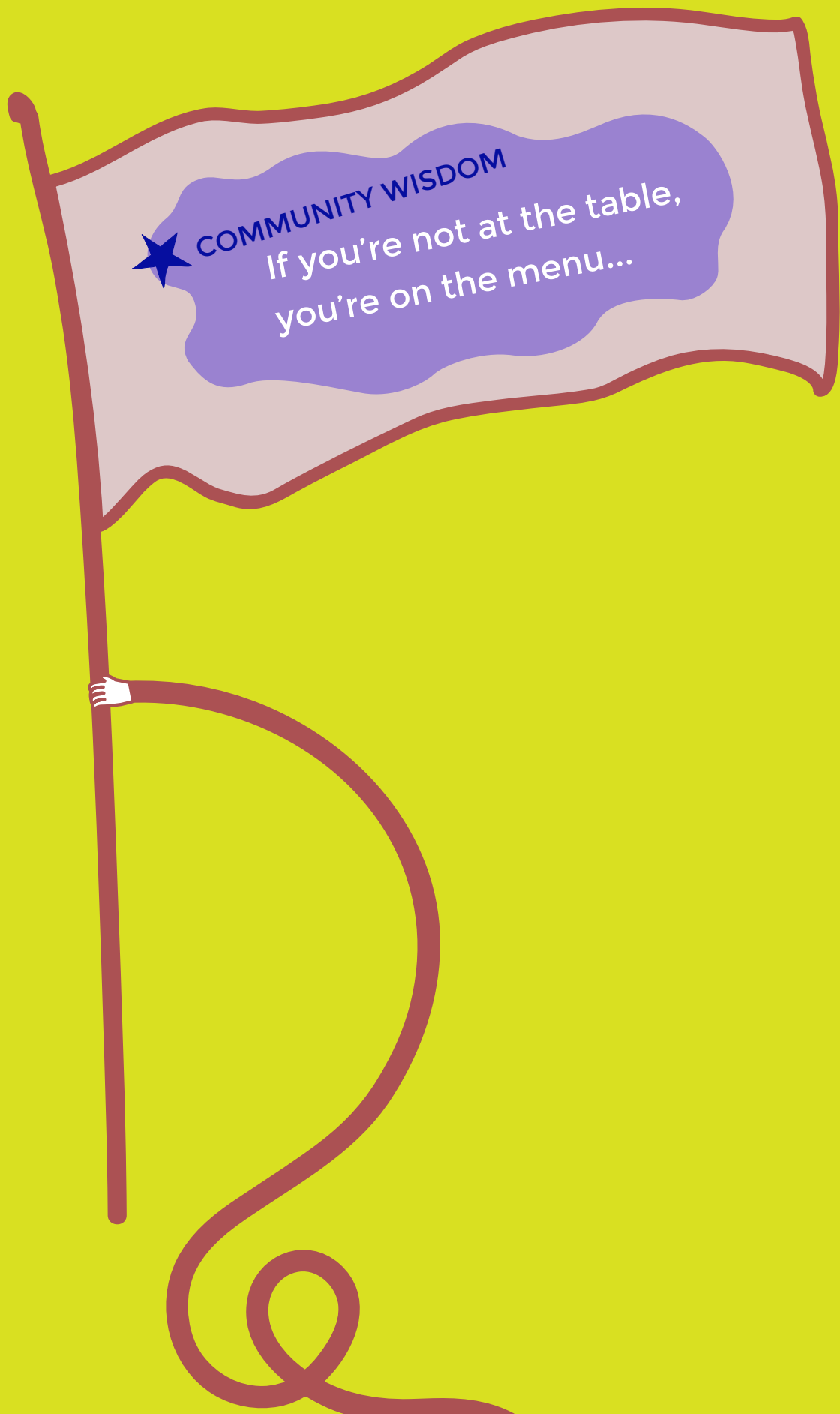
Residents use the tools and ingredients to make connections.



Residents analyze a problem.



Residents break down the process.



★ **COMMUNITY WISDOM**
If you're not at the table,
you're on the menu...