LCN

LOUISIANA COMMUNITY NETWORK

Introduction to Community Development

To create jobs and increase the standard of living, communities should focus on the links between three key aspects of development: economic, community and leadership.

Introduction to Community Development

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to provide a resource for community leaders, volunteers, and citizens who desire to make their community a better place. It describes the steps in the community development process, and the guiding principles that explain why each step in the process is important.

Before beginning, the question "What is community development?" must be answered. Community development is an **outcome**—establishing a city park, improving infrastructure, creating an industrial park, etc. It is also a **process**—a comprehensive process for managing community change that involves citizens in a dialogue on issues to decide what must be done, to share their vision of the future, and then to involve them in implementation activities (Vincent 2006).

Community is a physical place, but it also can be defined as people who live in the same location, share common interests, jointly own or participate in something, share common characteristics, or have mutual relations. **Development** relates to realizing potential, growth or expansion of something, or making something more effective. Put together simply, community development is the act of growing, expanding or making more effective groups of people who have mutual interests.

A Case for Community Development Planning: The Chattanooga Story

The City of Chattanooga provides a well-known example of what can happen when people come together to talk about solutions and to prepare for the future.

It was 1969 and the city had been designated as having the worst air quality in the nation. City leaders mobilized the community in collaborative efforts and, within five years, had overcome this negative situation. In addition to solving the problem at hand, the city learned an even more valuable lesson: its citizens could work together for a common purpose. A task force of people from the public, private, and nonprofit sectors was organized to consider the city's future, a future that faced the results of a recession, closing manufacturing plants, and a severe change in its economic base. The task force conducted more than sixty-five public meetings to gather public input on community issues, explore examples of successful cities, and organize data useful in describing the social and economic issues of the community.

To provide leadership for the process, the Chattanooga Venture organization was established, a mission adopted, and community issue teams organized. The new organization provided a vehicle to facilitate change and to ensure that all stakeholders were at the table. Approximately sixty goals were established, including more than two hundred programs and projects with more than seventeen hundred people involved in the development and execution of the action plans. As a result, all areas of community capital realized dramatic increases. Fourteen hundred jobs were created, the riverfront was developed, affordable housing became available, a human relations council was created to address human rights issues, and financial investments exceeding $793 million were made.

What has become known as the Chattanooga Process began more than thirty years ago and those involved will admit that it was not an easy undertaking. Getting people to come together required commitment, technical skills, a neutral group to mediate the process, a champion for the process, vision, enthusiasm, and optimism. Chattanooga Venture provided the structure, the road map, and the mechanism for citizens, business, government, and nonprofits to do the work. There were naysayers to be sure, but success won them over after a time.

Physical and economic improvements are evident throughout the city as a result of this community development effort. However, the lasting legacy of the process is that there is now a structure that allows people to work together to address common problems and opportunities in ways that the interests of all stakeholders are considered.

From: **Smart Communities** by Suzanne W. Morse

WHY IS PRACTICING COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IMPORTANT?
Community development is important because it **provides a process for citizens to engage in civic dialogue** rather than political debate. Community development is appropriate for all communities regardless of condition.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK
Community development is a multi-step process that is implemented in the community by local citizens and leaders. Elements of the community development framework are shown in the table below:

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK		
ASSUMPTIONS	**VALUES**	**PRINCIPLES**
People are capable of rational behavior.	All people have basic dignity.	Self-help and self-responsibility are required for successful development.
Significant behavior is learned behavior.	People have the right to participate in decisions that affect their current and future well-being.	Participation in public decision-making should be free and open to all citizens.
Significant behavior is learned through interaction over time.	Participatory democracy is the superior method of conducting the civic business of the community.	Broad representation and increased breadth of perspective and understanding encourage effective community development.
People are capable of giving purposeful direction to their behavior.	People have the right to strive to create an environment they desire.	Methods that produce accurate information about the community are vital to the process.
People are capable of impacting their collective environment to formulate a desired future.	People have the right to reject an externally imposed environment.	Understanding and general agreement is the basis for community change.
	Maximizing purposeful interaction and dialogue within a community will increase the potential for learning and development.	All individuals have the right to be heard in open discussion, whether in agreement or disagreement with community norms, and the responsibility to respect opposing viewpoints.
	Implied within a process of purposeful interaction is an ever-widening concept of community.	Trust is essential for effective working relationships.
	Every discipline and profession is a potential contributor to a community development process.	
	Motivation is created through interaction with the environment.	

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PRACTICE

The practice of community development is about **process** and **outcomes**. Both are equally important and one should not be favored over the other. Without process, the desired outcomes may be diminished or unrealized. Without successful outcomes, the process can be devalued or abandoned. Successful communities understand the role and contribution of each.

PROCESS

Community development is based upon the belief that people can work together to shape their own destiny if given the opportunity to participate in a free, open and non-threatening environment. Community development is not easy and requires people with specific knowledge and skills to facilitate the process. It is a process through which people develop the ability to collectively help themselves and reduce reliance on external resources. It includes a set of steps to guide problem solving, program planning and task completion. Community development practitioners subscribe to a basic process but with minor differences. The basic steps and a series of questions to consider when planning and implementing the community development process are shown in the "Summary of the Community Development Process" table on Page 10 and discussed below.

Organize

Establishing the organizing group for the community development effort can vary by community. It may be a new, independent organization created specifically to conduct a community development process in the community. If so, the new organization should have broad representation from many different community organizations and include a broad cross section of community leaders. As an alternative, the effort may come from within an existing organization such as the chamber of commerce or local economic development organization. If this is the source of the effort, it is important that this organization be inclusive and willing to seek out stakeholders that may not have existing relationships with the organizing group. Lastly, a political leader such as a mayor can initiate the effort but, as with the other possibilities, the leader must understand the value of including all stakeholders. The most successful development organizations are public-private partnerships that involve a blend of prominent citizens, religious and neighborhood leaders, major community stakeholders, elected officials, and local business leaders.

Once the organizing group has been formed, the group must determine if and to what extent a **community development professional** will be used. This is a critical decision and it often is based upon how much it will cost, if people can do it themselves, and if they feel they need someone from the outside. The decision

should be based upon the individual needs and conditions of the community. Do the organizers understand the process of community development and how important it is that the values, beliefs and principles be incorporated into the process? Have they had experience with this or had training in community development, community assessment, development financing, and other elements of community and economic development? If one or more issues divide the community, can the organizers serve as neutral facilitators who can focus on the process rather than the issues? Will the organizers be seen as unbiased and impartial? Every community is different and therefore the need to acquire professional services must be considered in light of community needs rather than as a purely financial issue.

Creation of the mission statement is important because it describes why the group was formed and what it intends to accomplish. It causes the organizers to specifically define the scope of the community to be addressed, which in turn will aid in the identification of key stakeholders. A mission statement declares the organizational purpose so that the chances of conflict with or duplication of efforts already undertaken by other organizations can be avoided. Once defined, this statement should keep the group focused and prevent it from expanding beyond or straying from its original purpose. A mission statement is simple, usually no more than one sentence, but descriptive of why the group exists.

The organizers must also consider the **resources** that will be required to complete a community development process. Resources can be either financial or in-kind and come from internal or external sources. Seed money to jump-start the process can be provided by the organizers but long-term financing must be addressed. Resources could include grants from external sources but the community should always seek ways for self-funding so that it is not reliant upon external sources.

Once the mission is defined, the **identification of stakeholders** is much easier. If the group is successful in its stated mission, who will be affected either positively or negatively? What roles should stakeholders play? How and when should they be involved? For practical reasons, inviting every citizen to every meeting will not be an efficient use of time or talent and can prevent detailed analysis and discussion of critical issues and the development of strategies. Initially, a representative group of citizens should be asked to participate and, as the process moves into other stages, the representative group can reach out to the broader community and involve other people in providing additional information, opinions, and ideas; asking questions; challenging the status quo; and approving the final plan and helping implement it. Once a structure is in place for developing and implementing the action plan, there will be ample opportunity for citizens to serve on subcommittees, task forces, or project teams.

Analyze

Before beginning work, it is important to identify the current community environment. There are various methods for **collecting and analyzing information** but a common first step in conducting an environmental scan is the completion of a community profile. This is a statistical overview of past and present demographics of the community (income, population, education, sector employment, etc.). Other approaches include community surveys such as a business opinion survey that samples local businesses and seeks opinions about local government, work force needs, or infrastructure. Citizen attitude surveys related to quality of life issues can augment surveys of specific sectors and provide a more comprehensive view of the community. Other methods include comprehensive studies, leadership workshops that examine all aspects of the community to identify critical issues, or a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats). The purpose of collecting information is to identify critical issues to be addressed and to identify those elements of the community that are positive and can be built upon. Surveys and other activities that compile the thoughts and attitudes of citizens are important but always should be reinforced with data. Data must be current, valid and reliable and made available in formats that are easy to understand and easily related to issues uncovered in the community surveys. This means that the organizing group must have access to data, have the skills to analyze it, and the ability to transform numbers into something that will engage the public.

Communicate

It is extremely important that an **effective communications process** be established to keep the lines of communication open with the public. This is essential if the process is to be inclusive and build trust. The process should include provisions to keep the general public informed but also include methods for members of the organizing group who represent specific stakeholder groups to keep their constituents informed as well. The local print, radio and television press should be involved but don't overlook public access cable channels, the Internet, and billboards. Look for avenues that reach the hard to reach—those with limited English or on a lower socioeconomic level, etc. Communications should be two-way. Look for ways to distribute information as well as to collect it. This could be a phone number or an e-mail that encourages people to submit ideas, comments, or questions about what is being done. Remember, however, that the only thing worse than failing to ask people for input is failing to act upon what is submitted. An effective communications plan provides for information management and distribution to appropriate people or committees. Any action taken as a result of public input should be included in periodic reports to the public.

Plan

As information is gathered and analyzed, issues and trends will begin to emerge

and it will be appropriate to **expand the community organization.** Additional organizations and citizens can become involved in addressing specific problems that are of direct interest to them and should be given the opportunity to serve on task forces or subcommittees that support the community development process.

As soon as the organizing group has identified the critical issues and conducted a SWOT analysis, it can **create a vision statement**. The statement should be forward-looking and provide guidance and direction for the actions that will be taken to make improvements. A vision statement is usually one sentence that embodies the desired state of the community to be achieved over the next fifteen to twenty years. The statement should be realistic but challenging enough to result in the desired changes.

Once the vision of the future is described, the organizing group should **create a comprehensive strategic plan** to support that vision. The strategic plan should be developed as broadly in the community as possible with action teams targeting each of the critical issue identified in the SWOT analysis. The communications plan developed earlier should include mechanisms for chairs of the action teams to communicate and collaborate with one another. Ideas can be shared and linkages established across the community. Each action team should develop goals and objectives and set up tasks and milestones that lead to achievement of the main objective. Each objective should include measurable outcomes with associated timelines, designate individuals responsible for tasks, and identify financial and resource needs.

As the process expands, the oversight organization can become unwieldy and difficult to manage. From the very beginning of the process, the community development professional or the organizing group should **identify the leadership for a community development plan management team** that will become a champion for the process as it grows and matures. These leaders may come from the organizing group, action teams, or other community organizations. Generally a group of seven to nine individuals should be identified and selected by the organizing group to form the plan management team. The team should reflect the public-private nature of the group and include representatives from each of the action teams. It is charged with acting on the organizing group's behalf and meets periodically to manage the ongoing process and keep it moving forward. The plan management team is also important because it provides a cadre of leaders capable of stepping in when the community development professional's work is completed or when new leadership is needed.

Implement
Implementing the plan is where the rubber meets the road and is a crucial time when the plan management team needs to monitor the process closely. It is important for the public to see signs of progress so people do not become

discouraged. For that reason it is important to build early successes into the planning process. Early success can be seen with activities that have a short timeframe for implementation or those that have high visibility or are popular with the vast majority of residents. Quick success can also occur with activities that have money or resources readily available and have a low risk of failure. Ensuring early success builds momentum, helps attract additional volunteers, and instills the belief that things are changing for the positive.

When implementing the plan, utilize resources from within and outside of the community. Sustain the momentum by nurturing efforts, recognizing progress and communicating with the public. The plan management team should remain open to new issues or concerns that may emerge and to the creation of additional actions teams as required.

Evaluate

Planning is a dynamic process where change is not only required but is also healthy; review and evaluation of the goals and objectives are critical. Some activities will take less time than expected; others will take more. Some may have to be eliminated entirely based upon community circumstances. It is also likely that new objectives will be added to the plan as new information or needs are discovered. As such, the plan management team should utilize the "plan, do, check and adjust" elements of total quality management. The reviews should consider what is going well, what problems need to be addressed, and what the next steps should be to move the process along toward achieving the community's vision of the future.

Celebrate

Nothing creates success like success and the best way to enjoy success is to **publicly celebrate** it! An annual report and a public event to recognize progress is important but so are smaller celebrations at well-spaced times of the year. These events should provide recognition for all volunteers and citizens involved in the effort and publicize incremental progress toward the larger goal. Assure that all stakeholders and all generations in the community are included in the events. These events should be used to strengthen the sense of community and build fun into the process. Volunteers will put in countless hours on behalf of the community and they will feel appreciated with food events, awards, recognition in the local paper, special t-shirts or hats, discount certificates, or other creative ways that say thank you.

Sustain

Like success, community development is a journey, not a destination. It is important that the original plan be reviewed and revised on a regular basis so that it remains relevant to the community. It is likely that not everything desired by the community could be included in the original plan and it keeps faith with the

public when some of these items can be incorporated in **new goals and objectives**. With input from community stakeholders, the management team should take a fresh look at the strategic vision and action plan and modify it in light of the current environment.

It is also important that the management team reach out to new leaders and institutionalize the process through volunteer or paid staff of community organizations. In order to sustain the original effort, long-term funding must be found and community leaders and citizens alike must seek ways to sustain the momentum and commit for the long-term.

SUMMARY OF THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

ORGANIZE

1. Establish the Organizing Group 2. Create a Mission Statement 3. Identify Community Stakeholders	Do we create a new organization or use an existing one? Who will lead the charge? Do we need a professional developer? What is our mission? Who are the stakeholders?

ANALYZE

4. Collect and Analyze Information	What information do we have and what do we need? Who can analyze the information and use it to describe the condition of the community and engage the public? Is the data complete, accurate, valid and reliable?

COMMUNICATE

5. Develop an Effective Communications Process	How will we obtain input from citizens? How will we keep citizens informed about the process? Are all available methods used, especially those that reach disenfranchised citizens? How can local media be involved?

PLAN

6. Expand the Community Organization 7. Identify the Leadership and Establish a Plan 8. Create a Vision Statement 9. Create a Comprehensive Strategic Plan	Who else and what other groups need to be included? What is the shared vision of the stakeholders for a common future? What goals and objectives are required to achieve the vision? Who will champion and lead the effort?

IMPLEMENT

10. Implement the Plan	What activities will produce early results? What activities will be highly visible? What activities are most popular among citizens? What activities can be accomplished with few resources? What will build/sustain momentum?

EVALUATE

11. Review and Evaluate the Planning Outcomes	How often will the plan be reviewed and are "plan, do, check, and adjust" elements built into the process? What is working, needs to be changed, eliminated or added? Have community conditions changed?

CELEBRATE

12. Celebrate the Successes	How can we publicly celebrate success? What should we do periodically and annually to celebrate? How do we recognize the efforts of citizens? How do we assure that all stakeholders of all generations are included? What activities will continue momentum?
13. Create New Goals and Objectives as Needed	What goals were expressed by citizens that were not included in the original plan? Can these be incorporated as new goals and objectives? How can fresh input be gained to keep the plan relevant? Are resources adequate for continued work?

OUTCOMES

Outcomes are the results of the community development process that increased the community's capital in a variety of areas—physical assets such as bridges, environmental assets such as natural resources, human capital such as a skilled workforce, and financial resources such as micro loan funds. All of these represent a physical increase in community capital that is visible and easily identified as a community asset.

Another element of community capital is less visible but equally important. Social capital is the extent to which members of a community can work together effectively to develop and sustain strong relationships; solve problems and make

group decisions; and collaborate effectively to plan, set goals and get things done.

A successful community is well balanced in human, physical, financial, and environmental capital. Social capital as shown in the figure spans the sum of the other capital areas and is shown as foundational to them. This is because social capital provides the capacity for achievements in the other areas. The more developed social capital is, the more likely it will facilitate success in the other areas and create a greater sense of community spirit.

BUILDING SOCIAL CAPITAL
Social capital is characterized by shared trust, shared norms and values, reciprocity, cooperation, social cohesion, volunteerism, mutual benefit, neighborliness, and a variety of other conditions that relate to relationships between and among individuals and the organizations through which they conduct the civic business of the community.

There are three types of social capital—bonding, bridging and linking. *Bonding* social capital concerns relationships among family members, friends or ethnic groups, groups with which there is a personal familiarity. *Bridging* social capital represents relationships across ethnic groups, the workplace, or a neighborhood, with people having shared interests or characteristics but limited personal interaction. *Linking* social capital represents relationships across different social classes, the world on a more global scale, or groups where one segment has power and influence and the other does not. Social capital, unlike other forms of community capital, does not get used up, and in fact, the more it is used, the more of it is generated.

Social network analysis is the mapping and measuring of community relationships to reveal community strengths as well as areas for improvement. Mapping can span the entire community or apply to specific sectors. It has been used to identify relationships in the criminal underworld, to identify members of volunteer networks, to determine available expertise in various medical fields, and to examine a network of farm animals to analyze how disease spreads.

With regard to the community development process, social network mapping is useful in identifying stakeholder groups and community strengths, and in doing gap analysis. It is a tool for identifying areas where work is required to increase bridging and linking social capital.

Measuring social capital is difficult at best but its presence can be sensed when there is substantial achievement in physical, financial and human capital. A list of questions found in the Appendix can be used to consider whether social capital exists and at what level. If the answer is negative, the community should

consider actions that will build social capital.

WHAT DO COMMUNITY DEVELOPERS DO?
Positive change in the community is driven by many factors and is best accomplished through a holistic approach to organizing, planning and implementing change. The professional community developer must be skilled in ways and means to identify and organize local leadership, engage the public, identify critical issues, plan strategically, and implement an action plan. This can include community assessment, strategic planning, organizational development, leadership development, economic development, public and private development financing, land use planning, and research (Vincent 2006). The professional must be able to motivate people and to facilitate an environment where people take ownership of their community and are empowered to help themselves.

This knowledge must be grounded in the theoretical frameworks of community development values, beliefs and principles so that the reasons for doing things a certain way make sense. For example, the need to include all stakeholders in the community in the visioning process is much easier to understand and embrace when one understands the belief that "people have the right to participate in decisions that affect them and the right to strive to create the environment they desire."

Community developers do not promote specific programs, remedies, or actions. Instead, the community developer focuses on the processes that increase civic capacity, opens doors for increased citizen participation, and develops in people the ability to give purposeful direction to their own future.

ASPECTS OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

To some people, development is all about creating jobs and community comes into play only when it positively or adversely affects the decision making process of a relocating company or site consultant.

Only in recent years have economic developers begun to recognize the importance of community development and its relationship to economic development.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
At the heart of **economic development** is money and the creation of wealth through the exchange of money for goods and services. The goal of economic development is to export goods and services from the community so that external dollars come inside, and to prevent local dollars from "leaking" outside the community when spent for external goods and services.

Most people associate economic development with attracting new businesses to the community, such as the announcement of a new manufacturing facility. In recent times, economic development has been expanded to include retention and expansion of existing businesses, small-business development, entrepreneurship, and sector development such as tourism and retirees. Given the emerging challenges of the global economy, work force development is being added to the list of economic development concerns.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Community development, as defined here, is the act of growing, expanding or making more effective groups of people who share common interests. The practice of community development is based upon a prescribed set of assumptions, values and beliefs and is practiced according to a set of principles that guide action and conduct.

Community development is process based, takes a much longer view than traditional economic development, and should be entirely controlled by local leaders and citizens. The most successful communities are often those where economic developers and community developers join together to effectively execute programs that spring from a community development process—communities where both disciplines value the contribution and function of the other and apply them holistically to the community. Successful community development will make the community attractive to executives looking for a new business location or to young entrepreneurs looking to build a company from the ground up. It will create a quality of life that is attractive to current and potential residents of all ages and interests. Community development is not a task that a community undertakes when it finds itself on the short list for a new business facility. It is a process that prepares communities to be ready when opportunity knocks.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Before leaving the discussion of various aspects of community based development, mention should be made of the importance of **leadership development**. A community's success or failure to achieve its collective potential is largely a function of leadership, and the extent to which local leadership is willing to change when faced with new circumstances. Leadership must be willing to collaborate rather than compete, to be inclusive rather than exclusive, and to serve as well as lead. Successful leadership development is the mechanism through which today's successes will be sustained into the future. Leadership is the linchpin that maximizes the success of all community efforts and initiatives.

DEVELOPMENT READY COMMUNITIES

The community development process is the equivalent of a ship's rudder, an explorer's compass, or a traveler's road map. It is what guides and directs and keeps a community on its chosen course. Without the community development process, a community will at best achieve only a portion of its potential. At worst, the community will flounder or perish. In between are communities that are good but could be exceptional if they were only ramped up to take advantage of opportunities either created internally or encountered externally. Community development is the one initiative that is entirely under the control of local citizens and the one initiative that creates community capital for current and future generations.

Community development must first be learned and then practiced. Community leaders should seek to increase their personal knowledge of the development process and then commit to applying that knowledge within the community.

CONCLUSION

Community development is not easy. Those leading the effort must commit to the hard work of inclusion, problem solving, and conflict resolution; they must create trust, share power, and collaborate efforts. They must be willing to let people contribute to the process and teach them how when necessary.

There is a comprehensive approach to community development. It begins with basic assumptions about people—their abilities, behaviors, and capacities. It has a set of established values and principles that practitioners use to put together community development activities in ways that allow people to develop the capacity for self-help rather than dependence.

Community development is about generating citizen participation and building trust so that people feel safe to express themselves in a free and open public dialogue, even when this results in disagreement. It is about understanding the community's past, creating a vision for the future, and—through the community development process—creating an action plan in the present that will work toward that vision.

A Case for Community Development Planning: The Tupelo Story

Success like that achieved in Chattanooga does not happen without effective leadership. A review of the outstanding success of Tupelo, Mississippi, offers an example of what can happen when leadership sets its sights on improving the economic and social conditions of the community. Key leaders chose to focus on three important principles of renewal—community cooperation, education, and citizen involvement. The beginning of the success can be traced as far back as the late 1930s to newspaper editor George McLean and the development of the Rural Community Development Councils (RCDCs). With the technical assistance of both internal and external organizations, these councils provided the mechanism for local citizens to decide for themselves the course of the community. Fifty-six councils involved six thousand citizens representing black and white communities. As successes occurred, McLean made sure that this was celebrated in his paper to build and maintain momentum.

Another major change made by leadership was the replacement of the local chamber with the Community Development Foundation. McLean and others realized that to achieve economic success, the region had to strengthen all aspects of the community, and it wasn't long before Tupelo was being hailed as a model for rural development.

The success of Tupelo is extensive and cuts across all sectors of the community. A $30 million school bond issue was passed in 1990 with an almost 90 percent approval rate, the largest in Mississippi history. Tupelo was the second community in Mississippi to desegregate its schools in 1965 when leaders recognized that the work force would require that all students be educated. Investments were made in higher education and vocational technical centers. McLean led by example and contributed $1 million to fund reading aides in every first-grade classroom for ten years, resulting in dramatic improvements in standardized test scores.. L. D. Hancock, the founder of Hancock Fabrics, donated $3.5 million to establish an institute for public school teachers. Partnerships were created between local, regional, state and federal organizations to promote education. The school system is a central focus of the community and unites all of the various stakeholder groups. Community banks' policy to avoid competing for business in destructive ways has also been noted as critical to the success.

Tupelo's strong leadership has accomplished what many others have been unable to do. Success came from a combination of hard work, commitment, a willingness to defy conventional wisdom, and an understanding that inclusion was critical to sustained success. Newcomers routinely are welcomed into leadership roles and differences in the areas of race and class have been bridged.

Many people have asked what the Tupelo secret to success has been. There are many responses but all of them can be traced to progressive leadership that understood and embraced the community development process and institutionalized it across multiple community functions.

QUESTIONS FOR BUILDING SOCIAL CAPITAL

Is there trust in the community? Are political leaders respected? Are police officers trusted or feared? Do citizens feel that there is a fair process for making community decisions?

Is there a shared vision for the community with priorities identified? Does the vision and associated action plan benefit all stakeholders, even those whose voices were not included in the planning? What steps can be taken to reach out to groups not already involved?

Is there a spirit of cooperation and the ability to openly discuss problems and needs?
Do community organizations see themselves as competitors protecting their turf or as collaborators seeking to maximize resources? Is there duplication of services? Are they willing to do what is best rather than what has been done in the past? Are there mechanisms in place that promote dialogue and increased understanding among community organizations? Are there linkages to organizations outside the community? Are these resources being accessed?

Are people willing to accept leadership roles? Is leadership capacity being developed in all segments of the community? Are there people already in leadership roles who are overlooked and not integrated into the community's mainstream leadership groups?

Is there a well-developed communications system used to keep citizens informed?
Does the system provide for citizen feedback or is it a one-way channel? Is information provided in a timely manner? Are there multiple methods of communication so people can be informed in a manner they choose?

Does the community have a history of working together to solve problems or help people, or is there a history of division? Are there opportunities for citizens to discuss issues with others, to build trust, or to increase group decision-making? Do people feel that they will be listened to?

What organizations or groups have strong ties to the community? Are organizations such as religious congregations, parent-teacher groups, or business associations involved?
What level of interaction is there among them?

Does a sense of reciprocity exist in the community? Do citizens generally help one another and feel that if they have a need, other citizens will return the

favor? Are social norms and values recognized through the provision of social services that facilitate these values? Are people recognized for supporting these values with honors, awards or other public recognitions? Are individual members of the community at large or of smaller units such as neighborhoods known to one another? Do people know the first names of their neighbors? If not, what activities would facilitate this?

Are there festivals or parades that bring people together? Are there activities that allow strangers to share common civic experiences?

What is the level of volunteerism from schools, senior adults, or other special groups?

Are there active neighborhood organizations or citizen coalitions? Do people feel a personal attachment to where they live? Does this result in their willingness to invest time and effort in their community? Do people generally feel that they can make a difference by participating in civic affairs?

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