

# Building Neighborhoods of Choice: A Framework for Collaborative Action

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WASHINGTON DC

# Background

- ▶ NHS of Chicago
- ▶ Commissioner of Housing
- ▶ Consultant
- ▶ 39 states, 79 cities, 135 neighborhoods on strategy development
- ▶ Developed Bernard Place
- ▶ Established Milwaukee Healthy Neighborhoods
- ▶ NeighborWorks Training Institute

# Biases

- ▶ Our work could be vastly more impactful if we paid attention to how neighborhoods work as markets and social places
- ▶ Building on strengths;
- ▶ Small-scale solutions have big consequences.

# Objectives for Today

- ▶ Congratulations
- ▶ A new way of thinking about neighborhood change and how to intervene in neighborhoods;
- ▶ How neighborhoods work when they are healthy;

- ▶ Outcomes as drivers of strategy;
- ▶ New vocabulary
- ▶ Practice
- ▶ It's in the Guide

# What's A Healthy Neighborhood?

- ▶ A place where it makes economic and emotional sense for neighbors to invest time, energy, and resources in the neighborhood and...
- ▶ A place where neighbors have the capacity to manage day to day issues.

Adapted from Neighborhoods Inc. of Battle Creek, 1993

# What Is It We Do When We Revitalize Neighborhoods?



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- ▶ We restore neighborhood confidence and build a positive image of the neighborhood;
  - ▶ We stabilize the housing market;
  - ▶ We strengthen the physical conditions so they show pride;

- ▶ We build the capacity of neighbors to manage day to day issues and we strengthen social conditions;
- ▶ We influence people's investment decisions;

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- ▶ We build a narrative of positive change;
  - ▶ We do things people can see and understand that tells them that their future and the future of the neighborhood can be different....

# Why Is This So Hard?



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- ▶ Too much focus on real estate projects and not on neighborhood dynamics;
  - ▶ Emphasis on programs as an end in themselves rather than on managing outcomes;
  - ▶ Little attention to changing neighborhood image and market conditions;

- ▶ Focus on removing something bad versus incenting good things to happen.

# What Kinds of Decisions Best Contribute to Neighborhood Revitalization?

- ▶ Capable home buyers purchasing for-sale homes...and improving them;
- ▶ Competent investors buying and maintaining rentals;
- ▶ Owners making decisions to repair and improve;

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- ▶ Residents making decisions to engage with each other as neighbors...more grass roots activities;
  - ▶ Decisions by local government to invest in infrastructure, etc.

What is an Outcome?





Simply...the answer to the question “What are we trying to achieve?”

Outcomes describe the end state of a neighborhood that is working well.

# Key Outcome Areas

- ▶ Image
- ▶ Market
- ▶ Physical Conditions
- ▶ Neighborhood Management and Social Connections

# Image Outcomes

- ▶ A positive image that attracts reinvestment;
- ▶ Confidence in the future of the neighborhood



# How Do We Assess?

- ▶ What are the first three things that come to mind when people think about the neighborhood?
- ▶ If the neighborhood had a positive image, what would be different?
- ▶ Whose opinions of the neighborhood is it important to influence?

# Strategies

- ▶ Newsletters and social media that reinforce a positive neighborhood image;
- ▶ Beautification projects;
- ▶ Banners and entry signs;
- ▶ Neighborhood branding with collateral;
- ▶ Social events and activities;
- ▶ Realtor engagement;
- ▶ Others?

# Market Outcomes

- ▶ Reflects confidence;
- ▶ Enough value so that people will see it as a good choice;
- ▶ While values in the neighborhood encourage investment, residents will not be involuntarily displaced by rapid escalation of rents and property taxes.

Research shows that lower-priced homes are purchased by investors. Why aren't we thinking about how these could be marketed to potential homeowners?



# Strategies

- ▶ Neighborhood marketing and identifying potential market segments;
- ▶ Marketing to realtors
- ▶ Incentives to potential owner-occupants;
- ▶ The Buy-Hold Fund/land banking
- ▶ Updating existing housing stock so it is more competitive;
- ▶ Identifying and incentivizing good landlords;

# Physical Conditions



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- ▶ Physical conditions will represent pride of ownership;
  - ▶ Higher standards of maintenance and improvements;
  - ▶ Public infrastructure – streets, sidewalks, and parks – will be maintained to a standard similar to neighborhoods as “better”.

# How Do We Assess?

- ▶ What physical signs would we see that tells us the neighborhood is improving?
- ▶ What kinds of physical changes would show pride?
- ▶ What does a high standard look like in this neighborhood? What are the differences in look between owner-occupied homes and investor-owned homes?

# Strategies

- ▶ Most Improved Porch Contest (Milwaukee);
- ▶ Curb Appeal projects (Grand Rapids);
- ▶ Small grants or interest rate reductions based on how many people on the block improve (Geneva and Hammond);
- ▶ Milwaukee Makeover;
- ▶ Lending on specific items - driveways, roofs, fencing;
- ▶ Screen repair workshop (Battle Creek);

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- ▶ Home Improvement Loan Program (but don't call it that);
  - ▶ Exterior incentives;
  - ▶ Buying bulk garbage items;
  - ▶ Entry signs
  - ▶ Streetscape improvements – especially if combined with other strategies;

# Neighborhood Management



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- ▶ A strong sense of collective efficacy;
  - ▶ Managing day to day issues
  - ▶ A greater sense of neighborliness;
  - ▶ Taking action to reinforce positive standards

# How Do We Assess?

We do one-on-one individual meetings.

Why?

We want to build relationships.

# Strategies

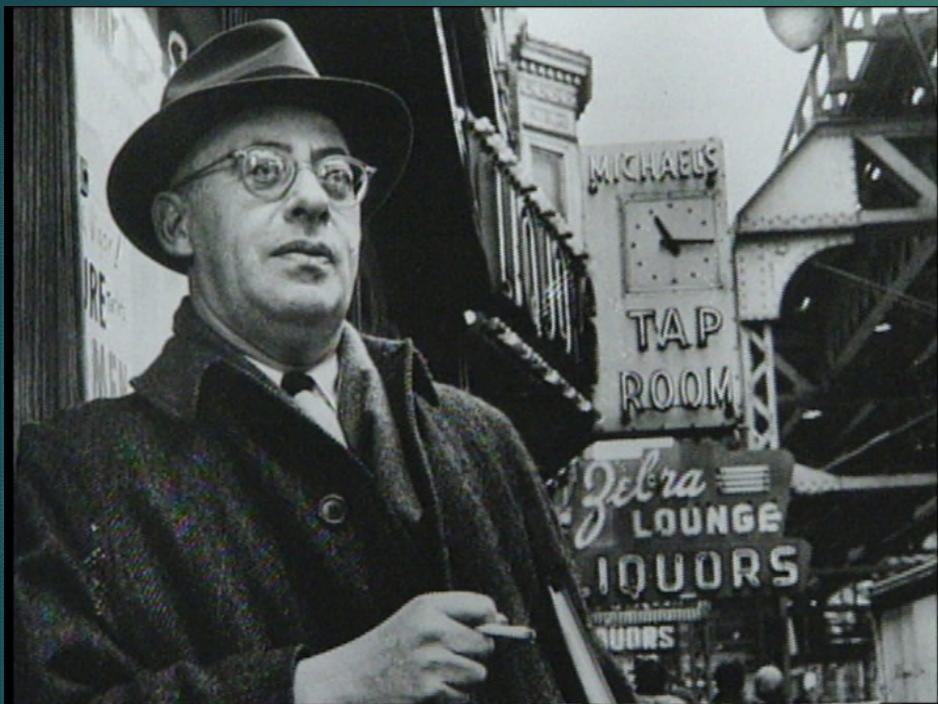
- ▶ Welcoming new neighbors;
- ▶ Coffee and rolls on the block on Saturday morning hosted by a neighbor – not a meeting;
- ▶ Small grants (\$500 - \$1,000) to support projects neighbors develop;
- ▶ Social events
- ▶ Back to School events

- ▶ Vacant lot gardens;
- ▶ Simple block parties
- ▶ Block Grandmas (Columbus, Georgia)
- ▶ Walking clubs
- ▶ Good neighbor awards

# Why Bother?

- ▶ Trust
- ▶ Communication of results
- ▶ Finding and developing leaders
- ▶ Power

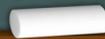
# The New Organizer



# Vocabulary

- ▶ Confidence
- ▶ Individual decisions
- ▶ Outcomes
- ▶ Collective efficacy
- ▶ Market intervention
- ▶ Formal and informal networks
- ▶ Landlord typology
- ▶ Pride Projects
- ▶ Target markets
- ▶ Intervention buying

QUESTIONS



# Building Neighborhoods of Choice: Developing Outcomes and Strategies

# Worksheet A: What's Working and Not Working?

- ▶ Review the Worksheet
- ▶ Pick a reporter and discuss
- ▶ 20 Minutes
- ▶ Some groups will report

# Worksheet B: Developing Outcomes

- ▶ Review the Worksheet
- ▶ Pick a reporter and discuss
- ▶ Remember: What is it we want to achieve?
- ▶ 20 Minutes and then prepare to report out

# Worksheet C: Develop Five Key Strategies

- ▶ Look at your Outcomes;
- ▶ Identify the five best strategies that help you achieve these Outcomes as a whole;
- ▶ Prepare to report out;
- ▶ You have 20 minutes

# Closing Question

What will I stop doing, start doing, or keep doing as a result of what I learned today?

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