



CHOICE NEIGHBORHOODS CONFERENCE

TRANSFORMATION From Vision *to Reality*

March 2016 • Washington, DC

CONFERENCE REPORT





Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS 3

INTRODUCTION 4

FEATURED SPEAKERS 6

- Reaching for the Future: Competing in the 21st Century 6
- People-Powered Place-Making: Harnessing Technology to Build Sustainable Community Leadership From the Ground Up 8

DEEP DIVES AND STRATEGY SESSIONS 10

- Building and Sustaining Resident and Community Leadership 10
- Positioning Your Neighborhood for Economic Development 12
- Understanding Your Housing Market 15
- Supporting Employment and Family Economic Stability 17

PROMISING PRACTICE WORKSHOPS 19

Community Engagement

- Empowering Residents for Long-Term Engagement: Lessons From Winston-Salem 19
- The Poverty Experience 21

Financing Tools for Redevelopment

- Maximizing Leverage: Using CDBG Funding to Support Neighborhood Revitalization Activities 23
- Unlocking the Power of New Market Tax Credits 25

Stabilizing Distressed and Vacant Properties

- Blight Elimination: Creating and Implementing a Comprehensive and Place-Based Plan 27
- Innovative Strategies for Distressed Properties 29

Enhancing Community Safety

- Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED): More Than Just Lighting 31
- Successful Place-Based Policing Strategies: Lessons From the Boston Police Department (BPD) 33

Improving Resident and Community Outcomes

- Building on Assets and Opportunities to Develop a Successful People Plan 36
- Navigating to Outcomes: The Academic Navigator’s Role in Attaining Student-Centered Results 38
- Creating Employment Supports That Work: Lessons From Jobs Plus 40

Acknowledgments

Featured Speakers

Dr. Antwi Akom
Tom Murphy

Session and Workshop Facilitators and Invited Speakers

Kate Bennett
Jaimee Bohning
Shirley Boubert
David Brint
Paul Brophy
Kathy Carton
Kevin Cheshire
Maria Cheevers
Kyle Chintalapalli
Sean Closkey
Tameka Colbert
Brooke Crenshaw
Nakida Daniel
Jamila Danzy
Kate Dempsey
Elaine DiPietro
Julie DeGraaf
Isaac Dozier
Frank Farrow
Reese Fayde

Roberta Garber
Paula Grantt
Kelsey Hamory
Stanley Holbrook
Nancy Howard
Donna Jackson
Hannah Jones
Erik Kregel
Jocquelyn Marshall
Paula McCoy
Sandra Moore
Natalie Pruett
Lyneir Richardson
Esther Shinn
Tina Shepard
Sergeant Sam Silta
Jessica Smith Perry
Raynetta Speed
Alan Steinbeck
Paul Vivian
Laurie Volk
Robert Weissbourd
Derrick Williams
Marquita Wisely
Tremayne Youmans

HUD

James Ashford
Ronald Ashford
Unisa Barrie
Luci Blackburn
Jayme Brown
Roma Campanile
Kyleen Hashim
Herb James
Kim Johnson
John Laswick
Pamela Lawrence
Jesse Leon
Karen Leung
Christina Mortensen
Tess Mullen
Rafiq Munir
Maria-Lana Queen
Jessica Rosenberg
Caroline Tatalovich
Mindy Turbov
Leigh van Rij
Chiquita Ward

Econometrica

Shireen Riazi-Kermani
and staff

Introduction

On March 17 and 18, 2016, more than 300 community development practitioners representing 31 grantees attended the Choice Neighborhoods Grantee Conference in Washington, DC. The theme of the 2-day conference, *Transformation from Vision to Reality*, focused on the strategic tools, decisions, and partnerships needed to put a vision for a neighborhood's future into action. The majority of attendees were Choice Neighborhoods grantees whose diverse teams represented housing developers, city planners, housing authority staff, educators, supportive service providers, and many others. Equally important, nearly a quarter of all grantee participants were residents.



The conference featured nationally recognized experts and Choice Neighborhoods grantees, who offered promising practices and recommendations from their on-the-ground experiences with neighborhood revitalization. Throughout the conference, Choice Neighborhoods grantees interacted with and learned from each other, building a national network of community development leaders that will last far beyond the grant period.

The conference included two types of sessions—Deep Dives and Strategy Sessions and Promising Practice Workshops—as well as featured speakers. On the first day of the conference, attendees selected one of four tracks of intensive Deep Dives and Strategy Sessions. The four topics were resident and community leadership, the housing market, economic development, and employment. During these sessions, participants explored promising practices through in-depth case studies and discussed applications and solutions to bring back to their own communities. The second day of the conference offered Promising Practice Workshops on a variety of topics, such as community engagement, financing tools for redevelopment, strategies for stabilizing distressed and vacant properties, enhancing community safety, and improving resident outcomes.

The conference highlighted both the technical tools and visionary leadership needed to transform distressed neighborhoods. Mindy Turbov, Director of Choice Neighborhoods, emphasized that good policies and practices emanate from the local level—from the real work that grantees and their partners do. She advised that charting a new course for neighborhoods will require grantees to rethink how players interact with each other and, most importantly, to engage residents whose lives will be most impacted by the grant. In

Introduction, *continued*

In his keynote speech, Tom Murphy, Senior Resident Fellow at the Urban Land Institute and former Mayor of Pittsburgh, PA, stressed the importance of advocating for your community's vision and being willing to take risks to spark neighborhood change. Dr. Antwi Akom, Cofounder of the Institute for Sustainable Economic, Educational, and Environmental Design (I-SEED) and the closing keynote speaker, underscored the importance of “ground-up” information and engagement with residents for creating effective and innovative solutions.

Feedback from conference participants was overwhelmingly positive, with 91 percent of respondents agreeing they could apply the information they learned immediately to their Choice Neighborhoods work, and 97 percent agreeing they would recommend this conference to a friend or colleague. During the closing session, participants shared their action steps inspired by the conference, such as trying entirely new ways of engaging and organizing residents, seeking new funding mechanisms such as New Market Tax Credits (NMTCs), and approaching new partners such as universities and the business sector. Resident leaders from across the country exchanged emails, creating a network of colleagues to share experiences and ideas. Participants left the conference with renewed commitment to build strong neighborhoods, recognizing that the Choice Neighborhoods grant creates an opportunity to use housing redevelopment as a platform for sustainable neighborhood change and innovation.

This conference report captures key topics and takeaways from the 2-day conference. The report is designed as a reference for participants and as a resource for other leaders in neighborhood revitalization who did not attend the conference. The report is organized by session type and topic, with particular attention to practical tools communities can apply and adapt to their local efforts. Conference materials, including presentations and handouts, can be found at www.hud.gov/choiceta.



Featured Speakers

Reaching for the Future: Competing in the 21st Century

Tom Murphy, Senior Resident Fellow at the Urban Land Institute and former Mayor of Pittsburgh, urged participants to be advocates for their communities. He emphasized that the work of transforming neighborhoods is about making change, stating boldly, “If you are not about making change, you don’t belong in this room.” Mr. Murphy pressed attendees to recognize the value they bring to the table and be willing to take risks. He stressed that many cities are experiencing new population growth,



and urban land is becoming more valuable. A neighborhood that was once considered a liability may now be seen as an asset with incredible development potential. In addition, he underscored that public housing can drive economic development, so housing authorities should use the significant funding they invest each year to attract leverage.

Mr. Murphy argued that strong leadership and a vision that defines how development should positively affect both the physical neighborhood and its residents are as critical as financing. Reflecting on his tenure as Mayor, he described his experience with the East Liberty neighborhood, where unemployment was high and industry had collapsed. The city realized the neighborhood could sustain large-scale retail development, which would generate new jobs while providing amenities to residents. Mr. Murphy and his staff took a leap of faith. First, the city bought up a parcel of vacant land. Then, Mr. Murphy persistently pursued The Home Depot, arranging to get a seat near the CEO at a sporting event to pitch a deal, persuading the CEO to take an impromptu tour of the neighborhood, and relentlessly painting a vision of what the neighborhood could become. At that time, there were hardly any urban Home Depot stores, but Mr. Murphy convinced the company to open a store and hire neighborhood residents. Following that success, the city also attracted Target and Whole Foods Market, generating further economic growth and providing much-needed retail to an underserved population.

Reaching for the Future: Competing in the 21st Century, *continued*

Mr. Murphy stated that leadership could come from a variety of places—from the mayor, from the community, from the private sector. Leaders should be translators, articulating shared priorities in different “languages” to different audiences. He also highlighted the importance of being able to leverage partnerships and resources. Leveraging is a talent, and it takes leadership, persistence, creativity, and, most importantly, risk. Mr. Murphy highlighted curiosity and an appetite for risk as two traits that can lead to remarkable neighborhood and city change.

TAKEAWAYS

- **Take risks to develop assets.** When housing authorities meet with city leaders or other stakeholders, it is important for them to understand that they bring significant leverage to the table. The land that housing authorities own is a valuable asset. Additionally, public housing residents can be extremely effective advocates for their neighborhood. Housing authorities and residents should recognize these strengths and be prepared to engage in conversations with stakeholders to effectively advocate for their community.
- **Success requires a vision.** Development should take into account all facets of the neighborhood’s transformation. It should not merely be a physical transaction; it should also induce an evolution in the quality of life of the neighborhood, including economic opportunities for low-income residents.
- **Forge strong partnerships and engage residents.** Leadership can come from anywhere in the city, but it absolutely requires partnerships and buy-in from residents. Engage residents by

showing them what success looks like. Ensure that partners are genuinely willing to face conflict and skeptics and are willing to commit to the project over the long term.



- **Understand the financing tools available.** Use the Choice Neighborhoods grant as a leveraging tool. There is money available through Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding. Attracting leverage from the city is not about whether the city “has the money” but how the city prioritizes funds. Make a convincing argument that CDBG funds should go toward your vision and engage private partners. In addition, take advantage of the Community Reinvestment Act, which is meant to encourage financial institutions to serve the needs of communities in which they are located, including low-income communities, and has resulted in substantial investments in community development activities.

People-Powered Place-Making: Harnessing Technology to Build Sustainable Community Leadership From the Ground Up

Dr. Antwi Akom, Cofounder of the Institute for Sustainable Economic, Educational, and Environmental Design (I-SEED), challenged attendees to put into action a community engagement model for the 21st century that prioritizes equity. Dr. Akom emphasized that residents understand the neighborhood and can “ground truth” the impact of programs. In order to effectively motivate and engage residents, planning processes should be multilingual, culturally responsive, and focused on investing in and building the capacity of residents. For residents to remain engaged, they need to see the tangible benefit of their work in the neighborhood.



Dr. Akom underscored how community-generated data can be critical tools to empower and engage residents as well as create effective and innovative solutions. Drawing on examples from several different cities and digital platforms, Dr. Akom described how the [Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing Tool](#), [Regional](#) and [National](#) Equity Atlases, and the Equity Tools from [PolicyLink](#) provide useful data, but they do not drill down past the census tract or county level and often use data that are several years old. While these data sources are useful for providing a bird’s-eye view, they are less useful for identifying timely information at a more granular level.

Dr. Akom encouraged attendees to supplement “big data” tools with apps that collect community-level data in collaboration with community members. Dr. Akom described his work with [Streetwyze](#), a community-level data app he and his team created. The app is a mobile platform that allows community members to enter real-time information from their phones and aggregates and maps that information to provide community-level data. This type of platform not only encourages active participation, it also “ground truths” big data.

For example, in one community, the standard data sources indicated the neighborhood had a wealth of grocery stores. However, using the Streetwyze app, community members identified nearly all of these so-called grocery stores as liquor stores or corner stores that lacked fresh foods, providing a more realistic picture of food access. Dr. Akom also described other community-level apps, including [SeeClickFix](#), [NextDoor](#), and the online community forum [mySidewalk](#).

People-Powered Place-Making: Harnessing Technology to Build Sustainable Community Leadership From the Ground Up, *continued*

TAKEAWAYS

■ **Empowered residents are motivated residents.**

Rather than asking community members for information and extracting it, it is important to empower residents to engage in ways that are relevant to their own lives and let them see the benefit. For example, in Greensboro, NC, residents did not have access to fresh and healthy foods. The community and its partners sold 1,000 \$100 memberships and created a co-op grocery store. In the South Bronx in New York City, NY, a group of mothers created the Morris Justice Project, systematically collected data on police harassment, and effectively changed policy.

■ **Harnessing firsthand, local knowledge leads to better solutions.** People-centered place-making depends on community-driven data and the integration of local knowledge with “official” knowledge. If community-driven information is used to inform a project concept and support implementation, neighborhood revitalization efforts will be more transparent, sustainable, and effective. For example, Minneapolis, MN, started a bikeshare program in a low-income community. The city thought the program was a failure because usage was low. However, when officials started interviewing community members, they discovered that people could not use the bikes because they required a credit card. The city equipped the bikeshare program to accept cash, and more people started using it.



■ **Technology can foster deeper and broader community participation.** Apps and other technology can be used to empower residents and supplement traditional community forums. For example, through the Streetwyze app, residents were able to identify fresh food needs in their community by entering comments, pictures, and other information. This tool enabled the community to lead the assessment and see collective findings in real time, inspiring participation in a deep and meaningful way. Meanwhile, apps like mySidewalk, which creates an online forum, can be used to attract harder-to-reach demographics, such as younger people, who may be more inclined to interact online.

FEATURED RESOURCE

■ **Innovation Out of Poverty:** [Watch](#) Dr. Akom’s recent TEDx talk called Innovation Out of Poverty.

DEEP DIVES AND STRATEGY SESSIONS

Building and Sustaining Resident and Community Leadership

The goal of this session was to foster discussion about the most effective ways to build and sustain resident and community leadership in order to aid neighborhood revitalization. Participants were encouraged to share ideas for solutions based on experiences in their own neighborhoods. Facilitators Frank Farrow, from the Center for the Study of Social Policy, and Sandra Moore, from Urban Strategies, emphasized that resident leadership is about proactively representing the interests of neighbors and there are a number of ways to build resident leadership. Many strategies blend civic participation, resident leadership, community organization, and social networking. The facilitators also identified major challenges often faced by resident and community leaders.



During the Deep Dive session, Alan Steinbeck from Winston-Salem, NC, and Stanley Holbrook and Donna Jackson from Pittsburgh, PA, discussed how they are developing strong leadership in their communities. Winston-Salem focused on the strengths of the community, honest communication, resident-led skill-building sessions, and initiatives created by residents. Pittsburgh focused on a Vision to Action plan involving residents, resident-led initiatives, and community engagement.

The Strategy Session involved group brainstorming on the common challenges associated with resident and community engagement. The topics addressed included bridging the gap between public housing residents and the surrounding community; recruiting and retaining residents; building trust, accountability, and transparency; and ensuring equity for residents. In her closing remarks for this session, Mindy Turbov recognized the more than 60 residents participating in this year's conference. Ms. Turbov encouraged residents to be a part of the conversation, help housing authorities understand how to communicate with residents, and help change the dynamic from "us versus them".

Building and Sustaining Resident and Community Leadership, *continued***TAKEAWAYS**

- **Leaders can be developed.** Seek the involvement of residents who have a passion for quality of life in the community. Each community has its own unique dynamics, so the pathways to leadership may differ. Create opportunities for residents to find these different paths.
- **Focus on assets and skill-building.** One model for developing resident leadership is what the Neighbors in Action in Winston-Salem calls asset-based community development. This approach builds on residents' gifts, skills, and talents and brings the community together for training, direct engagement, and community capacity building, such as resident-led skill-building sessions that include case analysis, role-playing exercises, games, and problem-solving scenarios about real issues. Training topics include: Understanding Your Personal Power; Understanding Race, Class, and Power in Community; Understanding Community Building and System Change; Neighborhood Visioning and Planning; and Training for Trainers: Organizing 101. In Winston-Salem, graduates of the skill-building series decided to form a Transformation Team and work on planning and implementing their own projects.
- **Keep promises and manage expectations.** Many residents question how they can know promises will be kept. Organizations and resident leaders should be open and honest about the timeline and the pace of change, which is often

slower than expected. Consistent communication is very important, including honesty about setbacks, problems, and uncertainties.

- **Break through distrust and hopelessness.** Building a sense of community among neighbors can help to break through distrust among residents and between residents and organizations. Winston-Salem hosts neighbor nights, which are informal gatherings during which people can decide what they want to discuss that night. Neighborhood leaders facilitate the conversations. Organizations usually are not present. These gatherings are about creating a comfortable space supported by people whom residents trust.

FEATURED RESOURCE

- ***Resident Voices in Neighborhood Revitalization: The Choice Neighborhoods Promising Practice Guide*** can be found at www.hud.gov/choiceta. The guide features the stories of two resident leaders who actively represent their neighbors, foster strong social networks, and educate their peers as their communities undergo large-scale revitalization. The resident leaders share insights into how they became leaders, how they reached a diverse range of community members, and how their voices came to represent the priorities and perspectives of their neighbors.

Positioning Your Neighborhood for Economic Development

This session built on a training provided at previous Choice Neighborhoods convenings called *Economic Place-Making: How to Develop a Neighborhood Business Plan*. This economic place-making framework, developed by Robert Weissbourd, encourages community development leaders to examine the neighborhood's current and potential relationship to job growth in the regional economy. This approach prioritizes an understanding of neighborhood assets, such as land available for job-creating economic development projects; existing and new businesses and their retention and expansion needs; and labor, including a match between the employment skills of existing neighborhood residents and quality jobs that economic development activities can create.

Based on this framework, the Deep Dive session discussed a case study featuring the Near East Side Choice Neighborhood in Columbus, OH. The Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority and city had sought advice on commercial and retail development plans for a major corridor in the neighborhood, including the feasibility of bringing a grocery store to a vacant site. Mr. Weissbourd, from RW Ventures, and Lyneir Richardson, from The Center for Urban Entrepreneurship and Economic Development at Rutgers Business School, presented the recommendations they made as part of this technical assistance request. First, they explained that the viability of a retail project depends on a set of related strategies to define and revitalize the neighborhood. Thus, local partners should consider strategies for defining and branding the neighborhood; adding households, income, and daytime population; and addressing safety in tandem with economic development strategies. Second, they stressed that staging activities so they build on each other is crucial to the success of each project.

Through this lens, retail is often an ancillary or complementary use, not a primary use. Mr. Weissbourd and Mr. Richardson described their suggestions for economic catalysts in the Near East Side to create jobs with good career ladders. These types of activities would increase income and daytime populations in the neighborhood, which in turn would increase demand for retail. The recommendations identified potential job-creating projects in specific geographic nodes in the neighborhood, such as supply chains for hospital and college anchor institutions. The recommendations also identified a different potential site for a future grocery store that might take longer to develop but be more viable because it draws from a larger market and has strong traffic count and access.

Positioning Your Neighborhood for Economic Development, *continued*

Roberta Garber, from the Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority, and Hannah Jones, from the City of Columbus, shared how these recommendations influenced their neighborhood plan. According to Ms. Garber and Ms. Jones, the recommendations helped local partners see that they needed a more coordinated vision for where the neighborhood is headed in order to shape and stage economic development opportunities over time. As a result, their neighborhood plan is becoming more targeted to a set of geographic nodes, rather than being driven by a single vacant lot or an individual project such as a grocery store. The plan also is focusing more on what existing and new businesses fit well within the nodes as well as the retention and expansion needs of those businesses. Ms. Garber expressed the ongoing challenge of having many individual projects that have their own lives and timelines.

During the Strategy Session, Mr. Weissbourd and his colleague, Gretchen Kosarko, presented a case study from Atlanta, GA, that showed another example of how economic development projects depend on a set of related strategies to define and revitalize a neighborhood. The case study examined the redevelopment of a large parcel of underutilized industrial land adjacent to a distressed neighborhood in Atlanta. After an in-depth examination of the case study, participants evaluated four development scenarios to determine which one best achieved Atlanta's project goals, using tools to analyze tradeoffs among uses.

TAKEAWAYS

- **Place your neighborhood in its regional context.**

Community development efforts often look inward. They often focus on neighborhood assets in terms of amenities that support quality of life, such as housing, retail, and services. However, neighborhoods do not have economies; regions do. Mr. Weissbourd's economic place-making framework looks outward, focusing on connecting neighborhood assets to the growing sectors of the regional economy. Through this lens, neighborhood assets, such as land, labor, and businesses, are paramount.

- **Understand where your neighborhood is going and how you are helping to shape its trajectory.** Local partners in Columbus realized they needed a more coordinated understanding of where the neighborhood was headed. They have begun to define a new neighborhood image that shows what the neighborhood wants to be, who it wants to serve, and how it fits into the regional economy. A unifying vision helps partners evaluate how individual projects contribute to a set of related neighborhood revitalization strategies. For example, even though there may be a current development opportunity—with a developer, land, and a retailer lined up—local partners may decide to forgo the opportunity if it does not help achieve the future vision.

Positioning Your Neighborhood for Economic Development *continued.*

■ **Understand different types of economic uses and their tradeoffs.** Mr. Weissbourd shared practical tools that identify a range of potential economic uses for a site and factors for evaluating tradeoffs among these uses. The types of economic uses include industrial uses such as traditional manufacturing, urban manufacturing, mixed use with industrial, doer-maker space, and non-industrial uses such as business-to-business, retail, and social enterprise. Tradeoff factors include market opportunity, job creation, job accessibility, job quality, positive externalities, negative externalities, neighborhood integration, compatibility with site constraints, utilization of site assets, cost of development, time to develop, remediation effort, compatibility with zoning/regulations, and interim use. Factors most closely linked to the established project goals can be more heavily weighted than other factors. [Download](#) the tools, which include examples and definitions, to see if you can use or adapt them for your neighborhood.



■ **Community members and stakeholders do not need technical expertise to be included.** Community members and stakeholders can be involved in evaluating economic uses and plans regardless of their level of expertise in economic development. For example, an inclusive and structured process was created to involve the community and stakeholders in deciding on the industrial land use that best achieved Atlanta’s project goals. An advisory committee with 15–20 local representatives assessed the project options using tools and exercises similar to those used during the conference session. Moreover, more than 100 people throughout the region were interviewed to test the marketplace and see which scenarios were feasible. Members of the business sector were also important contributors to the process.

Understanding Your Housing Market

This Deep Dive session explored how to develop a housing plan that is both aspirational and actionable. Laurie Volk, of Zimmerman/Volk Associates, began the session by discussing the limitations of some traditional market studies, particularly concerning more distressed communities. Whereas traditional market studies tend to depend on comparisons and overall population analysis, more aspirational market studies also try to account for how a neighborhood's housing market could change in the future, especially in light of new, high-quality developments. By consulting census data and creating demographic profiles of potential future residents—whether they will be millennials looking to buy a home or empty nesters looking to downsize—these market studies seek to determine who could be attracted to a neighborhood if a product meeting their needs and preferences is built. Evaluating where these residents may come from, when they might move, and what they could pay also is key.

In the afternoon Strategy Session, a panel of developers spoke about the strategies they use to develop mixed-income projects in lower-income communities. Brinshore Development's David Brint discussed his company's experience as the master developer for the Kansas City, MO, Paseo Gateway Choice Neighborhoods project, which will replace the distressed Chouteau Courts public housing development with new mixed-income housing. Kansas City and Brinshore's strategy includes placing housing near services and amenities to maximize impact, building off of existing neighborhood anchors (including schools, health centers, and other amenities), and picking housing sites and development programs that can both serve existing residents and attract market-rate renters. Neighborhood improvements—such as realigning city streets to enhance the Paseo Gateway neighborhood's connection to downtown—will also help the development build off downtown Kansas City's renaissance.

Sean Closkey of TRF Development Partners discussed his company's investments in East Baltimore, MD, an area near the city's main train station. Over the last decade, TRF Development Partners secured site control for more than 400 abandoned homes and lots and developed more than 150 homes. By strategically locating its investments, the developer was able to create momentum for new growth throughout the neighborhood, laying the groundwork to attract private investors. This work is getting results. In 2004, there were 623 vacant lots in the neighborhood, and only 1 house sold for more than \$150,000. In 2014, the number of vacant lots had dropped by 37 percent, and 32 houses sold for more than \$150,000. Mr. Closkey emphasized that truly rebuilding a market takes significant long-term capital and will require investment by more than one developer.

Finally, Julie DeGraaf of McCormack Baron Salazar spoke on developing mixed-income housing and how to determine the right mix of market-rate, affordable, and HUD-assisted units for the development. Integrating unrestricted market-rate units into a project enables a developer to build the surrounding market and diversify the project's income stream. It also provides residents of affordable units the opportunity to stay in their community as incomes increase. When determining the right unit mix, market assessments should consider a community's long-term trends and goals, neighborhood assets and weaknesses, competitors, what the rent range for the new units could be, and potential absorption rates for different unit types.

Understanding Your Housing Market, *continued*

TAKEAWAYS

- **There is no one formula for success.** Although many successful mixed-income projects are roughly comprised of one-third market-rate units, one-third workforce units, and one-third public housing units, it is important to remember that different markets can support different unit mixes. The key is to design to the local context, taking into account a neighborhood's amenities, its proximity to regional assets, and more. New construction that matches emerging market preferences—from tenure type to architectural design—has the potential to change perceptions of a neighborhood.
- **Consider the catalytic impact of new investment.** Traditional market studies that rely heavily on current comparisons can fail to adequately capture the catalytic impact of new investment in a distressed neighborhood. Expanding a market study's scope to account for populations that might be attracted to the future development, as well as accounting for the preferences of those populations in a building's design, might help developers attract new residents.
- **Design matters.** Design to a high standard, no matter the type of unit produced. An occupant's income level should never be discernible from the street. Market-rate and affordable units should be interspersed and buildings should be designed to enhance the public realm. Architecture that thoughtfully builds off a neighborhood's existing context helps create an attractive community of choice. Investing in amenities and sustainability—whether it's wiring new communities with broadband infrastructure or utilizing sustainable design to improve energy efficiency and reduce tenants' utility costs—can ultimately make a project more attractive and beneficial to residents.
- **Community engagement is key to success.** Successful development projects begin and end with community engagement. New developments that will replace currently distressed properties should be planned to benefit existing residents and new ones. Community stakeholders, including residents and community organizations, must be at the table during the planning process so that they can provide input about current residents' concerns and needs.
- **Good management is key.** Building managers should provide the best possible service and operate with the understanding that every resident across all incomes has a choice whether to stay. Good building management and a well-trained, competent, and committed staff adds value to a property and contributes to its long-term success.

Supporting Employment and Family Economic Stability

Facilitated by Pamela Lawrence from HUD's Choice Neighborhoods team, this Deep Dive session spotlighted federal and local policies, strategies, and programming that are being layered to effectively address root causes of barriers to employment. The Strategy Session engaged participants in a comprehensive self-assessment of local employment plans and outcomes. Panel members provided feedback to support the development of a Next 90-Day Blueprint and a Proven Strategies Tool Box. These tools helped participants negotiate local gaps and challenges and maximize existing partner resources.



The session featured two Choice Neighborhoods case studies from Urban Strategies—one from the Iberville neighborhood in New Orleans, LA, and another from the Alice Griffith neighborhood in San Francisco, CA. Esther Shinn and Isaac Dozier explained their multifaceted workforce development approach at the two sites. The approaches maximize relationships and strategic partnerships built with residents, employers, and community stakeholders to achieve economic stability for residents and their families. They emphasized that these partnerships help ensure that residents have the necessary resources and support to succeed along the continuum of service delivery. In particular, it is necessary to create trust between the case manager and residents in order to identify barriers to success. The job training should clearly benefit both the employer and employee so that employers get a well-trained, local workforce, and employees get training and support to be able to remain and grow in their jobs.

Rafiq Munir, of HUD's Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity, explained the purpose and benefits of Section 3. The purpose of Section 3 is to ensure that jobs, training, and contracting generated by HUD funding is directed to low- and very-low-income persons, particularly those who are recipients of government assistance for housing, and to businesses that substantially employ those persons. Derrick Williams, of the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration, and Jocquelyn Marshall, of TMC Global Consulting Network, gave attendees a better understanding of how Section 3 could be implemented through Choice Neighborhoods. They also identified incentives for participant retention in and completion of job-training programs.

Supporting Employment and Family Economic Stability, *continued***TAKEAWAYS**

- **Career pathways are critical for long-term stability.** Entry-level jobs are only one step in the process of creating economic opportunities for residents. It is important to build relationships with employers in growing industries that offer career pathways. It is also important to offer support after job placement to help residents retain jobs and advance.
- **Complete a self-assessment of local employment plans and outcomes.** Using a comprehensive self-assessment tool, grantees can take stock of current strategies being implemented or planned to support resident employment and long-term economic stability. Completing a self-assessment will highlight program strengths and opportunities for improvement across the following components of employment plans: communication, engagement, federal policy alignment, resource development, youth and adult programs, partnership alignment, and program evaluation. Download the [comprehensive self-assessment tool](#) developed for this conference session.
- **Establish stable relationships with diverse employers and deepen those relationships over time.** Long-term, stable relationships with employers can spur investment in residents through job training, employment placement, and pathway development. To achieve this stability, the presenters stated that they diversify their networks by approaching a diverse body of high-growth sector employers to meet residents' evolving interests, skills, and needs. The presenters also focused on deepening these relationships by working with multiple levels of employer organizations, such as human resources and management, to foster the employer's desire to commit to residents' long-term success.
- **Section 3 can be an important part of your employment strategy.** HUD's [Section 3](#) program ensures that jobs, training, and contracting generated by HUD funding shall be directed to low- and very-low-income persons, particularly those who are recipients of government assistance for housing, and to businesses that substantially employ those persons. Bring the housing authority, case management partner, and development partner together early in the planning process to develop a commitment and plan for Section 3 as part of the Choice Neighborhoods grant.
- **Identify participant incentives to help residents find and retain employment.** HUD and other programs can provide incentives for residents pursuing employment and long-term job stability. Examples include an 18-month rent increase exemption for participants in the Family Self-Sufficiency program, grants from community partners to help residents defray costs associated with startup businesses, and Section 3 contract opportunities for eligible residents to work on a contract basis in support of projects sponsored by the public housing authority or a community partner.

PROMISING PRACTICE WORKSHOPS

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Empowering Residents for Long-Term Engagement: Lessons From Winston-Salem

The Housing Authority of Winston-Salem (HAWS), a fiscal year 2013 Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grantee—working in concert with partners Renaissance Planning and Neighbors for Better Neighborhoods (NBN)—created a six-session capacity building and leadership development program for residents called Neighbors in Action. During this workshop, Alan Steinbeck of Renaissance Planning, Kevin Cheshire from HAWS, Nakida Daniel and Paula McCoy from NBN, and resident leaders including Marquita Wisely from the Cleveland Avenue Transformation Team shared their experiences with resident and neighborhood engagement and capacity building.



As the Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grant began, a group of residents invited NBN, a local community organizing and capacity building organization, to provide leadership training. NBN worked with HAWS and Renaissance Planning to provide trainings that supported meaningful resident participation in the Choice Neighborhoods planning process. A group of 18 residents from the target housing development and surrounding neighborhood participated in the Neighbors in Action intensive, hands-on training, with topics on visioning, systemic racism, asset-based community development, and organizing.

Out of that training and with continued support, residents began identifying and addressing community problems. For example, residents had trouble accessing and transporting fresh foods, so they worked with local organizations to identify how to create a community garden and establish a bus route to the grocery store. The children of the community helped plant the garden and learned how to cook with vegetables from the garden. Now, a group of residents is looking into the possibility of starting a food co-op and attracting a grocery store. The residents ultimately decided to form the Cleveland Avenue Transformation Team to continue their work in the neighborhood.

Empowering Residents for Long-Term Engagement: Lessons From Winston-Salem, *continued***TAKEAWAYS**

- **Understanding how organizations work facilitates equitable engagement.** During the process, it was important for residents in Winston-Salem to understand how the institutions they were working with were organized. Familiarity with the organizations allowed residents to access decision-makers and not just frontline workers. It also can help residents understand institutions' goals, requirements, and deadlines, so residents have a clear sense of when they need to communicate with these organizations.
- **Identifying an individual's power is motivating.** A key part of the Neighbors in Action training included helping residents identify their ability to make a meaningful impact. The training guided residents through a power analysis in which they identified how power was imposed on them and what power they had to affect change.
- **Creating neighborhood spaces can foster neighborhood networks and engagement.** NBN hosts regular neighborhood nights during which people can meet each other around food or an event. This provides a space in which neighbors can exchange information and network. These informal spaces can also provide an opportunity for institutions to engage residents in an authentic way and build trust. For example, Mr. Cheshire from HAWS felt he was not able to connect with residents during formal meetings, so he started to attend local movie night events and was able to build connections with residents in that informal setting.
- **Residents need to feel their efforts are making a tangible difference.** To successfully engage the community, residents said that they needed to feel as if they had ownership of their neighborhood. Residents were hired to interview other residents for the survey, and those conversations strengthened their interest in being part of the planning process. Members of the resident-led Cleveland Avenue Transformation Team codesigned and led a community meeting, worked with partners to create a community garden, and developed workforce development activities. Residents became more engaged when they saw results.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Poverty Experience

The Poverty Experience was an intensive 90-minute simulation on poverty and the obstacles Choice Neighborhoods residents and other low-income individuals and families face. The objective of the exercise was to help participants gain insight into poverty and the challenges it presents to engaging in community activities and achieving service delivery goals. Pamela Lawrence from HUD's Choice Neighborhoods office led conference participants in an exercise in which each participant was assigned a role within a "family," and families were charged with surviving a month on the average monthly income of a family living in poverty. Participants needed to be able to grocery shop and feed themselves and their children, send their children to school, maintain good health and pay for health care, pay rent, and secure employment. Stations manned by Choice Neighborhoods resident leaders and other volunteers were set up around the room to represent community resources, such as a school, a health clinic, a food pantry, a pawnshop, a bank, a Temporary Assistance for Needy Families office, and a jail.

After the simulation, participants were asked to discuss obstacles the teams faced and to delve into the causes of these barriers. Without an affordable mode of transportation, many participants were unable to obtain basic necessities. Unexpected financial strains left families on the verge of homelessness. Uncooperative or absent authority figures prevented families from fulfilling obligations, and constant stressors led families into confrontation with the law. Most families were unable to pay both rent and utilities, and no family was able to meet all of its basic needs.

Participants described the emotional experience as "overwhelming," "demoralizing," "frightening," "chaotic," "heartbreaking," "realistic," "corrupt," and "confusing." They then discussed how social and family context influenced the economic stability of the families: parents did not always have childcare or caring adults they could rely on to watch their children, health issues were exacerbated by an inability to access the health clinic, and families were impacted by distrust and a lack of social connections with neighbors. Participants came away with a better understanding of the challenges confronting Choice Neighborhoods residents.

The Poverty Experience, *continued*

TAKEAWAYS

- **It can be difficult for families in crisis to focus beyond day-to-day survival.** Participants noted that it was difficult for them to focus on goals, such as education and employment, when they were struggling to meet their families' basic needs. During the simulation, participants felt as though they needed to spend all of their time and energy trying to figure out how to pay housing, utility, and food bills for the month. Attendees stated that when they are trying to engage families in planning meetings and case management, it is important to understand that families may feel overwhelmed by daily stresses.
- **Service organizations and agencies may benefit from supports to improve responsiveness to clients.** Staff at service organizations and agencies may feel overwhelmed by high caseloads and high turnover. Additionally, a service organization's rules and requirements may be focused on processes rather than outcomes, and services may be limited to interventions that do not address a client's underlying problem. This



context can create an environment in which well-intentioned organizations approach clients in a way that may not be responsive to their needs and may even feel dehumanizing. Service providers and stakeholders can collaborate to identify a systems approach to the challenges low-income individuals face, so that collectively organizations can make services easier to navigate and focus on improving client well-being.

FINANCING TOOLS FOR REDEVELOPMENT

Maximizing Leverage: Using CDBG Funding to Support Neighborhood Revitalization Activities

Kim Johnson, from HUD's Office of Community Planning and Development, and John Laswick, of the Entitlement Communities Division in HUD's Office of Block Grant Assistance, explained why HUD's CDBG program is an important source of funding for community and economic development activities.

CDBG funds can be used to launch the transformation process, support planning efforts, and provide leverage for the Choice Neighborhoods grant. CDBG funds serve low- and moderate-income areas and are allocated to communities through the Consolidated Plan, which addresses affordable housing, community development, and economic development needs within the region. A CDBG grantee can also apply to have a community designated as a Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area (NRSA). Designated NRSA have no specific funding, but HUD provides more flexible use of the CDBG funds in designated NRSA and requires the CDBG grantee to target more funds to the area. NRSA require strong community engagement, much like the Choice Neighborhoods grant.

Several Choice Neighborhoods grantees have used an NRSA designation to enhance their neighborhood transformation efforts. The Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grant community in Durham, NC, used an NRSA designation and CDBG funds to develop the infrastructure for a new mixed-use development, rehabilitate distressed properties, and more. Boston, MA, secured an NRSA designation for the Quincy Corridor Choice Neighborhood shortly after receiving the Implementation Grant and used CDBG funds to help finance business façade improvements and transform an abandoned factory into a food production center. The Bayview community in San Francisco, CA, was already designated as an NRSA before securing an Implementation Grant and effectively integrated the Choice Neighborhoods and NRSA plans, which included affordable housing development, improved neighborhood facilities, public safety initiatives, and work-readiness services.

Maximizing Leverage: Using CDBG Funding to Support Neighborhood Revitalization Activities, *continued*

TAKEAWAYS

■ **NRSA designation provides key flexibilities in CDBG funding.** Designating a Choice Neighborhood as an NRSA allows the CDBG grantee more flexibility in how it can use its CDBG funding to support neighborhood transformation efforts. Some of the benefits of receiving an NRSA designation include:

- Aggregating CDBG assisted housing units in order to encourage mixed-income housing by viewing scattered housing projects as a single structure.
- Eliminating national objective documentation requirements for economic development activities, which are often viewed as an impediment for businesses.
- Exempting the target area from the aggregate public benefit standard that is required when underwriting economic development activities.
- Exempting the neighborhood from the 15-percent public service cap for those services carried out by community-based development organizations.

■ **Creatively blending funds can increase CDBG's impact.** CDBG funds have restrictions, but if used strategically with other sources, they can support pressing community needs. For example, the Southside community in

Durham recognized it needed to foster a mix of incomes within the neighborhood in order for real revitalization to occur, so it decided to create new, attractive mixed-income housing. Since CDBG funds, including Section 108 loans, cannot be used for new construction, the community used a Section 108 loan to rebuild the infrastructure for the expensive front end of a mixed-income development and used other sources for the new construction.

FEATURED RESOURCE

- **Notice on NRSAs.** A new [HUD Notice \(CPD-16-16\)](#) issued in September 2016 allows Entitlement communities, or communities that receive CDBG funding by formula, to request an automatic NRSA designation for Choice Neighborhoods. If requested by the CDBG grantee, a Choice Neighborhood with either (1) a HUD-accepted final transformation plan from a current or past Planning Grant or (2) an Implementation Grant will be automatically approved for NRSA designation. There is no longer an application process, and no additional reporting is required.

FINANCING TOOLS FOR REDEVELOPMENT

Unlocking the Power of New Market Tax Credits

This session introduced the NMTC program. Representatives from community development entities (CDEs), including Shirley Boubert of DC Housing Enterprises, Elaine DiPietro of Enterprise Community Investment, and Kelsey Hamory of LISC’s New Markets Support Company, shared what it takes to get a NMTC deal done in order to add jobs, retail, or community amenities in a neighborhood.



NMTC is a tax credit program used to spur economic investment in low-income communities. The equity generated from the tax credit can fill a financing gap in the construction or substantial rehab of commercial properties and community facilities, such as offices, retail, health centers, charter schools, recreational centers, and certain mixed-use projects. It can also provide funds toward business financing and industrial/distribution activities. To make use of the tax credit, a CDE first applies for and is competitively awarded NMTC “allocation authority” from the Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) fund. Next, investors—mostly major banks—form partnerships with the CDE to provide capital contributions. The NMTC program provides these investors with a 39-percent tax credit (\$0.39 for every \$1) on the capital invested in a CDE over a 7-year compliance period. Finally, a qualified active low-income community business (QALICB), which can include local nonprofit corporations, competes to receive a loan or equity investment for its particular community project.

The session presented several examples of successful projects. The Dorchester Bay Economic Development Corporation in Boston used NMTC to help redevelop a long-abandoned meat factory into a thriving food business incubator and production facility. DC Housing Enterprises, a CDE that is a subsidiary of the District of Columbia Housing Authority, has invested in projects that have created more than 500 construction/permanent jobs in the Washington, DC, area, including an early education center. At the national level, Enterprise Community Investment has partnered with CDEs to leverage funding for projects across the country, such as transforming an old restaurant into a health center in Oakland, CA. LISC has also used NMTCs to fill financing gaps in projects around the United States, such as developing new commercial space, a supportive services center, and a pharmacy in a mixed-use development in Philadelphia, PA.

Unlocking the Power of New Market Tax Credits, *continued***TAKEAWAYS**

- **NMTCs are highly competitive, and CDEs consider several criteria when selecting projects.** Projects are prioritized based on their community impact. A CDE will also consider whether the proposed project transaction aligns with its strategies; whether the project is just short of being fully financed and would not be completed “but for” the tax credit; the location of the project, in terms of both scope and target location within a highly distressed census tract; the type of project; evidence of community support; and environmental sustainability.
- **Benefits to low-income residents are critical for project approval.** As the project’s pitch is developed, presenters underscored the importance of having an economic development plan and being able to show support from low-income community members. Choice Neighborhoods grantees may already have an economic plan and be able to demonstrate support from their community planning processes.
- **The NMTC program has some limitations.** While the NMTC program can be an effective tool for creating commercial and community amenities in disinvested neighborhoods, potential participants should also be aware of its limitations. The program is highly competitive, borrowers take on some risks, transaction costs can be high, and compliance rules are strict. Funding also cannot be used for rental housing and cannot be combined with the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit program, unless there is a separate condominium regime. However, funding can be used for mixed-use projects in which less than 80 percent of gross revenue comes from dwelling units and at least 20 percent of all units are affordable to tenants earning no more than 80 percent of the Area Median Income.
- **How do I locate a CDE and when should I contact one?** It is never too early to contact a CDE. A CDE can be identified in the following ways:
 - Visit the NMTC page of CDFI’s Web site (<https://www.CDFIFund.gov/awards/nmtc/Pages/default.aspx>) for a list of certified CDEs. The list can be sorted by CDE name, service area, or type (e.g., bank, credit union, venture capital fund). The list will contain contact information for each CDE, which you can use to inquire about the types of assistance each CDE may provide.
 - NMTC consultants.
 - Banking relationships.
 - Contact one of the session presenters.

STABILIZING DISTRESSED AND VACANT PROPERTIES

Blight Elimination: Creating and Implementing a Comprehensive and Place-Based Plan

During this session, Natalie Pruett, a consultant who helped create the [*Beyond Blight: City of Flint Blight Elimination Framework*](#), and Raynetta Speed, the Community Outreach Coordinator for Genesee County Land Bank, discussed blight elimination efforts in Flint, MI. Flint has lost half of its population over the last 50 years, and as of 2016, the city had 20,059 properties in need of blight elimination, including 6,035 structures in need of demolition and 14,024 vacant lots. Flint's data-driven [*framework*](#) quantifies the scale of blight in the city, provides place-based plans, and identifies roles and responsibilities for everyone from residents to large-scale institutions.

Ms. Pruett introduced the framework and walked participants through its development, what it entails, how it is driving neighborhood investment, and the innovative strategies now being implemented to eliminate blight. The planning process began in 2010. Forty community-based groups formed a partnership to survey residential and commercial parcels and determine abandoned parcels. They also engaged city planners and trained surveyors. Based on the planning process, the partnership was able to develop a blueprint for neighborhood stabilization, with the goal of eliminating blight and stabilizing the decreasing population. Having a master plan made a significant difference because it gave leaders a clear vision.

Ms. Speed described how the Genesee County Land Bank's demolition campaign of more than \$36 million helped to implement the framework and impacted neighborhoods. The land bank's goal is to provide blight intervention to properties within a 5-year timeframe. Funding blight elimination efforts, however, has been a key challenge, given that 52 percent of properties are privately owned and therefore costlier to demolish. Lack of funding for maintaining vacant properties is another challenge. One approach to addressing this challenge has been to engage neighbors and offer them the opportunity to buy adjoining vacant property.

Blight Elimination: Creating and Implementing a Comprehensive and Place-Based Plan, *continued*

TAKEAWAYS

- **Master plans can provide the vision needed to move forward.** Through its master planning process, Flint was able to provide a vision and an end goal that local leaders and stakeholders could rally around. This made it easier to engage organizations in taking concrete actions toward achieving their goals.
- **Get everyone involved.** To eliminate blight, residents, community members, institutions, businesses, and local government must all be engaged. As part of its engagement strategy, the team in Flint held community meetings to raise awareness of the blight elimination plan. Leaders also clearly identified how different stakeholders could help. For instance, businesses could remove trash from properties next door and contribute 5 percent of their property maintenance budget, either in cash or in-kind, toward blight elimination. Larger institutions could help combat blight within a half-mile of their locations by providing funding, supplies, and volunteers to maintain properties. Community groups could host cleanup days and initiate efforts to reuse vacant land.
- **Clearly show people how they can help.** In addition to launching a Vacant Property Moving Plan, the Genesee County Land Bank published materials encouraging neighbors to mow vacant properties on their blocks. The publication pointed out that if every Flint household mowed one vacant property on its block, then two-thirds of the city's vacant properties would be cared for, saving the city \$2.3 million a year.



STABILIZING DISTRESSED AND VACANT PROPERTIES

Innovative Strategies for Distressed Properties

This session used two case studies from Choice Neighborhoods in Chicago, IL, and Pittsburgh, PA, to frame a discussion about addressing vacant and abandoned properties as part of a neighborhood revitalization strategy. Kyle Chintalapalli, from the Mayor's Office of the City of Pittsburgh, and Jessica Smith Perry, from the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh, presented the vacant land acquisition and development strategy in Pittsburgh's Larimer neighborhood. Jamila Danzy, from Community Investment Corporation (CIC), and Paula Grantt, from Neighborhood Housing Services (NHS), described the strategy to stabilize distressed and vacant properties in Chicago's Woodlawn neighborhood.

In Pittsburgh, the Larimer neighborhood's market potential and the fact that a large number of vacant properties were tax delinquent made the neighborhood a prime candidate for a land banking initiative. Beginning in 2008, the city began acquiring properties in earnest, and today 40 percent of the parcels in Larimer are publicly owned. In line with the community's vision for being the "greenest" neighborhood in the city, the neighborhood plan calls for various strategies utilizing vacant land for a 3-acre active park and more than 25 acres of passive parks, a village green and gardens, green infrastructure to address water runoff issues, and sustainable rental and for-sale housing. The land acquisitions enabled the replacement housing for the Choice Neighborhoods grant to be developed on more than just the existing HUD-assisted sites. The plan also included a for-sale infill new construction and rehabilitation housing strategy, in partnership with a local community development corporation.

In contrast to the many vacant properties in Pittsburgh, Chicago's Woodlawn neighborhood has predominately distressed properties. The housing stock in the area is solid, making it a good market for home improvement loans and a developer-driven rehab process. CIC and NHS are working together to acquire more than 30 one- to four-unit properties that are well-positioned to help stabilize the neighborhood and offer homeownership opportunities to neighborhood residents. CIC is responsible for the acquisition and dispositions of the properties, and NHS is responsible for the rehab and sale of the properties to owner occupants.

Innovative Strategies for Distressed Properties, *continued*

As part of its sales efforts, NHS implements a community-based marketing strategy, develops a pipeline of income-qualified buyers, administers subsidies for owner-occupied buyers, and manages a pool of responsible local developers and contractors. For outreach and marketing designed to connect potential buyers to rehabbed properties, NHS established monthly meetings with local residents, posted available properties on social media, and informed potential buyers about purchase incentives and available homeownership and landlord education.



TAKEAWAYS

- **Addressing vacant and abandoned properties has to be a long-term solution utilizing many strategies and partners.** The examples from Pittsburgh and Chicago show land acquisition and disposition strategies that intentionally contribute to a larger plan to stabilize the neighborhood. These strategies are coordinated across a wide range of partners, including the city, nonprofit organizations, community land trusts, community development corporations, private developers, lenders, and residents.
- **Tailor vacant and abandoned properties strategies to your local context and goals.** Map out all vacant and distressed properties in the neighborhood and adjacent communities. Identify the ownership and status of these properties.

Assess the market in the neighborhood and surrounding areas. Identify existing public and private funding sources, including organizations with expertise in stabilizing distressed and vacant properties. Use this information to develop a tailored strategy that aligns with the community's vision and goals.

- **Have a disposition strategy before starting your acquisition strategy.** As Pittsburgh's experience illustrates, it is important to have a vision and plan for what to do with the properties before acquiring them. Knowing this will help shape your acquisition strategy in terms of the number and location of the parcels you seek to acquire.

ENHANCING COMMUNITY SAFETY

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED): More Than Just Lighting

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) is grounded in the belief that proper design and the effective use of the built environment can reduce crime, improve perceptions of safety, encourage positive social interactions, and facilitate new investment. Implementing a successful CPTED program, however, involves more than just great design. Engaging a wide range of partners through extensive community engagement and ensuring a CPTED plan reflects the surrounding community's vision and priorities are equally critical to long-term success.



In this session, Nancy Howard from LISC, a technical assistance provider for the U.S. Department of Justice's (DOJ) Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation (BCJI) program, engaged two community leaders from Providence, RI, and San Antonio, TX, in discussing how design strategies combined with extensive community outreach helped improve public safety in their communities. In Providence, ONE Neighborhood Builders (ONB), a community-based organization, led a wide range of partners in developing a plan to transform Riverside Park and its surrounding areas. During the panel, Tina Shepard, from ONB, described how 30 local leaders participated in a 4-day CPTED training that helped them formulate strategies to address community concerns. Throughout the park, bike paths were improved, a new playground was installed, police presence was increased, and spaces were opened up. As a result, calls for service from this area have dropped dramatically, new investment is taking place, and there is a perception that the area now has the social infrastructure needed to generate positive change.

The San Antonio Housing Authority received a \$600,000 BCJI grant to reduce crime in the East Side Choice Neighborhood. During the panel, Brooke Crenshaw, from San Antonio's BCJI team, described one neighborhood intersection that used to feature vacant lots and a dilapidated alleyway, making it hotspot for criminal activity. As part of the BCJI plan, local police hosted a community barbeque and resource fair on the vacant lots for more than 400 residents. Engaged residents then helped to clean up the vacant lots, which ultimately became home to community gardens. These initiatives helped decrease crime at the intersection and improve police and community relations.

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED): More Than Just Lighting, *continued***TAKEAWAYS**

- **Bring everyone to the table.** Engaging a wide range of partners—such as community residents, law enforcement officials, business owners, designers, and real estate developers—is critically important to creating an effective strategy that responds to the community’s needs and is sustainable over the long term. Even the best-designed space can quickly fall into disrepair if it is not properly maintained and supported by the local community. In addition, community partnerships can enhance effectiveness. Through the CPTED process, police and community members in Providence successfully lobbied the city to reopen a street near a neighborhood park, which led to increased public surveillance and enhanced safety.
- **Resident investment in crime prevention strategies is critical.** When identifying crime prevention strategies, it is especially important that neighborhood residents feel a sense of ownership over the process. By keeping neighborhood residents involved and engaged throughout the planning and implementation processes, CPTED initiatives can both reduce crime and increase collaboration among residents, the city, and police. This can lead to improved relationships, encourage holistic approaches to problem-solving, and ultimately enhance the community’s quality of life.
- **Context is king.** A common pitfall in implementing CPTED strategies is applying principles without considering the community’s unique context. Other pitfalls to avoid are having a less-than-inclusive process that fails to engage a full range of community stakeholders and relying only on physical change at the expense of people strategies, such as improved community programming that can activate public spaces.
- **Good design and active programming can redefine areas as safe places.** Key CPTED design principles include access control (defining who uses a space and where people enter and exit); increasing ownership by using design to identify spaces as public, private, semipublic, or semiprivate; and enhancing natural surveillance through improved lighting and strategic window placement to increase “eyes on the street.” Once a physical space is less conducive to criminal activity, holding community programs, events, and activities there is key to redefining the space as a valued community asset.

ENHANCING COMMUNITY SAFETY

Successful Place-Based Policing Strategies: Lessons From the Boston Police Department

The Boston Police Department (BPD) received Public Safety Enhancement funding from the U.S. Department of Justice to prevent and reduce crime in the Quincy Corridor Choice Neighborhood. Quincy Corridor is one of three hotspot areas in Boston, accounting for 60 percent of the city's gun homicides and gun assaults despite making up only 5 percent of the city's landmass. At this workshop, Maria Cheevers, Sergeant Sam Silta, and Tremayne Youmans from BPD described the multipronged approach to community policing in the Quincy Corridor.

Community policing, as defined by DOJ's Office of Community Oriented Policing, promotes the systematic use of partnerships and problem-solving techniques to proactively address the immediate conditions that give rise to crime, social disorder, fear of crime, and other public safety issues. Recognizing that police rarely can solve public safety problems alone, community policing encourages partnerships between police and the communities and organizations they serve. These partnerships develop solutions and increase trust in police.

BPD utilized community policing as the foundation of its work with the Quincy Corridor by integrating four components into its public safety enhancement strategy. First, a clinical social worker from a local nonprofit organization is located at the district stationhouse to connect with more than 200 at-risk youth from the neighborhood and their families. Second, BPD community service officers facilitate community engagement through community events, micro-neighborhood watch meetings, and Neighborhood Response Team meetings, for a total of more than 100 meetings and events each month. Third, specialized units lead targeted crime suppression efforts, such as high-visibility walking beats, a gun buy-back program, and drug and gang investigations. Finally, the police department partnered with nationally known experts to plan for CPTED and for increasing collective efficacy in the neighborhood.

Through these enhanced efforts, BPD strengthened its longstanding partnership with the community to reduce crime and increase safety. During this time, the Quincy Corridor has experienced a significant reduction in crime, including a 10-percent decrease in violent crime, a more than 18-percent decrease in total Part 1 crimes, and a more than 16-percent decrease in total crimes.

Successful Place-Based Policing Strategies: Lessons From the Boston Police Department (BPD), *continued***TAKEAWAYS**

- **Community policing includes a continuum of strategies.** If your community and police department are just starting out with community policing, you can start with small strategies and build from there. Ms. Cheevers, Director of Research and Development at BPD, described community policing as a continuum of strategies ranging from (1) community relations, (2) community education, (3) police/community partnership programming, (4) strategic planning with community stakeholders, and (5) police/research partnerships. Community relations and community education are great places to start. Invite police to the community to discuss issues, and work together on issues that residents identify to gain their trust. As you move along the community–policing spectrum, you can build in police–community partnership programming, such as housing a clinical social worker at the stationhouse to facilitate social service referrals for at-risk neighborhood youth. [Download the handout](#) outlining the continuum of community policing strategies and examples of each strategy.
- **Maximize your community policing strategies.** Be creative and intentional about the community policing strategies you choose in order to maximize their impact. For example, BPD attracted a donation from NASCAR that turned an RV into the B2 Fun Command Center, which

visited different hotspot blocks in the Choice Neighborhood every Friday night during the summer. In addition to giving out 22,000 cups of ice cream and 5,500 hot dogs, the police department presented a slide deck of crime data specific to the blocks where the RV was parked and provided information about community resources and services. The B2 Fun Command Center became a successful community relations and community education tool for connecting the community with the police department. It was also a fun way to increase police presence on Friday nights during the summer months and to increase collective efficacy as neighbors interacted with each other.

- **Consider alternatives to large townhall-style community meetings.** Sergeant Silta described Boston’s community engagement strategy of Neighborhood Response Teams. He meets with a dozen or so residents in an area of the neighborhood where there are safety concerns. This smaller setting can be more effective than large townhall meetings, in which some people have their own agenda and try to control the conversation. In a smaller setting, Sergeant Silta can hear every single complaint and try to answer every single question.

Successful Place-Based Policing Strategies: Lessons From the Boston Police Department (BPD), *continued*

- **Community policing includes targeted crime suppression strategies, such as high-visibility walking beats and drug and gang investigations by specialized police units.**

Open and trusting communication between the police and the community can lead to information that helps police solve safety issues and crimes in the neighborhood. Thus, targeted suppression efforts, including high-visibility walking beats and drug and gang investigations, are part of the community policing strategy in the Quincy Corridor Choice Neighborhood.



FEATURED RESOURCE

- **[Watch](#) the video *Community Policing Done Right*, produced by NeighborWorks America.** The video features the consistent and positive presence of BPD Officer Ken Grubbs as a member of the community as well as community policing strategies that encourage resident engagement and investment in neighborhood safety.

IMPROVING RESIDENT AND COMMUNITY OUTCOMES

Building on Assets and Opportunities to Develop a Successful People Plan

This session focused on how to develop a successful people plan that will cultivate partnerships and opportunities needed to successfully move forward with implementation. Kathy Carton, of EJP Consulting Group, opened the session by describing four key steps in the plan development timeline: understanding the community by undertaking a thorough needs assessment, identifying residents and stakeholders to guide the development of the plan, creating a shared vision and identifying evidence-based strategies to achieve the collective vision, and developing a detailed action plan.

Three other presenters provided case studies from their experiences with Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grants. Paul Vivian, of Meriden Children First Initiative, focused on how Meriden, CT, conducted a thorough needs assessment and surveyed 99 percent of all target housing residents. This success, he explained, came in part from having a longstanding relationship with community members and hiring fellow residents to conduct interviews, including fluent Spanish speakers. In addition, instead of starting the survey process by going door to door, Meriden first conducted surveys around community events and fairs, which was highly efficient and created an awareness of what the survey was.

Kate Bennett, of the Boston Housing Authority, focused on how to choose and manage successful partnerships. In Boston, MA, the housing authority knew kids were falling behind in school, so it set specific goals around education. Those goals enabled it to figure out who would engage as a partner. Ms. Bennett recommended looking for long-term partners who have shared goals and commit to being engaged in the process. She emphasized the importance of delineating responsibilities and clear expectations, communicating well, and expecting bumps and adjustments in the partnership along the way.

Erik Kregel, of Mercy Housing, described his work in Sacramento, CA, to build a relationship with a reluctant stakeholder. Mercy Housing sought to partner with a local, poorly performing school but the principal did not trust Mercy Housing. The organization identified a mutual connection and slowly built trust by doing small things that the school needed, such as collecting school supplies. Mercy Housing realized it needed to clearly identify the value it could add to justify taking the time of the principal and staff. Eventually it was able to work with the principal to establish a community school model.

Building on Assets and Opportunities to Develop a Successful People Plan, *continued*

TAKEAWAYS

- **Partner recruitment and selection should be intentional.** Partners should have at least some of the following qualities: an aligned mission, investment in mutual outcomes, a track record with similar populations, responsiveness to phone calls and emails, and an agenda beyond Choice Neighborhoods that will help with sustainability. Potential partners may include decision-makers who are in a position to commit staffing; grassroots and resident organizations; and content or subject matter experts who are able to apply research and knowledge of best practices to your project. It is also important to organize partners into topic-specific working groups and identify who will lead these groups.
- **Taking a businesslike approach can help manage partnerships.** It is helpful to take a businesslike approach with partners. You should be mindful of the value you are bringing to your partners. Creating written agreements helps ensure you and your partners are clear about each entity's roles and objectives.
- **Develop a collective vision before strategies.** Neighborhood partners can be quite diverse and have diverse goals. Before diving into strategies, build a strong foundation for your plan by emphasizing the need for priorities and try to find consensus around clearly defined, shared goals.



- **Actionable plans include clear steps and accountability.** For a plan to be actionable, drill down to identify the steps that need to be taken, describe who will take responsibility, develop a realistic timeline, and establish mechanisms to measure success.
- **Strong partnerships will grow and evolve over time.** Challenges will inevitably present themselves during the implementation process. It is important to establish clear and open lines of communication at the outset of the relationship, acknowledge differences with partners, and be realistic that adjustments to the partner agreements may need to be made over time. The Planning Grant period may be thought of as a trial period; not everything will work at first, so you should build time and markers to evaluate progress into your plan.

IMPROVING RESIDENT AND COMMUNITY OUTCOMES

Navigating to Outcomes: The Academic Navigator's Role in Attaining Student-Centered Results

In this workshop, Jaimee Bohning and Tameka Colbert from the Northside Achievement Zone (NAZ) described their neighborhood's student-centered approach to improve educational outcomes. NAZ was established in 2003 and received a Promise Neighborhoods implementation grant from the U.S. Department of Education in 2011, with the goal to close the achievement gap for all children in North Minneapolis,



MN, including those that attend schools outside of the neighborhood. The session focused on how NAZ uses Academic Navigators to work across all members of a student's, or scholar's, "team," aligning school leaders, teachers, out-of-school providers, and others behind a clear, measurable outcome for the scholar and family.

In the NAZ model, the Academic Navigator identifies the scholar's team of around three committed adults (this could be a parent, teacher, family member, behavioral health clinician, after-school program staff, school psychologist, or principal) and builds a relationship with them. As a team, families, navigators, and scholars identify the one outcome that will have the greatest, most direct, and immediate positive impact for the scholar, and agree to hold to that result.

The Academic Navigator guides the scholar as he or she creates his or her own personalized Scholar Achievement Plan based on that goal. Scholar Achievement Plans target five key elements of success: expanding active learning time, reaching academic benchmarks in reading and math proficiency, fostering a supportive team of caring adults, achieving positive behavior and communication, and cultivating a scholar's spark or interests to engage them in learning. Team members also make aligned action commitments toward the outcome. The Academic Navigator facilitates goal steps and connects the scholar to school and community resources. Throughout the process, the team identifies what is and is not working, and moves forward with any necessary revisions.

For NAZ, academic navigation is a key component of a broader two-generational approach to improving family outcomes. Schools and partners, who provide supports such as wraparound services and out-of-school-time programming, follow evidence-based plans, and track real-time results for programs and families. As part of the effort, NAZ has invested in a data system that drives achievement; supports coordination across partners; and tracks individual, program, and longitudinal data.

Navigating to Outcomes: The Academic Navigator's Role in Attaining Student-Centered Results, *continued***TAKEAWAYS****■ Meet students and families where they are.**

It is essential for Academic Navigators to partner with families, teachers, students, and other leaders. The NAZ model relies on investment in relationships that are consistent and genuine. Change only occurs when the individual is ready to change and has a clear goal in mind. Keeping the goals focused on the student builds buy-in, and if parental engagement wanes, the student still gets the support needed. If families leave the program, they are always welcomed back.

- Keep the child at the center of tense conversations.**
- For occasional times when a stakeholder reacts defensively, Academic Navigators are encouraged to keep the child and family at the center of the conversation. This takes the focus off what each party is or is not doing and engages each party in a problem-solving discussion about how to help the student.

- Establish realistic boundaries and expectations with school partners.**
- NAZ staff members are colocated at anchor sites, but they are not employed by them. In order to carry out their work effectively, Academic Navigators cannot compensate or fill in for the lack of resources or staffing the school may have. Therefore, it is important for Academic Navigators and program leadership to set clear boundaries at the outset.

■ Questions to ask when establishing the Academic Navigator role in your community.

Communities should carefully consider how Academic Navigators would be most effective in their context. Questions to consider before establishing the Academic Navigator role include:

- Who would be supported by this role?
- What measures will be used to determine (a) if scholars are better off because of this support, and (b) if the role and strategies are being delivered well?
- How are you currently doing on these measures?
- Who are the partners with a role to play?
- Which partners are not at the table or do not exist?
- What do we know already works with our students?
- What has to happen to be powerful enough to address our greatest need?
- What do we propose to do? What actions are we going to take?

IMPROVING RESIDENT AND COMMUNITY OUTCOMES

Creating Employment Supports That Work: Lessons From Jobs Plus

Ron Ashford, Director of Public Housing Supportive Services at HUD, and Kate Dempsey, Director of Strategy and Operations for the Center for Economic Opportunity in the Office of Mayor in New York City, NY, presented lessons from the Jobs Plus program. They discussed how the Jobs Plus model, a place-based employment program designed to help public housing residents achieve employment and economic stability goals, can be applied to Choice Neighborhoods.



The Jobs Plus model was evaluated through a randomized control study in the early 2000s and was shown to be successful. In 2014, the program was funded at a national scale for the first time through HUD's Jobs Plus Pilot program. Jobs Plus combines workforce services, rent incentives, and community supports for work. The model utilizes workforce services such as training, employer linkages, educational advancement, job placement, and employment counseling. Participating public housing residents benefit from a financial incentive, called an Earned Income Disregard, that allows 100 percent of an increase in earned income to be disregarded from rent calculations for up to 48 months. These services and incentives are marketed to residents through peer outreach and social networking. Peer coaches build strong relationships with residents and property management in order to create a network of support for work within the public housing community.

During the conference session, grantees were asked to consider aspects of Jobs Plus that could be applied to Choice Neighborhoods. Some features highlighted for consideration were how Jobs Plus identifies and trains staff, establishes partners and program governance, plans services for and with participants, coordinates logistics and facilities, and markets to and engages with residents. Qualities of an effective Jobs Plus employment program included being client-centered and demand-driven, creative and nimble, collaborative, and focused on long-term advancement into occupations that offer a family-supporting wage. Effective approaches also prioritized continuous improvement by having staff and partners participate in regular evaluation of the program's procedures and progress.

Creating Employment Supports That Work: Lessons From Jobs Plus, *continued***TAKEAWAYS**

- **Design a comprehensive employment strategy.** The Jobs Plus model has three pillars—workforce supports, incentives, and community supports for work. Your Choice Neighborhoods employment strategy should be just as comprehensive and coordinated. Residents face a multitude of barriers when seeking employment, so you need a multipronged approach.
- **Focus on advancement.** Regularly sharing and assessing data that focus on advancement is a centerpiece of New York City's Jobs Plus program. The city's performance management tool, Jobs-PlusStat, tracks outcomes such as progress toward the annual employment placements goal, median hourly wage of placements, industries containing job placements, and number of placements with specific employers. These performance data prioritize advancement, such as change in hourly wage over time and placements in growth industries and jobs with pathways to family-sustaining wages.
- **A focus on growth sectors helps create pathways to advancement.** Effective approaches tie the workforce strategy to sectors in which jobs are growing so that the jobs are sustainable. Workforce Investment Boards have expertise in growth sectors in your region and can help you access training and job placements in those industries. In addition, New York City's Jobs Plus counselors are expected to be generalists and to develop expertise in one growth sector, so they are familiar with job training, placement, and advancement related to that sector.

- **Being client-centered leads to better results.**

Workforce staff should be encouraged to support participants in reaching the goals they identify as most important, rather than substituting those with goals that staff members believe should be most important. Through Jobs Plus, partners also customize training offerings to the unique employment goals and needs of the public housing residents in a particular place.

FEATURED RESOURCES

- [Download](#) *The Second Generation of Jobs-Plus Programs: Implementation Lessons From San Antonio and the Bronx*. This report investigates how Jobs Plus was replicated more recently, analyzing the early implementation in the Bronx, NY, and San Antonio, TX, both funded by the Social Innovation Fund of the Corporation for National and Community Service.
- [Download](#) *From Ground Up: Creating Sustainable Partnerships Between Public Housing Authorities and Workforce Investment Boards*. The U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration and HUD's Office of Public and Indian Housing created this tool kit to provide frontline staff with a quick reference to the resources that each federal agency contributes locally to the workforce and public housing systems. This resource guide also provides examples of successful partnerships between public housing authorities and Workforce Investment Boards/American Job Centers in three cities.



**U.S. Department of Housing
and Urban Development**
451 7th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20410

Telephone: (202) 708-1112
TTY: (202) 708-1455

