Citizens Toolkit

A guide by neighbors for neighbors about how to get things done in your neighborhood

PHILADELPHIA citizens PLANNING INSTITUTE

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Citizens Planning Institute brought 15 longtime neighborhood leaders together for a series of workshops called Neighbors Helping Neighbors in Fall 2015. We asked these leaders: ***What challenges are you facing in your neighborhoods, and what do you do to address them?***

Their answers became the content of the Citizens Toolkit.

Questions and suggestions are welcome! Contact **cpi@phila.gov** or **2156834648** to share them with us.

How to Get to Know Your Neighbors

NEIGHBORHOOD: Eastern North Philadelphia

Connecting with Neighbors One at a Time

NAIDA BURGOS

Naida Burgos wanted to work on behalf of her community in Eastern North Philadelphia. She got her start as a **Community Connector** for the Asociación Puertorriqueños en Marcha (APM) -- a health, **human services**, community, and **economic development** non-profit organization. Connectors go door-to-door to speak with residents and give them valuable information about resources, local services from APM and other organizations, and collect information from residents through outreach and surveys to learn about their needs and values.

Many of APM's constituents either lack the literacy or access to computers needed to research answers and find services on their own. As a Connector, Nadia learned what it took to be effective as a trusted source of information on available programs for housing, job training, education and much more. In her words:

"Being seen as a trusted connector to information and services starts with listening."

When Naida first started as a Connector she realized that her own knowledge of residents' needs was limited. So she made it her goal to learn from neighbors about their individual concerns and interests, whether it be the need for job training, lack of daycare options, or the safety of their street. To get to these answers, she started by asking questions of the residents and listening, rather than talking. For Naida, the two most important questions she asked residents were:

- **What do you think about your community?**
- **What community programs are already serving you?**

An early learning lesson for Naida was to be respectful of residents when they decline an offer for info or services, and politely move on to the next

I WANT TO GET TO KNOW MY NEIGHBORS

Naida staffs a resource table at a neighborhood event.

house. She took the responses she did get from residents and asked her co-workers at APM what other programs were out there to help meet these needs.

Something else Naida learned as a Connector is that neighbors don't always have to be at a meeting in order to have their opinions heard.

For example, a **charrette** was being hosted in Center City to generate redevelopment ideas for a vacant lot in an APM neighborhood. Naida recognized it was difficult for neighbors to attend something far from their neighborhood and quickly put together a short survey about the reuse of the vacant lot. Going door to door, she collected comments and votes for different options from residents living near the vacant lot, and submitted the survey results to the charette organizers.

Naida now works as a **Neighborhood Advisory Committee (NAC)** Coordinator at APM. In this role, she creates and runs programs for the neighborhoods APM serves.

"It's important for community organizations to be creative to get important information to residents."

A successful approach has been to turn APM's quarterly informational meetings into fiestas with arts and crafts activities and awards for volunteers. These events attract people with activities, but then get vital information and services to them once they're there.

Temple University has sponsored such events and brought in medical students to provide health clinics for residents. The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society sponsors events as well, providing activities such as flower arrangement and wreath-making workshops.

A holiday party attracted residents with crafts and activities, then got vital info to them once they were there.

A true highlight for Naida was giving out awards at one of these events to neighborhood volunteers who would otherwise not get recognized for their efforts. Recent recipients include a 10-year old boy who tends a community garden plot on behalf of his whole family or an 80-year old woman who regularly sweeps up her block.

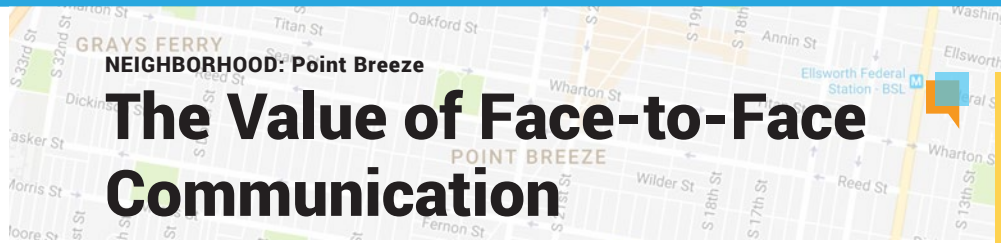
Lastly, Naida and her colleagues at APM track all their results! This means keeping records of sign-in sheets, meeting attendance, services provided, flyers handed out, and taking photos at all her events.

As Naida puts it: "Tracking results and personal stories is what funders want to see more and more. Doing something small and doing it well and building upon that relationship [with a funding partner] helps to secure more funds with each new ask."

Key Tools

- → **Get to know your neighbors and earn their trust Naida became a trusted figure in the community, but it took time and repeat visits to residents**
- → **When going door to door, be respectful of folks who aren't interested**
- → **Ask questions before acting: Listen to your neighbors' interests and concerns first.**
- → **If residents cannot attend a meeting outside the neighborhood, use a survey to record and present their opinions.** *Naida collected neighbors' opinions on a project and brought them to a meeting downtown that many neighbors couldn't attend.*
- → **Give people more than one reason to come to a community meeting: health screenings, home repair workshops, invite elected officials, etc.**
- → **Numbers matter: track your impact by people served, dollars raised, meetings held, etc. APM uses sign-in sheets, takes photos, etc. at every event!**
- → **Toot your own horn: let funders and partners know your neighborhood success stories.**
- → **To become a resource of community information, ask questions and do your research.**

NEIGHBORHOOD: Eastern North Philadelphia



NEIGHBORHOOD: Point Breeze

The Value of Face-to-Face Communication

Stacy Thomas increasingly sees her lifelong neighborhood of Point Breeze in local news stories about houses getting more expensive and neighbors not getting along. Stacy is a fifth generation Point Breeze resident who loves her neighborhood and welcomes the new residents to it.

STACY THOMAS

Stacy earns trust by old and new residents alike by taking action to beautify to the place she holds most dear: her block of 1900 McClellan Street. She has been a **Block Captain** through Philadelphia More Beautiful Committee for 30 years, a position she holds with great pride, working to keep her block litter-free and all its houses in good repair, even if they are vacant.

Stacy's block is lush and green because she connects its residents with their green thumbed neighbor

Though she has the cell phone numbers for her **Clean Block Officer**, **City Councilman**, and other neighborhood leaders, she often finds the best way to get results is to go straight to her neighbors.

She catches them while they're coming in and out of their homes, or knocks on their doors. If they own their house, she talks to them about the importance of keeping the whole block clean. If they rent, she helps them write letters asking for better property maintenance to their landlords.

On reaching landlords, she preaches a philosophy of persistence: "I tell people to just keep calling."

Stacy has new people moving onto her block as well, and she does her part to make sure, in a loving and respectful way, that they understand the ways of the neighborhood. She welcomes everyone personally, introducing herself and handing out a newsletter of block information that she writes at least once a year.

Her newsletter provides answers to frequently asked questions about the neighborhood, includes useful resources Stacy has learned about, outlines some basic "do's and dont's," and gives suggestions on other neighbors to talk to. For example: if people have gardening questions, Stacy sends them to one particular neighbor, "we call her our horticultural center."

She realizes that people are coming from all over and may not understand what it means to live on a dense block of rowhouses like hers:

"Even just waving to your neighbor, [it helps to] be hospitable."

To welcome new people onto the block, Stacy hosts a meet-and-greet open house every summer and helps out when people come to her in need. She will also use tough love when she needs to (though she doesn't need to that often) to keep the block harmonious.

Stacy talks to her neighbors directly when she feels they are causing problems, and when there is an issue she feels strongly about, she walks the neighborhood and talks to people about it. On reaching people the old fashioned way, she said:

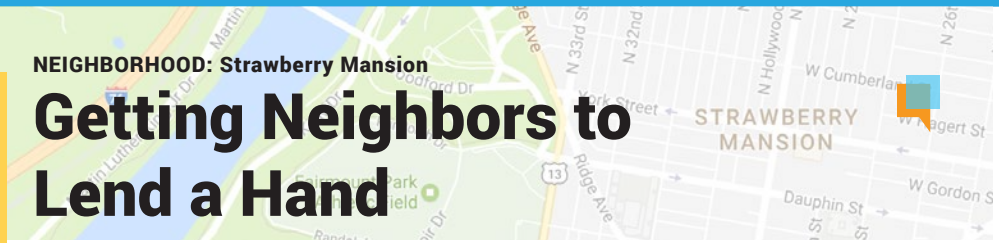
"We live in a technological world, but not everyone has access to that."

For example, on election days, she often pays neighborhood teens to help place voting reminder slips on people's doors, as the last generation of block leaders that she fondly remembers used to do back in the day.

Key Tools

- → **Get to know your neighbors and earn their trust**
- → **Use face-to-face communication to reach out to neighbors**
- → **Being a responsive and well-connected block leader starts with talking with neighbors and learning how to answer their questions.**
- → **Get neighbors talking to each other through a block gathering, such as a clean-up, potluck meet-and-greet, or both!** *Stacy holds a gathering for her block at her house once a year.*
- → **Connect neighbors to each other by letting them know what other neighbor's can help them with.** *Someone on Stacy's block is a gardening expert and helps other neighbors with their trees and planter boxes.*
- → **A simple, hand-delivered newsletter can be an effective way to let new neighbors know about the norms of the block and community events or City services.**
- → **If a neighbor does something unneighborly, assume it's not intentional and reach out to them in a friendly manner.**

NEIGHBORHOOD: Point Breeze



NEIGHBORHOOD: Strawberry Mansion

Getting Neighbors to Lend a Hand

TONNETTA GRAHAM

Tonnetta Graham loves Strawberry Mansion's big historic houses, but sees residents struggling to maintain and stay in their homes.

As a lifelong resident and President of Strawberry Mansion CDC (SMCDC), Tonnetta has helped address the issue in multiple ways: by getting residents to sign up for utility assistance and property tax reductions, organizing **tangled title** workshops with her **Councilman's office**, and hosting block pride contests which award residents for the upkeep of their properties.

Neighborhood volunteers spruce up a neighbor's porch.

A unique opportunity presented itself when the Councilman introduced Tonnetta to Proud Neighbor, a community life magazine based in Philadelphia. In 2014, SMCDC participated in Proud Neighbor's annual Help A Neighbor Day for the first time by organizing an event where neighbors volunteer to do small exterior repairs on the houses of three longtime Strawberry Mansion residents. This could mean fixing a loose railing, painting a porch or cleaning up the yard.

SMCDC raised about $1,000 in funds for materials, sought donations of labor and paint from local contractors and City departments, and pulled together a team of volunteers. While Proud Neighbor didn't finance the event, if featured SMCDC in a large spread in its quarterly magazine.

Being featured in a high-quality publication has helped SMCDC promote themselves to potential funders.

To find the homeowners with the greatest need, SMCDC reached out to area **Block Captains** to nominate residents. Tonnetta also did some neighborhood walks, looking for homes that might be good candidates.

She focused on blocks close to commercial corridors where redevelopment was already underway in Strawberry Mansion. This was a strategic step Tonnetta said, to "attend to the needs of long-time homeowners and show that money doesn't just go to new developments in the neighborhood."

Her deep knowledge of the neighborhood helped her know how to involve her neighbors, telling them, for example. "look at how just two gallons of paint can help you." She recounted:

"Some neighbors weren't interested, believe it or not, but others said, 'You sure this is free?!?'"

Help a Neighbor Day in action!

Six homes have been completed in the two years SMCDC has sponsored Help Your Neighbor Day. For Tonnetta, the repairs are just one measure of success. The other is when Strawberry Mansion residents came outside, saw the work being done by their neighbors, and joined in. Tonnetta described how:

"Many neighbors came out and started cleaning up their own house as a result. We left the paint and materials behind, which helped other neighbors hit some extra homes."

Help a Neighbor Day in action!

Finally, it's informal policy of SMCDC is to encourage residents to invest some of the savings they get by signing up for property tax reduction programs into the maintenance of their homes.

This policy works its way into workshops and bi-monthly community meetings where Tonnetta and staff host City of Philadelphia staffers

to explain how residents can take advantage of tax discount programs available to residents like the **Long Time Owner Occupant Program**, the **Homestead Exemption**, or the **Low Income Senior Citizen Real Estate Tax Freeze**.

SMCDC reinforces the suggestion to take the savings from these programs and put them towards home repairs by referring residents to the **Philadelphia Rowhouse Manual** by the Philadelphia City Planning Commission. The Rowhouse Manual provides information on maintenance and improvements owners can make to their rowhome.

"Since there are no classes offered on how to maintain a house when you get a mortgage - such as the basics like repairing a faucet - the Rowhouse Manual is a great go-to guide" says Tonnetta.

Key Tools

- → **Give people a reason to help out: organize an event that makes it easy (and fun!) to pitch in.**
- → **Get to know your neighbors and earn their trust**
- → **Reach out to your Block Captain to reach more neighbors and receive guidance**
- → **Work with partners: find out who can help you and has strengths in areas you don't. Proud Neighbor provided free publicity for SMCDC's event.**
- → **Don't be afraid to start with small steps.**
- → **Contact your elected officials when appropriate and have a clear idea of what you're asking for--they may share opportunities with you as they encounter them.** *Tonnetta's Councilperson knew home repair was a need, so he connected her with Proud Neighbor and Help a Neighbor Day.*
- → **Ask local businesses to support your cause by donating supplies or labor.**
- → **Document your accomplishments: show funders and partners you can get work done.**
- → **Refer residents to helpful how-to guides like the Philadelphia Rowhouse Manual.**

NEIGHBORHOOD: Strawberry Mansion

I WANT TO GET TO KNOW MY NEIGHBORS

How to Tackle a Challenge

Talk to your neighbors to find out if they share your concern, any history behind it, and anything that's been tried before.

Put your vision on paper to see if you need to break down the challenge into smaller more easily accomplished steps--start small!

Find out who your community players are (i.e. volunteer groups, civics, NAC office, CDC, etc.)

See if they have resources to help you or want to partner.

Write out your list of what you need to make this project happen, and how many people you need to help you.

If they don't, reach out to City government, elected officials, other non-profits, etc.

Speak at meetings and knock on doors to reach out to neighbors, businesses, and others with your project plan, see if they are supportive, and recruit volunteers!

If they aren't supportive, Get to know your neighbors to better understand why the community doesn't share your concern.

Update neighbors and partners on your progress

Get to work! Organize volunteers, seek funding / supplies, keep good records and lists of contact info.

Document results (photos!) and keep track of numbers.

If you achieve your goal, celebrate your success!

If you didn't achieve your goal, figure out what went wrong, document that, and try a smaller project next!

How to Knock on Doors

Introduce yourself, give some history of your involvement in the neighborhood

To encourage people to attend a meeting, say "I haven't seen you in a while!" or, if you haven't seen them before, "Are you new to the neighborhood?"

Start by saying "Are you coming to the community meeting?" Then they'll ask "What meeting?" and you can take it from there!

Free snacks are always a good draw for meetings. Just make sure you actually provide them if you say you will!

Make sure you have a smile on your face and that you stand back from the door so they can see you and your flyer from the window or peephole

Make sure the flyer is visible while you're talking, so they can read along as you talk

I HAVE A CHALLENGE TO TACKLE

How to Knock on Doors (Continued)

Include the topics that will be discussed at the meeting on your flyer

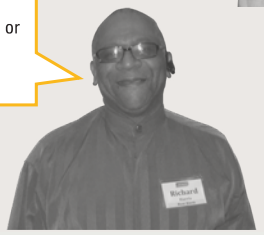
Simplify your flyer to include only the most essential info such as the date, time, and topic, and make that info bold

Instead of a long intro, start with the important information you want to share

Flyer on weekends when people have more time to talk

Eventually people will start to recognize you & know you're delivering important information!

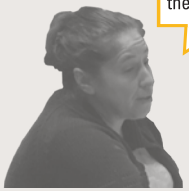
Tell them you're not there to sell anything or to ask them to take a survey



How to Knock on Doors (Continued)

Always have something to leave behind with contact info printed on it

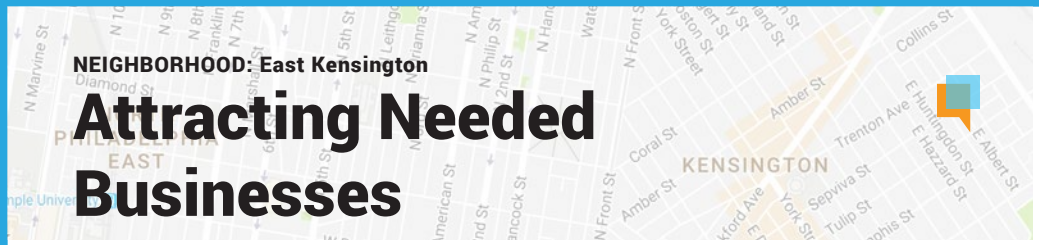
Tell them they have a chance to have their voice heard!



Tell them why this meeting is particularly important (there are lots of public meetings)

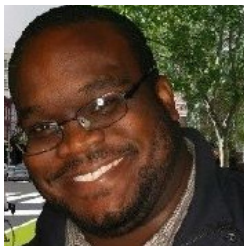
Read your audience—if they have the game on in the background, ask them who is winning. If they're cooking dinner, be quick

If you're flyering for a zoning meeting, be clear you are there on behalf of the neighborhood, not the developer



NEIGHBORHOOD: East Kensington

Attracting Needed Businesses



JAMES WRIGHT

JOHN THEOBOLD

John Theobald and James Wright have both been involved in the efforts to bring new businesses and activity to East Kensington's Frankford Avenue: John as a board member of New Kensington Community Development Corporation (NKCDC) and **zoning committee** chair of East Kensington Neighbors Association (EKNA) and James as a then-employee of NKCDC.

The main neighborhoods that NKCDC served -- Fishtown, East Kensington, and Olde Richmond -- experienced decades of population and job loss and an increase in vacancy and crime.

NKCDC identified Frankford Avenue as the key to changing this pattern because it was the area's spine and connected all three neighborhoods together. Frankford Avenue also had existing strengths including dedicated nearby neighbors, a growing number of artists moving in, and steady manufacturing jobs that still existed.

NKCDC conducted a **neighborhood planning process** in 2003, which resulted in the Frankford Avenue Arts Corridor Plan. The plan recommended capitalizing on those existing strengths to re-brand the neighborhood as a hub for artists and makers. "The bones of the plan linked to the neighborhood's history of fabricators and industrial businesses," John said.

Adhering to the plan, NKCDC focused much of its improvement projects on the Avenue, engaging residents and business owners in the process. "The strength was in NKCDC's focus on the idea and commitment to building it," John said.

They worked with Pennsylvania Horticultural Society and the Licenses and Inspections to clean up vacant lots; buy property; install flower pots, trees, benches and bus shelters; and work with owners to rent to commercial tenants that fit the Frankford Avenue Arts vision.

NKCDC also provided day-to-day support to business owners, established **design guidelines** for businesses, and provided funding to install new lights and fix storefronts.

Lastly, NKCDC hosted First Friday events to showcase Avenue businesses with attendance topping 100 people, and other arts businesses opened as a result.

One of the iconic "FA" (Frankford Ave) signs and a bus shelter installed and maintained by NKCDC

At the same time, NKCDC staff helped neighbors form EKNA, which went on to become the most active neighborhood to participate in the Corridor Plan. Thanks to their participation, the plan truly expresses the interests of EKNA residents. This is part of what makes the plan successful from the neighbor and the business perspective. John recollected how:

"The plan gave neighbors their own voice, and the community groups support it because of that."

I HAVE A CHALLENGE TO TACKLE

The results of these efforts, 13 years later? Almost no commercial vacancy, and new commercial spaces being built and occupied! "Now there's a nice mix of businesses, all different kinds- some creative, some food, and the everyday stuff." James describes. "It seems like most businesses are owned by local entrepreneurs."

EKNA helps carry the torch for the Avenue Corridor Plan in multiple ways now, including hosting an annual arts festival and holding firm on requiring property owners on the Avenue to reserve their first floors for businesses. John described how:

Little Baby's Ice Cream, one of the many businesses that has opened on Frankford Avenue in the past 10 years.

"We vote for ground-floor retail [on Frankford Avenue] every single time. We'll give up on parking and height issues to make that happen."

A recent EKNA zoning meeting.

Because Frankford Avenue has some blocks that are mostly homes, EKNA has really stressed requiring putting businesses on the first floors of new **development** projects. This keeps the commercial corridor as continuous as possible, which encourages customers to walk along Frankford Avenue and stop inside different businesses, instead of just patronizing one business then leaving.

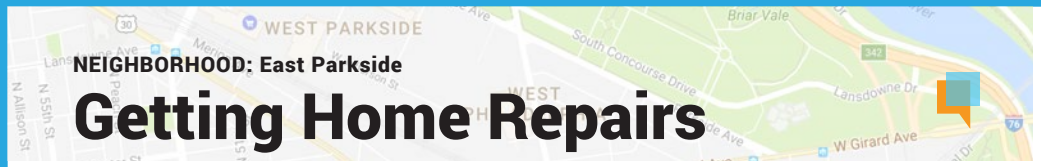
"The plan helps [EKNA] hang its hat on the arts corridor idea and helps us push for it, especially when we're talking to doubtful developers," John said. All these efforts together make the Frankford Arts one of the few plans that still has major momentum more than 10 years after being published.

"It started as NKCDC driven, but they can't do the work without having buy-in from the neighbors," James said. "Getting neighbors to patronize the businesses is important, and having zoning processes and design guidelines are a big way that the neighborhood groups now uphold the aspects the corridor vision."

Key Tools

- → **Neighbor-led plans are powerful: they build support for your cause, provide a roadmap, and make fundraising easier.**
- → **When drafting a neighborhood plan, start with what makes your neighborhood great already and build off of that.** *On Frankford Avenue, there were already artists in the neighborhood and some small manufacturing, so that was emphasized in the plan.*
- → **Being flexible in a plan helps.** *The Frankford Avenue Commercial Corridor Plan was more effective because it recommend a mix of businesses and wasn't too restrictive about what fit the vision of an "arts" corridor.*
- → **Learn the City's rules for development and zoning, as well as when you have influence.**
- → **When negotiating, focus on what is most important.** *The EKNA zoning committee is willing to sacrifice other desires to ensure Frankford Avenue projects featuring ground-floor commercial.*

NEIGHBORHOOD: East Kensington



NEIGHBORHOOD: East Parkside

Getting Home Repairs

JOYCE SMITH

Joyce Smith saw a connection between home maintenance and **blight** from abandoned houses in her neighborhood of East Parkside. "For me, my main concern has always been our housing stock," Joyce said. Sometimes the owner doesn't have the money or skills to maintain an older home.

This can be especially true on historic blocks, where it is more expensive to make specialty repairs to the exterior. Abandonment and demolition can result when the home's condition deteriorates significantly and the homeowner can't afford to pay for repairs. Joyce saw many historic homes in her neighborhood lost for this reason.

Joyce is a member and co-founder of the Viola Street Residents Association (VSRA), which has done work on her block for years. VSRA established an ongoing collaboration with the Department of Licenses and Inspection, got the UC Green tree tender group to expand their boundaries to include East Parkside, developed a neighborhood plan through the Community Design Collaborative, and successfully lobbied their Councilwoman to induct Viola Street's community garden into the Neighborhood Gardens Trust.

Needless to say, VSRA has established a reputation as a civic that had the capacity to accomplish projects and reach out to residents. This came in handy when Joyce discovered a way to prevent abandonment: help residents to repair their homes so they can stay in their homes.

Joyce and VSRA initially reached out to Regional Housing Legal Services about legal tools they could use to fight vacancy. VSRA walked the neighborhood inventorying vacant properties, and Joyce did research using City websites to find property information, deeds and tax balances. It was through these conversations that VSRA was referred to Philadelphia's local chapter of Habitat for Humanity.

Habitat volunteers repair a facade.

Habitat's home repair program was seeking a well-organized neighborhood in need of repairs. In East Parkside they found just that. Through their partnership, VSRA did the neighbor-to-neighbor outreach and assisted residents with the necessary paperwork and Habitat volunteers did the repairs.

Joyce, her husband, and another VSRA volunteer took the lead on the outreach and sign-ups. They started on weekends in early spring, which helped increase their chance of striking up conversations with neighbors who were outside on their porches. It took several months, many conversations, and much paperwork to sign up neighbors. "We just kept coming back," Joyce said.

> "I know some people send emails, but you really have to get out and talk to people. Walk the block, knock on doors, meet people where they're at."

Some neighbors needed more convincing than others. Joyce knew from her neighborhood property research that **tangled titles** were a problem for many of her neighbors. This meant that a neighbor might be hesitant to participate in the project for fear of having to prove legal ownership of their home. Because some folks would be afraid of signing agreements for fear of losing their homes, Joyce approached these conversations with a lot of sensitivity.

> "Because I was a trusted neighbor, it was easier for me to coax folks past their fears than it would have been for Habitat"

says Joyce. Residents weren't asked to show papers proving they owned the house. Instead, Habitat agreed to do the repairs as long as residents provided proof that they'd lived in the house for a long time.

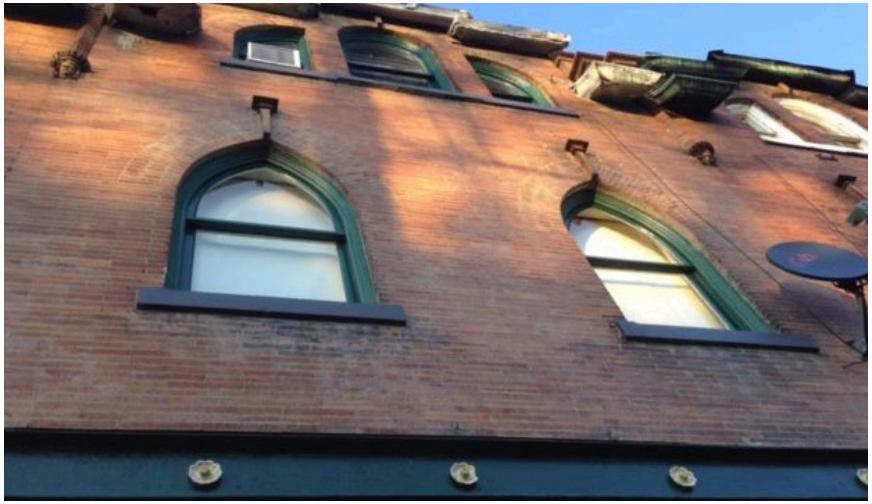
A neighbor repaints a door on Viola Street.

Habitat volunteers repaired 15 homes during the summer of 2014. They focused on repairs to the exterior of the home like windows, banisters, porches, and painting. Smaller projects were free and larger repairs were offered at steeply discounted rates and a payment plan with no interest or **liens**. Larger repairs took a month and minor ones were completed in a day.

Houses designated as historic by the Philadelphia Historical Commission tended to be more complex projects. For these, Joyce and Habitat sought the assistance of local experts: the Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia and East Parkside neighbor Sean Solomon, an experienced historical preservationist and president of the VSRA board at the time. Working together, Sean and the Preservation Alliance guided the repairs to meet Historical Commission rules.

"Helping folks repair their homes is good for the whole neighborhood" says Joyce. Repairs stop the deterioration of houses that might lead to safety problems and high heating costs, all factors that can drive fixed-income residents from their homes. Residents who can stay in their homes continue to be a part of the community, supporting its stability and character and increasing pride among neighbors.

Plus, well-maintained homes reinforce property values for the entire block. Joyce hopes to bring Habitat for Humanity back to East Parkside in the near future to address the interior repair needs of neighbors.



Facade restoration conformed to Historical Commission standards

Key Tools

- → **Work with partners: find out who can help you and has strengths in areas you don't.** *Habitat for Humanity provided skilled volunteers, materials and know-how. Reaching out to a potential partner (Regional Housing Legal Services) is what eventually led VRSA to their partnership with Habitat.*
- → **Reach out to experts for help.** *Preservation Alliance provided guidance on how to repair historically designated homes.*
- → **Repeat communication leads to greater success.** *It took Joyce many visits with some neighbors to get them signed up for home repairs they needed.*
- → **Know your audience: focus on what's important to them, not what's important to you.**
- → **To become a community resource, ask questions and do research.**
- → **Get to know your neighbors and earn their trust over time.**
- → **Use face-to-face communication to reach out to neighbors.**
- → **Be sensitive that not everyone's situation is the same.** *Several owners on Joyce's block had tangled titles and were afraid of losing their homes if they had to share that information.*

NEIGHBORHOOD: East Parkside

NEIGHBORHOOD: Tioga

Putting a Commercial Corridor on the Map

SHEILA HOWARD

Sheila Howard returned to her neighborhood of Tioga and found that it no longer had the businesses that every community needs to thrive. No dry cleaners, no places to eat breakfast, etc.

"The neighborhood had been depleted...not like it was when I was raised there," she recounted.

Her concern led her to start attending Tioga United's community meetings and eventually enroll in Citizens Planning Institute (CPI). After talking with Tioga United's leadership, she decided to make her CPI final project about revitalizing 17th Street commercial corridor between Allegheny and Erie Avenues.

At the time, Tioga United was working with the Community Design Collaborative and local residents to envision how to make this stretch of 17th Street more beautiful, but no one had spoken with business owners yet. Sheila decided to hold a meeting for business owners; to make it easy for the businesses, she arranged a meeting time and place, all they had to do was show up.

In order to reach the owners and get them to come, Sheila visited all the shops on 17th Street to talk to them. "Because I was from Tioga United, they were willing to hear me out," Sheila said. She also flyered with her grandkids' help and sent text reminders, which she discovered was a more reliable form of communication--when she called the businesses it usually wasn't the owners who answered the phone.

Her hard work paid off and eight business owners showed up to talk about their issues! They agreed that making 17th Street more attractive and active was important, but didn't want to start a formal business association to do so.

Instead, Sheila agreed to become the point person, taking the role of organizer on herself and being intentional and specific about what she asked of the businesses. Sheila recalled how:

"I had to do all the logistical stuff. I took that off their plate so they would be engaged and stay involved. I didn't promise I could cure all their ills, but I stressed that we could work together."

Sheila posing with Clean & Green Day volunteers & her local Clean Block Officer

Sheila did this in two big ways: pushing the City's Commerce Department to contribute funding, and organizing a Clean and Green Day. The businesses agreed they wanted to spruce up their properties, but said they needed the **City's Storefront Improvement Program** (SIP) to do it. This stretch of 17th Street wasn't on the City's list of eligible commercial corridors, but that didn't stop Sheila.

After many meetings, phone calls, and emails from Sheila, Commerce staff took the bus up from Center City to 17th Street to take a look. Sheila didn't have much time to plan, but she texted the business owners and several came out, ready to sign up for the program. This showed Commerce the business owners' commitment, and they allowed them to enroll in SIP!

Sheila knew there were more corridor improvements needed and came up with the idea for a Clean and Green Day that would help business owners while also involving nearby **Block Captains**. The event combined a clean-up with a tree planting, and was a big success!

The local hardware store donated supplies to paint the tree planters and curbs, one business opened its parking lot as a community space for the day, a local church held a flea market and games for kids, and 31 trees were planted by volunteers.

But Sheila didn't stop there. In the process of organizing the Clean and Green Day, she formed a block captain coalition. "If you're a good block captain, you're organized and everyone knows what's going on," Sheila said. She built up the membership by asking Tioga United for the phone

numbers and email addresses of block captains they knew of, and also asking them to let other dedicated neighbors know about the coalition.

She ended up with a coalition of 27 block captains, and surveyed them about what their two biggest issues were. The top response was to clean dirty alleyways. So just two months after the Clean and Green Day, Shelia organized a Clean Alleys Project. She organized four separate events where one alley was cleaned each day, one of which was connected to the 17th Street corridor.

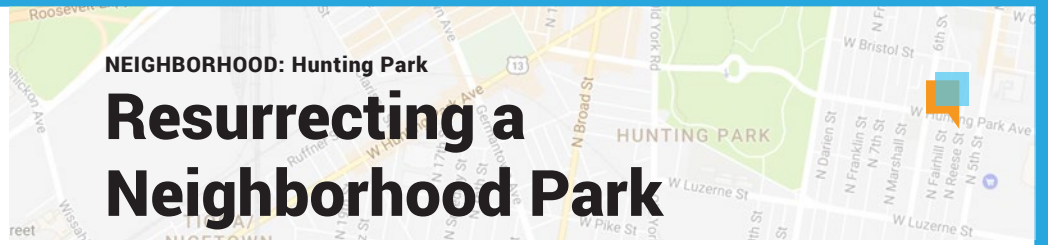
Tioga United donated supplies, Gaudenzia House donated volunteer labor, the block captains on those blocks prepared a meal for the volunteers, and other neighbors on those blocks cleaned their front yards the same day. These events were so successful that members of Sheila's coalition are now meeting together to plan other events around the neighborhood! Sheila described how:

"People want to align with success, so if you show a victory, people will come out and want to join."

Key Tools

- → **Get to know your neighbors and earn their trust**
- → **Follow-up if someone offers to help and be specific about what you need—even if it's small, it helps!**
- → **Organizing small business owners is different from organizing residents: be mindful of hours available and getting the best contact info to reach the owner.**
- → **Learn who has authority to make decisions and focus your efforts on contacting those who can truly help you.**
- → **Persistence pays off:** *Sheila's relentless communication got the Commerce Department to invest funds in two businesses.*
- → **Reach out to Block Captains as a valuable resource**
- → **Appeal to businesses' bottom line:** *Sheila emphasized that a clean corridor attracts more customers.*
- → **Work with partners: find out who can help you and has strengths in areas you don't.** *Gaudenzia House provided volunteers for Sheila's Block Captain Coalition's Clean Alley Project.*

NEIGHBORHOOD: Tioga



NEIGHBORHOOD: Hunting Park

Resurrecting a Neighborhood Park

When Leroy Fisher returned from the Marines to his home of Hunting Park in the early 1990s, he saw a neighborhood of crime, drugs and **disinvestment**. He knew he wanted to help, but wasn't sure how. He remembered:

LEROY FISHER

"I knew I wanted to be more involved in the community when I returned, not run away from the problem like I did previously. I had to build new relationships."

He started meeting and talking with his new neighbors, and slowly met more people who wanted to take action just like he did. After conversing with neighbors who really knew the community, they resolved that the solution for the neighborhood was a solution for the youth, who seemed to be "lost with no options."

Leroy and his neighbors provided the opportunity for young men to be active and learn teamwork through football, starting a league on the trash-ridden football field at Hunting Park, the 87-acre park the neighborhood was named after.

Leroy got the league together "by any means necessary." He made flyers, pounded the pavement, talked to people, and hosted fundraiser parties at the bar he managed.

The hard work paid off! So many kids signed-up they had enough for six teams instead of the two they were planning. Even those who were using the park for illegal activity supported Leroy: "It wasn't a hard sell. Everyone wants something better for their children."

Because of the league, Leroy ended up doing a lot more for the park: "We were single-minded with football," he described, "and everything else

came as a byproduct of that." For example, he hosted field clean-ups with families to get ready for games so the kids wouldn't have to play football with glass in the grass.

The league helped neighbors take pride in their football, their park, and their neighborhood. He saw people's behavior change slowly as he led by example. Leroy said:

Once people saw us cleaning, they were less inclined to litter.

In order to keep the league up and running, local churches, businesses, and politicians started offering to help out. More sports leagues formed, and the Hunting Park Aztecs won the Pop Warner national football title in 2004. The leagues now support 500 young athletes!

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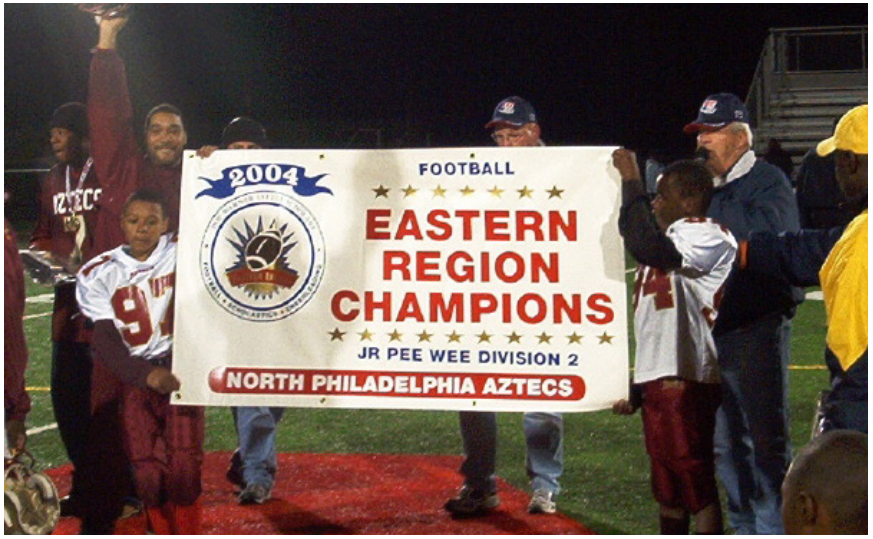


On the field success led to notice from beyond the community. Leroy helped parlay it into a fundraising windfall.

After the national championship, others around the city took notice. The non-profit Fairmount Park Conservancy was looking for a signature park project to invest in, and they contacted Leroy after seeing his name in the paper.

Why did they choose Hunting Park United? Leroy explained:

"We had our finger on the pulse of the community, that's why they came to us."

Leroy and the Conservancy organized many well-attended community meetings to create a **master plan** that set the vision for how neighbors wanted to see the park improve over time.

Through this parternship, the park has seen $5 million in improvements over the past 7 years, including new baseball, football, and tennis facilities, lighting, trees, and community gardens.

According to Leroy, it was a win-win for Fairmount Park Conservancy and Hunting Park United: "We made a bigger name for ourselves, and we gave the Conservancy a story to tell."

A brand new playground includes lettering made by community members.

Perhaps the most important result of the master planning effort is that Leroy formed Hunting Park United, the first community group to meet in Hunting Park in a long time. Hunting Park United meets every month at the park and many residents attend to work toward their future vision for the neighborhood as a whole.

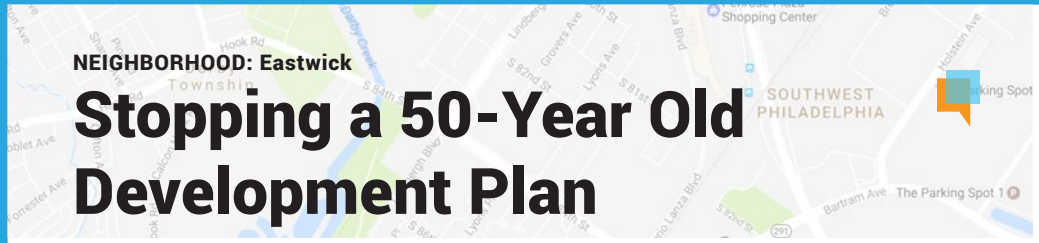
More and more neighbors are coming out; "I don't have to work as hard to get people in the door as I used to!" Leroy said.

With help from the Fairmount Park Conservancy and Phillies' first baseman Ryan Howard, a new baseball field was opened in 2012.

Key Tools

- → **Talk to your neighbors to find out if they share your concern, any history behind it, and anything that's been tried before.**
- → **Knock on doors to get participation in your project**
- → **Start small! Big change takes a long time, eventually small successes will start adding up.** *Creating youth athletic leagues brought eventual attention and investment to the park.*
- → **When asking for support, start with small requests from different supporters with different resources, and work you way up to bigger ones.**
- → **Make it about the kids!** *Leroy discovered that cleaning the park for the park's sake wasn't enough to get parents to help out, but making it a necessity for kids to play there was.*
- → **Lead by example, and others will start to follow your lead.**
- → **Numbers matter: track your impact by people served, dollars raised, meetings held, etc.**
- → **Neighbor-led plans are powerful: they build support for your cause, provide a roadmap, and make fundraising easier.**
- → **Neighbors need to help create the plan instead of being included once the plan is done.**

NEIGHBORHOOD: Hunting Park



NEIGHBORHOOD: Eastwick

Stopping a 50-Year Old Development Plan

RAMONA ROUSSEAU-REID

Ramona Rousseau-Reid and a few of her neighbors had just formed a group called the Eastwick Action Committee (EAC) when a resident spotted engineers doing **land survey** work on a vast parcel of wooded land between 86th Street and the John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge.

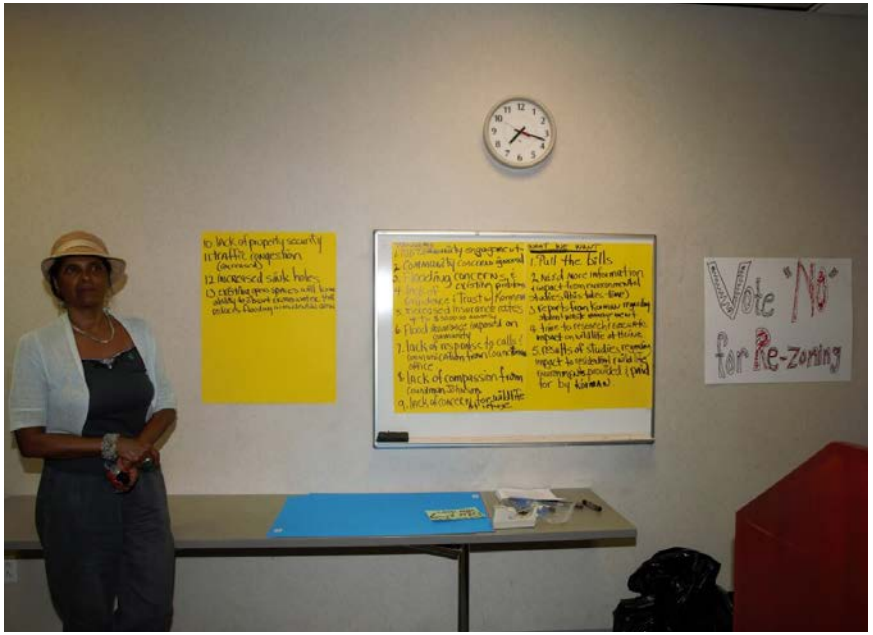
The neighbor asked what they were doing and the surveyors said they were hired by the Korman Company. Turned out the City government gave Korman permission to develop this land decades ago as part of the transformation of Eastwick from lower-density marshland to suburban style housing. Now they were finally developing it. Two EAC members went directly to the Korman office to ask about it, and learned that they planned to build 722 new apartments and 1034 new parking spaces on **floodplain** land in their community.

"We were horrified when we got the news," Ramona said. EAC found out that Korman needed to change the lot's **zoning** from single-family homes to multi-family in order to build apartments. Because Eastwick didn't have a Registered Community Organization (RCO) to host a public meeting to vote on whether apartments should be built, Korman could go straight to the District **Councilman** for approval. Ramona knew she and her neighbors needed to act fast, though she and some EAC members hadn't been part of community groups since the 1990s and "didn't know each other that well yet."

EAC contacted the Friends of Heinz Refuge (FOHR), who were equally concerned. Though both groups were made up of different people, "we saw we had a lot in common in terms of our interest in land use and the Eastwick community." They decided to "form a united front" as the Eastwick Friends & Neighbors Coalition (EFNC) around stopping the development from happening as it was proposed, which they believed would have major negative environmental impacts on the community.

Environmentalists use advocacy frequently, so the Friends were able

to connect Ramona and EFNC to other professionals that helped them advocate for their cause, including the Delaware River Keeper Network, Keystone Conservation Trust, Audubon Pennsylvania, Darby Creek Valley Association, and the Pennsylvania chapter of the Sierra Club.



"Vote NO to Rezoning" at a July 2012 EFNC educational meeting.

The Friends and these other partners educated EFNC on the details of the environmental dangers posed by this development, which Ramona recounts took "hours of meetings." During this organizing process, EFNC also wrote a **mission statement**, elected **officers**, and retained free legal counsel from the Public Interest Law Center and Dechert LLP.

Korman was scheduled to present at a EFNC community meeting. Ramona knew she needed to pack these meetings with neighbors if there was any hope of changing this development. She and fellow EFNC board members had to meet all their neighbors, tell them the complicated story of Eastwick and its place on environmentally important marshland, and then convince them to take time out of their personal schedules to protest a development that had been in the works and approved by the City for decades.

Ramona and EFNC set out to reach all 5,500 Eastwick residents and did just that! They personally financed necessary supplies and sometimes borrowed printer paper from their workplaces to make flyers to hand out door-to-door. They also waited outside the Eastwick Regional Rail station and the Penrose shopping mall parking lot in all weather, where they casually started conversations asking if people knew about the historic problems the neighborhood has had with flooding. Ramona even hopped on the SEPTA Regional Rail train with people sometimes to continue talking, and then turned around and came back!

Ramona and fellow EFNC members table to meet and educate neighbors.

Ramona described:

"We knew we needed to educate people before the meeting, so we took as long as it took to have conversations with any residents who had questions. It was so imperative that residents [came to meetings]. We'd tell them 'You must have a voice, we have to stand strong.'"

Thanks to four full days of outreach, there was a huge turnout at the community meeting. Korman was surprised by the emotional reaction of neighbors to the proposed development, which was not only because of the environmental risks and the fact that "you can't build like that in the floodplain, that's preposterous," as Ramona put it.

Their reaction was also due to the fact that this proposal was yet another missed opportunity for the **economic development** neighbors have been promised since the mid-20th century when thousands of residents were displaced by the promise of **urban renewal** in their neighborhood that never happened.

The next step was outreach to the Councilman's office. EFNC called his office directly to ask for a meeting to educate the relatively new Council member on Eastwick's history and environmental concerns. They invited him to a community meeting and packed the house; by that time, neighbors recognized Ramona and EFNC outreach team members and knew how important this was. "We needed a movement," Ramona said.

EFNC meeting attendees vote in opposition to rezoning the parcel for Korman's proposed development.

The Councilman still introduced the zoning bill anyway, but environmentalists, their free lawyers, and over 100 neighbors attended the public hearing and gave two dozen testimonies. The Councilman tabled the bill that day and eventually pulled it altogether.

Ramona described:

"They didn't expect the community to be as forceful as we did. They had to hear us."

Since tackling the Korman development, EFNC has become a **Registered Community Organization,** received various City **grants**, been awarded the Empowerment Award from The Bread & Roses Funding, and still works actively to make sure neighborhood interests are well represented in any future planning and development efforts. The Councilman now notifies the group when there are any potential projects in the neighborhood.

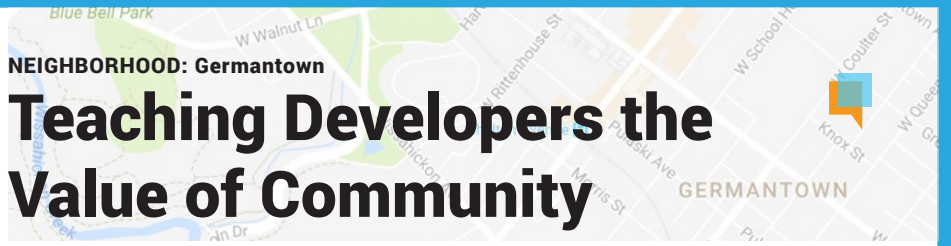
In December 2015, Ramona and other EFNC members were there when the Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority terminated their agreement with Korman, returning that large piece of marshland back to City ownership. "Some of us were teary eyed...shows that when you know something to be right in your spirit, if you totally commit to it, people will see that passion and come to your aid."

Ramona calls the EAC's leaders "a great unit of friendship and collaboration" and she still lives by her "do what you have to do" approach to outreach, making whatever time is needed to make sure the community has a voice.

Key Tools

- → **If you see something happening in your neighborhood, ask about it!** *If neighbors hadn't spoke with surveyors on Korman site, residents may not have known about development proposal until it was too late for them to act.*
- → **If you need to speak to a large company or City official, pick up the phone or show up at their door.**
- → **Work with partners: find out who can help you and has strengths in areas you don't.** *Friends of Heinz Refuge and other environmental experts educated Eastwick residents and Councilman Johnson about complex environmental concerns surrounding the proposed development.*
- → **Work with City Council when large developments are proposed; if you let them know your needs and opinions, they can be an ally.**
- → **Learn the City's rules for development and zoning, as well as when you have influence.**
- → **A big turnout at public meetings and Council hearings is a great way to make the community voice heard.**
- → **Use face-to-face communication to reach out to neighbors.** *Ramona and EFNC door knocked and went to shopping mall parking lots and train stations to talk to neighbors about her cause.*
- → **Get to know your neighbors and earn their trust.** *Ramona and EFNC did this in a remarkably short period of time by putting in long hours doing face-to-face outreach and hosting meetings, and showing results.*

NEIGHBORHOOD: Eastwick



NEIGHBORHOOD: Germantown

Teaching Developers the Value of Community

BETTY TURNER

In Germantown, Betty Turner saw an increasing number of properties getting **redeveloped**, and an increasing number of neighbors concerned that new owners were not building in a way that kept the diverse and historic character of the community.

Since the neighborhood did not have a **neighborhood plan** at the time, there wasn't an easy way for developers to see what sort of projects community members were interested in.

Betty's organization, Germantown Community Connection, and others, asked developers to present their project ideas openly to neighbors before it was required by City government. "A lot of different residents and organizations attended this development series," Betty said. "Germantown residents were concerned."

Betty speaks to a huge crowd at a Germantown Community Connection zoning meeting.

Betty noticed that developers were more welcomed by residents when they presented their ideas ahead of time and were open to input on how their project could better serve the community.

I HAVE A CHALLENGE TO TACKLE

One **developer**, Ken Weinstein of Philly Office Retail, was investing a lot in the neighborhood at the time. "Initially, the community wasn't so happy with some of Ken's projects," Betty said. "There was some give and take on Ken's part...When he [was] open and upfront with the community, there were fewer problems."

Learning how to work with the community in Germantown led Weinstein to create Jumpstart Germantown, a program to increase the number of people who are investing in the neighborhood in a community-minded way.

Jumpstart Germantown connects novice and less experienced developers with more experienced real estate professionals and provides acquisition and construction loans, not typically offered by area banks, for their projects.

Ken Weinstein leads a Jumpstart Germantown session

Betty teaches Jumpstart Germantown's important class on community relations. Ken asked her to do so because she has lived in the neighborhood a long time, knows its history, its key block leaders, and has developed trusting relationships with many of them.

"When the program started, there was a big pressure for residents to be part of the mentoring process," Betty said:

"This would help developers see the importance of community relations and provide helpful hints for how to make that happen."

Betty is quick to note that her class is very different than public relations. This class teaches people interested in building in Germantown the community's demographics, how to be good neighbors, who to talk to on the block to find out what's important to people, and the most valuable

lesson of engaging community members in decisions at all levels as soon as possible. As she described:

"We ask the developers to put themselves in the shoes of people being impacted by development and think about what it means to them."

Ken Weinstein (center) with the first cohort to complete the Jumpstart Germantown program.

The result is what Betty sees as "the best thing to happen to Germantown." It's a win-win: not only are more properties renovated more quickly, but in a way that's better for the community because of the input offered by neighborhood residents. Neighbors are informed, and developers have the resources to help make Germantown better.

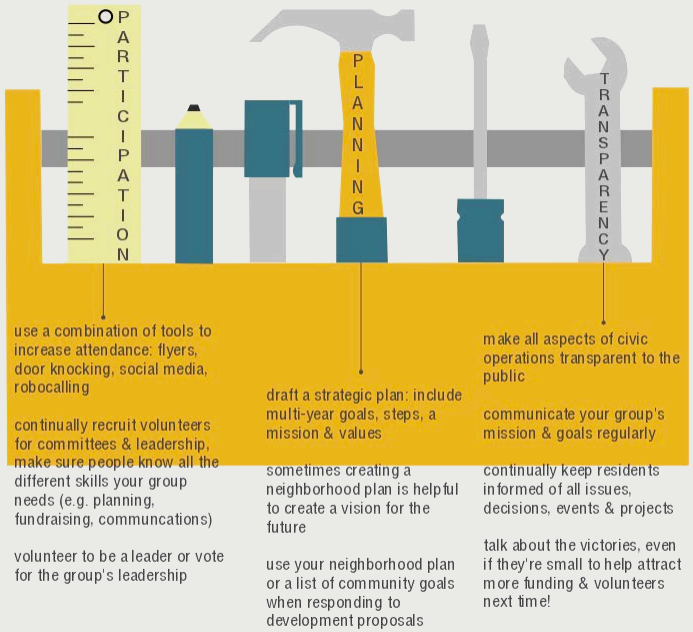
Jumpstart has even inspired many developers to live in Germantown themselves!

Key Tools

- → **Learn the City's rules for development and zoning, as well as when you have influence**
- → **Give developers examples of projects that the community likes**
- → **If you don't have a neighborhood plan, define the needs (street lighting, signage, etc.) with your community before meeting with the developer**
- → **When negotiating, focus on what is most important: Germantown Community Connection learned that the best results happen when instead of saying "no" to development, they work with developers to help them build something that is a positive contribution to the neighborhood.**
- → **Get to know your neighbors and earn their trust**

NEIGHBORHOOD: Germantown

How to Improve Your Community Group



NEIGHBORHOOD: Kensington, Sharswood

Churches & Communities Working Together

Richard Harris and Warren McMichael both saw that their churches could help solve problems and build community in their respective neighborhoods of Kensington and Sharswood.

Warren is a member of Miller Memorial Baptist Church, which sits a few hundred feet from General John F. Reynolds Elementary.

RICHARD HARRIS

WARREN MCMICHAEL

In 1993 the church's pastor, a former teacher, had the church "adopt" Reynolds Elementary to support the school.

The congregation formed a Public School Committee, of which Warren was a member. The committee organized volunteers to staff school libraries and lunchrooms, and fundraised amongst the congregation to pay for field trips, scholarships, and awards for students.

Seventh Graders having a ball in Washington, DC.

Thank you, Miller Memorial Baptist Church!!

Reynolds yearbooks are filled with acknowledgements of Miller Memorial Baptist Church and the support it provided

Miller Memorial is similar to other Philadelphia churches in that many of its members grew up in the neighborhood, and later moved away, but continued to be congregants. Though the school has since closed, Warren's story continues to serve as an example of how churches can support their neighborhoods, even if members don't live there.

Miller Memorial Baptist Church hosted graduation ceremonies for Reynolds, the local public school.

In his years as Head Pastor at Firm Hope Baptist Church, Richard has fallen in love with the surrounding neighborhood. It is rich in diversity and history, but has been crippled by becoming city's largest site for heroin dealing. "A lot oppression, depression, drug abuse, crime, and everything that comes with that," Richard described.

After seeing other North Philly churches join together with secular organizations to get drugs out of their neighborhoods, Richard decided that in addition to the spiritual, the church needed to provide social and physical support. "I witnessed it first hand...if it happened there, it can happen where we're at," Richard said. He began participating in neighborhood improvement activities and began envisioning the church as a neighborhood community center.

He started by attending his local civic association after receiving a flyer in the church's mailslot for the monthly Somerset Neighbors for Better Living (SNBL) meeting. He saw all the helpful information and resources offered at the meeting and wanted to bring it to the neighbors who lived around the church.

He believed that partnering with SNBL and other organizations was the way the church should start being a helping hand to the community: "beyond our four walls, beyond Sunday morning. It's our responsibility to do that."

Richard hadn't done community outreach before, but he quickly learned. Richard and church leadership started going door-to-door, introducing themselves to people who weren't church members, but had lived next to the congregation for decades. Richard started saying hi to folks outside as he came and went. He started asking questions about what's going on and what sort of help they needed -- not to pitch them on faith, but to pitch them on helping to improve the neighborhood.

He also started working with New Kensington Community Development Corporation (NKCDC), who now hosts "community office hours" every month in which an NKCDC staff person comes to the church to help neighbors sign up for assistance programs. Church leaders and NKCDC staff also team up to canvass the neighborhood for larger community meetings.

In the past few years, the church has hosted block cleanups, computer classes, health insurance registrations, and started inviting neighbors to their annual multicultural day. Of the collaboration, Richard said:

Firm Hope Baptist Church congregants participant in a neighborhood.

"We all reach more people when we're working together. We're getting more done, getting more resources into the community, as a result of our affiliation with NKCDC and SNBL."

He himself has done everything from raking trash at clean-ups to driving neighbors to community meetings. Recently Richard and one of his deacons were elected to the SNBL Steering Committee and now help guide the organization.

After successfully convincing SNBL to expand its boundary east to include previously unrepresented blocks, Richard goes door-to-door to get those newly included neighbors to attend SNBL community meetings.

He sees shifting from block-level to neighborhood-wide thinking as an important step if the community is to improve: "We're combatting such powerful forces, so we need everyone, no matter what." Slowly, it's working: multiple new SNBL members found out about the organization from Firm Hope, and Richard is seeing those "neighbor-to-neighbor connections where we respect and look out for each other" increasingly coming back.

Grace Townhomes under construction.

Richard also met with his **State Rep.**, who connected him with the affordable housing **developer** Women's Community Revitalization Project (WCRP). WCRP was looking for a site for its next development, and Richard knew that newly-built affordable housing was hard to come by in this community.

Firm Hope became a community partner of WCRP, and the developer eventually proposed constructing Grace Town Homes, 36 affordable rental and homeownership units on a vacant lot one block west of the church. Firm Hope vocally supported the project in response to some residents' fear about building low-income housing in a neighborhood that was already struggling.

Many neighbors criticized Richard for supporting the development; he even lost a couple congregants as a result. But he stood firm because he felt Grace Town Homes would make the neighborhood better in the long run:

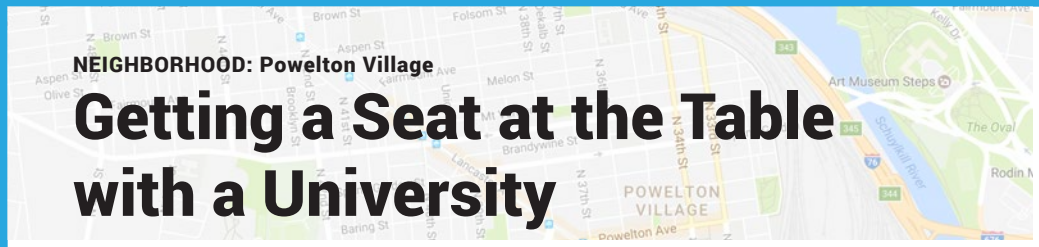
"Gentrification is moving into that area and these homes... [will] remain affordable. This will help to keep some of the long term residents in the community that they love, living in a new home that they can afford and be proud of both their home and the community in which they live."

Richard reached out to neighbors who disagreed with him to try to resolve their differences so they can continue work together to help the neighborhood, "because we are still one community," as he put it.

Key Tools

- → **Use face-to-face communication to reach out to neighbors.** *In Richard's neighborhood, many residents don't have access to computers, or aren't fluent in English, so door-to-door communication is the best way to reach them.*
- → **Get to know your neighbors and earn their trust over time.** *Richard demonstrated his trustworthiness through his commitment to listen and his ability to get things done--whether it was participating in a clean-up or offering to drive neighbors to a community meeting.*
- → **As neighbors, if you disagree on one topic you can still collaborate on another: keep the big picture in mind.**
- → **Be proactive.** *Warren's congregation saw that the school was struggling, so they decided to volunteer at the school directly, create new programs, and fundraise for it.*
- → **Ask questions before acting: Listen to your neighbors' interests and concerns first.**
- → **To become a community resource, ask questions and do research.**
- → **Work with partners: find out who can help you and has strengths in areas you don't.** *NKCDC has staff dedicated to connecting residents with free and affordable assistance programs, so Richard partnered with them to bring an NKCDC staff person to Firm Hope once a month to bring their services to neighbors directly.*

NEIGHBORHOOD: Kensington, Sharswood



NEIGHBORHOOD: Powelton Village

Getting a Seat at the Table with a University

MIKE JONES

When Mike Jones moved to Powelton Village in 1998, he could see the neighborhood was changing significantly, primarily due to neighboring Drexel University shifting from a commuter school to a residential school. Powelton Village homeowners now found themselves living next to new neighbors: college students.

Mike and other members of the Powelton Village Civic Association (PVCA) have worked hard to preserve quality of life for all residents during this transition. In the mid-2000s, Drexel proposed a large student housing project at 32nd and Powelton on a site that they had previously agreed would be greenspace. PVCA said, "no!" and went into their archives to show the communications between Drexel, PVCA, and Council in which Drexel committed to making the parcel greenspace. They also fundraised to hire a lawyer by writing letters to neighbors and going door-to-door.

It worked; their **Councilwoman** held the zoning bill until Drexel could reach an agreement with neighbors. Drexel did not end up building housing on that site, instead it is a public space, as promised, called Drexel Park.

Mike saw this as a return to "This notion of standing up for what you believe in and fighting for it." He continued:

> "It required raising a ton of money for lawyer bills, getting a ton of people out to Planning Commission and ZBA meetings, and raising a lot of ruckus--getting articles in the newspaper and all that. But it's worth doing."

After the negotiation around Drexel Park, both Drexel and PVCA agreed that they needed to meet more regularly so that Drexel could understand

neighborhood priorities and PVCA could see Drexel's long-term expansion plans.

They've been meeting bi-weekly for over a decade now. Topics and participants vary, but now that the community is seen as a serious stakeholder, there have been a variety of improvements and partnerships that are more collaborative in nature. "The conversation wasn't complete without us," Mike said.

One early example was neighbors showing Drexel senior staff what a Friday night in Powelton Village was like. Mike introduced them to a student-run website that published locations and photos from parties. This led to an important discovery for Drexel that their students were living in places they didn't know about -- sometimes in questionable conditions-- and were not behaving as good neighbors.

Mike also researched other cities and passed along recommendations on how other places handle expanding college neighborhoods. Drexel subsequently began requiring that landlords stick to certain living standards if Drexel was going to promote them as approved student housing.

Drexel also responded to the situation with students living off-campus by building more Drexel-run student housing in the neighborhood. At that point, PVCA knew they needed to create a neighborhood plan to codify the community's voice in order for it to be accounted for in Drexel's new developments.

Mike was the PVCA rep on the University City District (UCD) board at the time, and he asked them to apply for funding for the Powelton Village **neighborhood plan**. They secured the funds, and PVCA proceeded to work closely with neighbors (owners and renters), business owners, and **non-profits** to ensure everyone's voice was incorporated into the plan.

Most importantly, PVCA leaders made sure the plan incorporated Drexel's development plans, specifying where development was acceptable to community members:

> "We needed a way to anticipate that large-scale development is coming our way—Drexel needs it—so where do we want it to go so it has the least impact? These are conversations we couldn't have had previously because we were always in crisis mode."

Mike said it was in their interest to be thoughtful about where large development made sense in the neighborhood. Because their plan balanced resident and university interests, Powelton Village residents are taken seriously by Drexel and have an influential voice. Upon completion of the plan, Drexel even invited PVCA to have two residents sit on their **Steering Committee** for their own **master plan**.

PVCA's neighborhood planning process was so "eye-opening" that they pushed for a similar process again when the old University City High School (UCHS) site at 36th and Filbert was put up for sale. Anticipating the sale of the site, PVCA re-drew their neighborhood boundaries to include the site and ensure that they would have a voice in the proposal.

Before the workshop, PVCA held a community meeting to educate neighbors on the site and process.

People's Emergency Center CDC (PECCDC) worked with the civic associations in Powelton Village, West Powelton, Saunders Park, and Mantua to host a design workshop for the UCHS site with the help of planning consultants PEC hired. Pro-bono consultants from the Community Design Collaborative then helped write a report based on the information that was collected from the workshop.

Nearly 200 neighbors attended and talked about what they wanted to see when that site got redeveloped, and the report summarizing the workshop was submitted to the School Reform Commission and became the basis for a **Community Benefits Agreement** (CBA) signed by Drexel and three nearby community groups when Drexel purchased the site.

Architects, Drexel representatives, and neighborhood residents all worked together at the UCHS workshop

The process was "tremendously successful at building coalitions," Mike said. The CBA was negotiated by lawyers, which PVCA at this point has recognized as expensive but necessary when large developments are proposed. PVCA and PECCDC covered the attorney fees; PVCA fundraised among neighbors again for their contribution. "It wasn't hard for people to see how important this was," Mike said.

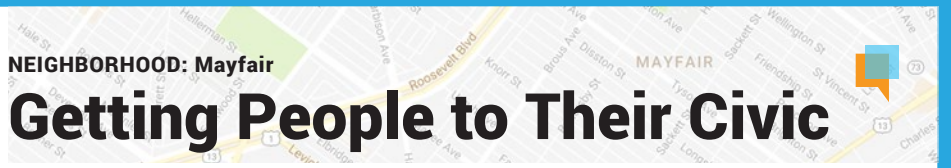
PVCA hasn't needed to legally enforce the provisions of the CBA, but feel the agreement brings a "moral commitment" that would be hard to veer from because Drexel and the local community groups plan to work together for decades to come.

Mike is pleased to see that the CBA has been upheld so far. Its goals include increasing homeownership in Powelton Village to 25% and building a new school on the UCHS site. An advisory committee has been formed with representatives from all nearby neighborhoods to review updates on the development on a monthly basis.

Key Tools

- → **Work with City Council when large developments are proposed; if you let them know your needs and opinions, they can be an ally.**
- → **Neighbor-led plans are powerful: they build support for your cause, provide a roadmap, and makes fundraising easier. They also provided shovel-ready ideas that are supported by neighbors and can be implemented when opportunities arise.** *In Powelton Village, creating a neighborhood plan gave the community group credibility with Drexel and allowed them to proactively advocate for their vision of neighborhood change.*
- → **When negotiating, focus on what is most important.** *PVCA leaders feel they can enforce their vision for the neighborhood when they guide large scale development to preferred locations, rather than attempting to stop it.*
- → **Follow-up if someone offers to help and be specific about what you need.** *PVCA set up recurring meetings with Drexel to ensure the university considers community interests in many aspects of its growth.*
- → **Learn who has authority to make decisions and focus your efforts on contacting those who can truly help you.**
- → **Learn the City's rules for development and zoning, as well as when you have influence.**
- → **Community Benefits Agreements (CBAs) can be powerful tools.** *The CBA for the University City High School site got the community's values incorporated into the development project.*
- → **Research how other neighborhoods or cities have solved similar problems.** *PVCA researched how other urban universities dealt with town/gown relations and showed Drexel what was possible and had been done successfully elsewhere.*

NEIGHBORHOOD: Powelton Village



NEIGHBORHOOD: Mayfair

Getting People to Their Civic

PETE MCDERMOTT

Several years ago, Pete McDermott had some ideas for improving his neighborhood of Mayfair and some frustrations too. He checked out Mayfair Civic Association and found that participation at its meetings and events, such as its annual parades, had been lagging in recent years.

Feeling that it was time to step up and shoulder some of the responsibility, he and fellow neighbors of similar age and interests joined Mayfair Civic and set about to improve its reach and positive impact in the neighborhood.

Pete works with other volunteers to get the word about and increase attendance at the community group's meetings and events. He coordinates three methods of outreach, the most successful of which is robocalls.

Mayfair Civic first tried robocalling about two years ago as an experiment, and it is now an essential way that the group shares information with neighbors. The civic uses its own donated equipment and pays about $25 per month for a robocaller service.

The week prior to each community meeting, Pete records a 45-second message. For regular meetings the message is limited to the main topics for discussion and always includes the date, time and location. The message can also contain updates on special projects or zoning issues as needed.

The robocaller dials nearly 3,000 telephone numbers drawn from sign-in sheets at meetings or events. Residents must opt-in to receive calls. According to Pete, prior to use of the robocaller, a meeting may have had 40 or 50 attendees, but afterwards attendance shot up to 150 or 200 attendees, depending on the topic.

Residents like the calls too as a passive way of getting information. Not everyone who'd like to can make an evening meeting, but the messages left in the robocalls give folks a briefing on meeting details, zoning cases, or a reminder of an upcoming event.

The other tools used by Mayfair Civic are a Facebook page and literature drops. The Facebook page is regularly updated with posts describing events, projects, and meetings of the civic and include plenty of pictures and videos. It's a great way for residents, or anyone who loves the

neighborhood, to learn of the group's activities and to provide feedback and ask questions.

Anyone who "likes" Mayfair Civic's page will see the civic's posts in their "news feed." Plus, all board members are asked to "like" and "share" posts to spread them around their own social networks.

Flyering or "lit drops" are a tried and true way to get the word out. Mayfair Civic usually uses lit drops are used to notify neighbors of zoning cases because they are a **Registered Community Organization** (RCO), which means they host public meetings about property owners within their boundaries seeking a **variance** from the **zoning code**. Flyering is done at the properties closest to the site of the proposed project that is requesting a variance.

The key to a successful lit drop for Pete is to make sure the flyer is printed on a half-sheet of heavy weight paper in a bright neon color, because you get more flyers per ream of paper by using half-sheets and, according to Pete:

"Heavier paper makes it hard to crumple and toss [your flyer] in the trash and neon makes it hard to ignore!"

Mayfair Civic also tried print advertisements in local newspapers for events in the past, but according to Pete, "we didn't see much bang for the buck in terms of turnout."

Key Tools

- → **Ask how attendees found out about a meeting or event to learn what works: email, flyers, social media, etc.**
- → **Try a combination of outreach methods to reach more people and increase attendance: flyers, door knocking, social media, robocalling, etc.**
- → **Grab attention with flyers printed on brightly colored and heavier paper.**
- → **Experiment!** *In Pete's case, robocalls were an experiment that ended up working.*

NEIGHBORHOOD: Mayfair

About the Contributors

Hello Reader!

We are fifteen community leaders from all over Philadelphia who came together to share our stories and learn from one another through a project called Neighbors Helping Neighbors.

This resulting Citizens Toolkit shows how we each tackled neighborhood challenges, and distills tips and lessons for fellow Philadelphians.

We are people who struggle to fix the problems we encounter in our neighborhood. When we came together for Neighbors Helping Neighbors, we found we had a lot in common in how we tackle challenges in our communities. We all look for where we can go to get support; keep open and transparent communication with our neighbors; stay persistent with those who can help; and constantly look for new ways to keep our neighbors informed.

It quickly became clear that no matter what neighborhood you're in, the first step to making change is always the same: talking to your neighbors face to face. And beyond talking, also being a good neighbor and getting to know what's important to your community!

You are empowered to do something! You can be the leader your neighborhood needs, and the Toolkit is organized to help you accomplish this. We hope you'll use it as a source of encouragement, and as a guide for getting projects off the ground, finding support, and increasing and sustaining participation in citizen-led community groups!

Best wishes,

Citizens Toolkit Contributors

NAME
Naida Elena Burgos

NEIGHBORHOOD
Eastern North

HOW I FIRST GOT INVOLVED IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD
"I was always interested in service and decided to volunteer with Asociación Puertorriqueños en Marcha after I was encouraged to do so by a local woman who knows everyone in the community."

NAME
Leroy Fisher

NEIGHBORHOOD
Hunting Park

HOW I FIRST GOT INVOLVED IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD
"I came home from the Marines and found young men in my neighborhood losing their lives to crime and violence. I wanted to reach them and the connection was through sports. I worked with two friends to form a youth football league. We have ten teams today."

NAME
Tonnetta Graham

NEIGHBORHOOD
Strawberry Mansion

HOW I FIRST GOT INVOLVED IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD
"I called [then] Councilman Street to complain about the neighborhood's water pipes and pool being broken. He told me to attend a public meeting he was holding; I showed up with my complaint and the pool was fixed and the water outages stopped."

NAME
Richard Harris

NEIGHBORHOOD
Kensington

HOW I FIRST GOT INVOLVED IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD
"I went to a Somerset Neighbors meeting after getting a flyer at my church. I saw resources they offered and wanted to do what I could to bring those to the neighbors around the church."

NAME
Sheila Howard

NEIGHBORHOOD
Tioga

HOW I FIRST GOT INVOLVED IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD
"I moved back to the neighborhood and saw we lacked stores for basic goods and services. I attended CPI and my final project that was helping revitalize 17th Street with Tioga United."

NAME
Michael Jones

NEIGHBORHOOD
Powelton Village

HOW I FIRST GOT INVOLVED IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD
"I wanted to clean up the lots around my property and get students to act like better neighbors. I got involved, attended one civic association meeting too many and was nominated to be president!"

NAME
Lisa Maiello

NEIGHBORHOOD
South Kensington

HOW I FIRST GOT INVOLVED IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD
"I knew I wanted to join something. I did some research, found the Kensington South NAC, and started attending their meetings."

NAME
Peter McDermott

NEIGHBORHOOD
Mayfair

HOW I FIRST GOT INVOLVED IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD
"I was reaching my mid-thirties and felt it was time for my generation to step up and take some of the load off of the folks who had been doing all of the local civic work. I had my own concerns and ideas on how to improve the neighborhood and joined Mayfair Civic Association."

NAME
Warren McMichael

NEIGHBORHOOD
Brewerytown/Sharswood

HOW I FIRST GOT INVOLVED IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD
"I started as a block captain. I led block cleanups, picked up the trash, and pushed [then Councilman] John Street to get the abandoned cars out of the neighborhood."

NAME
Ramona Rousseau-Reid

NEIGHBORHOOD
Eastwick

HOW I FIRST GOT INVOLVED IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD
"I attended our Town Watch after seeing drag racing outside the Pepper School. To stop this, I created a phone chain for each block so everyone would call the Police District when something was going on. We got speed bumps to deter the drag racing."

NAME
Joyce Smith

NEIGHBORHOOD
East Parkside

HOW I FIRST GOT INVOLVED IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD
"I went to my local CDC and said I wanted to get involved. After they shut down, I was talking to a local block captain and a couple other people I know and we decided to form a civic association because not much was happening without one."

NAME
John Theobald

NEIGHBORHOOD
East Kensington

HOW I FIRST GOT INVOLVED IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD
"I attended my neighborhood zoning meeting and saw the zoning committee voted differently than the community vote but they didn't tell anyone about it. I decided to become a member of the committee to work on reform to set new standards for transparency."

NAME
Stacy Thomas

NEIGHBORHOOD
Point Breeze

HOW I FIRST GOT INVOLVED IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD
"I was reading my neighborhood newspapers and saw an ad about free smoke detectors. I went to the fire department in 1979 to get one and realized I should get ones for my whole block."

NAME
Betty Turner

NEIGHBORHOOD
Germantown

HOW I FIRST GOT INVOLVED IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD
"I was a parent concerned about health care and we didn't have those services in the neighborhood. I went to the nearest hospital and asked health care professionals to bring pediatricians to our neighborhood public housing. This led to a clinic opening at a local PHA site!"

NAME
James Wright

NEIGHBORHOOD
Cobbs Creek

HOW I FIRST GOT INVOLVED IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD
"I saw a notice about a NAC meeting either on a flyer or copy of Westside Weekly. I went to the meeting and there were elections right after. The chair encouraged me to run so I did. After that, I instigated a bit by putting a flyer in every door on my block asking who was the block captain. After finding we didn't have one, a few of us got together and another neighbor volunteered to do it!"

About the Creators

We began designing the process that became Neighbors Helping Neighbors in 2014 as two adopted Philadelphians who wanted to see how we could help bring people together as the city's changes seemed to be pushing people further apart. We decided to learn from those who found a changing Philadelphia at their doorstep and stepped out of their house and tried to make a difference.

We learned some pretty amazing stuff from these Philadelphians. What struck us the most: there is no us versus them divide. Or at least, there doesn't have to be.

Because the truth is that we have more in common than we think: we all want safe, welcoming, and vibrant neighborhoods, and we agree on more than we don't -- no matter how long we've lived here.

To accomplish this, we need to connect with each other the old fashioned way: by knocking on doors, by saying hi, and by being outside even when we could be inside. Based on what we learned from the contributors to this project, this is the first step to learning how much we can accomplish together!

We'd also like to thank Octavia Howell and Ashley Richards who helped facilitate the Neighbors Helping Neighbors workshops, and Donna Carney and Ariel Diliberto of Citizens Planning Institute, the ongoing partner for this project.

Best wishes,
Andrew Goodman and Mark Wheeler

Glossary

Blight: Can be a general term to describe abandoned houses, vacant lots, litter, and other things that detract from the beauty and quality of life of a given area. At the Philadelphia City Planning Commission, blight is a technical term that is only given to an area if certain criteria are met. This process is called "blight certification." An area that is blight certified is eligible for **redevelopment**, and a redevelopment plan is created.

Block Captain: An individual elected by their block to help keep their block clean by organizing clean-ups during citywide clean-up events, organizing block for monthly Saturday clean-ups, and conducting other activities on their block. To find out if your block has a block captain, call the Streets Department's Philadelphia More Beautiful Committee (PMBC): 215-685-3981.

Block Captains receive the following support from the PMBC and their **Clean Block Officer**: info on sanitation rules and regulations; clean-up materials such as trash bags, street brooms, etc.; organizational assistance; presentations at block meetings to discuss community or block projects; the Saturday Cleanup Schedule, including special trash collection by the Streets Department; and Clean Block Awards and prize information. For more info, visit:
www.philadelphiastreets.com/pmbc/block-captain

Charrette: A charrette is an intensive planning session where citizens, designers and others collaborate on a vision for a development project.

Civic Association: An organization whose official goal is to improve a neighborhood through volunteer work by its members.

Clean Block Officer: Philadelphia Police Department officer who help Block Captains get clean-up supplies and answer questions about clean-ups. For a list of Clean Block Officers for each Police District visit:
www.philadelphiastreets.com/pmbc/meet-your-reps

Community Benefits Agreement (CBA): Community development activities improve neighborhoods by identifying and addressing local needs. Such activities may support infrastructure, job and business creation, greenspace, community centers, housing repair or development, first-time homeownership, services and more.

Community Development Corporation (CDC): A non-profit organization serving a specific neighborhood or neighborhoods. CDCs support improvements that benefit neighborhood residents, often focusing on serving lower-income areas. CDC can be involved in many areas including job and business creation, education, affordable housing development, neighborhood planning projects, providing services directly to residents, and more. Many CDCs have Boards of Directors comprised partly or completely of local residents. There is currently no legal requirements for an organization to be a Community Development Corporation.

Comprehensive Plan: A plan developed by a city that provides recommendations to help manage future development and change, while preserving existing character and assets. A comprehensive plan does not call for any specific action or laws. Instead, it assesses the current conditions and provides a vision that can help dictate public policy in terms of transportation, utilities and services, land use, parks and open space, historic preservation, job and business growth, and housing. Philadelphia2035 (Phila2035) is Philadelphia's comprehensive plan, also known as a "citywide vision."

Councilperson (or Councilman or Councilwoman): A member of City Council, the elected body in Philadelphia that has the power to make laws. There are ten members elected by geographic district and seven at-large members elected by the entire City. Find your district councilperson by visiting:
www.bit.ly/council-districts

Design Guidelines: Suggestions for how to design facades, buildings, public space, etc. to meet certain standards. These standards could be having visual consistency with the surrounding area, preserving certain qualities, using certain materials, keeping to a certain size, or other standards. They can be developed by the Philadelphia City Planning Commission, CDCs, RCO/civic association, or other organizations. Design guidelines are purely suggestions that present a vision for a given street or neighborhood, and are not binding in any way.

Developer: A person or organization makes improvements to a parcel of land. An improvement could mean a new building or changes to an existing structure, or landscape improvements. A developer could be a homeowner, a nonprofit organization or a private development company.

Development: The process of constructing of a new building, rehabilitating of an existing building, or improving land, to be sold, rented, or occupied by the **developer**.

Disinvestment: A lack of investment by the government and/or the private sector in a given geographic area, leading to deterioration of the physical environment and of the quality of services.

Economic Development: Programs and policies that attempt to improve the economic well-being and quality of life for a community by creating jobs, increasing the number of businesses, and growing residents' incomes.

Floodplain: An area of low-lying land next to a body of water (river, creek, etc.) that is prone to flooding. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) creates maps showing which areas of land are considered to be in a floodplain. For more info visit:
www.bit.ly/flood-plain-controls

Grant: A sum of money given by a government agency, private foundation, or non-profit to an organization for a particular purpose or project.

Homestead Exemption: A real estate tax discount to all Philadelphia homeowners for their primary residence, reduces the taxable portion of their property assessment by $30,000. For more info, visit:
www.phila.gov/OPA/AbatementsExemptions/Pages/Homestead.aspx

Human Services: Meeting human needs through sharing information, focusing on prevention as well as remediation of problems, and maintaining a commitment to improving the overall quality of life of a given population.

Land Survey: Accurately measuring the dimensions of a particular area of land, often required before a development can begin.

Land Use: How a parcel of land is used. Different kinds of land use include: residential, commercial, industrial, transportation, recreational, parks, and schools. Zoning is what determines which land uses are permitted on each parcel in the city.

Lien: A property lien is a legal claim on a property that grants the issuer of the lien a specified amount of money when the owner sells the property,

for debts owed by the property owner. Liens can be placed on properties for unpaid property taxes, unpaid federal income taxes, unpaid child support, unpaid contractors who did work on the property, or unpaid fines from Licenses & Inspection. Such liens ensure the payment of a debt, with the property acting as collateral against the amount owed.

Long-time Owner Occupants Program (LOOP): a real estate tax discount program for homeowners who have lived in their homes for 10 years or more, experienced a significant increase in their property taxes from one year to the next, and meet income and other eligibility requirements.
For more info, visit:
www.phila.gov/loop/Pages/default.aspx

Low-income Senior Citizen Real Estate Tax Freeze: A program for eligible seniors and widows of eligible seniors, that stops their property taxes from increasing, even if their property assessment or the tax rate changes. For more info, visit:
www.bit.ly/senior-real-estate-tax-freeze

Master Plan: Some cities use "master plan" and "**comprehensive plan**" interchangeably. In Philadelphia, they mean different things. A Master Plan is a long-range plan for a specific area, facility, institution or amenity, such as the Philadelphia Trail Master Plan, which coordinates the construction of future bike and pedestrian trails across the entire city, or the Drexel University Campus Master Plan, which envisions and guides the growth of Drexel's campus as well as transformations to their existing facilities.

Mission Statement: A written declaration of an organization's core purpose and focus that normally remains unchanged over time. Properly crafted mission statements (1) serve as filters to separate what is important from what is not, (2) clearly state which markets (for for-profit entitites) or who/what (for non-profit entities) will be served and how, and (3) communicate a sense of intended direction to the entire organization. A mission is different from a vision. A vision is the result of an executed mission; it is the desired end result. Both for-profit and non-profit organizations have mission statements.

Neighborhood Advisory Committee (NAC): An organization that has a contract with the City of Philadelphia's Office of Housing and Community Development to improve employment opportunities, educational opportunities, safety, youth opportunities, do outreach for

the City's Foreclosure Prevention program; and generally share resources (especially those related to housing and utilities) with residents within an assigned geographic area. Organization's with a NAC contract are also required to have a volunteer advisory committee elected by and comprised of local residents. The committee is typically known at the Neighborhood Advisory Subcommittee (NAS).

Neighborhood Plan: A plan for improving and preserving a specific neighborhood. Neighborhood plans are developed through the participation of residents, civic organizations, community development corporations, and business and property owners—usually with the help of planning professionals.

A neighborhood plan can help communities address issues such as housing types and density, allowed zoning uses, design and development standards and transportation needs like better sidewalks and bike lanes. Planning can also help communities address social issues such as crime and safety. Once the plan is complete, carrying out the suggestions in the plan is the next step.

Non-Profit: An organization that does not function primarily to generate a profit, and rather uses its revenue to further achieve its purpose or **mission**. An organization does not have to be tax-exempt, aka a 501(c)(3), to be a non-profit. "Non-profit" is a type of corporation, while 501(c)(3) is a tax-exempt status that non-profits that do qualifying work can apply for.

Officer (of an organization): A person who has an elected position at an organization which includes more responsibility than a member has, and sometimes includes more decision-making power.

Philadlephia Rowhouse Manual: A practical guide for rowhouse maintenance. Download for free here:
www.phila.gov/CityPlanning/Initiatives/pdf/rowhousemanual.pdf

Redevelopment: Development that takes place in an area that is blighted.

Registered Community Organization (RCO): Organizations or civic associations that host public meetings regarding local properties requesting **zoning variances**, so neighbors can provide input and vote in favor or against the request variance. A representative for the property owner presents their proposed development prior to the community input and vote. The RCO then relays the community's comments and voting results to the Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA). RCOs much register with the Philadelphia City Planning Commission (PCPC) and follow certain requirements. When a variance is requested for a property, PCPC notifies all RCOs for whom the property falls in their boundaries. For more info, visit:
www.phila.gov/CityPlanning/projectreviews/Pages/RegisteredCommunityOrganizations.aspx

State Representative (State Rep): An elected official who serves a specific geographic area and represents that area in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, one of the bodies that has the power to make laws in Pennsylvania. To find your state representative, visit:
www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/home/findyourlegislator

Steering Committee: A committee that provides guidance, direction and makes decisions for an organization or for a project within an organization.

Storefront Improvement Program: This program reimburses owners of commercial buildings and businesses within designated commercial corridors who make improvements to the front of their buildings/stores. For more info, visit:
https://business.phila.gov/storefront-improvement-program

Tangled Title: When the person who owns a property does not have their name on the deed. Some of the ways this can happen are: when a home is inherited from a relative but that relative passes away without changing the deed, when an owner is in a rent-to-own agreement and has paid all or some of the purchase price for the house but their name is not on the deed, or when an owner bought a property directly from the former owner using cash and the deed was never changed.

Tangled titles are a concern because another person can try to claim to own the property. Property owners who don't have their name on the title will most likely be unable to do the following: take out mortgages or loans for the property, negotiate with utility companies about overdue bills, get City grants to repair their homes, obtain homeowners insurance for the property, sell their home, give their property to a family member or friend. For more info visit:
www.phila.gov/records/documentrecording/tangled_title.html

Town Watch: A group of volunteer neighborhood residents who are trained to recognize crime or potential crime and alert police. Some Town Watches actively patrol the neighborhood, while others just have members report incidents or potential incidents as they encounter them. For more info visit:
www.townwatch.net

Urban Renewal: Urban renewal was a component of the 1949 U.S. Housing Act. Its main focus was to encourage private investment in city centers in two unfortunate and ultimately ineffective ways: by clearing away neighboring "slums" and by building highways through cities.

The Housing Act provided funding to cities to use eminent domain to purchase and assemble large tracts of land and sell them to developers at very low prices. The federal government also funded highways built directly through cities. Between 1956 and 1972, urban renewal and urban highway construction across the United States displaced an estimated 3.8 million people from their homes. The urban renewal approach to urban redevelopment faded in popularity by the mid-1960s.

The terms "urban renewal" is sometimes still used to mean the more general **redevelopment** of a **blighted** urban area.

Variance (Zoning Variance): Permission to build something with dimensions or a use that do not conform to the existing **zoning** requirements for that parcel. The property owner must meet with the local Registered Community Organization(s) (RCOs) and attend a public hearing with the Zoning Board of Adjustment. A variance may be granted when the specific condition on the parcel of land would cause the property owner difficulty and "hardship" to follow the existing zoning. A variance may be granted, for example, to reduce yard size or setback (from the street), increase height, or have a commercial use in a parcel that is zoned residential.

Zoning: A set of laws that restrict and define the type of land uses (e.g. commercial, residential, industrial, etc.) and development that can occur on each parcel of land in Philadelphia. Zoning also determines the height and bulk of buildings, population density, parking requirements, the placement of signs, character of development, and what properties can be used for.

Zoning typically divides an area into districts that group compatible uses together and exclude incompatible uses, for example, separating industrial areas and residential areas. These districts are known as the "base zoning" or "base district" for each parcel and area.

Zoning Code: The document that defines the different **zoning** designations for parcels in Philadelphia, contains all regulations for each designation, and describes procedures for compliance.

Zoning Committee: A committee within an RCO's board that facilitates neighborhood zoning meetings and coordinates between the developer and the membership of the RCO. Typically, if an RCO has a zoning committee, that committee will write the RCO's letters to the Zoning Board of Adjustment reporting on the RCO's vote and feedback on a development seeking a variance.

Notes & Ideas

PHILADELPHIA
citizens
PLANNING INSTITUTE