

Networking Council - 04/13/2010

Best Practices Forum

Moderator: Paul Krupski (Mid-City CAN Coordinating Council)

Please paint a picture of the community. Who lives there? Where is it located? What is the dilemma at hand?

Jennifer Henry (Consensus Organizing Center) – Perry Hilltop, PA 30 yrs ago was predominantly African-American, equally distributed. A specific real estate agent came in block-busting. The position was the neighborhood is changing, new folks moving in and should affect the value of your home.

Diane Takvorian (Environmental Health Coalition) – Georgette Gomez is here. This was a community driven land-use. West side of National City: Barrio Logan. Early 1990s, parents were reporting children having high rates of Asthma. As a result of resident organizing, 800 surveys, 20% of the children had asthma, 7% was the national average. Mixed-use zoning allows certain commercial/industrial entities next to residential, where as in other places this was nonexistent.

Paul Watson (Springfield College) – Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative, Roxbury Section of Boston. This community was initially, primarily Irish and Italian. As time went on, as people, after the war, started to come back and get married, they started moving away, particularly going out to the suburbs. So as people moved in, low-income and colored, the community got red-lined. People felt trapped in the property. Folks resorted to burning their homes to collect insurance. Thus the community was on the decline. The community is similar to City Heights, in the sense that there was a lot of diversity. We had Asian Americans, Cape Verdean, 7-8 different languages spoken there. What precipitated people coming together to, was a decline in the neighborhood, and a particular foundation wanted to come in and help. This foundation spent time developing a plan and it incensed the community because they were not included in the plan. So the community started organizing.

Joey McKellar (San Diego Organizing Project) – Federation of congregations throughout San Diego. Been around for 30 years, part of the PICO national network. Began in the 1990s, at a time in San Diego, it was the war on drugs, was at its height. SDOP congregations were in the midst of taking back neighborhoods plagued by safety problems. The war on drugs, created a hunkering down on the part of police. There was an emphasis on enforcement and retribution. Neighborhood youth: latch-key kids. This is the concept where a child comes home and locks the door and waits for their parents to come home. SDOP's strategy is developing leadership, and equipping the leaders with creating solutions. Reframing of the "War on Drugs" as a "Drug Epidemic". The solution became treatment instead of punishment. SDOP creating more treatment beds, drug hot spots were identified, and around the youth issue, helped to create the 6 to 6 program. City wanted to offer a before-and-after school program for kids. Prior to this, the City stated it was not their responsibility to provide programs before and after school. We find ourselves in a similar place now, diverting millions of dollars from parks and recreation. The work we are trying to do now, systems-alignment, the entities that have a stake in kids are working

more collaboratively in an institutionalized way. Not a focus on one institution, it's a matter of aligned different institutions to ... clearly set goals and outcomes.

Roque Barros (Jacobs Center) – The Market Creek Plaza was once known as the 4 Corners of Death. The development cost about 25 Million. We are a very diverse community, an international courtyard.

What inspired your organization's work in the community? Include strategies and methods.

Jennifer Henry – Mike Eichler, to address block-busting. We were organizing the residents around this issue, getting them on the same page. Identifying the issues, personalizing the target, the person who can make the change. Real Estate Agent was identified. Next step was to get everyone really angry, people with different ethnicities. The Real Estate agent was steering different ethnicities towards a certain area. Unifying event, instead of leaving and being angry at each other, but to get angry at the real estate agent. Putting pressure on the RE agent. Called media, went to his church and took over the pulpit. Forced him to move out of the community because of this strategy.

Strategies: certain communities wanted to keep it the way they were. Some folks appreciated what he was doing. Mike Eichler, need to change strategies, because it was like a band-aid. Consensus Organizing, identifying self-interest between different parties. Social capital in the community. The glue for communities. Idea of camaraderie.

Diane Takvorian – Residents direct the work we're doing. EHC, can be a resource, once residents identify problems, advocacy and leadership empowerment. Leaders who have identified problems in the community does not have the tools to address them. Leaders can speak with their own voice. What they want to change. It's really about helping people identifying problems together and getting the skills and power to change it. There is a dynamic of power, and you have to pick the right target. Elected officials, the power to enact discriminatory land use policies. Residents are poor and people of color. There is no question there are power dynamics. We can always find points of consensus, and residents will have to find their power. Effective resident organizing can come into play. Vision their community. Persistence, residents are persistence, it's amazing. Change doesn't happen overnight, and residents need to understand that as they are doing this work.

Paul Watson – Dudley Street Project, grass-roots projects that came up from the bottom, residents. Conditions in the community were ripe for the folks to do something about the issues affecting them. As the community began to deteriorate, the issues were in your face. Serious situations coming. Everyone knew this was happening, and something needed to happen. Catalyst, outside foundation came to say they were going to fix the community without any community input. That catalyst got the residents to say we don't want others to tell us what to do, we want to do it ourselves. Community was able to push back, and came back with a plan. As they started to think about environmental racism: vacant properties, unscrupulous sanitation, and dumping. Burned out cars, refrigerators, and even large amounts of rotting meat. Campaign of "Stop Dumping On Us", and used it to organize residents around. Success led to momentum to . Social development strategy, looking at the resiliency of the community. Needed an economic development strategy, increase wealth in community. Cultural development strategy. Not about ethnic, but more about the community spirit. Needed some clear strategies.

Celebrations and symbols towards, Political development strategy. Creating community power. Constantly engaging more and more people. Community was very diverse. Need organizers from different groups who understood those systems and could reach out to the community.

Joey Mckellar – SDOP is faith-based, we believe in the inherent dignity of people. Transform individuals, you can transform the world. So organizing people is a matter for us. Organizing people around their values, and not issues. Outside force, influence and proposition folks. Non-negotiable. What are you willing to fight for? We're multi-issue. Engage resident leaders about quality of life concerns. We ask them, and develop them to develop a critique of the world to them, their reality. It is helping people build powerful organizations. Systems don't change on their own, "Society of Inertia", applying an outside force. We develop people to do that. We also believe that, power of table, table of decision-making, that common people need to be there. Decisions at the state level. Methodology, organizing for us is figuring out how individuals, and differentiating between residents and leaders, resident and citizens. Leaders have a following. Develop people to build a following.

Outcomes, success. The time period to see those outcomes, and to see the success come to fruition. If anything, what would you have done differently?

Diane Takvorian – West Side National City: 13 years ago, we did a survey which revealed the problems of asthma. IN 2005, an Asthma committee was set up. St. Anthony's collaborated with SDOP. Sources of pollution were the sources of health problems. West Side specific plan. Mixed-use, land-use. Our goal was to separate and relocate the auto-body shops in particular. 20 that surround the schools. 5 years short, community organizing, meetings, leadership development, developed an Old-Town specific plan that was adopted by the Town Council. Amateurization Ordinance, required the shops to relocate. First priority was to relocate the auto-body shops, to 2nd = affordable housing. Community was able to attract federal funding for housing. HUD, Department of Transportation and EPA were working together. Federal agencies came to realize seeing the community not in a silo way, but holistically. It will help us get there. Green auto-body Concrete outcomes haven't come yet, but we have plans and they will come. It is important to realize that community residents did it.

Jennifer Henry – Residents wanted to become Real Estate (RE) agents within their own community. Went against what Michael Eichler did. Consensus Organizing meets the self-interest of those on the inside and outside. Barriers? How long does it take? College education? Just had to pass a test. Created capacity building for residents to become Real Estate agents. Bring in more money to their communities. Progresses: Perry Hilltop still remains diverse to this day. Created a deal with RE agency, with 1-2% goes back into the community. Residents are in control of their community, took control of this issue. 2 years before everything was complete. Partnership with the banks. Still exists today.

Paul Watson – Outcomes, the research shows that in community development projects, with planning process and implementation – 30 years. A lot of work has to be done in between. Claim to fame, one of the first community groups to negotiate with the city, to get the city government to give them eminent domain over the vacant lots, to develop 200 affordable housing units. They were able to get that imminent domain, unheard of for a government agency to give that to a group of residents. Biggest

accomplishment, community development can take 30 years, in order to sustain that, structures need to be put in place to carry that work. The folks were organizing, and didn't allow the decision making to be given away or taken away. Formed the Dudley Street Initiative. Many residents didn't know about imminent domain, ability to take this on and stay together and to grow together, was the greatest accomplishment and will not be swayed.

Joey McKellar – SDOP, has been spearheading a youth campaign. At Our Lady of Sacred Heart (OLSH), a lot of efforts are focused on reducing the drop-out-rates and getting up stream on youth violence. Prevention and early intervention aimed at kids. Juvenile diversion in City Heights. We organized, after listening. We always began with listening, then learning. After learning enough information, with causes and solutions. We hold those in power accountable. At OLSH, we had Todd Gloria, Police Captain, and Superintendent. Diverted programs were increased so youth weren't sent to juvenile detention for minor offenses. Hoover High created an Attendance Specialist. Change is incremental. The arc of history. The largest transfer of wealth. Aimed at progress, targeting poverty over the long term. Adherence to our philosophy: listen, learning, acting, and reflecting. Working with people where they are at, and not where we want to take them. To think about them, their neighbors. Not selfish nor selfless.

Roque Barros – Resident ownership. Folk who come into a neighborhood need to change. Jobs were the biggest needs in the community. With Food-4-Less, with 110 new jobs, 90 went to residents. For construction, contractors or workers came from the community. We assisted with financing and other. No major grocery stores in the 4th district. \$60 Million were being leaked out of the community. Social impact study, we were able to capture about 45 Million of the 60 Million. Cultural work, has become a cultural gathering place. A lot of different events are being held there: Laotian New Year. IPO, residents own shares. 40% owned by residents.

Q & A:

Please specify leaders?

Joey McKellar – Leaders come from the congregation itself. We are into institution-based organizing, which is different from community-based organizing. We begin by listening. Because of the quality-of-life issues, participation is leaked in from residents of the community.

How do stop gentrification? In PA, did they have local agents that help going down that process?

Jennifer Henry – Gentrification was being done by 1 person. We tapped into the self-interest of the homeowners, that the homeowners and RE agent were playing on social fears.

Have this neighborhood been mixed-income or stayed mixed-income?

Jennifer Henry – Will check on the stats.

Paul Watson – Trying to get financing to do the projects.

How does a new group recognize that they can organize themselves?

Paul Watson – Really engaged organizers from that same community. Those organizers spent a lot of time going into the community and listening to people. Community celebrations. Constant organizing piece. Key segment, is the youth piece. Boost in energy, and creativity. Youth weren't initially included in their plans.

Joey McKellar - Listening campaign. Beginning and an end. A critical mass of leaders are trained to do one-to-one with residents. List of concerns and potential leadership.

Art as a tool of transformation?

Jennifer Henry – Asset-based-development. Who are the stakeholders? Who is in the community? Youth, artist, businesses, seniors, homeless, and institutions.

Paul Watson – Art and celebration to identify the progress made and contributions. Targeting the graffiti for young people, creating murals. Those youth prevented the defacing of the murals, because of pride and ownership. Art was a way of bringing people together, celebrating the work, and celebrating the community.

Roque Barros – Commercial and cultural center. Work with an artist or not work on this project. Artist asked the community bring any representation, to a charette.

Strategies of listening?

Can't design anything until you listen. Forms of listening, living-room meeting concept, social and economic benefits. Rent a house and host a meeting.