Designing Pivotal Moments for Community Change
Community Engagement: Activating and Connecting the Community Landscape for Systems Change
Connect into groups of 3, then share....

• Your Name
• Where you Live
• One thing that is New or Good, that has happened in your personal life over the last few days
Community Network Building

Local communities need **new, broad and diverse networks of positive, aspirational people** to re-populate their civic and economic landscape.

This starts with shaping **new kinds of community moments** - born from a **plurality of perspectives** - for real time, real place connection and exchange, **across existing boundaries and to challenge existing power dynamics**.
Community Network Building

SHIFTS IN THINKING+PRACTICE+LEADERSHIP

Shifts in Thinking – *Our primary intervention as community builders is to create, protect and preserve intentional community spaces that help people weave an impactful fabric of relationships, co-investment and action.*

Shifts in Practice – *Well designed and effectively run spaces with Practices that feed the aspirational energy of residents, can unleash significant capacity for creative local solutions and cultivate important new connections across class, ethnic and racial, geographic and generational divides.*

Shifts in Leadership – *Traditional leadership forms are ineffective at broadening inclusion and sharing ownership and participation. Rather we focus on mastering “Stewardship.” Stewards lead from within principally by preparing, holding and protecting space for all to flourish and to contribute.*
When these elements dominate, it is difficult to solve daily problems or spark sustainable neighborhood change.
A Community is an Eco-System. Eco-Systems don’t lie. In every Eco-System certain things get fed, and certain things are starved.

Whatever thrives in an eco-system is exactly what that Eco-System is designed to cultivate.
What Thrives in Your Community Eco-System?

Healthy Connections
Equity
Inclusion
Trust
Diversity
Collective Action
Healthy Connections
Entrepreneurial Spirit
Aspirational Energy

Empathy
Fun
Love

Fear
Isolation
Racism
Inequity
Power Plays
Good Ol’ Boy Network
Bureaucratic Spirit

Mis-Trust
Gossip
Inaction
Understanding The Truth about Your Eco-System
Re-Connect into groups of 3
Each take 2-3 minutes to talk about the community environment that you know best (the one you live in or work in or grew up in) ... your town or neighborhood... try to describe the “water” or “the eco-system”

- What are some of the spoken or unspoken rules of engagement?
- What about the ecosystem is healthy, what is toxic?
To Mobilize All the Talent, Time, energy creativity and Resources We Can Muster

Build and Activate New Networks of Trusting Relationships That Cross Boundaries

Hey Fellas... It’s All About Mobilizing Everyone’s Best Stuff... to Make Positive Change. LET’S GO!!
Recognizing that there is latent **value** locked up in:

- Disconnection
- Exclusion
- Fear Based Attitudes and Behaviors
- Command and Control Structure
- Un-Conscious Bias

That once liberated can help us solve this problem

“Recognition and Liberation are Simultaneous”
Tibetan Book of the Dead
**OLD Eco-System**

- I Still Don’t Understand What This is About
  - Sooooooo Boring
- I Can’t Afford to Waste My Time
  - They Don’t Really Need Me
- All they Want is a Rubber Stamp
- What a Drab and Uncomfortable Room
  - Never Ends on Time
  - Never Starts on Time
- So and So Just Talks Too Much
- Not Fun – Not Interesting
- I Don’t know Anyone Here
- This Kind of Thing Isn’t For Me
- All these Muckety Mucks Just like Hearing Themselves Talk

**NEW Eco-System**

- This is New and Different
- Interesting and Fun – Never Been in a Room Like This
- It Seems Like We Have a Pretty Clear Path to Follow
- I’m So Glad I Finally Got to Know So-and-So Better
- I’m So Glad I Got to Meet Some Folks From Over There
  - Starts on Time/Ends on Time
  - The Place is Festive and Comfortable and Ready
- I Actually Learned Something/Got Something Today
  - I Got to Talk About What I Care About
- I Have a Role to Play That Interests Me and Is My Strength
  - People Here Are Expecting Me to Do My Part
- We Can Really Do Something Special Together &
  - Have Fun While We Do It!
So, I guess it’s good to know all this BUT....

Yeah or NOT do?

Yeah what the heck do we do now??
Ah Excellent Question!
Here are 4 Gigantic Don’t’s

Oh, and 2 Enormous Do’s
#1 DON’T Act Like You Can Do Transformative Change Without Taking on Structural – Traditional Exclusion

OK folks if we want to build trust we are going to have to take on the racism that’s been going on here for a long time!!

Many Initiatives approach community engagement as if we are operating in a Neutral Space... as if the power dynamics, and practices of structural exclusion, don’t exist or are just going to melt away.

This is a mistake! THERE IS NO NEUTRAL SPACE!
Yikes, There’s Not Just One Elephant in this Room!!!
#2 DON’T Assume that The Tried and True Methods of the Past Are Going to Work Today

They May Be Part of the Problem
We have been building “poor people’s” environments engineered to “manage” community participation and to service broken people - environments we would never choose for ourselves or our loved ones.

Bad Meetings

Dominating, Exclusive Leadership

Intrusive Systems

Places that encourage/ feed dependency and helplessness

Systems that Isolate, dominate and Control

Networks that are starved and impotent

Public Participation Karaoke

System and Medical Model Solutions

Community Engagement ‘Bait n Switch’
Lawrence CommunityWorks
“Iron Rule” #1

“There is no such thing as Apathy. People aren’t apathetic, they are discerning. If folks aren’t coming to your thing, it’s the wrong thing.”

Lawrence CommunityWorks
“Iron Rule” #2

“Never design a meeting or activity that you aren’t excited about going to yourself or that you wouldn’t happily invite your loved ones to.”
#3 DON’T Try To Reform Existing Structures and Institutions

Even the Smallest Institutions will mount a Fierce Resistance to Change
#4 DON’T Believe that Institutional Interventions are the key to Transformative Community Change!

We Expect Institutions to Make The Kind of Change That Only Functioning Communities Can Achieve!
The Network Organizing Premise?
De-Humanizing systems and institutions are reinforcing and exacerbating the fear and isolation that diminish us as humans and divide us as a community

System Interventions in an environment of weak or thin community coherence are like using toxic synthetic fertilizers in the garden, designed to support one outcome to the exclusion of others and in the process deplete the soil, making it harder for anything to grow
1. DO....Get Busy Creating a New Human-Centered, Fun, Aspirational and Productive Infrastructure for Connection and Action
7 Elements of a Human Centered Environment?

1. Opportunities for cultivating strong individual self agency that comes from being asked/challenged to contribute: *feeling useful and helpful to my own cause and to others*
2. Networks (Relationships) of support and accountability that encourage and challenge me in honest and helpful ways
3. A *choice environment* that is well understood, diverse and rich and consistently there
4. A *Truthful and honest shared assessment of the system and structural barriers* and challenges we all face as we try to solve this problem: institutional racism, multi-generational poverty etc.
5. Spaces that are *safe, fair comfortable and fun* and where leaning into learning and expressing vulnerability are prized behaviors
6. An abundance of *“marketplace moments”* that help me discern valuable opportunities and relationships and bring my own value to others.
7. Practices and behaviors and *norms that help us be our best selves* with others
Our Community Conversation #3

“Human-Centered Environment”

- Group of 3 Conversation...

Connect in your group of three, each take a minute to reflect on an organization or effort that you have been a part of that functioned as a positive human-centered environment.

- How could you tell?
- What specifically were some of the things that made it that way?
- How did it feel to be a part of that group?
2. DO Try Using Community Network Building Strategies to Start Cultivating a New Diverse Network of Aspirational, Connected and Action Oriented People!

**4 Core Strategies**

1. A Powerful, Compelling and Truthful Invitation

2. Spaces for Healing and Exchange

3. Practices for Feeding Trust and Starving Fear

4. Stewardship as Leadership
A Powerful, Compelling Invitation

- Human: Language and feel
- Aspirational; Positive, Reaching, Inspirational
- Truthful; Both the challenge and the imperative that all are needed
- Timely – What is the Moment of Opportunity?
- Challenge: What can you do to help?
Old Invitation

You're Invited!

To: Be A Part of the Blah Blah Blah Blah Blah Initiative

Give us your input on a proposal that a few of us have been working on for the past 6 months

Come to a planning meeting to give us your feedback

Fill out a survey to give us your feedback – ‘what would you like to see in the neighborhood?’

We need a resident on our steering committee!

New Invitation

You're Invited!

To:

Join the Raise Up Network!

If you love our kids and care about our kids succeeding in school and if you are willing to do something to help even one more kid succeed, you should join this network of parents, teachers, residents, coaches, business leaders who are Raising Up Kids to Succeed in Our City!

• Come to Network Night and Meet Others in the Network
• Start or Join an Action Team to Start helping Kids Now!
• Join The Raise Up Door-to-Door Squad To Help The Network Grow to 2,000 people by
Network Night
in Greater University Circle

Food * Fun * Friends!
This casual gathering is a place to share ideas and grow the network of people who are invested in making our neighborhoods an amazing place!

1st Thursday of every month at 6 p.m.!

Spaces for Healing and Exchange

- Human Centered
- Regular and Consistent
- Ritualized
- Fairness and Transparency
- Aspirational Energy
- Market Place Moments
Network Night

Community Conversations

1. New and Good
2. Table Talk
3. The Marketplace

Tuesdays Together

NeighborUp Night!

Working Cities Wednesdays

Community Cafés
Practices for Feeding Trust and Starving Fear

- Story Sharing
- Liberation Vs Domination
- Give/Get
- Open Architecture
- Form Follows Function
Stewardship as Leadership

- Shaping and protecting space
- Leading and teaching practices
- Commitment to Intentionality
- Inhabiting the network- leading from within
- Being Vulnerable “I Don’t Know!”
- Bringing your true and best self
- Collaborative Action
Comfortable Connection
Introduce yourself: Ed
Request a few minutes
What is one way that you would seek excellence for one Birmingham City school student?
Invite to the July 25 gathering
Share/Ask for contact information
Our Community Conversation #4

“Shifting Behaviors”

- **Group of 3 Conversation...** As people who are part of leading initiatives and/or representing institutions and active in community change efforts.... How do we work to bridge the gap between institutional and human centered operating culture?

- **What are some of the individual and group behaviors we need to change?**

- **What is one practice that you think could really help?**
Why Invest in Community Engagement?

Because absolutely this will not happen without more of us bringing our best selves.
What Does it Mean to Invest in Community Engagement?

- Understand your ‘Water’
- Create New Moments that Feed Aspiration and Connection, and Starve division, fear and exclusion