



Improving Quality of Life in Neighborhoods

A guide for residents, community
associations and partners

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How to use this guide

This guide is meant to help resident leaders and stakeholders learn about — and apply — the Quality of Life Framework to their neighborhood revitalization efforts. You are encouraged to review the [map](#) that shows all 10 long-term outcomes and how they relate to one another. The ultimate outcome, an improved quality of life, is defined at the top. The map is meant to be read starting from the bottom center with the dreams, hopes and concerns of the residents, then proceeding through the innermost bands of the three foundational outcomes, and then outward into the seven sector outcomes.

Note that the focus of this framework is on outcomes, not activities. This is discussed in more depth later, but please note that the framework is designed to focus time, attention and resources on those activities that will bring about specific desirable outcomes that then lead to the next set of desirable outcomes. The framework is designed to prevent random activities that waste time and resources. Deliberate focus on outcomes is more likely to bring about the hoped for changes.

Before starting neighborhood revitalization work, and certainly before jumping right into sector work, neighbors and partners are encouraged to read through the early chapters of this guide, which outline the philosophy of how sustainable and systemic positive change occurs in neighborhoods, including assumptions and barriers.

The chapter on [sustaining practices](#) is meant to encourage you to adopt specific activities that have helped others succeed at sustainable and systemic change. Throughout this guide, as specific sustaining practices are identified, a link to the corresponding manual is included, so you can jump to additional information on an as-needed basis.

Please note the brief chapter about [getting started](#), which is helpful if you are alone and taking the first steps in your neighborhood.

Most important, all readers are encouraged to review the three foundational outcome chapters and their corresponding pathways, as these delineate how each outcome is connected to others and why some deserve attention first.

After gaining a clear understanding of the big picture on the map and the foundational outcome pathways, readers should review the four phases of the iterative cycle before determining the status of their neighborhoods.

Please refer often to the terminology descriptions in [Appendix A](#), as this framework uses many new terms, and uses familiar terms in new and specific ways.

[Appendix B](#) contains graphic representations of the pathways to each foundational and sector outcome.

Appendices [C](#), [D](#) and [E](#) include how-to steps within each foundational outcome by applying the four phases of the iterative cycle. You will note some repetition within these appendices, as the phases are the same, but the focus is different. Some neighborhoods will have accomplished more intermediate outcomes than others and therefore may find this guide at a different point in their journey. These appendices also include assessment tools for each foundational outcome, to help you and your neighbors determine your status and location on the pathway. Finally, the appendices include a summary of questions to consider for each of the three foundational outcomes. These guiding questions are meant to get you thinking about the status of your neighborhood and to clarify the distinctions among the three foundational outcomes.

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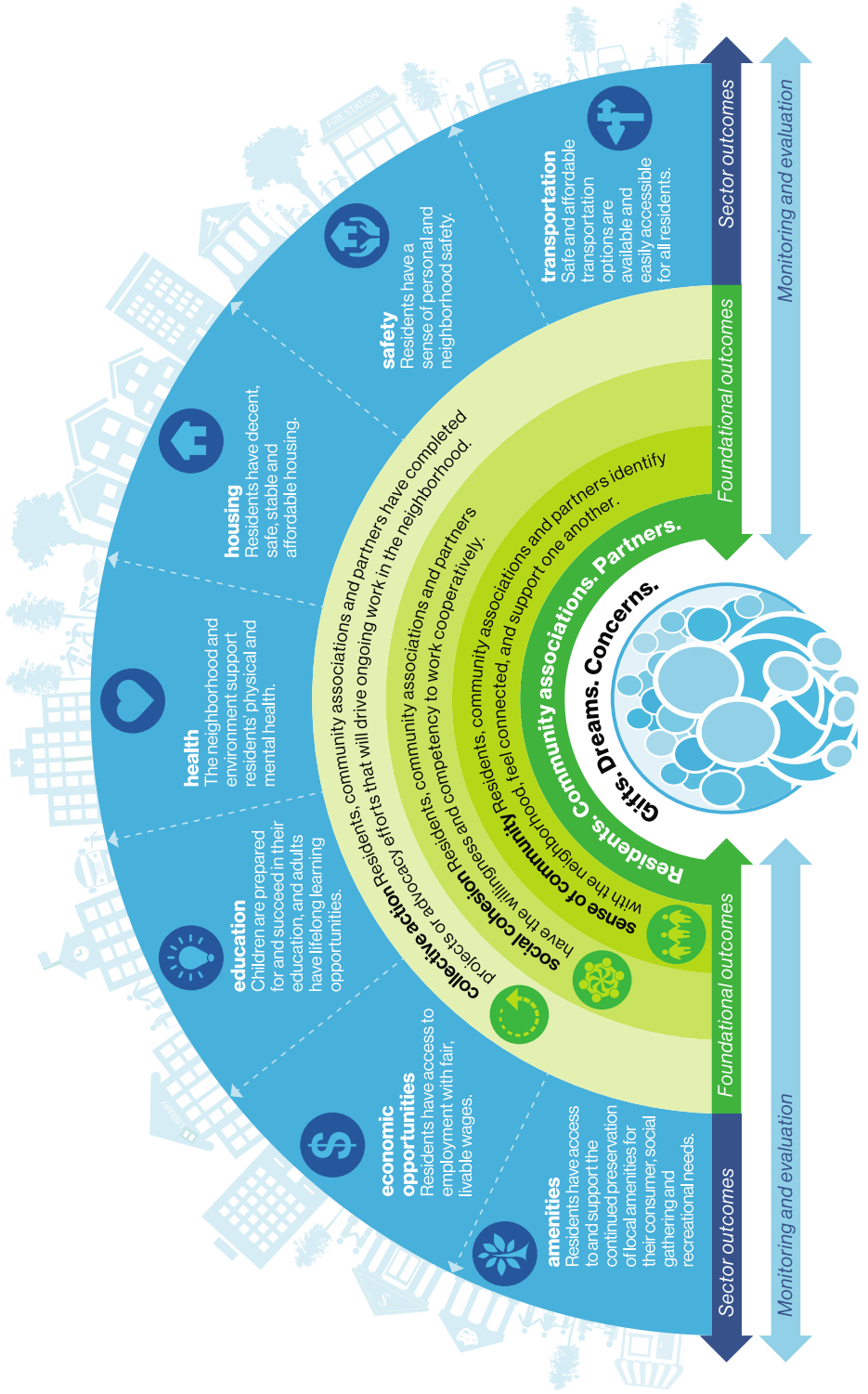


Neighborhood revitalization quality of life framework

Ultimate outcome: Improved quality of life

Quality of life is the sense of well-being and happiness experienced by individuals, groups and communities.

MARCH 2017



An introduction to the Quality of Life Framework

Ultimate goal

The ultimate goal of neighborhood revitalization is to improve quality of life, which is defined as a sense of well-being and happiness experienced by individuals, groups and communities. This guide will help you and your neighbors determine how to improve the quality of life in your neighborhood.

Ten long-term outcomes

The Quality of Life framework includes a map and 10 outcome pathways that represent intermediate and long-term outcomes required to sustain efforts to improve lives. The framework was created by people who have decades of experience working to improve the quality of life in neighborhoods. This guide is organized around 10 long-term outcomes — three foundational outcomes and seven sector outcomes. Each outcome has a pathway with activities and indicators to measure progress, and all 10 are on the [map](#), which shows how they relate to one another. Each pathway also refers to intermediate outcomes, which are prerequisites to meeting the outcome at the top of each pathway. To create lasting change, community efforts must focus first on three foundational outcomes:

- **Sense of community** — Identifying with the neighborhood, feeling connected and supporting one another.
- **Social cohesion** — Being willing and able to work together.
- **Collective action** — Sustaining ongoing projects and advocacy efforts.

Only after investing significant time and resources in the foundational outcomes do neighborhoods turn their attention to select sector priorities within the other seven long-term outcomes:

- **Amenities** — Access to, and preservation of, consumer, social and recreational amenities.
- **Economic opportunities** — Access to employment with fair, livable wages.
- **Education** — Lifelong learning opportunities and support for educational success for children.
- **Health** — An environment that supports physical and emotional health.
- **Housing** — Access to decent, safe, stable and affordable housing.
- **Safety** — A sense of personal safety.
- **Transportation** — Options and access to safe and affordable transportation.

The framework is based on four assumptions, recognizes 10 common barriers, identifies four lenses to provide focus and doggedly asserts that all neighborhoods contain assets that can contribute to community transformation.

Four assumptions

- **Customization:** Every neighborhood is unique, with specifics that greatly impact neighborhood priorities.
- **Sustainable and systemic:** In a revitalizing neighborhood, the quality of life improvements are sustained over time and systemic, so that we can be assured that we aren't just treating symptoms, but addressing root causes.
- **The foundational outcomes are foundational:** Focus on the three foundational outcomes first to build capacity, skills, relationships and knowledge to fuel future work.
- **Iterative pathway:** Neighborhoods travel in both directions along the pathways to revisit the foundational outcomes, reinforce capacities and strengthen relationships.

Ten common barriers to lasting community change

- Cycle of poverty.
- Displacement of residents and neighborhood culture.
- Individual prejudice and bigotry.
- Inequitable and predatory policies and systems.
- Institutionalized racism.
- Lack of localized and citizen political power and voice.

- Lack of market control.
- Neighborhood disinvestment.
- Poor design and land use.
- Regular shifts in the demographic makeup of neighborhoods.

Four lenses

A lens provides focus or modifies how something is seen. This framework uses the following four lenses:

- An approach based on residents' strengths.
- Equity.
- Multisector collaboration.
- Systems approach.

So what? Why do my neighbors and I need a framework?

Your neighborhood can use the map, pathways and suggestions in this guide to impact priorities identified by neighbors who want to work together. Using a specific framework provides guidance and common language to help multitudes of people make optimal decisions about programs, outreach, resource allocation and outcome evaluation.

Having a framework to guide planning and decision-making about priorities reminds us to build on the assets and strengths in the neighborhood while recognizing the forces that act as barriers to improved quality of life. Recognizing both the assets and the barriers in your neighborhood will allow people to organize intentional strategies and projects designed to meet the foundational outcomes: sense of community, social cohesion and collective action. The framework also identifies intermediate outcomes, indicators and sustaining practices designed to address these forces. Identifying these forces and barriers, and committing to address them in the beginning stages of community organizing, ensures that sector-level work, and all neighborhood revitalization efforts, will be lasting and enduring over time.

Having many neighborhoods, coalitions, agencies and residents using the same terminology based on common assumptions allows for cross-neighborhood pollination and co-learning. Together, neighborhood residents and coalitions can share good ideas and best practices and can encourage one another. Your neighborhood coalition will increase its knowledge and expertise as you move through the outcome pathways.

Motivation and capacity

Your collective work will require increasing levels of capacity and skill to sustain vital partnerships and concerted action. Learning to work together is an ongoing process, and it starts with the motivation to act.

Motivation is defined as an internal willingness and desire to act and accomplish something together. Motivation comes from residents' dreams and aspirations, gifts and assets, and fears and concerns. When the dreams and aspirations of a handful of neighbors are voiced, it serves as an inspirational force to mobilize initial changes. When you apply your gifts to an effort you care about and when neighbors recognize the talents of one another, it becomes possible to use the unique assets in your neighborhood to generate energy and increase the willingness of many to work together. Fears and concerns, when shared with neighbors, have the potential to generate positive action. These three motivators have in their essence a "let's do something" attitude and create forward momentum.

Motivation is a key component to concerted action, but it alone will not provide sufficient ingredients for ongoing, future movement. The other essential component is sufficient capacity to take the immediate next step forward. While motivation is the internal willingness, capacity is the ability to match the inner desire.

Recognizing the forces of motivation and capacity, this guide emphasizes relationship-building activities throughout the first three foundational outcomes before working on sector outcome priorities. The iterative nature of community development requires a deliberate return to activities within the foundational outcomes to spur continued growth in relationships, motivation and capacity. As you work on each foundational outcome pathway, you and your neighbors will have an opportunity to work on small, “quick-win” projects that may be closely related to priority sector work. These projects provide an opportunity to practice working together, holding each other accountable, working through conflict, raising resources and organizing volunteers, all of which will impact your success with holistic sector work in the future.

The following pages contain more detail about the long-term foundational outcomes, indicators, activities and sustaining practices that are key to improving the quality of life in neighborhoods.

This guide emphasizes relationship-building activities throughout the first three foundational outcomes before working on sector outcome priorities.

IN SUMMARY, THIS FRAMEWORK IS BASED ON THE FOLLOWING:

- Each and every neighborhood contains gifts, strengths and assets that can be leveraged to create change.
- When people invest in their relationships and decide to work together to benefit the entire neighborhood, transformation is possible.
- When local organizations, governments, schools and businesses take time to listen to and understand the aspirations of the residents, they become effective partners in revitalizing neighborhoods.
- Neighborhoods face a unique mix of challenges, and in every case, no matter the specifics, viable solutions do not come from outside the neighborhood, but from within.
- Improving quality of life requires a holistic perspective and sustained, intentional efforts by many stakeholders.

Long-term outcomes

Improving the sense of well-being and happiness experienced by individuals, groups and communities requires a holistic view that is systemic, sustainable and inclusive. Ten long-term outcomes are identified, three of which are considered foundational and are deemed essential to improving the quality of life in a neighborhood:

- **Sense of community** — Residents, community associations and partners identify with the neighborhood, feel connected and support one another. (“I know you and I like you.”)
- **Social cohesion** — Residents, community associations and partners have the willingness and competency to work cooperatively. (“I want to work with you on something important to both of us.”)
- **Collective action** — Residents, community associations and partners have completed projects or advocacy efforts that will drive ongoing

THREE FOUNDATIONAL OUTCOMES

- Sense of community — “I know you and I like you.”
- Social cohesion — “I want to work with you on something important to both of us.”
- Collective action — “Let’s work our plan together over time until we see a difference.”

work in the neighborhood. (“Let’s work our plan together over time until we see a difference.”)

The remaining seven outcomes are related to the following sectors:

- **Amenities** — Residents have access to and support the continued preservation of local amenities for their consumer, social gathering and recreational needs.
- **Economic opportunities** — Residents have access to employment with fair, livable wages.
- **Education** — Children are prepared for and succeed in their education, and adults have lifelong learning opportunities.
- **Health** — The neighborhood and environment support residents’ physical and emotional health.
- **Housing** — Residents have decent, safe, stable and affordable housing.
- **Safety** — Residents have a sense of personal and neighborhood safety.
- **Transportation** — Safe and affordable transportation options are available and easily accessible for all residents.

Not every neighborhood needs to address each of these sectors in the same way or with the same level of focus. Your neighborhood might choose to address only some of these sectors. You, with your neighbors, choose priorities, activities and indicators of success, and ensure how to make progress equitable for all.

Not only are the three foundational outcomes vital to an improved quality of life, but they also create lasting change in the other seven sector outcome areas. Neighborhoods will progress through the foundational outcomes, resulting in enhanced relationships and improved connections, and will become more prepared to invest in and manage the work of the sector outcomes. Working along the foundational outcome pathways not only provides the opportunity to practice planning and organizing projects successfully, but also fosters relationships that can lay the groundwork for success within the sectors. For example, it is very difficult to sustain an improvement in the perception of safety if no progress is made in deepening a sense of community or bolstering social cohesion. It can be difficult to feel safe if you don’t know your neighbors and do not feel that any of your neighbors will help you. This is particularly true for vulnerable populations living in distressed neighborhoods. Working through the sense of community pathway will connect neighbors with each other. Working through the social cohesion pathway will bring neighbors together to identify shared values and aspirations. The collective action pathway offers opportunity for neighbors to learn from each other and to plan a shared future together. All of these actions will foster sector work, creating a greater chance of success with sustainable and systemic change.

You are never truly done with the foundational outcomes. As you move into sector activities, changes in the neighborhood might require returning to the foundational outcomes to strengthen relationships, which will lead to a coalition that is more connected and prepared for action and advocacy. You will read more about the iterative nature of this work later in this guide.

Before we discuss the three foundational outcomes in more depth, it is critical to review the key assumptions that the Quality of Life framework is based upon.

CALL TO ACTION

If you suspect that your neighborhood’s efforts have jumped straight to sector work, please focus on the foundational outcomes.

What is challenging about improving quality of life in neighborhoods?

Assumptions, barriers and lenses

FOUR ASSUMPTIONS

The assumptions in this guide are beliefs, biases, principles and best practices that make a case for what works to improve quality of life at the neighborhood level.

- **Customization:** Although the foundational outcomes have universal application in every neighborhood, each neighborhood is unique, and contextual differences will affect the scope and approach of the work in

each neighborhood. The Quality of Life Framework is tailored to each neighborhood's priorities within the foundational outcome pathways. The map remains the same for each neighborhood.

- **Sustainable and systemic:** The ultimate outcome is an improved quality of life for residents in the neighborhood. Our definition of success is more comprehensive than “things are getting better” or “projects have been completed.” A revitalizing neighborhood is one where quality of life improvements are sustained over time and systemic, addressing root causes, not just treating symptoms.
- **The foundational outcomes are foundational:** The guide to improving quality of life in a neighborhood was written with the expectation that every neighborhood — or specific geographic area — would focus on all three of the foundational outcomes first. In doing so, you, your neighbors and other stakeholders will have the capacity, skills and knowledge to undertake any or all of the sector outcomes. Also embedded in this assumption is the belief that the foundational outcomes (when fully or greatly realized) create the level of motivation and capacity it takes to see “sustainable and systemic” change.
- **Iterative pathway:** Although a common pathway is articulated for each outcome, neighborhoods never fully arrive or finish. It is not possible for a neighborhood to be characterized as *revitalized*, which is static; we prefer the term *revitalizing*, which is dynamic. Progress is measured by changes in indicators associated with each outcome. The assumption is that neighborhoods are always reaching a sufficient amount of a particular intermediate outcome to move through the pathway, as well as increasing in motivation (internal willingness) and capacity (external ability). Thus, neighborhoods travel in both directions along the pathways as they revisit the foundational outcomes to reinforce capacities and strengthen relationships. Feedback loops are used to capture lessons throughout the journey. For more information about the specific feedback loop methodology, please see the [Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning collection](#) on My.Habitat, along with a brief explanation in [Appendix A](#).

COMMON BARRIERS TO IMPROVING QUALITY OF LIFE

Beyond the four assumptions listed above, there are 10 barriers that often impede efforts to improve quality of life. Knowing how to optimally create change is not possible without recognizing common challenges and barriers to improved quality of life. Although history and circumstances are unique to each neighborhood, there are barriers held in common by many distressed neighborhoods that hinder efforts to improve residents’ quality of life. Frequently, barriers have contributed to the creation of the current state and impeded improvement efforts. In some cases, these barriers are embedded in a community, and they often are perpetuated by decisions made beyond the neighborhood, all of which have an impact on revitalization efforts.

You and your neighbors can identify the specific barriers that are active in your neighborhood, and can explore causes and possible activities to address the barriers, particularly during the foundational outcome work. Informed by 40 years of work, and by having discussions with and following the work of experts in the fields of community organizing, economic development and public health, we have assembled the following list of 10 primary forces that act as common barriers to efforts designed to revitalize neighborhoods.

- **Cycle of poverty:** The cycle of poverty is the set of factors or events by which poverty, once started, is likely to continue unless there is outside intervention.
- **Displacement of residents and neighborhood culture:** New (and usually outside) investment may attract new residents and drive up the cost of living for current residents, making the neighborhood unaffordable or unfavorable for them, and thus causing residents to leave or changing the entire cultural heritage and identity of the neighborhood.
- **Individual prejudice and bigotry:** This generally manifests in two ways: an internal sense of inferiority and an internal sense of superiority. It isn’t just about race; it can also be manifested around class, gender, religion, sexual orientation, etc.

CALL TO ACTION

During the foundational outcome work, encourage activities in your neighborhood to identify barriers to improving the quality of life.

- **Inequitable and predatory policies and systems:** Policies and political, economic and social systems may prey on and take advantage of the vulnerable and fail to address the inequities they experience.
- **Institutionalized racism:** This includes the ways in which racism is systemically and structurally present in our systems and society as a whole, which is governed by behavioral norms that support racist thinking and active racism. It is reflected in disparities related to wealth, income, the criminal justice system, employment, housing, health care, political power and education, among other things.
- **Lack of localized and citizen political power and voice:** This occurs when local residents lack the understanding, resources and competencies to effectively represent or overcome the barriers to their interests and influence the decisions that affect their neighborhood, or when those in political power or with decision-making authority choose to ignore the voices of residents, particularly minority or marginalized residents.
- **Lack of market control:** This is a problem when the cost of basic needs that inform quality of life are not affordable to most residents in the neighborhood. For example, for the most part, housing is not treated as a basic need but rather a commodity, and therefore the cost of housing is primarily set not by an ethical or moral standard, but by whatever the market will bear. “What the market will bear” is generally not the same thing as “what is affordable for most people.”
- **Neighborhood disinvestment:** This occurs when the community lacks resources — or those willing to invest resources — to sustain a high quality of life.
- **Poor design and land use:** Land use regulations may increase the price of property (what some call a “zoning tax”), causing the burden of land use regulations to be borne disproportionately by low-income people, particularly renters.
- **Regular shifts in the demographic makeup of neighborhoods:** Because of multiple factors, the population makeup of our neighborhoods can change very rapidly, making it difficult to build the sense of community and cohesion that usually happens over an extended period. Examples of influencing factors include reinvestment and displacement in neighborhoods, rapidly changing socio-economic factors, and the confluence of different cultural and ethnic populations in and out of neighborhoods.

FOUR LENSES

The four assumptions and 10 common barriers listed above, combined with our commitment to social justice, inform the lens of this guide to improving quality of life in neighborhoods. A lens is something that provides focus or modifies how something is seen. The following four lenses serve to focus and modify the activities and indicators contained in the pathways in order to align each with assumptions described above, as well as to coordinate with evidence-based practice.

- **Resident strengths-based approach.** Guided by the asset-based community development, or ABCD, methodology, neighborhood revitalization efforts are catalyzed and informed by the gifts, dreams and concerns of residents. Every neighborhood is home to residents with skills, passions and talents that, when organized and applied, transform a community from the “inside out.”
- **Equity:** Equity doesn’t mean equal. Equity is about being intentional and giving preference to the voices that are impacted — and marginalized — most by the injustices of our society. To ensure that our work is equitable, we must ensure not only that silenced and relegated voices are “at the table,” but also that they have real decision-making power related to activities and priorities in their neighborhoods. When we strive for equity, we are striving to create a level playing field.
- **Multisector collaboration:** To create sustainable and systemic change, residents need the support and resources of trusted community associations and partners who share a common vision and goal for the neighborhood. The sectors relate to one another and therefore cannot be addressed in isolation. There are

CALL TO ACTION

Please see the **ABCD methodology resources** on My.Habitat to learn more about how to identify, map and network assets.

many different models and forms of partnership that support this collaborative approach, including collective impact and coalition building. Our map and pathways were developed with a strong commitment to the importance of partnership and collaboration.

- **Systems approach:** The activities, outcomes and indicators stress the interactive nature and interdependence of external and internal factors that impact our neighborhoods, our organizations and the systems that support them. Because we believe so deeply in this interdependence and its impact on the quality of life in the neighborhood, we also believe that comprehensive, systemic and sustainable change cannot happen without addressing and influencing these relationships known as systems.

Improving quality of life: A customized approach

Neighborhood context

This guide to improving the quality of life in a neighborhood does not contain a universal definition for the kind of neighborhood in need of revitalization. The map and pathways were developed with urban, suburban and rural neighborhoods in mind. They apply to any neighborhood where people identify a desire to improve their quality of life in a systemic and sustainable way, but work will occur most often in a neighborhood that is experiencing some level of distress.

“Neighborhood” is defined as the place or geographically defined location where revitalization is happening. You might call the place you live something other than a “neighborhood.” This is especially true in rural areas, where people identify with the entire community, village or small town. You should not feel obliged to use the word “neighborhood” if it does not apply. This guide uses “neighborhood” in reference to a specific place with boundaries, while using “community” to refer to the social connections between people.

Although the ultimate and intermediate outcomes and indicators are firm and consistent across neighborhoods, specific activities designed to meet those outcomes will vary based on the context of each particular geographic neighborhood and the partners and people working within. The contextual differences will affect the scope and approach of the work, with many activities deeply affected by the particular neighborhood’s strengths and assets. The foundational outcomes and sustaining practices, as described later, have universal application.

Community assets

The framework presented in this guide is grounded in, and informed by, the methodology of asset-based community development, or ABCD. The ABCD perspective suggests that neighborhood revitalization begins with the assets and gifts of the residents and the neighborhood, the dreams and aspirations of the residents for their neighborhood, and the fears and concerns that they have for the neighborhood. These factors and the people who bring them forth are the mobilizing and motivational elements that serve as catalysts for the work that will be done.

The ABCD approach intentionally emphasizes the gifts, assets, dreams and aspirations of the neighborhood as correctives to a long history of strictly needs-based approaches where outsiders to the neighborhood perpetuated a narrative about certain neighborhoods as “places to be fixed” and residents as “clients to be served.”

John Kretzmann and John P. McKnight, authors of the seminal publication on the ABCD methodology, *Building Communities from the Inside Out*, invite readers to consider communities no longer as complex masses of needs and problems, but rather as diverse and potent webs of gifts and assets. As such, each community has a unique set of skills, capacities and networks (pages 6-10) that can be marshaled to sustain community development efforts.

The Quality of Life map and outcome pathways for neighborhood revitalization have adopted the following ABCD asset category definitions:

- **Individuals:** At the center are residents of the neighborhood, each of whom has gifts, assets and skills. Individual gifts and assets need to be recognized and identified. In community development, you cannot do anything with people’s needs, only their assets. Deficits or needs are only useful to institutions.
- **Community associations:** Small, informal groups of people, such as clubs and faith and spiritual organizations working with a common interest as volunteers, are called “associations” and are critical to

community mobilization. They don't control anything; they come together around a common interest by their individual choice.

- **Partners:** Structurally organized professionals are called "partner institutions," or "partners" for short. They include government agencies, private businesses, nonprofit organizations, schools, libraries, hospitals, etc. The assets of these partner institutions help the community capture valuable resources and establish a sense of civic responsibility.

Asset-based community development also considers the fears and concerns that residents have for their neighborhoods. Taking assets and aspirations seriously doesn't mean that the very real pain of residents and neighborhoods goes unaccounted. Community associations, organizations and partners stand in solidarity with residents by acknowledging their pain and using the power of partnership to bring healing while advocating for systemic change. Recognizing common challenges in the list of 10 barriers discussed above is a first step, with many to follow.

Customized approach

The unique context of each neighborhood — the strengths that live within, combined with the concerns and desires of you and your neighbors — determines which barriers are addressed and which outcomes, activities and indicators are selected as top priorities.

According to NeighborWorks America, a leader in the field, community development is the strategic process of transforming neighborhoods that lack vitality into neighborhoods of choice (aka a place people want to live) by helping residents and other stakeholders build and maintain places where they want to live, work and play. These neighborhoods strive to be resilient places where people can invest time, energy and money; where they are optimistic about their future; where they feel they have control over their surroundings and the capacity to respond to community dynamics; and where they are connected to one another and to the larger community.

As mentioned above, one of the steadfast principles and beliefs of this framework is that, while trends and themes exist, every neighborhood holds its own unique set of gifts, assets and concerns. Each neighborhood will customize its sector pathways to fit its specific circumstances. For example, your neighborhood might not need to address safety if this long-term outcome has already been addressed. In addition, a neighborhood, to suit its specific circumstances, may customize the activities designed to meet the intermediate outcomes within a long-term outcome. For example, if a neighborhood is addressing neighborhood amenities, it might decide to focus only on "amenities for basic consumer needs" if it has sufficient amenities for recreation.

Part of the neighborhood revitalization process is identifying the priorities you, your neighbors and your partners are willing to act on and which activities people are willing to organize around. This framework will help you make strategic decisions about using time, resources and talent to optimize impact toward your collective aspirations. The map and pathways are not meant to create a cookie-cutter approach to neighborhood transformation. No coalition member alone is in a position to know, let alone determine, what's best for you and your neighbors. Rather, each coalition member brings talents, gifts, skills and resources to the table as a dedicated partner, and together decisions are made that resonate and align with your aspirations. Some of the activities listed in the 10 outcome pathways are considered "sample" activities designed to illustrate the types of activities that might be used to reach an outcome. These are not considered exhaustive, and it is assumed that you and other neighborhood leaders and partners will create contextually appropriate activities to reach your desired intermediate and long-term outcomes.

Working in neighborhoods across the country confirms that, although every neighborhood is unique, there are trends and best practices that can guide community-building efforts. Specific activities, defined below as sustaining practices, take into account evidence-based expertise, themes and trends from the field.

Sustaining practices

Informed by evidence gathered from community development practitioners across the country, there are seven practices that greatly influence the viability of long-term change and maximize the impact of efforts. Known as sustaining practices, these are influenced by the assumptions, barriers and lenses discussed previously, and include the following:

CALL TO ACTION
See the **sustaining practices guides** on My.Habitat.

Outreach and engagement

Our entire approach is based on efforts being resident-driven and resident-informed. Engaging neighbors is essential to building community, creating social cohesion and creating collective action. For positive change to be sustainable, strategies must align with the gifts, dreams and concerns of neighbors, and the implementation of programs and activities must involve you and your neighbors. This guide recommends multiple activities within the foundational outcomes that seek to involve and engage residents and neighbors. Building a sense of community in a neighborhood does not happen overnight, especially when a neighborhood has experienced chronic disinvestment or has significant barriers between groups of people. It takes time for residents, neighbors, community associations and partners to build relationships, feel connected and support one another. Neighborhoods are revitalized by people spending time with one another, both informally and through more formal activities. Over time, we create a shared identity and story built on stronger relationships of trust and care.

Resident leadership

When a neighborhood has leaders who have a vision and the skill set for creating change, revitalizing neighborhood work can take place naturally without support from an outside organization. However, some neighborhoods might not have leadership that is organized and taking action to build community and transform the neighborhood. That doesn't mean that leaders don't exist; they just might not know each other or be organized yet. In some cases, an outside organization can support the development of leadership skills that are essential to community-building efforts. An organization can support the development of knowledge and skills of local residents who become the central players in building and maintaining positive relationships and connections throughout the neighborhood. For community work to be sustainable, investment in developing the skills of local leadership is vital. The appendices of this guide recommend activities particularly in the social cohesion and collective action outcomes that train local leadership on:

- ABCD methodology.
- How to build strong partnerships and coalitions.
- How to conduct effective engagement and outreach.
- How to run community meetings.
- Conflict resolution.
- Cultural competency.
- Anti-racism.
- And much more.

Coalition building

For neighborhood revitalization work to be comprehensive and sustainable, residents must organize with one another and with trusted community associations and partners who share a common vision, goals and values. To sustain the work over time, the residents, community associations and partners form associations, collaboratives and coalitions with shared resources. This *collective impact* approach can be supported by organizing particularly in the areas of social cohesion and collective action.

Neighborhood planning and implementation

Many residents and nonprofits become engaged when there is a crisis afoot. This will always be the case, but this guide stresses the importance not only of being responsive to an immediate crisis, but also of being strategic over time — for the long haul. Planning allows us to be more strategic, inclusive and comprehensive in our approaches to improving the quality of life in neighborhoods. Planning can take many different forms, some more focused and others comprehensive. When done well, it engages multiple stakeholders and pays particular attention to those most impacted in the neighborhood. The guide encourages various forms of planning activities to support all of the foundational outcomes, but particularly within collective action and in preparation for activities designed to make an impact in the sector-level outcomes. Plans are effective only if they are implemented. Plans not only highlight priority areas to be addressed in the neighborhood, but also specify actions, targets, milestones and a timeline, which allows progress on the plan to be monitored.

Advocacy

Advocacy, as a sustaining practice, includes community organizing and coordinated efforts by engaged citizens designed to influence local, state and federal regulations, appropriations, policies and practices to positively influence the quality of life in the neighborhood. Letter-writing campaigns and presentations at local zoning boards or at a state legislative hearing are examples of advocacy, as are public awareness campaigns.

Mobilizing resources

Whether neighborhood plans are narrow and focused or comprehensive and grand, it takes significant financial resources and paid staff and volunteer hours to meet desired outcomes. Part of any strong planning process or agenda for a neighborhood association or coalition is the implementation of a resource development plan. This guide contains activities, particularly within collective action and the seven sector outcomes, to raise funds, allocate paid staff time, and recruit and empower volunteers to support and sustain the work of revitalizing the neighborhood.

Monitoring, evaluation, accountability, learning

In general, monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning, or MEAL, is a set of principles and practices that push us beyond using data simply for reporting and instead toward making more informed decisions about our programs and strategies. MEAL encourages us to ask many questions about our work and to answer them with “credible evidence” derived from a variety of stakeholder-selected sources. An important aspect of improving the quality of life in a neighborhood is the collection of indicators used to measure whether progress has been made toward a desired outcome. Indicators measure the impact and effectiveness of efforts and validate strategies. Indicators are developed first, so that activities align with desired outcomes. Outcome evaluation happens over a multiyear period using both quantitative and qualitative data. We also use a “real time” measurement tactic known as “feedback loops,” which are frequent touches in the community with stakeholders to measure how things are going. We encourage the collection of perception, qualitative, quantitative and secondary data to effectively communicate impact and to monitor progress in order to make adjustments to strategies and programs. Evaluation methodologies are used throughout all 10 outcomes — foundational and sector — and neighborhood coalitions include a formal evaluation plan as part of their comprehensive neighborhood plan. Monitoring and evaluation support effective accountability and learning.

Neighborhoods that use this guide incorporate the seven sustaining practices into their organizing efforts, along each of the 10 long-term outcome pathways. The appendices include examples of sustaining practices within each of the foundational outcomes. You can also find additional information about each practice in the corresponding Sustaining Practice Guide.

Getting started

Before we discuss each foundational outcome in depth, let's review some basics about getting started.

In order to intentionally improve the quality of life in a neighborhood, there needs to be:

- A specific neighborhood with the motivation and capacity to move forward. For more information, see the [*Affiliate Handbook on the Quality of Life Framework: Exploring Readiness, Neighborhood Selection and Participation*](#).
- Neighbors, local partners and public officials willing to understand and document the gifts, dreams and concerns of people who live in the neighborhood. (link to appropriate resource on how to identify gifts, dreams, concerns)
- A willingness to gather initial information about the history, demographic and socioeconomic status of the neighborhood.

NOTE TO POTENTIAL PARTNER AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

Remember that sustainable, systemic change does not happen by outside organizations designing programs to “build a sense of community” or any other thing we might dream up. The job of outside agencies is to walk alongside residents to facilitate changes that they deem priorities. Ensure that you are well-matched with the assets and aspirations of a particular neighborhood.

NOTE TO NEIGHBORHOOD RESIDENTS

Perhaps you are interested in revitalizing and improving the quality of life in your own neighborhood. We recommend sharing your hopes with your neighbors and potential agency partners. To build on the strengths in your neighborhood, consider following steps described later in this guide to explore skills and capacities and to map the assets, dreams and concerns of those who are interested in creating change with you. Assessment and discovery tools that can be used for this purpose are discussed in the appendices of this guide and in the sustaining practices supplemental guides.

Build a core team of residents with partners

Whoever you are and wherever you share your gifts and talents, you cannot do this work alone. For revitalization work to be viable over time, a core team of stakeholders and residents will need to be created to oversee and organize the many tasks and responsibilities. In an ideal world, your neighborhood would already have a core team of local folks organized to carry out revitalization work. Perhaps a partner agency has the skills, talents or resources to help facilitate the building of a core team of stakeholders: residents, associations and partners. What is not desired is a “team of one” trying to revitalize a neighborhood alone. Worse yet is a core team made up of agencies trying to do things to a neighborhood. Please see the John Kretzmann and John P. McKnight book *Building Communities from the Inside Out* for steps on how you and your neighbors can change your neighborhood for the better by building on your strengths, skills, networks and assets. Please see the [*Affiliate Handbook on the Quality of Life Framework: Exploring Readiness, Neighborhood Selection and Participation*](#) for more information on how to build a core team.

Funding

It is never too early to start looking for resources to fund the inevitable work that you, your neighbors and the core team members create and plan. Consider assets within the neighborhood in addition to resources that other stakeholders, both public and private, could bring to the neighborhood.

Once a neighborhood has been identified, a core team has been recruited and a study of assets and potential resources has been considered, it is time to turn your attention to the Quality of Life framework map and pathways. The following pages will describe in detail how to follow a foundational outcome pathway.

Before each pathway

In order to intentionally deepen a sense of community, you, your neighbors and the core team will have already completed the following:

- Identified the boundaries of a specific neighborhood in which to focus quality of life improvement efforts.
- Started conversations with neighbors, residents, local partners and public officials, with the goal of understanding the gifts, dreams and concerns in the neighborhood.
- Gathered initial information about the history, demographic and socioeconomic status of the neighborhood.

In order to intentionally build social cohesion, you, your neighbors and the core team will have:

- Completed the steps above under sense of community.
- Made a commitment to each other to work together on the intermediate outcomes for sense of community.
- Determined that the ultimate outcome of sense of community has been achieved.

Before a coalition begins the collective action pathway, it is important to ensure the following:

- The sense of community ultimate outcome — *residents, community associations and partners identify with the neighborhood, feel connected and support one another* — has been achieved. This inherently includes advancement in the intermediate outcomes.
- The social cohesion ultimate outcome — *residents, community associations and partners have the willingness and competency to work cooperatively* — has been achieved. This also inherently includes advancement in the intermediate outcomes.
- Recognize that the initial aspirational goals and concerns developed by the original core team along the sense of community pathway and by the coalition along the social cohesion pathway will now become more comprehensively and specifically articulated, including timelines, accountabilities, measurements, indicators and fundraising targets.

The remainder of this guide will describe each foundational outcome and the intermediate outcomes along each pathway, and how-to steps will follow in the corresponding appendices.

What is sense of community?

A sense of community is the level of identification, connectedness and support that residents, community associations and partners have with one another. There are many ways to strengthen the sense of community and many barriers to be addressed, not the least of which are issues of race, power and equity. Building a sense of community in a neighborhood does not happen overnight, especially when the neighborhood has experienced chronic disinvestment or has significant barriers between groups of people.

There are two basic elements to enhancing a sense of community: interaction and information. A sense of community is improved when people spend time with one another, both informally and in more formal gatherings. In addition to deliberately spending more time together, increasing efforts to share information about what is happening in the neighborhood is foundational to future revitalization work. You and your neighbors can deepen your sense of community by learning the history and opportunities facing your neighborhood.

Over time, neighbors create a shared identity and story, built on deeper trust and stronger relationships. As the information, interactions, identity and support develop, participants have a greater sense of belonging, creating a firm foundation for future cooperation and coordinated action. Outcomes of a strong sense of community include people who:

- Identify strongly with the neighborhood.
- Feel good about their relationships in the neighborhood.
- Report feeling a sense of “belonging” in the neighborhood.

The sense of community foundational outcome anticipates that neighbors will get to know one another and build a deeper level of trust. You and your neighbors will embrace the neighborhood as a place where you choose to invest time and resources. Neighbors, community associations and local partners will feel connected to one another and will know how to access and support each other when a need arises. Activities within the sense of community foundational outcome seek to create a community that considers and respects race, religion, economic status or anything else that can keep people separated.

Sense of community intermediate outcomes

- Knowledge and awareness.
- Formal and informal interaction.
- Shared identity and story.
- Shared support and resources.

An example of an activity in this outcome area is creating informational communication pieces and holding meetings in multiple languages in order to engage more residents. For more information, please see the [Outreach and Engagement Sustaining Practice Guide](#).

An example of an activity related to this intermediate outcome is hosting theme-based community information sessions on relevant topics, at accessible times and with adequate child care. For more information about community information sessions, please see the [Outreach and Engagement Sustaining Practice Guide](#).

The neighborhood has realized this outcome when residents, community associations and partners identify with the neighborhood as a place they care about. They have knowledge of the story of their neighborhood, what has been accomplished, and the unique gifts that exist there. There is a sense of ownership and a belief that they are “in it



together.” For many neighborhoods, especially those that have experienced major demographic shifts, it is extremely difficult to uncover the neighborhood story or create a new story for residents to live from. As our society has become more individualized, less focus has been given to the shared story that has built and sustained the neighborhood in which we live. Activities and projects in this outcome are designed to draw residents together to a common story and identity that provide inspiration and creativity for the work ahead. Positive action results from residents and partners believing that their neighborhood is special and worth the investment of their time, talents and resources.

An example of an activity related to this intermediate outcome is organizing public storytelling experiences that highlight stories of the neighborhood and its residents. Another example is working with residents, associations and partners to identify a name for the revitalization efforts, then developing signs with a motto or tag line and with neighborhood branding. For more information, please see the [Outreach and Engagement Sustaining Practice Guide](#).

SHARED SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

The neighborhood has realized this outcome when residents, community associations and partners share time, resources and skills with one another when need arises, creating a network of support that is mutual, equitable and personal. The adage “every person for themselves” has created a narrative that doesn’t work well for creating healthy, thriving neighborhoods. For neighborhoods to thrive, we must relearn that each part depends on the whole. Activities and projects in this outcome are designed to act on the relationships that have been built with support and resources that help provide for the needs of residents in the neighborhood. A neighborhood becomes a “shared” place when the older woman down the street knows that people in the neighborhood will check on her and when the young parent knows that her neighbors are looking out for her child as he walks home from the bus stop.

Examples of activities related to this outcome include creating a tool sharing library and organizing resident-led projects and caring for neighbors in need. For more information about the former, please see the [Advocacy Sustaining Practice Guide](#), and for the latter please reference the [Outreach and Engagement Sustaining Practice Guide](#) and the [Resident Leadership Sustaining Practice Guide](#).

What is social cohesion?

It is important to build a sense of community because that, in and of itself, improves quality of life, but neighborhood residents, community associations and partners also must be willing to assemble and practice working together cooperatively. This foundational outcome is known as social cohesion.

Through the sense of community pathway, you have met more of your neighbors, more residents have gotten to know one another, and the level of trust has deepened. Now you can begin organizing to work together on shared projects and priorities. Social cohesion is necessary for neighborhood residents to work together successfully toward a desired goal, and it serves as an indicator of increased quality of life. This foundational outcome includes the assumption that there is adequate motivation to move forward with shared work.

For cohesion to take root, an event, person or group must be a catalyst to mobilize others to move forward with a revitalization process that adheres to the principles of asset-based community development. The work of revitalization hinges on you and your neighbors being active and taking on leadership roles in your neighborhood. As you and your neighbors take on these roles and begin to organize using an asset- and strengths-based approach, additional community associations and partners will be identified.

The combination of residents, community associations and partners over time coalesces into a coalition of willing, engaged and passionate people who have the capacity and motivation to work together cooperatively. You and your neighbors join others who care about the neighborhood to organize yourselves into a framework for action and accountability. This is when a shared vision for the neighborhood begins to take shape, neighbors encourage one another to participate, and partners learn how to listen and collaborate.

Cohesion continues to solidify as connections increase, relationships expand, organizing efforts grow, and a set of common goals, values and priorities begins to surface. Outcomes of social cohesion might be regular resident meetings or the development of a community coalition that comes together regularly to strategize ways to improve

the quality of life in the neighborhood. Building a sense of community and establishing social cohesion are the glue that keeps you and your partners working together toward a shared vision for the neighborhood.

The ultimate outcome of social cohesion is realized when residents, community associations and partners have the willingness and competency to work cooperatively. Before you get to the ultimate outcome, there are several prerequisites, known as intermediate outcomes, to achieve first. Please refer to the figure below to see a smaller version of the social cohesion pathway, or reference the detailed social cohesion pathway in [Appendix B](#).

Social cohesion intermediate outcomes

There are five intermediate outcomes within the social cohesion pathway:

- Catalysts and connectors.
- Asset-based strengths approach.
- Formal and informal organizations.
- Identified, organized, connected assets.
- Common goals, values and concerns.

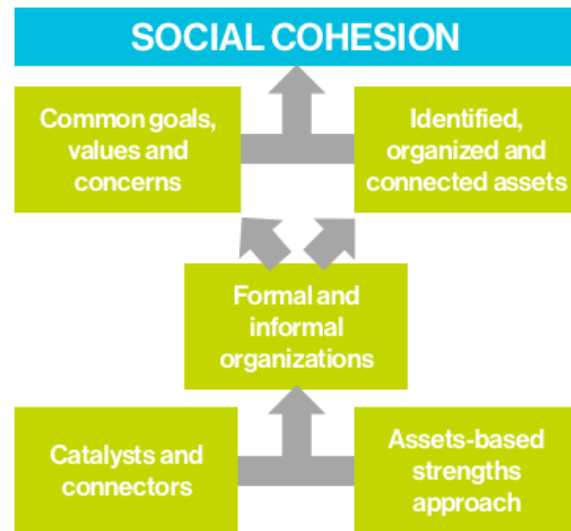
CATALYSTS AND CONNECTORS

Catalysts and connectors are well-connected leaders who bring people together. Sometimes, an event such as a natural disaster or a perceived threat such as a proposed toxic waste site next to the neighborhood acts as a catalyst to mobilize people to organize and act. Sometimes there is no catalytic event, but a desire to change prevalent and persistent challenges draws people together. Regardless of whether the catalyst for action is episodic or chronic, you as a resident who desires change will need to connect with your neighbors and others to make change happen. Be on the lookout for neighbors, residents, community association members and partners who have connections to others in the neighborhood. This is the time to think about bringing together some of these key leaders or having an initial meeting around a key concern or crisis that may be widely identified in the neighborhood. Our first step is connecting and gathering with some of these key leaders who have the capacity to engage the neighborhood and begin to build a coalition representative of the neighborhood. Keep in mind that you may already have several of these catalysts and connectors within the informal core team of leaders who have been working together to increase sense of community in the neighborhood. These folks are a great place to start identifying others.

A sample activity would be identifying these leaders through asset mapping, then applying outreach methods to neighborhood schools, churches, associations, businesses and nonprofits that have representational resident stakeholders, thereby identifying leaders who are catalysts and connectors. You can learn more about some of these activities in the [Outreach and Engagement Sustaining Practice Guide](#) and in the [Coalition Building Sustaining Practice Guide](#).

ASSET-BASED STRENGTHS APPROACH

The second intermediate outcome in the social cohesion pathway is the common understanding of asset-based community development rather than a deficits approach. Once there is a regular and reliable group of catalytic leaders, you will want to agree on an assets- and strengths-based approach to your work. It is likely that those who have been working with you to build a strong sense of community already value a strengths-based approach. The assets- and strengths-based approach highlights the importance of deepening relationships and connections, promoting identification with the neighborhood, and leveraging and highlighting the existing assets within the neighborhood to support and care for one another.



There might also be new people recently engaged in the revitalization efforts who are not familiar with an asset- and strengths-based approach. Depending on the level of familiarity and understanding of asset- and strengths-based approaches to community development work, you might consider doing a formal training around the ABCD approach or at least some informal sharing of resources to inform your future work together. The ABCD approach has some very important strategies to help inform your social cohesion work, including:

- Asset mapping (please see the asset mapping resources in the [Outreach and Engagement Sustaining Practice collection](#)).
- Emphasizing resident voices along with key partners.
- Building on existing strengths and expertise within the neighborhood.
- Using the existing gifts, dreams and concerns of residents, community associations and partners to further organize and catalyze your efforts.

You can learn more about these trainings and resources in the [Resident Leadership Sustaining Practice Guide](#). Depending on the context of your neighborhood, you might consider other training for coalition members and neighbors, such as:

- **Social cohesion training:** Training on coalition or collaborative design with interested residents, community association members and partners. To learn more about this, see the [Resident Leadership](#) and [Coalition Building](#) Sustaining Practice Guides or talk with local experts and consultants or one of Habitat's neighborhood revitalization consultants.
- **Equity, diversity and cultural competency training:** One significant barrier to social cohesion is that coalitions often lack representational participation by residents or certain marginalized populations within the neighborhood and an understanding of what it looks like to create an equitable approach to working in the neighborhood. To learn more about these resources and training opportunities, see the [Resident Leadership Sustaining Practice Guide](#) or talk with local experts and consultants or one of Habitat's neighborhood revitalization consultants.

FORMAL AND INFORMAL ORGANIZATIONS

The third intermediate outcome on the social cohesion pathway involves leaders who are prepared to lead their community in common goals, values and concerns and in organizing assets for collective action. By this point, you might already have one or more informal teams or coalitions of residents, community associations and partners who are meeting regularly. It's time for this intermediate outcome when you want to work to formalize one or more of these groups, help make connections and formalize relationships among multiple groups. Paying attention to the representation of these groups is key to discern targeted outreach and make sure your efforts are equitable and inclusive and that your work truly represents the aspirations of the neighborhood.

Processes to consider, depending on your particular context, include:

- Recruiting potential coalition members.
- Clarifying the coalition's purpose, roles, governance, accountabilities, evaluation and expectations in a written agreement. This could still be informal or could be done with a memorandum of understanding, or MOU.
- Developing resources for meeting space, administrative costs, child care, meals, etc.
- Creating a schedule for meetings and activities.
- Training a coalition around equity, organization and management.
- Creating a communication structure and plan.

Please refer to the [Coalition Building Sustaining Practice Guide](#) for more information.

IDENTIFIED, ORGANIZED AND CONNECTED ASSETS

In some ways, you have already identified, organized and connected assets just by organizing one or more formal or informal groups or coalitions. Now you will want to identify and create visible activities, projects or events that:

- Demonstrate the power of collaborative efforts.
- Build and strengthen the coalition, paying particular attention to representation and equity.
- Educate people in the community about what we are doing.
- Develop leadership, resources and skills to support our work.

Resident-led and resident-focused activities continue to foster a greater sense of community, educate residents about the coalition work taking place and invite them to participate. It is also vital to continue to listen to residents about the strengths to build on, dreams to realize or concerns to address in the neighborhood. You can learn more about these activities in the [Outreach and Engagement Sustaining Practice Guide](#).

By this time, critical concerns may have come up, or some early issues or activities may have appeared that you and your neighbors want to act on immediately. These types of early actions and projects can help further catalyze your efforts and create broader community interest. Examples of great “quick win” projects include:

- A neighborhood cleanup.
- A public art project that promotes neighborhood identity.
- A place-making project that promotes resident gathering and interaction.
- The installation of lighting on streets or in a park to improve neighborhood perceptions of safety.

Finally, your coalition might want to continue to improve its own processes, structure, way of engaging with residents, and promoting equity and representation. Example activities or strategies include:

- Hosting a training on coalition design. You can learn more about this in the [Coalition Building Sustaining Practice Guide](#).
- Hosting a training on collaborative fundraising. You can learn more about this in the [Coalition Building and Mobilizing Resources Sustaining Practice Guides](#).
- Hosting a training on resident engagement strategies and activities. You can learn more about this in the [Outreach and Engagement Sustaining Practice Guide](#).
- Hosting a training on equity, anti-racism or cultural competency. You can learn more about this in the [Resident Leadership Sustaining Practice Guide](#).

COMMON GOALS, VALUES AND CONCERNS

By the time you reach this last intermediate outcome, you already have some identified goals, values and concerns that are driving your work. As you continue to formalize your coalition and deepen your outreach and engagement, this is the time to integrate what you are learning, to formalize the common values for the coalition, and to communicate to other stakeholders the purpose and goals of the coalition.

Here are a couple of important activities and strategies related to finding agreement on goals, values and concerns.

- **Conduct community listening sessions:** You may feel like you’ve already listened sufficiently up to this point, but you might also find that you want to involve more residents in the process of creating the common goals, values and concerns for the coalition. If so, you can hold some community listening sessions to provide an opportunity for the broader community to give input. You can learn more about listening sessions in the [Outreach and Engagement Sustaining Practice Guide](#).
- **Mission, vision and values statement:** Set aside time with coalition members to write a coalition mission, vision and values statement, along with some potential concerns and goals to guide your coalition work. You can learn more about this activity in the [Coalition Building Sustaining Practice Guide](#).

What is collective action?

The collective action foundational outcome immediately follows social cohesion and precedes the seven sector outcomes. Work in the collective action outcome supports the community's acting together to plan and perform tasks and to advocate for change.

It is important that efforts to organize do so with an eye toward strategic and unified actions that achieve the quality of life that you and your neighbors desire. The ability to mobilize a diverse group of stakeholders to act and advocate is called collective action.

To sustain concerted action into the future, it is necessary to further develop capacities, competencies and resources, and to conduct an honest evaluation of financial and human capital. Additionally, it is important that stakeholders acquire knowledge and pertinent data about neighborhood issues, policies and systems. The development of leaders is key to successful collective action. By training and equipping leaders, you will make it possible to sustain the work long into the future.

With a strong coalition and equipped leaders, the neighborhood is positioned to begin processes that result in a comprehensive plan that details the actions, advocacy and vision for the neighborhood. All neighborhood residents should have an opportunity to provide input into the community plan. Every effort should be made to listen to residents from all backgrounds, which often requires several different engagement strategies, including the use of translators. When a diversity of voices have been heard and incorporated into the plan, the coalition can be confident that the final plan represents the aspirations of the neighborhood. Depending on identified priorities, the final seven outcome pathways can serve as a guide.

Collective action intermediate outcomes

The ultimate outcome of collective action is that residents, community associations and partners have completed projects or advocacy efforts that will drive ongoing work in the neighborhood. Projects completed along this pathway have a twofold purpose:

- Mobilize more resources to address a priority identified by the neighborhood.
- Practice to learn skills critical to effective implementation and project management for the future.

To attain this, four intermediate outcomes must be reached (you can follow along with the detailed collective action pathway in [Appendix B](#) and in the basic pathway at right):

- Resources.
- Knowledge and data.
- Equipped leaders.
- Capacities and competencies.



RESOURCES: FINANCIAL AND HUMAN CAPITAL

There are two essential elements for beginning collective action: financial capital and human capital. You need to have the financial resources that will sustain the movement through collective action. Financial resources would support, for example, resident trainings, facilitator and consultant expenses for neighborhood planning, data collection, and resident gatherings.

There also is a need for human capital. This simply means that there will be a committed team of people who will give time, talent and energy to working toward the collective action outcome. There will be a need for people on the neighborhood planning team and for people who will collect data and surveys.

Sample activities include:

- Recruiting neighborhood residents who have not been involved yet.
- Raising funds to support a planning process.
- Connecting with elected officials to explore available resources.

KNOWLEDGE AND DATA: ACQUIRED INFORMATION ABOUT NEIGHBORHOOD ISSUES, POLICIES, SYSTEMS AND DATA THAT HELP SHAPE ACTION TO BE TAKEN

“Data” includes neighborhood socioeconomic demographics and all secondary data that relate to housing, transportation, safety, health and education. “Knowledge” is the needed information about how systems work, what policies affect the neighborhood, and the issues relevant to the neighborhood.

Sample activities include accessing and collecting relevant secondary data and collecting perceptual data through listening sessions, interviews and surveying.

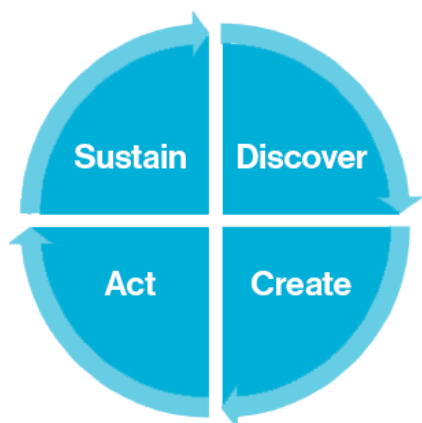
EQUIPPED LEADERS: LEADERS ARE PREPARED TO LEAD ACTION AND ADVOCACY

The move to collective action requires leaders who are prepared to lead actions and advocacy efforts. Equipped leaders will have the skills, capacities and abilities to move into action and build advocacy efforts as needed. Sample activities to equip leaders include workshops and training on equity, anti-racism, cultural competency, civic engagement and advocacy.

CAPACITY AND COMPETENCIES: RESIDENTS, COMMUNITY ASSOCIATIONS AND PARTNERS HAVE THE CAPACITY, COMPETENCIES AND RESOURCES TO CREATE CHANGE BY TAKING ACTION AND/OR INFLUENCING DECISIONS MADE ABOUT THE NEIGHBORHOOD

The comprehensive neighborhood plan, inclusive of advocacy, evaluation and resource development, is a description of where the neighborhood wants to go. In order to help their neighborhood move in the right direction, it is critical for residents, associations and partners to have the capacity, competencies and resources to create change by taking action and influencing decisions made about the neighborhood. Capacities and competencies can be developed by residents who hold leadership positions on local neighborhood committees, work groups, councils or other groups working toward an enhanced quality of life in the neighborhood. A sample activity under this intermediate outcome is the creation of a neighborhood plan.

As you move through these intermediate outcomes and develop specific activities related to your context, this will move you toward the foundational outcome of collective action: Residents, community associations and partners have completed projects or advocacy efforts that will drive ongoing work in the neighborhood.



The iterative cycle

“Iterate” is an important word for the entire Quality of Life framework. The approach is based on the idea that the improvement process is never complete, particularly when it comes to the foundational outcomes, which are essential for making a neighborhood’s efforts sustainable and systemic.

The iterative cycle is made of four phases: discover, create, act and sustain. These phases describe the type of work that occurs within each foundational outcome. It is best to imagine these four phases as a flow of work that rotates clockwise in a never-ending circle. Imagine the iterative cycle as a wheel that continuously propels progress.

The **discover phase** includes activities to gather information and residents' perceptions about the neighborhood. This phase includes the use of assessment and survey tools, a review of secondary data, and informal listening conversations with residents. It also includes analyzing and interpreting data, sharing results with stakeholders, and discussing findings.

The **create phase** includes coupling the interpreted data from the discover phase with the Quality of Life framework pathways to make decisions about priorities and strategic activities. This is the phase that includes discernment and choices about the feasibility and desirability of proposed projects. The phase is named for the creation of the plan of action, which does not necessarily equate with a neighborhood plan that includes a variety of sector outcomes. This plan of action might include documentation of initial activities to build a sense of community or to deepen social cohesion. The create phase is where some serious intentional decision-making will need to take place.

The **act phase** is when the people who signed up to implement a work plan do their tasks and assignments. Activities are monitored and supported by ongoing resource mobilization and reallocation of resources based on feedback and early signs of success.

The **sustain phase** is where deliberate learning, reflection and recruitment take place, so that efforts can continue.

Work in the neighborhood flows through these four phases of the iterative cycle, which propels efforts and provides an organizing framework to ensure sustainable growth within each of the foundational outcomes.

Where can I find more information about how to do the work related to each foundational outcome?

The appendices describe how to do this work, and include activities for each of the four phases of the iterative cycle.

- Please see [Appendix C](#) for more information about how to do the work of the sense of community outcome.
- Please see [Appendix D](#) for more information about how to do the work of the social cohesion outcome.
- Please see [Appendix E](#) for more information about how to do the work of the collective action outcome.

Each appendix includes overarching guiding questions for the foundational outcome, along with an assessment tool to guide the discovery of the status of the foundational outcome in your neighborhood. Where appropriate, references to specific example activities are highlighted as sustaining practices, with links and references to the corresponding sustaining practice guide.

Sector outcomes

Ultimately, the good work completed in the foundational outcomes — deeper relationships, greater understanding of neighborhood assets, data about neighborhood challenges combined with a commitment to work together and an increase in skills and competencies — yields a neighborhood plan that identifies top priority actions within the sectors that matter most to the residents. The neighborhood plan outlines the role of each stakeholder, the resources required, and a timeline to hold all efforts accountable. Not every neighborhood will have identified priorities within each of the seven sectors: amenities, economic development, education, health, housing, safety and transportation. Priority sector work is identified throughout the iterative cycles of the foundational outcomes, culminating in a neighborhood plan that resonates with residents and is built upon their aspirations, gifts, motivations and concerns.

As you move through the collective action pathway and into the sector outcomes, there is a realization that the early work in the sense of community and social cohesion outcomes is what supports and sustains the sector-level work. Thus, it is incredibly important to continue to grow the sense of community and foster social cohesion. The scope of the neighborhood work can expand, growing more complex over time, requiring more partners and integrating new neighbors. Expect to reiterate work along the sense of community and social cohesion pathways. More growth in the foundational outcomes may be required to realize the other long-term outcomes associated with specific sectors.

As you move forward acting on plans and measuring progress, you also go back to the earlier discover and create phases to gather data, listen to feedback and evaluate impact. This ensures that you and your neighbors will

influence what is created and planned next. The subsequent iterations of discover, create, act and sustain within the foundational outcomes is ultimately what will sustain improvements in a neighborhood's quality of life over the long haul.

You can't do this alone. But together with your neighbors, community associations and partners, your neighborhood can reach these outcomes.

Be diligent. Be deliberate. Be data-driven. Be responsive. Be welcoming. Be learning. Be.

Enjoy the process!

Appendices

Appendix A: Terminology

Appendix B: Outcome Pathways

Appendix C: Sense of Community – How To

Applying the iterative cycle and sustaining practices

Appendix D: Social Cohesion – How To

Applying the iterative cycle and sustaining practices

Appendix E: Collective Action – How To

Applying the iterative cycle and sustaining practices

Appendix A: Terminology — How terms are used in the Quality of Life framework

ABCD: Asset-based community development — the belief and corresponding methodology that neighborhood revitalization efforts are catalyzed and informed by the gifts, dreams and concerns of residents. Every neighborhood is home to residents with skills, passions and talents that, when organized and applied, transform a community from the inside out.

Activities: Specific actions, programs, services, strategies and interventions included in a framework that will bring about the intended intermediate outcomes and that can be measured by specified indicators.

Advocacy: As one of the seven sustaining practices, advocacy includes community organizing and coordinated efforts by engaged citizens designed to influence local, state and federal regulations, appropriations, policies and practices to positively influence the quality of life in the neighborhood.

Amenities: One of the seven sector outcomes in the framework, defined as “residents having access to and supporting the continued preservation of local amenities for their consumer, social gathering and recreational needs.”

Anti-displacement: Application of broad strategies and corresponding actions to prevent displacement of residents as new investment and development come into the neighborhood. These strategies and actions are typically targeted to preserve housing affordability, retain existing neighborhood businesses and help families achieve economic self-sufficiency.

Asset mapping: This practice provides information about the strengths and resources of a community and can help uncover solutions. Once community strengths and resources are inventoried and depicted in a map, you can more easily think about how to build on these assets to address community needs and improve health.

Assumptions: Beliefs, principles and best practices that provide explanation for why a proposed activity will bring about its intended impact, and that illustrate requisite relationships between intermediate outcomes at different stages of the change process. The framework includes four assumptions: 1) customization, 2) sustainable and systemic, 3) foundational outcomes are foundational, and 4) iterative pathway.

Barriers: Primary forces, obstacles and challenges that diminish revitalization efforts taken by residents, community associations and partners. The framework identifies 10 primary barriers.

Bias: A particular point of view or belief that influences opinions, perspectives, decisions and behaviors.

Capacity: To have knowledge and expertise to move through the pathways and apply the guide to a unique and specific neighborhood.

Coalition building: One of seven sustaining practices contained in the framework, a coalition is a group of individuals, organizations, businesses and partners who agree to meet regularly to strategize ways to improve the quality of life in the neighborhood.

Collaboration: Numerous individuals and entities from multiple sectors intentionally working together and sharing resources in order to achieve shared objectives and goals.

Collective action: The third foundational outcome in the framework, defined as “residents, community associations and partners having completed projects or advocacy efforts that will drive ongoing work in the neighborhood.”

Community: The social connections between people.

Community associations: Small informal groups of people, such as clubs and faith and spiritual organizations working with a common interest as volunteers, are called associations in ABCD and are critical to community

mobilization. They don't control anything; they are just coming together around a common interest by their individual choice.

Core team: A small group of residents and stakeholders who gather in the beginning to plan activities, reach out to neighbors and organize local efforts to improve the quality of life.

Cycle of poverty: A set of factors or events by which poverty, once started, is likely to continue unless there is outside intervention. This term is frequently used in reference to a generational time frame.

Disinvestment: The sustained and systemic withdrawal of capital investment from the built environment and the neglect of public services. (Definition compiled from Gibson, Karen J. "Bleeding Albina: A History of Community Disinvestment, 1940-2000." *Transforming Anthropology*, Vol. 15, No. 1. 2007. [kingneighborhood.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/BLEEDING-ALBINA -A-HISTORY-OF-COMMUNITY-DISINVESTMENT-1940%E2%80%932000.pdf](http://kingneighborhood.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/BLEEDING-ALBINA-A-HISTORY-OF-COMMUNITY-DISINVESTMENT-1940%E2%80%932000.pdf).)

Displacement: A potential consequence of gentrification. It refers to external factors that cause people to leave the neighborhood they currently live in, for reasons that are involuntary. (Definition is from the *Not in Cully* report that informs the work of Living Cully, a coalition that Portland Habitat for Humanity in Oregon is a member of: pdx.edu/usp/sites/www.pdx.edu.usp/files/A_LivingCully_PrinterFriendly_0.pdf.)

Equity: This doesn't mean equal. Equity is about being intentional and giving preference to the voices that are affected most by the injustices of our society or that have been marginalized the most.

Feedback loop: The feedback loop methodology is an action-oriented process that ensures revitalization activities or strategies are co-created with community residents. It involves five phases: the design of action-oriented questions, the collection of feedback, the analysis of feedback, dialogue, and course correction.

Foundational outcomes: The first three long-term outcomes contained in the framework: 1) sense of community, 2) social cohesion and 3) collective action. These are considered essential building blocks to sustaining change that improves quality of life, and they are prerequisites to success within the long-term outcomes in each sector.

Indicators: Specific measurements to assess whether intermediate and long-term outcomes have been achieved.

Intermediate outcomes: Short-term outcomes located on the pathway below the long-term outcome and functioning as prerequisites for meeting that long-term outcome.

Iterative: A repetitive process with the aim of approaching a desired goal, target or result.

Lens: A lens provides focus or modifies how something is seen. The four lenses in the neighborhood revitalization framework are informed by four assumptions, 10 barriers and our commitment to social justice. The four lenses are 1) a resident strengths-based approach, 2) equity, 3) multisector collaboration and 4) a systems approach.

Long-term outcome: The drivers required to reach the ultimate goal of improving quality of life. The framework contains 10 long-term outcomes: three foundational outcomes and seven sector outcomes.

Map: The diagram depicting the big picture of the ultimate goal to improve the quality of life and the relationships among the three foundational outcomes and seven sector outcomes.

Mobilizing resources: One of seven sustaining practices, resource development includes strategies and intentional efforts to raise funds and pool assets in order to address priorities identified by the neighborhood.

Monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL): One of seven sustaining practices, evaluation involves investigating whether efforts resulted in demonstrable effects on specifically defined target outcomes. Monitoring uses measurements to check the progress of efforts in order to realign and readjust them as necessary. The framework incorporates feedback loops to monitor the progress of activities, along with outcome evaluation indicators to assess the effectiveness of activities to improve outcomes. Monitoring and evaluation support effective accountability and learning.

Motivation: An internal willingness and desire to act and accomplish something together. Motivation comes primarily from three resident sources: dreams and aspirations, gifts and assets, and fears and concerns.

Neighborhood: The place or geographically defined location.

Neighborhood planning and implementation: The inclusive processes used to develop a resident-driven, multistakeholder, multiyear neighborhood plan addressing priority Quality of Life Framework outcomes. The result of neighborhood planning and implementation is a quality of life plan that resonates with the residents, associations and partners *and* identifies specific priorities, action steps, responsibilities and milestones so that progress on implementing the plan can be monitored.

Outreach and engagement: One of seven sustaining practices, this includes intentional activities designed to involve and include a variety of people, associations and organizations. These activities are not only aimed at residents; in many cases, residents will conduct outreach activities to their own neighbors, associations and potential partners.

Partner: Structurally organized professionals are called “partner institutions,” or “partners” for short. They include government agencies, private businesses, nonprofit organizations, schools, faith and spiritual communities, etc. The assets of these partner institutions help the community capture valuable resources and establish a sense of civic responsibility.

Pathway: A flow chart or diagram depicting the relationship between intermediate and long-term outcomes, indicators and actions over the life span of a community’s effort to improve the quality of life in a neighborhood.

Quality of life: The ultimate goal of the framework is to improve the quality of life in neighborhoods. An improved quality of life is defined as a sense of well-being and happiness experienced by individuals, groups and communities.

Resident: An individual who lives within the boundaries of the focus neighborhood.

Resident leadership: One of seven sustaining practices, this includes intentional activities designed to support the development of knowledge and skills of local residents who become the central players in building and sustaining positive relationships and connections throughout the neighborhood.

Resource development plan: A plan for acquiring the financial resources to support the goals and objectives of an agency or neighborhood plan. The resource development plan outlines the strategies and tactics to meet the contribution goals of a budget associated with accomplishing a plan.

Revitalizing: A dynamic process of becoming — transforming into an aspirational vision.

Sector outcomes: Measureable long-term outcomes organized into seven categories: amenities, economic opportunity, education, health, housing, safety and transportation.

Sense of community: The first foundational outcome, identified as “residents, community associations and partners identifying with the neighborhood, feeling connected and supporting one another.”

Social cohesion: The second foundational outcome in the framework, defined as “residents, community associations and partners having the willingness and competency to work cooperatively.”

Stakeholders: Individuals, groups, organizations, government departments, businesses — anyone with a stake or a vested interest.

Sustainable: Viable over a designated and required period, usually without requiring perpetual influx of outside resources.

Sustaining practice: Specific strategies that are universal for the purposes of creating viable change and maximizing the impact of effort. Designated activities, called sustaining practices, are influenced by the assumptions, beliefs and lenses, including an adherence to the principles of ABCD and informed by evidence-based practice gathered from community development practitioners around the country. The framework has seven sustaining practices, including

1) engagement and outreach, 2) resident leadership, 3) coalition building, 4) neighborhood planning, 5) implementation and advocacy, 6) mobilizing resources, and 7) evaluation.

Systemic: Of or related to a system, rather than a localized or isolated, individualized phenomenon. Connected and pervasive. Systemwide — affecting or relating to a group (such as a body, economy or market) as a whole, instead of its individual members or parts. Also refers to root causes. Not to be confused with “systematic,” which means “methodical.”

Theory of change: A comprehensive description and illustration of how and why a desired change is expected to happen in a particular context. A theory of change is a specific methodology for planning, participation and evaluation that is used in the philanthropic, not-for-profit and government sectors to promote social change. A theory of change defines long-term goals and then maps backward to identify prerequisite intermediate outcomes, indicators and activities.

Ultimate goal: This appears at the top of the Quality of Life map and describes what the neighborhood is seeking to achieve. The framework defines the ultimate goal as “improving the quality of life of residents, associations and partners.”

Appendix B: Foundational and sector outcome pathways

The following pages show the paths to each foundational and sector outcome, beginning with sample activities and proceeding through intermediate outcomes, and includes sample indicators and core indicators that will help you measure progress along the pathway. Refer back to these pathways frequently as you track your own progress to the sector and foundational outcomes.



FOUNDATIONAL OUTCOME: SENSE OF COMMUNITY

Residents, community associations and partners identify with the neighborhood, feel connected, and support one another.

- Create regular and consistent methods for sharing the stories related to the building of a sense of community. (OE)
- Develop a mailing list and database of residents. (OE)

(1)

- Number of residents reporting that they feel connected to their neighborhood.
- Number of residents reporting that they feel pride in their neighborhood.

SHARED IDENTITY AND STORY¹

Residents, community associations and partners identify with the neighborhood as a place they care about. They know the story of their neighborhood, what has been accomplished, and the unique gifts that exist there. There is a sense of ownership and a belief that they are "in it together."

SHARED SUPPORT AND RESOURCES²

Residents, community associations and partners share time, resources and skills with one another when needs arise. A network of support exists that is mutual, equitable and personal.

- Develop block-focused and resident-hosted gatherings in homes. (OE)
- Develop signage, neighborhood branding and a name for efforts. (OE)
- Organize storytelling experiences that highlight neighborhood and resident stories. (OE)

- Create a time banking system. (NPI)
- Create a tool sharing library. (NPI)
- Residents organize efforts or projects to care for neighbors in need. (OE)

(3)

- Number of residents accessing website or reading neighborhood publications.
- Number of information pieces.
- Number of residents in database.

KNOWLEDGE AND AWARENESS³

Residents, community associations and partners have knowledge of what is happening in the neighborhood and are aware of plans and issues that will impact them.

FORMAL AND INFORMAL INTERACTION⁴

Residents spend time together at community meetings, local gathering spots, and places of recreation.

- Create baseline Quality of Life survey. (ME)
- Create information pieces and hold meetings in multiple languages through translation services and/or specialized facilitation. (OE)
- Create web, print and physical infrastructure to support information sharing. (OE)
- Host themes-based community information sessions on relevant topics at accessible times, and provide child care. (OE)

- Organize neighborhood events such as block parties, social events, potlucks, arts and cultural events, etc. (OE)
- Organize relevant affinity groups such as a dance troupe, single-parent support group, senior outing group, soccer club, etc. (OE)
- Catalog and name the neighborhood bumping/social spaces where residents gather. (OE)

Core indicators

- **Membership:** Degree to which residents report experiencing a sense of belonging and security.
- **Influence:** Degree to which residents report being influenced by and being able to influence their community.
- **Meeting needs and values:** Degree to which residents share needs and values with other community members and those needs and values are met by being together in this community.
- **Shared emotional connection:** Degree to which residents report a sense of common history and a commitment to be part of the community.

(2)

- Number of hours neighbors spend volunteering in their neighborhood, accounting for culture/demographic.
- Number of residents reporting that they are willing to help a neighbor if needed, accounting for culture/demographic.
- Number of residents reporting that they can rely on a neighbor to help them if needed, accounting for culture/demographic.

(4)

- Number of people attending block parties/community meetings.
- Number of residents who know their neighbors by name.

- Foundational outcome:** A long-term and central community outcome required for equitable and sustainable neighborhood revitalization.
- Intermediate outcome:** Short-term outcomes (preconditions) are located below the long-term outcome and are prerequisites for meeting the long-term outcome.
- Sample activity:** Specific actions, programs, services or strategies that will bring about the intended outcome(s).
- Core indicator:** Required measures for assessing whether a foundational or sector outcome is being achieved.
- Sample indicator:** Each intermediate outcome and long-term goal have specific measurements to track progress.

Sustaining Practices

CB: Coalition building; **OE:** Outreach and engagement; **A:** Advocacy; **ME:** Monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning; **MR:** Mobilizing resources; **NPI:** Neighborhood planning and implementation; **RL:** Resident leadership



FOUNDATIONAL OUTCOME: SOCIAL COHESION

Residents, community associations and partners have the willingness and competency to work cooperatively.

Core indicators

- **Trusting bonds:** Degree to which residents report that neighborhood residents trust each other.
- **Opinion valued:** Degree to which residents report their opinion is valued.
- **Willingness to intervene:** Degree to which residents report that it is likely a neighbor would do something if they noticed someone committing a crime in the community.
- **Capacity for social control:** Degree to which residents report that it is likely a neighbor would do something if a serious problem arose in the community.

- Coalition is trained in collaborative fundraising. (MR)
- Develop a communications plan for information sharing with residents, community associations and partners. (OE)
- Implement quick-win projects. (NPI)
- Residents create projects and actions based upon their individual dreams and aspirations. (CB)

(1)

- Articulated shared vision and values.
- Percentage of residents who have had input into neighborhood vision, goals and values.
- Percentage of residents who report neighborhood strengths and opportunities, accounting for culture/demographic. (Does there appear to be agreement on them among residents?)

COMMON GOALS, VALUES, CONCERNS¹

Residents, community associations and partners agree on the efforts they will work on.

IDENTIFIED, ORGANIZED AND CONNECTED ASSETS²

Individual and collective assets are assembled to perform specific activities.

(2)

Community creates a map of the assets of individuals; associations; institutions; physical spaces; and local economy, culture and stories.

- Complete resident engagement by holding listening sessions or interviews, or by conducting surveys to determine the goals, values and concerns of residents in order to engage all aspects and groups in the neighborhood. (OE)
- Formal and informal organized residents, associations and partners create mission, vision and values statements for their group. (CB)

FORMAL AND INFORMAL ORGANIZATIONS³

Leaders who are prepared to lead their community in identified common goals, values and concerns and in organizing assets for collective action.

(3)

- A paid staff person who is dedicated to organizing, coordinating and supporting leaders and the organization.
- Sufficient structure that facilitates communication, accountability and measuring progress in order to galvanize action.
- Written agreement(s) articulating organizations' commitment to coalition and a collaborative revitalization process.

- Champion and organize projects that create physical places and spaces for people to gather. (NPI)
- Conduct asset mapping. (CB)
- Connect assets of organized groups through meetings and introductions. (CB)
- Develop a multisector coalition. (CB)

(4)

- One or more events or happenings in the community are stimulating resident interest in organizing to address them.
- Number of residents who bring people from the neighborhood together to act on behalf of the neighborhood, accounting for culture/demographics.
- Number of residents networked with other residents in the neighborhood OR size/scope of resident networks in the neighborhood, accounting for culture/demographics.

CATALYSTS AND CONNECTORS⁴

Circumstances, events and/or individuals that mobilize neighborhoods to action.

ASSETS-BASED STRENGTHS APPROACH⁵

Common understanding of asset-based community development, rather than a deficits-based approach.

(5)

- A community asset map is created and shared with relevant stakeholders, including residents.
- Percentage of residents, community associations and partners trained in an asset-based approach.
- Residents, community associations and partners are able to articulate and practice ABCD.

- Catalog and name the neighborhood bumping/social spaces where residents gather. (OE)
- Identify resident connectors through listening conversations and resident engagement efforts. (CB)
- Reach out to neighborhood associations, schools, churches, businesses and institutions that are representational of the neighborhood to identify key leaders. (CB)

- Facilitate training and workshops on asset-based community development. (RL)
- Advocate for an asset-based strengths approach with pertinent leadership, community leaders or bodies/boards. (RL)

Foundational outcome: A long-term and central community outcome required for equitable and sustainable neighborhood revitalization.

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Sample activity: Specific actions, programs, services or strategies that will bring about the intended outcome(s).

Core indicator: Required measures for assessing whether a foundational or sector outcome is being achieved.

Sample indicator: Each intermediate outcome and long-term goal have specific measurements to track progress.

Sustaining Practices

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FOUNDATIONAL OUTCOME: COLLECTIVE ACTION

Residents, community associations and partners have completed projects or advocacy efforts that will drive ongoing work in the neighborhood.

Core indicators

- **Taking collective actions:** Degree to which residents report that residents and groups come together to work on projects or advocate for neighborhood issues.
- **Success of collective actions:** Degree to which residents report that the neighborhood improved through working together.
- **Participation in collective actions:** Degree to which residents report participating in collective actions that address neighborhood issues.

- Create action teams around specific priorities. (NPI)
- Create budgets and solicit financial support. (MR)
- Develop and execute an evaluation plan. (ME)
- Develop a case statement to support collaborative efforts. (MR)
- Establish indicators for monitoring progress. (ME)
- Implement advocacy activities as identified in the neighborhood plan. (A)
- Implement the neighborhood plan. (NPI)
- Implement quick-win projects. (NPI)

(1)

Neighborhood plan is in place.

CAPACITY AND COMPETENCIES¹

Residents, community associations and partners have the capacity, competencies and resources to create change by taking action and/or influencing decisions made about the neighborhood.

- Create a neighborhood plan. (NPI)
- Develop relationships with decision-makers. (OE)
- Facilitate focus groups to understand issues that affect underrepresented populations. (OE)

EQUIPPED LEADERS²

Leaders who are prepared to lead action and advocacy.

- Analyze and make meaning from the knowledge and data collected. (NPI)
- Develop resident leaders. (RL)
- Facilitate training and workshops around equity, anti-racism, cultural competency and advocacy. (RL)

RESOURCES³

Financial and human capital.

- Activating underrepresented or marginalized people as leaders. (RL)
- Develop fundraising to support the planning process. (MR)
- Making personal connections to elected officials. (OE)

KNOWLEDGE AND DATA⁴

Acquired information about neighborhood issues, policies, systems and data that help shape action to be taken.

- Access and collect relevant secondary data. (NPI)
- Access and collect sources of information to educate on laws, policies and decision-making systems that impact the neighborhood. (NPI)
- Collect perceptual data through listening sessions, interviews and surveys. (OE)

(2)

- Number of residents who complete trainings or workshops related to equity, anti-racism, cultural competency and advocacy.
- Number of residents in leadership positions on local neighborhood committees, councils or other groups working toward an enhanced quality of life in the neighborhood.
- Number of residents who report being confident that their peer leaders represent their interests and have the skills and influence to affect decisions that impact neighborhood quality of life.
- People who are willing and capable to lead.

(4)

- Baseline quality of life data collected for the focus neighborhood and shared with residents.
- Number of residents aware of local resources they have access to that affect their quality of life, accounting for culture/demographics.
- Number of residents aware of upcoming policy decisions at the local level that will affect quality of life in their neighborhood, accounting for culture/demographics.
- Number of residents who have enough information to advocate or act as needed, accounting for culture/demographics. ("I regularly have enough information about what is happening in my neighborhood to advocate or act on behalf of it if I desire.")

Foundational outcome: A long-term and central community outcome required for equitable and sustainable neighborhood revitalization.

Intermediate outcome: Short-term outcomes (preconditions) are located below the long-term outcome and are prerequisites for meeting the long-term outcome.

Sample activity: Specific actions, programs, services or strategies that will bring about the intended outcome(s).

Core indicator: Required measures for assessing whether a foundational or sector outcome is being achieved.

Sample indicator: Each intermediate outcome and long-term goal have specific measurements to track progress.

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SECTOR OUTCOME:

AMENITIES

Residents have access to and support the continued preservation of local amenities for their consumer, social gathering and recreational needs.

Core indicators

- Average resident rating of access to amenities needed for daily living.
- Average resident rating of quality of amenities within neighborhood and nearby communities.
- Relevant amenities (number) (groceries, restaurants, shopping options, banking institutions) inside or within a half-mile of the neighborhood.

(1)

- Second indicator assumes each private business stays in operation because of that store's continued profitability (and therefore local consumer demand), rather than subsidization by more profitable retail chains or other sources of funding.
- Residents have access to all basic consumer needs within 10 miles of their residence for rural areas or 1 mile for urban areas.

- Advertise/communicate to residents about neighborhood amenities.

AMENITIES FOR BASIC CONSUMER NEEDS¹

Residents have access to basic retail needs (grocery, banking, gas, clothing, utilities, child care, housewares and furnishings) in their neighborhood or nearby communities.

AMENITIES FOR RECREATION²

Residents have access to public and private venues for relaxation, exercise, gathering, socializing and entertainment.

- Public officials share market studies/plans to attract businesses.
- Residents, officials, investors and/or businesses create private/community ownership opportunities.

- Public officials implement plans with new green spaces, parks, sidewalks, etc.
- Residents create shared neighborhood spaces to gather and socialize (bench, garden, etc.).

(2)

- Residents have access to at least seven recreational entertainment options – theaters, arenas, restaurants/bars, museums, skating rinks, recreational sports clubs, boating, swimming, theme parks, etc. – within 15 miles of their residence for rural areas or 1 mile for urban areas.
- Increasingly more residents have access to sidewalks or live within a 10-minute walking distance to a public green space for exercise and recreation.

(3)

Number of ideas initiated or supported by residents that subsequently appear in development plans.

SUPPORTIVE POLICIES AND PLANNING³

Policies and government plans enable the establishment and continued maintenance of amenities that meet residents' consumer, gathering and recreational needs.

- Advocate for zoning changes/public utility and ownership.

(4)

Amenity-related assets and deficits are captured in community development, business or advocacy plans.

UNDERSTANDING AND AWARENESS OF NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES⁴

Key stakeholders – residents, public officials, investors, businesses and entrepreneurs – are knowledgeable about the unmet market gaps related to residents' consumer, gathering and recreational needs

- Conduct market assessments.
- Hold community meetings to better understand needs/aspirations.

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Sample activity: Specific actions, programs, services or strategies that will bring about the intended outcome(s).

Core indicator: Required measures for assessing whether a foundational or sector outcome is being achieved.

Sample indicator: Each intermediate outcome and long-term goal have specific measurements to track progress.

DRAFT



SECTOR OUTCOME: ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

Residents have access to employment with fair, livable wages.

Core indicators

- Percentage of residents reporting they can meet their family's basic needs.
- Average resident rating of the availability of job opportunities.
- Percentage of residents reporting they have enrolled in a job training program.
- Income (median) of neighborhood residents.
- Unemployment rate (percentage).
- Businesses by economic sector.
- Employees (number) of businesses by economic sector.

- Inform residents of job opportunities.

(1)

Average wage for employment within a 30-mile radius of the neighborhood improves every year and/or is maintained at or above XX percent of the area's cost of living.

(2)

90 percent of residents participating in skills-building workshops, higher education courses, or mentorships obtain employment or higher-wage jobs within one year.

(5)

At least XX percent of loans that are applied for by businesses operating in the neighborhood's county or surrounding counties are approved with interest rates that are no greater than 1 percent of the current market rate.

(6)

Nearby commercial areas (within 15 miles for rural areas or 1 mile for urban areas) increase every year until a ratio of 1:10 commercial to residential is achieved and/or maintained.

LIVABLE AND FAIR WAGES¹

Residents have access to compensation for labor; it allows them to maintain a normal standard of living; and it is comparable to rates in the same or similar occupations and localities for equivalent productivity.

- Advocate for livable and fair wages.

EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS²

A group of essential abilities that involve the development of a knowledge base, expertise level and mindset that are necessary for success in the workplace.

- Instruct residents on how to apply for higher education courses, including scholarships.
- Organize skills-building workshops.
- Provide internship/mentorship opportunities.

JOB AVAILABILITY³

Residents have access to nearby or telecommute employment opportunities.

JOB CREATION⁴

Provision of new opportunities for paid employment.

- Educate entrepreneurs/business owners of new environment/opportunities.

(3)

- Residents are able to find adequate employment opportunities within a one-hour commute from the neighborhood.
- The number of employment opportunities with fair and livable wages is maintained at or around X percent of the population.

ACCESS TO BUSINESS CAPITAL⁵

Entrepreneurs and business owners are able to acquire loans (at fair market rates) and/or other assets.

- Advocate for government subsidies, tax benefits and changes to financial lending regulations.
- Instruct residents on how to build credit and complete lending applications.
- Provide technical assistance to financial institutions on how to structure appropriate lending products.
- Establish CDFI/loan products.

BUSINESS DISTRICT⁶

Sections of the neighborhood or communities nearby allow for commerce and/or there are processes to add or expand commercial areas, as necessary.

- Advocate for zoning changes.
- Instruct residents on how to complete civic applications.

(4)

Number of jobs for the neighborhood's county or surrounding counties increases every year, as necessary, until an unemployment rate of 5.5 percent or lower is achieved.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT SKILLS⁷

Entrepreneurs and business owners have the knowledge and skills to start or grow commercial enterprises.

- Create community ownership business opportunities.
- Conduct market assessments.
- Organize skills-building workshops.
- Provide internship/mentorship opportunities.

(7)

25 percent of residents participating in skills-building workshops or mentorships start businesses that are profitable after three years.

Foundational outcome: A long-term and central community outcome required for equitable and sustainable neighborhood revitalization.

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Sample activity: Specific actions, programs, services or strategies that will bring about the intended outcome(s).

Core indicator: Required measures for assessing whether a foundational or sector outcome is being achieved.

Sample indicator: Each intermediate outcome and long-term goal have specific measurements to track progress.

DRAFT



SECTOR OUTCOME:

EDUCATION

Children are prepared for and succeed in their education, and adults have lifelong learning opportunities.

Core indicators

- Average resident rating of access to GED prep classes for local residents.
- Average resident rating of access to job training programs.
- Average resident rating of satisfaction with the schools that kids in the neighborhood can attend.
- Residents (percentage) with greater than a high school education.
- Elementary school standardized test scores.
- Graduation rates.

- (3)
- Absentee rates.
 - Graduation rates.

- (4)
- Absentee rates.
 - Dropout rates.
 - Third-grade reading level.
 - Pre-K readiness.

- (6)
- Kindergarten readiness.

- (7)
- Percentage of free and reduced-cost lunch-eligible kids receiving free or reduced-cost lunch.
 - Reduced transiency among students.

- (10)
- Percentage of application rates for state scholarship/college subsidy.

- (1)
- CTE graduation rates.
 - Percentage of students in CTE programming.

- (2)
- Decreasing percentage of residents who don't have a high school equivalency.

CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION¹
Young people need career and technical options in work trades that support a different pathway than that of college.

- CTE programs.
- Mentoring.

GED²
Those students who drop out of school need access to obtain their GED.

GED classes.

GRADUATION³
Graduation for every student is essential for a successful life and career pathway.

- Graduation assistance.
- Mentoring.

P-12 EDUCATION OPPORTUNITY⁴

A variety of P-12 education opportunities that support a successful learning environment throughout the education pathway for the child.

Training for parents to create alternative school options.

SUPPORTIVE INTERVENTIONS⁵
Supportive interventions give children the education focus to overcome achievement gaps and provide access to physical, emotional and social needs.

After-school activities: art and music, employment resources and skill-building, literacy, mentoring, tutoring, youth sports.

EARLY EDUCATION⁶
Accessible and affordable preschool and day care options support the early learning of all children.

Head start.

FAMILY AND STUDENT RESOURCES⁷
Family and support services give children and families the basic human needs – shelter, food, emotional support – needed to succeed in school.

- Housing subsidies.
- Family Resource Centers.
- Rental assistance.

- (5)
- Percentage mentored.
 - Percentage of social and emotional well-being.

- (8)
- Active parents in classroom/school.
 - Chronic absentee rates.

- (9)
- TBD

SUPPORTIVE, ENGAGED PARENTS⁸
Engaged, supportive parents provide a solid foundation for all children's educational success and stability.

- Mentorship.
- Parenting classes.
- Parent training.

EDUCATIONAL PARTNERS⁹
A multisector collaboration that develops all essential educational partnership is needed.

- Financial aid.
- Scholarship information.

KNOWLEDGE OF SCHOLARSHIPS AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES¹⁰
Knowledge of appropriate educational resources and financial supports..

Foundational outcome: A long-term and central community outcome required for equitable and sustainable neighborhood revitalization.

Intermediate outcome: Short-term outcomes (preconditions) are located below the long-term outcome and are prerequisites for meeting the long-term outcome.

Sample activity: Specific actions, programs, services or strategies that will bring about the intended outcome(s).

Core indicator: Required measures for assessing whether a foundational or sector outcome is being achieved.

Sample indicator: Each intermediate outcome and long-term goal have specific measurements to track progress.

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SECTOR OUTCOME:

HEALTH

The neighborhood and environment support residents' physical and mental health.

Core indicators

- Average resident rating of access to routine health care services.
- Average resident rating of neighborhood's impact on their overall mental and physical health.
- Physicians (number) practicing in or within a half-mile of the neighborhood.
- Health care facilities (number of hospitals, clinics, pharmacies) located in or within a half-mile of the neighborhood.

(1)

- A drop in reported cases of health issues that prevention programs in the community address.
- Data show a rise in resident exercise rates.
- Number of people participating in community gardens and/or healthy eating programs.

POLICY¹

Policies support residents' physical and mental health through prevention and promotion programming, a healthy ecological environment, and the health care system.

PREVENTION AND PROMOTION²

Health education and programming that supports residents' physical and mental health by helping residents prevent unhealthy factors and promote healthy factors.

ECOLOGICAL ENVIRONMENT³

Education and services exist to address ecological issues and/or sustain a healthy environment to support residents' physical and mental health.

HEALTH CARE SYSTEM⁴

Adequate, accessible and affordable health care exists to support residents' physical and mental health.

(2)

- Environmental policies protect the environment of the neighborhood.
- An increasing number of people report having adequate and affordable health insurance.
- Prevention programs exist, are fully funded, and address the greatest health issues in the community.

- Advocacy: town halls, letter-writing/call campaigns, legislative visits, media campaigns.
- Publishing data in the community that support the case for residents' health needs.

- Community groups, organizations or residents create community gardens and hold healthy eating workshops.
- System, organizational or resident-led programs promote exercise and physical recreation.

- Do a comprehensive environmental study.
- Environmental cleanup and sustainability plan is created and implemented.
- Local Habitat does affordable mold remediation for residents in need.

- Community awareness campaign to educate residents on health care options.
- Implement an evaluation plan to track impact.

(3)

- Comprehensive environmental study shows that the neighborhood is safe or identifies intervention areas.
- Data show health improvements linked to environmental concerns, such as mold remediation.

(5)

TBD

(6)

TBD

(7)

TBD

ADVOCACY AGENDA⁵

This is part of the community plan, addressing needed changes in policies or laws to support safety.

ENGAGED RESIDENTS⁶

Resident-led prevention and awareness programming; practicing and advocating for ecologically friendly practices; education about policy to others; and advocacy for policies that support funding and services needed.

FUNDING/RESOURCES⁷

Funding to support local resident action and funding to support adequate, accessible and affordable prevention programming; the health care system; and ecological and environmental health.

(4)

- Data show a drop in wait time for essential health services.
- An increasing number of people report having adequate and affordable health insurance.
- Number of health care providers or pharmacies that are accessible and appropriate to the neighborhood's size.

(8)

TBD

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING⁸

Prevention, health care system and ecological/environmental issues; understanding of policies in place, systems and health-related data that speaks to the health of the neighborhood.

TBD

- **Foundational outcome:** A long-term and central community outcome required for equitable and sustainable neighborhood revitalization.
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SECTOR OUTCOME: HOUSING

Residents have decent, safe, stable, affordable housing.

Core indicators

- Degree to which residents report availability of affordable housing opportunities in the neighborhood (average score).
- Average resident rating of the condition of their own housing unit.
- Vacancy rate (percentage).
- Median home value.
- Median rent.
- Owner-occupied housing units (percentage).
- Units of subsidized housing (number) within the neighborhood.

(3)

- Percentage of affordable housing.
- Rate of displacement (numerous indicators).

(1)

- Measure of code compliance.

(2)

- Percentage of increase in capital and financing.
- Number of projects funded.

HIGH-QUALITY CONSTRUCTION¹
Well-constructed and high-quality homes.

- Educate builders on the use of new tech.
- Invent or use new technologies.
- Use of universal design plans.

CAPITAL²
Sufficient capital and financing are available.

Resource development.

DIVERSIFIED HOUSING STOCK³
A diversified housing stock that supports the variety of income, accessibility and demographic needs of a neighborhood.

- Advocacy.
- Home modification.
- Housing study.
- Permanent affordability mechanism.

(4)

Number of lenders marketing to target neighborhood.

(5)

Percentage of vacant lots.

QUALIFIED BUYERS⁴
Buyers who have the finances and credit to purchase homes.

- Credit repair programs.
- First-time homebuyer classes.
- IDAs (individual development accounts).

LAND AND INFRASTRUCTURE⁵
Access to and control of buildable land and utility infrastructure.

Land banks.

ACCESS TO FINANCES AND LENDERS⁶
Potential buyers have access to lending sources.

First-time homebuyer classes.

DEVELOPERS AND BUILDERS⁷
Interested developers and builders who have an affordable housing mission.

Housing coalitions/collaborations.

POLICIES⁸
Policies, including displacement, planning and zoning, that support building decent, safe, stable and affordable housing.

- Advocacy efforts.
- Establishment and use of land trusts.

(6)

Percentage of homes sold to residents.

(7)

Annual production capacity of affordable builders in the area.

(8)

Percentage of inclusionary zoning.

(9)

Credit repair.

CONSUMER KNOWLEDGE⁹

Consumers who are knowledgeable and have the information needed to make informed decisions.

Education efforts.

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SECTOR OUTCOME:

SAFETY

Residents have a sense of personal and neighborhood safety.

Core indicators

- Degree to which residents report feeling safe being outside in their neighborhood at night (average score).
- Average resident rating of their level of trust of police department officers.
- Degree to which residents perceive various crimes as problems in their neighborhood (average score).
- Violent crime rate.
- Nonviolent (property) crime rate.

(1)

- A drop in incidence of crimes that had an "inordinate" amount of prosecution in the neighborhood.
- Laws in question by residents are changed.

JUST, EQUITABLE LAWS¹

The laws provide residents a sense of personal and neighborhood safety.

SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT²

The natural environment, structures and infrastructure promote a sense of personal and neighborhood safety.

ADEQUATE AND RESPONSIVE LAW ENFORCEMENT³

Police presence, enforcement and relationship with residents promote a sense of personal and neighborhood safety.

ADEQUATE AND RESPONSIVE EMERGENCY SERVICES⁴

The presence, capacity and responsiveness of emergency services promotes a sense of personal and neighborhood safety.

(2)

- Drop in accident reports and complaints.
- Municipal agencies are adequately responding to requests.
- Percentage of dark places that have been lit, and the darkness has not overcome it.

- Advocacy: letter-writing/call campaign, media campaign and legislator visits.
- Implement evaluation plan to track impact.
- Town hall meeting with residents, advocacy groups, legislators and law enforcement.

- Advocacy campaign to bring awareness, secure more funding or pass a levy.
- Implement evaluation plan to track impact.
- Local Habitat works with residents and funder to install lighting.

- Advocacy: funding, cultural competency training and screening process for police.
- Create community policing, neighborhood watch, resident advisory and community feedback sessions.
- Invite police to participate in community events.

- Advocacy: adequate funding and cultural competency training.
- Advocacy campaign to bring awareness, advocate for more funding, or pass a levy.
- Invite first responders to attend community events.

(3)

- Data show improving response times.
- Data support adequate funding for service area.

(4)

- Drop in complaints against police.
- Lower crime rates.
- Police report adequate funding for services.

(5)

A "group" (task force, committee, team, etc.) is meeting regularly to listen, organize, plan and implement.

ENGAGED AND ORGANIZED RESIDENTS AND PARTNERS⁵

Residents and partners are working in coordination to actively improve the safety of the neighborhood.

EQUIPPED LEADERS⁶

Resident leaders and coalition leaders have the knowledge and tools to organize and act on behalf of the neighborhood.

ORGANIZED PLAN WITH ADVOCACY AGENDA⁷

A plan exists that was created with resident input and represents the diversity of stakeholders within the neighborhood.

ADEQUATE FUNDING AND RESOURCES⁸

Funding and resources are available for implementing strategies to improve safety in the neighborhood.

(7)

- There is enough money to implement the plan.
- Tools and communication pieces exist for advocacy, awareness and education – data have been collected and organized to create them.

(6)

- Leaders meet a minimum of once a month (or whenever is deemed necessary).
- Leaders self-report that they feel organized and equipped.

- Asset mapping.
- Use community listening sessions and/or surveys to identify residents' assets and concerns.

- Send leaders to training or bring in experts to train.
- Train leaders through existing community resources.

- Use existing community experts or bring in others from the field (advocacy or programmatic) to advise on the plan's elements and strategies.

- Create tools for effective communication of the agenda, the issues of concern and solutions.
- Gather baseline and secondary data.

(8)

A completed and resident-supported advocacy agenda and/or community plan exists.

(9)

- Number of residents who attend local informational meetings on issues that will impact their neighborhood.
- Number of residents subscribing to a Facebook, NextDoor or other social media group for their neighborhood.

KNOWLEDGEABLE RESIDENTS AND PARTNERS⁹

Residents and partners are aware of local issues facing their neighborhood and of the assets and opportunities for improving safety.

RESIDENTS, PARTNERS AND LOCAL PEOPLE LOOK OUT FOR ONE ANOTHER¹⁰

There is a general knowledge of who resides in the neighborhood, positive interactions between residents and local people, and a sense that people are looking out for one another.

(10)

- Number of residents participating in a neighborhood watch program.
- Residents report that they "know their neighbors" by having someone to contact in case they need help.

- Create a fund development plan and raise money to support the efforts.
- Create tools for effective communication of the agenda, the issues of concern, and solutions.
- Gather baseline and secondary data.

- Creation of a disaster preparedness group to organize in the neighborhood.
- Creation of a neighborhood watch program.

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SECTOR OUTCOME: **TRANSPORTATION**

Safe and affordable transportation options are available and easily accessible for all residents.

Core indicators

- Average resident rating of ability to get where they want to go within a reasonable amount of time.
- Average resident ratings of quality of transportation resources in neighborhood (driving, walking, biking, public transit).
- AllTransit performance score.
- Jobs (number) accessible by transit.

(3)

Number of alternative transportation sources available.

(4)

Amount of money dedicated to maintenance and repair.

(1)

- Price of trip.
- Proximity of public transportation.

(2)

- Number of miles of protected bike lanes.
- Percentage of streets with 20 mph speed limit.
- Percentage of streets with sidewalks.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION ACCESS AND AFFORDABILITY¹

Public transportation is easily accessible, affordable and takes residents where they want to go.

Advocacy on cost and proximity of public transportation.

COMPLETE STREETS²

Streets are designed and built considering the most vulnerable road users and the environmental impact.

- Addition of safety infrastructure.
- Creation of protected bike lanes.

ALTERNATIVE RIDE SHARE OPPORTUNITIES³

Residents have access to alternative transportation options other than owning a motor vehicle.

- Creation of bike share program.
- Creation of car share programs.

REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE⁴

Streets, sidewalks, bicycle lanes and other public infrastructure are maintained by the local or state government.

- Pothole hotline.
- Repainting worn areas.

AWARENESS OF SERVICES⁵

Residents in the neighborhood are aware of the transportation options available to them.

Dissemination of information on transportation options and safe routes for walking and cycling.

(5)

Number of residents using services and safe routes.

TRANSPORTATION PLAN⁶

A plan has been developed that is rooted in residents' aspirations and is aligned with a larger city plan on transportation.

Existence of a transportation plan that includes residents' aspirations.

(6)

Existence of a transportation plan that includes residents' aspirations.

(7)

Number of residents who attend the training shaped around civic engagement.

COOPERATIVE PARTNERSHIP WITH CITY⁷

Residents have developed a relationship with the city, and the city reciprocates, resulting in improvements to local transportation opportunities.

Train residents in how to build a relationship with local government and engage civically.

(8)

Number of people who access information sources.

PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE OF TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS AND ISSUES⁸

Residents have a working knowledge of the local transportation options, how they impact their neighborhood, and what potential issues they are facing.

Data are gathered and shared.

USER DATA⁹

Data that show how the roads are being used over time, how public transportation is being used, and where people need to access transportation within the community.

Develop informational sources to share information about transportation options and issues the community is facing.

(9)

Residents, community associations and partners are aware of pertinent data.

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Appendix C: Sense of community how-to

Applying the iterative cycle and sustaining practices

With a commitment to each other and some initial information about the neighborhood in hand, it is time to work through each of the phases of the iterative cycle to understand how to effectively build a sense of community that will sustain action into the future and, ultimately, meet each of the intermediate outcomes along the sense of community pathway.

Discover phase: Sense of community

The aim of the discover phase of the iterative cycle is to understand the current level of the sense of community. Lots of information is gathered, analyzed and discussed in this phase. It is vital to understand the degree of sense of community perceived by you and your neighbors, so that appropriate activities can be organized to deepen the sense of community if need be. Without a strong sense of community providing a foundation upon which to build, the chances of sustained improvement in the quality of life in the neighborhood are slim to none.

The discover phase includes (1) gathering information, (2) data analysis and interpretation, and (3) discussion of findings.

GATHERING INFORMATION

As part of the discover phase, you and the core team will organize efforts to conduct a variety of strategies to gather information, learn perceptions and assess the status of neighborhood features. These efforts may include:

- **Listening conversations** with neighbors to learn firsthand the level of the neighborhood's sense of community. These conversations also can identify neighborhood leaders who can give a representative voice not only to their opinions, but also to those of the larger community. It is important to include a diverse group of people to get an accurate picture of the neighborhood. Consider having conversations with local school staff members, local business owners and staff members from local nonprofit organizations. For more information on listening conversations, see the [Outreach and Engagement Sustaining Practice Guide](#).
- **Feedback loops** can be used to gather perceptions on the degree to which "sense of community" is being experienced by residents. The feedback loop methodology is an action-oriented process that ensures revitalization activities or strategies are co-created with community residents. It involves five phases: the design of action-oriented questions, the collection of feedback, the analysis of feedback, dialogue, and course correction. The following articles dive deeper into the benefits of leveraging feedback loops for deepening the understanding of residents' thoughts on and aspirations for their neighborhood. They include some helpful insights on implementing the feedback loop process.
 - Fund For Shared Insight: fundforsharedinsight.org/insights/feedback-practice
 - Nonprofit Technology Network: nten.org/article/facts-and-feelings/?utm_medium=Email&utm_source=Connect&utm_campaign=Jun2017
 - Feedback Labs: feedbacklabs.org/blog/3tt-feeding-the-feedback-loop/
- **Complete a formal survey** to gather data on the degree to which residents are experiencing a "sense of community." The survey may capture additional information, but the focus at this point is to understand how connected neighbors are to each other and if they feel supported. An outcome evaluation tool will need to be selected to collect baseline data for residents' perceptions related to sense of community. Many tools are available, but we recommend Success Measures, as it is designed to measure many of the outcomes in our Quality of Life framework. Staff members from a local organization, volunteers and residents will need to be trained in how to complete the survey in the neighborhood. When surveying in the focus neighborhood, being sure to target a diverse group of respondents. There are many options for gathering responses, from going door to door and convening focus groups to setting up a table at a local business, farmers market or other gathering space that is frequented by residents. For more information about

collecting survey data, please review the [Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning Sustaining Practice Guide](#) and the [Outreach and Engagement Sustaining Practice Guide](#).

- **Research the history** of the neighborhood, focusing on what makes it what it is today. How has the neighborhood been shaped by infrastructure decisions? What economic decisions have impacted it? What has made certain individuals or groups of people move to this place? For more information, please refer to the [Neighborhood Planning and Implementation Sustaining Practice Guide](#).
- **Review demographics** and statistics related to the neighborhood. As an example, consider population trends, household size and makeup, age of residents, occupational employment, education statistics, income levels, crime rates, home values, home sizes, cost of rent, road and street data, etc. For more information, please refer to the [Neighborhood Planning and Implementation Sustaining Practice Guide](#).
- **Review articles** written about the culture and history of the neighborhood. What events have shaped the neighborhood over time? What major “wins” (e.g., successful projects, advocacy efforts, equitable investments) could be cultural assets for the neighborhood? For more information, please refer to the [Neighborhood Planning and Implementation Sustaining Practice Guide](#).
- **Check in with municipalities.** Touch base with local governmental officials to understand the priorities the city or county has for the neighborhood. Be sure to talk about available funding that could support work in this outcome or others. For more information, please refer to the [Mobilizing Resources Sustaining Practice Guide](#).

DATA ANALYSIS, VALIDATION AND INTERPRETATION

After collecting all the data and resident input, the core team will share the results with stakeholders and residents. It is important to remember to share the information with those who shared their time and opinions during the survey data collection. It is also important to invite stakeholders, including your neighbors, to participate in the interpretation of the collected information. For more information about how to intentionally invite neighbors to provide feedback on the data and how to welcome their interpretation of the data, please see the [Outreach and Engagement Sustaining Practice Guide](#) and the [Resident Leadership Sustaining Practice Guide](#).

The data analysis, validation and interpretation provide guidance and direction for determining the level of focus required for each of the intermediate outcomes within the sense of community foundational outcome.

Here are three tips for making sense of all the data collected in the discover phase:

- **Look for patterns in the data.** Compile the information gathered through surveying and listening to see if patterns, themes and recurring concepts surface. To answer the question, “So what?” do the following:
 - Have conversations with residents and stakeholders on what these patterns and themes mean to the neighborhood. This is an example of an outreach and engagement sustaining practice activity.
 - Compare these patterns to surrounding neighborhoods to discover if they are common to the larger area. If there are commonalities, there may be an opportunity to learn from another neighborhood that is further along in the process of revitalization. If the neighborhood is distinct from surrounding neighborhoods, explore why this is the case and what it means for your work moving forward. This is an example of mobilizing resources and resident leadership sustaining practice activities.
- **Catalogue current activities and identify gaps:** Remember that this is in regard only to sense of community at this point. A “fuller” asset-mapping exercise takes place under social cohesion. Through the work of assessing and interpreting, you will uncover the assets and gaps in the neighborhood. It is smart to catalog these so that stakeholders can reference them in the future.

As you catalogue the assets, include the following:

- Places for residents to gather and interact in the neighborhood (local business spots, parks, etc.)
- Sources of news and information that allow residents to know current issues, events and opportunities for involvement.

- Resources for the community to tap into for support and resources. These include tool libraries; meetup groups for parents, kids or aging adults; time-banking system; food cooking classes; continuing education classes; etc.

As you catalog the gaps, consider the following questions:

- In the surveying and listening work, what “gaps” or challenges did you hear multiple times?
 - Is there a lack of community gathering spaces?
 - Do a lot of residents not know the neighbors on their block?
 - Has there been a lack of opportunity or resources to learn about events or issues that will affect the neighborhood before it is too late?
 - Are there great opportunities to build a sense of community that are partitioned off for one group of people?
- **Identify partnerships:** Throughout the discover phase, you will learn of many residents, community associations and partners who are active and doing good work in the neighborhood. Make note of these people and organizations and make sure that you follow up with them to learn what they are doing, what motivates them and what their aspirations are for the area. *This is an example of an activity that bridges across three sustaining practices: outreach and engagement, coalition building and mobilizing resources.*

DISCUSS FINDINGS

The next step is to focus on the people and organizations that have some common aspirations for the neighborhood and to begin discussing revitalization work, particularly how to deepen a sense of community in the neighborhood. Begin discussing what you each know or have been learning about the identity and connectedness of the neighborhood. These relationships will build the foundation for successful activities to deepen the sense of community in the neighborhood. To help ensure diverse participation, always ask, “Who should be at the table for this discussion or decision?”

With the knowledge gained, partner with residents and other stakeholders to clarify the neighborhood status for each of the intermediate outcomes. It is not important to be in perfect agreement on where things are at this point. It is more important to agree to work together to build a deeper sense of community for all residents in the neighborhood. Detail the status of each of the intermediate outcomes, as this will inform the next steps in the “create” phase.

Create phase: Sense of community

The create phase includes discernment and making choices about the feasibility and desirability of proposed projects. This is the time to discuss, debate and decide on a plan of action with intended outcomes, specific activities and monitoring strategies.

At this point, the planning work is more informal and is focused on building a sense of community. The create phase in the sense of community foundational outcome focuses on activities connected to intermediate outcomes that drive success in building connection to and identification with the neighborhood. More comprehensive neighborhood planning processes take place in the collective action foundational outcome pathway. Many of the activities identified in this phase and in this foundational outcome can be resident-led, which inherently will help to build a sense of community by building relationships and a shared identity. Please refer to the [Resident Leadership Sustaining Practice Guide](#) for more information.

Frequently, community development efforts at this phase move straight to organizing strategies and activities without residents at the table. It is important that residents participate in the discover *and* create phases so that the activities will bring about the change they desire in their neighborhood.

Typically, there is no formal coalition at this point in the revitalization process, but there should at least be a group of residents and organizations that see opportunities to begin working through the Quality of Life framework together. We call this group the core team, as described earlier in this guide. When meetings of the core team are called and discussions take place, be mindful of who is at the table and seek to have residents engaged at all levels.

The core team and stakeholders interpret and discuss the data collected in the discover phase. With an eye on the intermediate outcomes contained in the sense of community pathway, they identify specific priority activities and sustaining practices designed to achieve their top priority indicators. The list of questions below, organized by intermediate outcomes, can be helpful as potential activities are considered. The Sense of Community pathway can be instrumental in providing focus and intentionality.

Remember, generally speaking, people can brainstorm an abundance of possible activities, many of which are underresourced, unfeasible or not well-designed to achieve a specific purpose. Use the pathway coupled with the interpreted data to guide the selection of priority activities to enhance relationships and nurture a sense of identification with the neighborhood.

A point person should be selected to take notes at these core team meetings and to draft a written plan including the activities, timeline, responsible parties and indicators of progress. The plan might also include the available resources and other inputs to support the action. Conversations also should focus on allocating money toward the identified activities, where appropriate. If additional funding is needed, identify the sources and write grants to support these projects. Again, the activities under discussion at this point are all about building and deepening the sense of community. Activities are focused on building relationships, fostering a shared identity and sharing resources. Selecting activities from the pathway that are flagged as sustaining practices will help ensure the long-term viability of the neighborhood-level activities.

The compiled list of priorities and activities should be written in a way that is accessible to residents. In neighborhoods where multiple languages are spoken, locate volunteers or organizations that will interpret the content. This plan can then be shared and communicated in multiple ways to recruit people to engage with the work. Consider posting the plan on a social media site (e.g., a neighborhood Facebook group, a NextDoor group, or another medium used by residents), and printing it and sharing it at the school or local gathering spot.

As a final step in the create phase of the iterative cycle, a point person should be selected to head up work in each intermediate outcome or for specific activities. These individuals or organizations will help keep things moving forward and will report back to the core team on the progress being made.

After careful data collection, analysis and interpretation; after much discussion to select priority outcomes, indicators and strategies; and after documenting decisions into a plan of action, it is time to act.

Act phase: Sense of community

The act phase of the iterative cycle focuses on implementation — recruitment, mobilization and monitoring — and is designed to achieve progress. Whereas priorities are selected and the plan of action is created in the create phase, the act phase is where we observe progress and make adjustments to maximize improvements.

The core team's role involves not only spreading the news about work in the neighborhood, but also recruiting residents and other partners to join in the effort. Here are some tips and reminders for engaging residents in implementing activities designed to enhance a sense of community:

- When you share the plan with others, ask them where they would like to participate and provide clear direction on how to do so. *This is an outreach and engagement sustaining practice.*
- Create several on-ramps for people to be engaged in the activities.
- Not everyone will be interested in participating in an advocacy event early in their engagement in the neighborhood, but they may take on a small role in helping to organize a block party.
- The core team should continue to meet regularly and touch base on progress, identify needed resources, and discuss necessary adjustments. *This is a coalition building sustaining practice.*

Throughout the implementation of activities designed to deepen a sense of community, continue to look for opportunities to build partnerships in the work. As activities become more involved or complex, new partners or a deeper partnership will be needed for success. You and your neighbors will become more connected and will identify with the neighborhood more as activities and projects are completed. Knowledge and awareness are built, formal and informal interaction is taking place throughout the neighborhood, people are beginning to talk about the story of

the neighborhood and feel a part of it, resources and support are being shared, and eventually a sense of community is built that drives “social cohesion,” the next outcome in the Quality of Life framework.

The process described above can build a sense of community from the ground up, using three phases of the iterative cycle: discover, create, act. Community development is an iterative process that includes always having to consider if we have adequate capacity and relationships to move to the next project or activity. When it is determined that the sense of community is not enough to support the work, neighbors will spend time developing and enhancing the intermediate outcomes. In this respect, the work of building a sense of community is never done; it is continually being built to support the deeper revitalization work happening at any point in time. The fourth phase of the iterative cycle is sustaining. No matter the specifics, every neighborhood working to revitalize itself and improve its quality of life will need to focus on sustaining the effort over a long period.

Sustain phase: Sense of community

Deliberate learning, reflection and recruitment take place in the sustain phase of the iterative cycle. Your core team of neighbors and stakeholders regularly revisit and assess the level of “sense of community” to determine the health of relationships and connectedness in the neighborhood. Design projects and activities that build a sense of community in the plan of action as long as a plan exists. As a coalition is developed to support further revitalization in the neighborhood, assign a team to oversee and champion key aspects of the sense of community.

Consider an annual event to celebrate the neighborhood and all that it has become for its residents. These events provide an opportunity to look back at what has been accomplished and look forward to the future. They also create a space for people who care about the neighborhood to experience firsthand that they are a part of something special. *Hosting an annual celebration is a strategic activity that bridges across multiple sustaining practices: outreach and engagement, resident leadership, mobilizing resources, implementation and advocacy, and monitoring and evaluation.*

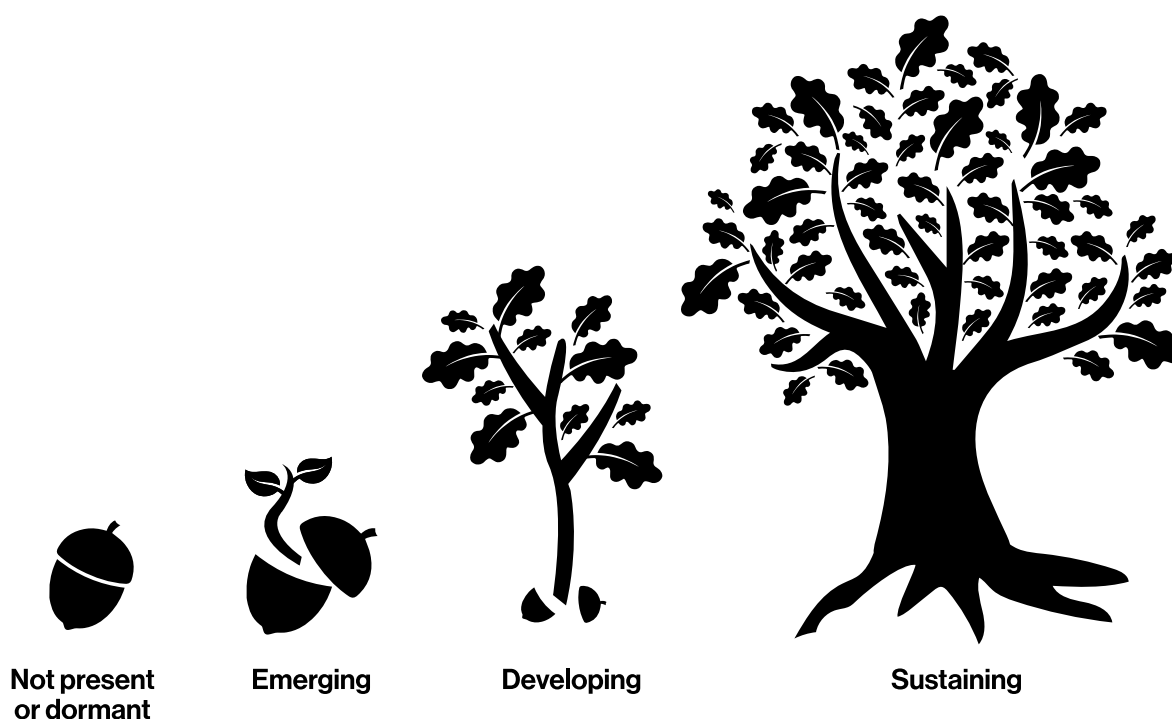
Sense of community guiding questions

- What is happening in the neighborhood, and how can residents and important stakeholders learn about what is going on?
- Where do people interact in the neighborhood, and what makes them show up or not?
- How can we participate with residents to build interaction among people who live in the neighborhood?
- What is the story of the neighborhood, and how do people talk about it?
- Is the neighborhood a place where people feel connected and part of a community?
- What opportunities exist to share support and resources within the neighborhood?

Sense of community assessment and survey

Assessments for the three foundational outcomes are among the resources accompanying this guide and can be found at my.habitat.org/435ca. These assessments are designed to assist a coalition of residents and partners in understanding the current status of the intermediate and long-term outcomes in the neighborhood. When completed, they help the coalition identify which intermediate and long-term outcomes need particular attention. This discovery process leads to the development of indicators to measure the impact of specific activities and projects on the outcomes. The assessments use the following key:

- Not Present or Dormant = There are no signs of progress.
- Emerging = There are beginning signs of progress.
- Developing = There are significant signs of progress.
- Sustaining = The progress measure has been met and is being sustained.



The life cycle of a tree can be helpful in understanding the language used in the key. A neighborhood, which is a form of ecosystem in itself, moves through a similar cycle as it develops and matures.

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Several sources of information come together to complete a foundational outcome assessment, including:

- **Foundational outcome surveys:** Gathering resident and partners' opinions and range of agreement on the status of intermediate and long-term outcomes.
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- **Dialogue:** Once the community completes the survey, results from the survey should be discussed with residents and partners to uncover additional information.
- **Observation:** Learning about current neighborhood-level activity.

Appendix D: Social cohesion how-to

Applying the iterative cycle and sustaining practices

With information about the neighborhood in hand, a commitment to each other, and a deeper sense of community, it is time to work through each phase of the iterative cycle to understand how to effectively build social cohesion that will sustain action into the future. Let's look at the four phases cycle – discover, create, act, sustain – to explore specific activities related to the social cohesion pathway.

Discover phase: Social cohesion

As in the sense of community foundational outcome, you will want to begin your social cohesion efforts with a discover phase. The aim of this phase of the iterative cycle is to assess the current state of social cohesion in the neighborhood as a snapshot in time. The phase includes 1) gathering information, 2) data analysis and interpretation, and 3) discussion of findings.

GATHER INFORMATION

As the core team has connected with residents, community associations and partners to build a strong sense of community, it is likely that you have already learned some things about the state of social cohesion in the neighborhood. You may have come across residents, community associations or partners who already are working together or have in the past. You or those you are working with already may have started having conversations about working together or trying to connect various leaders and organizations who seem to have some common dreams and concerns for the neighborhood. If so, you are on your way to discovering the state of social cohesion in the neighborhood.

You can also conduct a social cohesion assessment. This could be done through a combination of activities and would provide a baseline for the state of social cohesion when you begin your work. Some of the example activities below repeat activities in the discovery phase under sense of community and are best viewed as an ongoing conversation, but they should be weighed against the survey burden that you and your neighbors have already experienced.

- **Survey:** A perceptual survey of residents, community associations and partners, designed to get their assessment of the level of social cohesion based on clear definitions and indicators of such cohesion. You can get more information about surveying in the [Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning Sustaining Practice Guide](#).
- **Asset mapping:** Researching and collecting information about existing resident groups, community associations and partners working in the community, along with any formal or informal coalitions or collaborative efforts. You can get more information about asset mapping in the [Outreach and Engagement Sustaining Practice Guide](#).
- **Listening sessions or interviews:** Group or one-to-one discovery activities with residents, community associations and partners to get both the history of collaboration in the neighborhood and their perspective on the current state of collaboration. You can get more information about these activities in the [Outreach and Engagement Sustaining Practice Guide](#).

Key questions you will want to ask include:

- What is already happening or has happened in the past?
- Is there an existing coalition, and is it healthy, active and representational of the neighborhood? If not, what can be done to strengthen it, and are members receptive to growing and evolving?
- What gifts and assets do individuals, groups and organizations have to offer?
- Why isn't stronger collaboration taking place? What barriers need to be overcome?

Many strategies and activities can be used as you listen and learn about ways to build social cohesion. Here are a few examples:

- **Resident engagement methods**
 - **Resident meetings/forums, listening sessions and focus groups:** These can be structured in multiple ways, including a very informal and open forum or a facilitated listening session or focus group. You can learn more about how to structure and facilitate these kinds of resident meetings in the [Outreach and Engagement Sustaining Practice Guide](#).
 - **Door-to-door or one-to-one surveying or interviews:** You can also go door to door or set up one-to-one meetings with residents to do either a survey or an interview or listening conversation. Again, you can learn more about surveys in the [Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning Sustaining Practice Guide](#) or interviews and listening conversations in the [Outreach and Engagement Sustaining Practice Guide](#).
 - **Leverage a catalyzing crisis or concern:** Finally, a crisis or other elevated concern often can bring people together. Pay attention to whether there is a catalyzing concern in the neighborhood that has people talking and wanting to take action. Examples of a catalyzing concerns include a natural disaster, a proposed toxic waste site adjacent to the neighborhood, a dramatic increase in violent crime, or a vivid and publicized rise in negative socioeconomic or health status. When a shared concern catches the attention of your neighbors, this is a strategic moment to gather folks together around the catalyzing issue and listen using one (or several) of the above formats.
- **Partner or association engagement methods**
 - **Summits, listening sessions or focus groups:** Many of the same activities used for listening to residents can be used to listen to associations and partner organizations in the neighborhood, including an organizational summit on collaboration and partnership models, listening sessions, or focus groups.
 - **One-to-one surveying or interviews:** You also can do one-to-one surveying, interviews or listening conversations with association members and organizational leaders.
 - **Leveraging a catalyzing concern:** Similarly, an elevated concern can catalyze community associations and partners to come together to work collaboratively.
- **Data collection**
 - **Asset mapping and learning from listening:** Within your asset mapping and listening, you might learn about current or past collaborative efforts and be able to get information about what is working or has worked in the past to build social cohesion. You can learn more about asset mapping in the [Outreach and Engagement Sustaining Practice Guide](#).
 - **Secondary data:** You can also look at secondary data and case studies about collaborative groups and coalitions in similar contexts that have successfully built motivation and interest in collaboration and helped people see the concrete benefits.
 - **Primary survey data:** Your other primary data point could be resident or association and partner surveys that you conducted to assess social cohesion and what that information tells you about what may be needed to move things forward. You can learn more about surveying in the [Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning Sustaining Practice Guide](#).

ANALYZE AND INTERPRET DATA

As you listen, you will want to have a strategy for capturing and organizing the input and data so that it can be easily accessed and interpreted. As you collect data and information, you will want to pay attention to strengths, assets and resources, in addition to concerns, gaps, barriers and opportunities. There are multiple ways to gather and present the material, including:

- Organized notes.
- A summary narrative.
- Asset maps.
- Bars and graphs.
- Multimedia presentations.

Once you've assessed, prepared, listened and gathered information and perspectives about the strengths and gaps related to social cohesion in the neighborhood, you are ready to interpret what you heard, found and learned. The following suggestions can structure your interpretations and learning to help guide your efforts.

Identify patterns, assets and gaps

Interpret feedback from listening sessions, focus groups, interviews and surveys of residents, community association members and partners by looking for patterns or repetition around the state of social cohesion using the following categories:

- Strengths, assets and resources.
- Opportunities, concerns, barriers and gaps.

Two tools you can use to categorize and interpret are the SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) and SOAR (strengths, opportunities, aspirations, results) models. See more information about these models in the [Coalition Building](#) and [Neighborhood Planning and Implementation Sustaining Practice Guides](#).

Identify existing and potential partnerships

Based on your discovery efforts, you can identify key resident leaders, community associations and other existing or potential coalition or collaborative partners who could be brought together in one or more groups to strengthen social cohesion in the neighborhood. Pay particular attention to any underrepresented or marginalized populations to inform your next steps and create strategies for focused outreach and invitation to these residents.

DISCUSS FINDINGS

The next step is to discuss the findings with stakeholders and begin applying the data analysis and interpretation. These conversations will start to foster the willingness and competency of residents, community associations and partners to work collaboratively as people discuss common findings and patterns revealed in the data. To help ensure diverse participation, always ask, "Who should be at the table for this discussion or decision?"

With the knowledge gained through the work up to this point, partner with residents and other stakeholders to clarify the neighborhood status for each of the intermediate outcomes within the social cohesion pathway, which will inform the next steps in the create phase of the iterative cycle.

Create phase: Social cohesion

Now that you have discovered and interpreted what you have heard, you are ready to create a structure and strategies directed at strengthening and sustaining the social cohesion in the neighborhood. This is when the interpretations of the data meet the social cohesion pathway.

Reviewing the social cohesion pathway can help you determine how to organize priorities into a natural flow of work and activity. You might want to refer back to the social cohesion pathway to remind yourself of the definition of social cohesion, the intermediate outcome definitions and some of the core indicators. Of course, you also will want to think specifically about the unique barriers to overcome and benchmarks related to your own context.

As a reminder, here is a list of the five intermediate outcomes under social cohesion:

- **Catalysts and connectors:** Circumstances, events or individuals that mobilize neighborhoods to action.
- **Asset-based strengths approach:** A common understanding of asset-based community development, rather than a deficits-based approach.

- **Formal and informal organizations:** Leaders are prepared to lead their community in identified common goals, values and concerns and organizing assets for collective action.
- **Identified, organized and connected assets:** Individual and collective assets are assembled to perform specific activities.
- **Common goals, values and concerns:** Residents, community associations and partners agree on which efforts they will work on.

Once you have assessed the current state of social cohesion in the neighborhood and have reviewed the social cohesion pathway, the core team and stakeholders will begin selecting strategies designed to increase collaborative efforts and foster social cohesion. It is helpful for you and the core team to create some indicators, outcomes and benchmarks for your social cohesion work. Basically, this is where you articulate what success will look like for social cohesion. As you consider activities, outcomes and indicators for social cohesion, consider the following questions:

- What would success look like?
- What needs to be in place?
- Who needs to be there?
- Who is not here? Who should be invited?
- What funds or resources are required, and are we on track?

You can learn more about selecting indicators of success and monitoring benchmarks based on the specific activities identified in the [Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning Sustaining Practice Guide](#) and by thinking about the intermediate and foundational outcomes of social cohesion.

Act phase: Social cohesion

You have already been taking action in the discover and create phases of the iterative cycle. Actions within the act phase refer to the strategies you will focus on to enhance social cohesion.

The plan of action to foster social cohesion was designed and developed in the previous phase, but the act phase is where we do the work as planned, monitor progress and adjust accordingly.

The indicators of success designated in the create phase are now used to help focus and monitor the work that takes place in this phase. The core team will establish protocols and reporting expectations to:

- Monitor progress of implementation and execution.
- Obtain feedback from participants or those affected by the activities.
- Make adjustments to improve and increase the impact of your activities related to your designated outcomes.

Sustain phase: Social cohesion

Here are some simple ways to promote sustainability around your social cohesion work:

- Perform regular training and development to strengthen how coalition members work together. Training examples can be found in the [Outreach and Engagement](#), [Resident Leadership](#), and [Coalition Building](#) Sustaining Practice Guides.
- Provide training on collaborative fundraising and set aside time for the coalition to assess and reflect on their resource development efforts. More information about these activities is in the [Mobilizing Resources Sustaining Practice Guide](#).
- Pause to celebrate your work, acknowledge people's contributions and gifts, and share in the successes and benefits of the activities. Examples of these activities are in the [Outreach and Engagement](#) and [MEAL](#) guides.
- Have regular coalition check-in and feedback sessions to support the health of the coalition. You can learn more about this activity in the [Coalition Building Sustaining Practice Guide](#).

- Create a yearly evaluation process to gauge the effectiveness of the coalition from the perspective of coalition members. You can learn more about this process in the [Coalition Building](#) and [MEAL](#) Sustaining Practice Guides.
- Create regular check-ins and feedback loops to learn how the broader neighborhood is feeling about work and activities. You can learn more about these activities in the [Outreach and Engagement](#), [Coalition Building](#), and [MEAL](#) Sustaining Practice Guides.

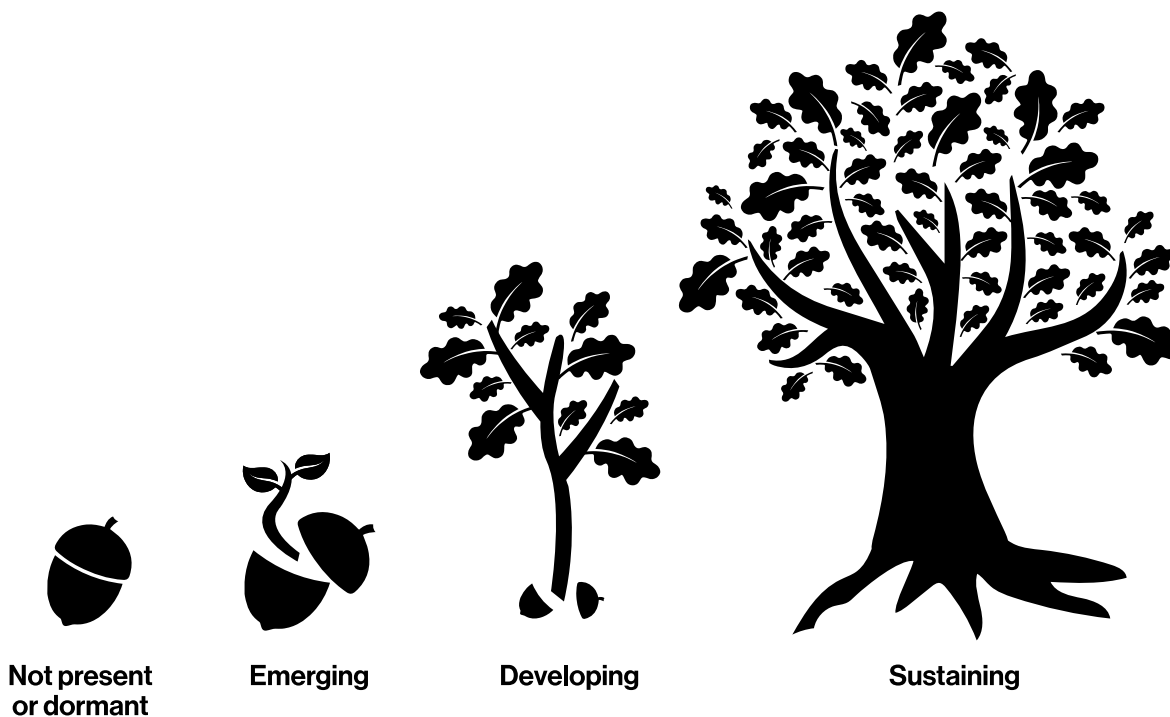
Social cohesion guiding questions

- Who else can we invite to the table to discuss next steps for working together?
- How do residents and other stakeholders provide input into possible new partners?
- How can we recognize neighborhood assets?
- Do we, the residents, have a common vision and guiding principles for our work together?
- How might residents and other stakeholders formalize organizing and decision-making efforts?

Social cohesion assessment and survey

Assessments for the three foundational outcomes are among the resources accompanying this guide and can be found at my.habitat.org/435ca. These assessments are designed to assist a coalition of residents and partners in understanding the current status of the intermediate and long-term outcomes in the neighborhood. When completed, they help the coalition identify which intermediate and long-term outcomes need particular attention. This discovery process leads to the development of indicators to measure the impact of specific activities and projects on the outcomes. The assessments use the following key:

- Not present or dormant = There are no signs of progress.
- Emerging = There are beginning signs of progress.
- Developing = There are significant signs of progress.
- Sustaining = The progress measure has been met and is being sustained.



The life cycle of a tree can be helpful in understanding the language used in the key. A neighborhood, which is a form of ecosystem in itself, moves through a similar cycle as it develops and matures.

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Several sources of information come together to complete a foundational outcome assessment, including:

- **Foundational outcome surveys:** Gathering resident and partners' opinions and range of agreement on the status of intermediate and long-term outcomes.
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Appendix E: Collective action how-to

Applying the iterative cycle and sustaining practices

As with the other two foundational outcomes, the iterative cycle informs and supports decisions about when to organize and implement activities and projects to achieve specific intermediate outcomes along the pathway. The iterative cycle consists of the following phases: discover, create, act and sustain. Following these phases in order will provide you with a flow of work to help make decisions based on your and your neighbors' perceptions and aspirations, plus data about your neighborhood. The pathway will help you select activities and projects that lead you to the collective action outcome.

Discover phase: Collective action

The aim of the discover phase is to understand the availability and adequacy of resources, knowledge and capacities to propel progress on a comprehensive neighborhood plan. This phase includes: (1) gathering information, (2) data analysis and interpretation, and (3) discussion of findings.

GATHER INFORMATION

As part of the discover phase, the coalition will organize efforts to conduct a variety of strategies to gather the needed knowledge and data to make informed decisions. An in-depth discovery phase is essential to acquiring information about neighborhood issues, policies, systems and data, all of which can be used to shape future actions. There are many ways to discover the essential issues, concerns, gifts and assets. In fact, much of this work should have been done in the foundational outcomes of sense of community and social cohesion. Specific discovery in collective action is the movement toward discovering the long-term outcomes that a neighborhood wants to focus on to change the quality of life. There are many ways to discover this in a neighborhood, including resident listening conversations, surveys and focus groups.

Reviewing demographics and statistics related to the neighborhood is key to building a shared understanding of the neighborhood data. As an example, consider population trends, household size and makeup, age of residents, occupational employment, education statistics, income levels, crime rates, home values, home sizes, cost of rent, road and street data, etc.

Check in with municipalities, partners and local governmental officials to understand the priorities the city or county has for the neighborhood. Be sure to have a conversation about available funding that could support work related directly to this foundational outcome, such as planning grants, in addition to funding for eventual sector outcome work and current training needs. Making connections to elected officials, foundations and community leaders is essential to discuss the planning process. Listening to other partners and associations is essential to gaining new perspectives, identifying resources and assets, and building partnership.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

After conducting a thorough discover phase, you will have gathered a host of information; materials; data; and resident, community association and partner dreams, gifts and concerns. It is important to analyze the data and make some initial interpretations, and to share the information with stakeholders and residents. You also must remember to share the information with those who shared their time and opinions earlier during the survey data collection. It is also important to invite stakeholders, including residents, to participate in the interpretation of the collected information.

Here are three tips for making sense of all the data collected in the discover phase:

- **Look for patterns in the data:** Compile the information gathered through surveying and listening to see if patterns, themes and recurring concepts surface. Analyzing the data takes the mystery of all the points of discovery and identifies patterns and insights. In an attempt to answer the "So what?" question, do the following:

- Have conversations with residents and stakeholders on what these patterns and themes mean to the neighborhood.
- Compare these patterns to surrounding neighborhoods. If there are commonalities, there may be an opportunity to learn from another neighborhood that is further along in the process of revitalization. If the neighborhood is distinct from surrounding neighborhoods, explore why this is the case and what it means for your work moving forward.
- **Identify assets and gaps:** A thorough asset map of the neighborhood can be created by residents, community associations and partners. Through the work of assessing and interpreting, you will uncover the assets and gaps that exist in the neighborhood. It is smart to catalog these so that stakeholders can reference them in the future.

As you catalog the assets, include the following:

- Existence of current or recent neighborhood plans and the residents' perceptions of the process used previously to create a plan.
- People who have experience facilitating planning, or who have knowledge of planning processes.
- Resources for the community to tap into for support and resources. These would include things such as organizations with meeting rooms, audiovisual equipment and communication technologies that could support a planning process; professionals with access to printing services; or employers at groceries and restaurants.

Based on this discovery, you will be able to determine how equipped the residents are to lead action and advocacy. An essential intermediate outcome for moving forward is that a neighborhood has leaders who are equipped and prepared to lead action and advocacy. Training and education may be needed to develop the necessary skills in resident leaders.

As you catalog the gaps, consider the following questions:

- In the surveying and listening work, what "gaps" or challenges did you hear multiple times?
- Are there sore feelings or lingering negativity from previous efforts to conduct neighborhood planning or resident-led projects?
- **Identify partnerships:** Throughout the discover phase, you will learn of many residents, community associations and partners that are active and doing good work in the neighborhood. Make note of these people and organizations and consider how to include them in a future neighborhood planning process. Questions to consider as you review the data findings and consider information about potential and existing partners:
 - Where are our partnerships the strongest? Weakest?
 - Who holds the power in the neighborhood? (power analysis)
 - Who are the emerging resident leaders who are willing to lead?

DISCUSS FINDINGS

The next step is to focus on the people and organizations that have some common aspirations for the neighborhood and to begin discussing a comprehensive planning process, particularly how to equip resident leaders to play a key role in future planning efforts. Begin discussing what each stakeholder has learned about perceptions of and interest in neighborhood planning. These preliminary discussions will continue to build a strong foundation for successful collaborative efforts in the neighborhood. To help ensure diverse participation, always ask, "Who should be at the table for this discussion or decision?"

With the knowledge gained, partner with residents and other stakeholders to clarify the neighborhood status for each intermediate outcome. It is important to agree to work together to identify principles to guide future neighborhood planning processes, and to determine additional capacities and competencies required to adequately

resource a planning process. Detail the status of each intermediate outcome, as this will inform the next steps in the create phase.

Create phase: Collective action

The create phase includes discernment and decisions about the feasibility and desirability of proposed projects. This is the time where a plan of action with intended outcomes, specific activities and monitoring strategies is discussed, debated and decided. The create phase focuses on creating a comprehensive, data-driven, resident-led neighborhood plan for action, advocacy, implementation, evaluation and resource development. This phase also selects strategies to equip leaders for the planning process, as well as for future project management and leadership.

The planning work was more informal during the early days of revitalization, but you can anticipate a more comprehensive neighborhood planning process in the collective action foundational outcome. The create phase within the collective action pathway focuses on activities connected to intermediate outcomes that will drive to the ultimate goal.

Often, community development efforts and the professionals who participate in them move straight to identifying sector-level projects without taking the time to include residents in the planning. It is important to have residents participate in the discover and create phases so that the neighborhood plan will bring about the change they desire, and they will be less likely to feel as though an external entity is doing something to their neighborhood without their consent. In the create phase, we seek more than resident consent; we seek an inclusive process that invites the assets and the diversity of the neighborhood to sit in the planning room and at the proverbial drawing table.

The coalition of resident leaders and stakeholders interpret and discuss the data collected in the discover phase and, with an eye on the intermediate outcomes in the collective action pathway, identify specific priority activities and sustaining practices designed to achieve their top priority indicators. The collective action pathway can be instrumental in providing focus and intentionality.

As mentioned earlier, without strong facilitation, people tend to brainstorm an abundance of possible projects without clarity of purpose and intent. Use the Collective Action pathway coupled with the interpreted data results to guide decisions that will yield an increase in financial and human capital, along with an increase in the number of residents who are equipped to lead projects and advocacy efforts and to participate in the planning process.

As part of the work of this foundational outcome, a three- to five-year comprehensive neighborhood plan is written, including the overarching vision of the neighborhood, the outcomes and indicators for where the neighborhood wants to focus its work, and the strategies and activities that the residents, community association and partners will implement. There will need to be a timeline, progress indicators, and an identification of responsible parties. Equally important to having a written plan in hand is the relationship building and increase in individual and collective efficacy that come from an inclusive and well-facilitated planning process.

Act phase: Collective action

The act phase focuses on implementation — recruitment, mobilization and monitoring — and is designed to achieve and document progress. While priorities are selected and the plan of action is created in the create phase, the act phase is where we observe progress and make adjustments to maximize improvements. In the collective action pathway, some of the action will revolve around equipping leaders and building capacity and competencies. Other action will focus on organizing the neighborhood planning process. Activities also could take these forms:

- **Quick wins:** Quick wins are low-resource, high-impact projects that can be implemented quickly to build momentum and activity.
- **Long-term projects and actions:** Your one-year implementation plan has detailed which projects and actions you will work on first. Developing the teams and activities needed to complete each action is the next step.

- **Resident-based actions:** There will always be resident-based actions that one or two residents will want to work on together. Based on the continued outcome and engagement efforts, these resident-led actions can be prioritized and supported financially and organizationally.

The neighborhood plan represents a long-term, three- to five-year window and is more general in nature. There will also be a need to develop an annual action plan to lay out the detailed plans for the coming year and a resource development plan that will plan how funding will be secured for the projects and activities that are in the neighborhood plan.

ANNUAL OPERATIONAL PLAN

The implementation of a long-term neighborhood plans requires an annual operational plan that details the specific actions to be completed in the coming year and the performance measures for each one. Point people are selected to head up work for each outcome area or for specific activities. These individuals or organizations will help keep things moving forward and will report back to the coalition on the progress being made.

RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Each plan will require sufficient funding to move projects forward. There may be a need to develop a comprehensive resource development plan to raise the needed funds to implement specific projects (see the [Mobilizing Resources Sustaining Practices Guide](#)). The coalition will need to define which partners will work together to create the comprehensive resource development plan.

Throughout the implementation of activities designed to equip leaders and build competencies for planning and project management, continue to look for opportunities to build partnerships in the work. As activities become more involved or complex, new partners or a deeper partnership will be needed for success.

Using three phases of the iterative cycle — discover, create and act — this chapter illustrated how you, your neighbors, community associations and partners can prepare for future sector work and contribute to a comprehensive planning process. Improving the quality of life in a neighborhood is an iterative process that includes always having to consider if we have adequate capacity and strong enough relationships to move to the next project or activity. When it is determined that the sense of community or social cohesion is not adequate to support the work, coalition partners will return to intermediate outcomes in any or all of the foundational outcomes.

Sustain phase: Collective action

The three key activities in sustaining the work of collective action are (1) ensuring and expanding resources, (2) reflecting and learning, and (3) celebrating victories and successes.

ENSURE AND EXPAND RESOURCES

To sustain the work of collective action, there must be a continual source of resources — both financial and human — to move the work forward.

REFLECT AND LEARN

The sustain phase is where deliberate learning, reflection and recruitment take place so that efforts can continue into the future. Coalition members and neighbors regularly revisit and assess progress on the intermediate outcomes within the collective action pathway to determine whether adequate capacity exists to sustain comprehensive sector change. It is wise to include in the neighborhood plan all projects and activities designed to foster the intermediate outcomes of all three foundational outcomes, regardless of where you are working on the Quality of Life map.

CELEBRATE

As part of the sustain phase, consider an annual event to celebrate the neighborhood and all that it has become for its residents. These events provide an opportunity to look back at what has been accomplished and look forward to the future. They also create a space for people who care about the neighborhood to experience firsthand that they are a

part of something special. Hosting an annual celebration is one of those strategic activities that bridges multiple sustaining practices: outreach and engagement, resident leadership, mobilizing resources, implementation and advocacy, and monitoring and evaluation.

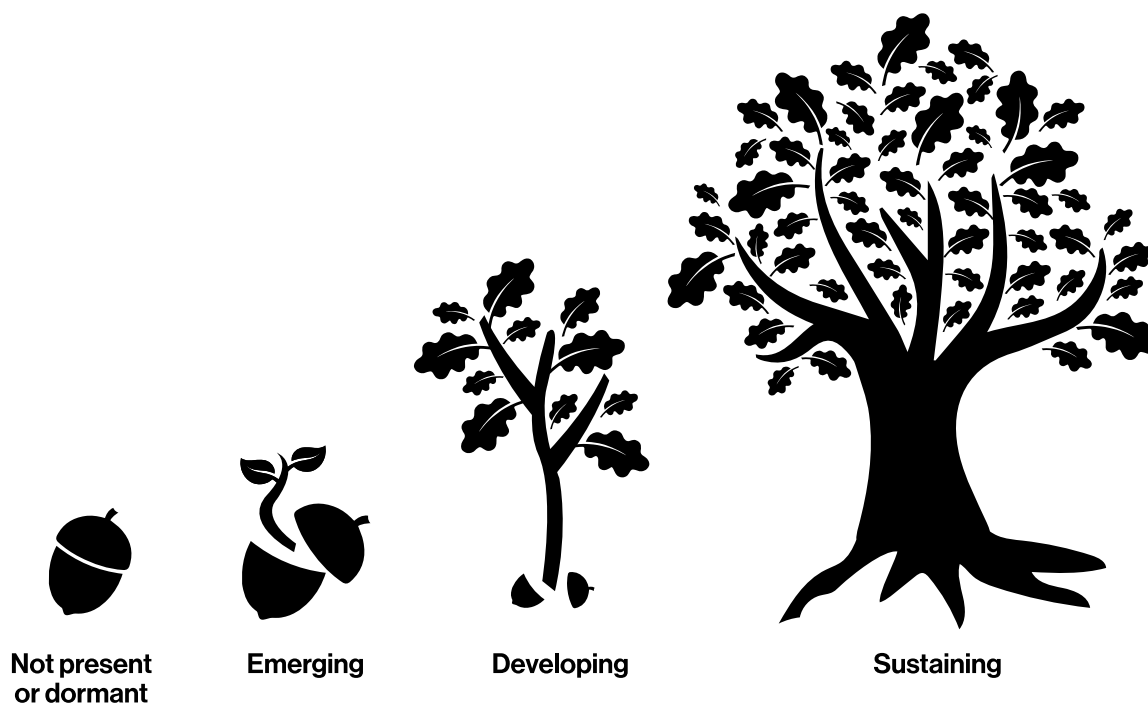
Collective action guiding questions

- What process will we use to create our neighborhood plan? Who will participate and how?
- What is our picture of the future? What is our vision for our neighborhood?
- Where will we focus our work? What are our goals?
- How will we know if we are successful? How will we measure this?
- What are the strategies we will employ to impact our indicators and reach our goals?
- What are the specific actions and projects we will work on together?
- Are we equipped and ready to advocate?
- What will we evaluate and monitor?
- What human resources and financial capital exist to support our projects, and what is our budget?

Collective action assessment and survey

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