Community Engagement: Empowerment, Action & Change

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Jerome Jackson, Operation Better Block

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Everyday Democracy
Ideas & Tools for Community Change
- Your Name
- Where you work
- What do you think community dialogues provide that focus groups do not?
How does your community solve problems?
From the top down
From the bottom up
Town hall meetings
There’s another way to solve community problems
Rock Island, IL

1. Population: 40,000
2. Rapidly growing in immigrants & refugees
3. Demographic change causes business sector growth, but places strain on schools
Rock Island: Actions

1. Quad City Alliance for Immigrants & Refugees formed
2. Housing Team - Rental & Home Ownership Education
3. Police/community Relations
4. Education
5. Cultural Celebration
6. Jobs/Employment
What is effective about this approach?

1. Includes many voices
2. Builds relationships
3. Breaks down barriers
4. Action ideas come from the community
HOW THIS APPROACH WORKS
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Organizing takes about 4-6 months
Different voices and perspectives are key
What dialogue circles look like

1. 8 to 12 participants
2. Usually meets 4-5 times to discuss a critical public issue
3. 2 facilitators per group use a discussion guide
4. Diverse participants and opinions
Building relationships

Trust

Stronger community

Motivation to take action

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Benefits of Inclusive Dialogues

1. Creating an open space for people to talk about difficult issues
2. Hearing from community members who usually don’t have a voice
3. Diffusing tensions between groups
4. Creating space to come up with ideas for action
Here’s another story...

• SD Community

• Concern: Youth getting into trouble

• People donate space, furniture, games, and their time.

• Closed car dealership becomes youth center
Empty car dealership turns into youth center.

Eyesore turns into community asset.
A Project of The Paul J. Aicher Foundation

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Bring People Together!

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Community Engagement Models

- Mahoning Valley Collaborative and Jim Caprerro’s “One-on-One” model
- World Café
- Slavic Village
- Saul Alinsky
- Everyday Democracy model encompassed organizing, education, dialogues and Action Teams!
Steering Committee was made up of community stakeholders representing the diverse groups in Oakland.

Had already been conducting at least a year of community engagement through one-on-ones and various community initiatives.

Chose facilitators with a genuine interest; brought in Everyday Democracy for facilitator training.
The Events

- Kick-off event got people excited for the community plan and let them sign up for the dialogues.

- Action Forum brought people together after the dialogues were finished; they then voted on Action Team goals.
OAKLAND 2025:
JOIN US AT THE ACTION FORUM

Thursday, May 12th, 2011
6:00pm-8:30pm
St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Cathedral
419 South Dithridge Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

The Oakland community is creating a roadmap for the future. Be a part of the action that will change your neighborhood.

Cast your vote at the Action Forum on the top priorities for your community and join an action team to make them a reality.
The Dialogues

- 146 Oakland community members attended Kick Off; 123 signed up for a dialogue.
- Average of 11 participants in each group with 2 facilitators
- 55 dialogue sessions in over 100 hours of dialogues
Going Forward

- Action Teams are working hard and have seen early results
- Finalizing community plan recommendations
- Possibly another set of dialogues to happen
» South Pittsburgh
Hilltop

> Distinct communities
> Diverse Characteristics
  – demographic, economic, social, environmental, political
> City Neighborhoods + Municipality
THE HILLTOP ALLIANCE

» Origin in Deliberative Democracy Process 2007

» Founded in 2008 by 5 Hilltop community organizations

» Operational in 2009 representing 10 communities

» 2010 Nonprofit Status

» 2 communities added in 2012 – Mt Washington and South Side Slopes

MISSION

» Connect neighborhood-based organizations and leverage their individual efforts, creating a shared vision and voice for the Hilltop, thereby preserving and creating Hilltop assets.

» Bring together, serve as a resource, and promote a common vision within the Hilltop neighborhoods.
### WHY DIALOGUE TO ACTION?

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<th>COMMUNITY</th>
<th>MODEL</th>
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<tr>
<td>» Spotty history of working within or across neighborhoods</td>
<td>» Foundation Building Tool = Builds understanding,</td>
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<td>» Little community group infrastructure/capacity</td>
<td>relationships + trust; common understanding of issues; collaboration</td>
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<td>» Negative community trends</td>
<td>and partnerships; ownership of issues and actions; leaders</td>
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<td>» Need to intervene and jump start action on issues</td>
<td>» Leads to action and short-term success</td>
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<td>» Early Action Funding</td>
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<td>» Replicable</td>
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HILLTOP DIALOGUES

» 2009 “POSITIVE CHANGE ON THE HILLTOP”

» 2010 “UNITED HILLTOP = SAFE STREETS”

» 2012 “YOUTH REDEFINED”

» MODEL WILL ALSO BE USED IN 2012-13 QUALITY OF LIFE PLANNING PROCESS

Process has evolved and been refined as moved forward and applied lessons learned.

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POSITIVE CHANGE ON THE HILLTOP

2009

Positive Change on the Hilltop

Building a Strong Hilltop Community

A Discussion Guide for Public Dialogue and Community Problem Solving

Hilltop Alliance
PPND

and the Community Development Collaborative

Positive Change on the Hilltop

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Extensive Outreach

120 + at Kick Off

100 In 5 Weeks Of Dialogue Discussions

Result: Formation of 2 Action Teams – Community Services Coordination + Repurposing Vacant Properties

Meet monthly + tangible projects
UNITED HILLTOP = SAFE STREETS

2010

United Hilltop = SAFE STREETS

Everyone's invited! Teens, kids, retirees, parents, families, politicians, businesses, church groups, Pittsburgh police, block watch personnel. If you live in Allisonville, Arlington, Allison Heights, Iron Art, Beechview, Carrick, Knoxville, Mt. Oliver or St. Clair this will affect you!

You are invited to participate in a series of dialogues focusing on public safety. Count to our Kick-Off Event on May 19th to enjoy dinner and meet with your local police officers, block watch leaders, and neighbors to share your ideas on how to make our streets safer. We need your ideas, energy, and participation to make this a success.

And SUCCESS means SAFE STREETS!!

Come and tell us your needs. We will listen to YOU!

WHERE: St. Pius X Byzantine Catholic Church (2336 Brunswick Rd)
WHEN: Wednesday, May 19, 5:45 PM - 8:00 PM
FREE DINNER, FREE PARKING, FREE CHILD CARE!

MORE INFORMATION: Sara Bennett (412) 560-7607, hilltopalliance@gmail.com

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Outgrowth of Positive Change Dialogue

100 + at Kick Off

60 in 5 Weeks Of Dialogue Discussions

Result: Formation of Public Safety Action Team

Meets monthly + tangible projects

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We value youth engagement in community rebuilding - it is critical.

Young people have a genuine stake in helping our communities work.

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YOUTH REDEFINED

» Youth suggestion at United Hilltop Dialogue
» 1st project of Youth L.E.A.D. Initiative
» Target = teens 14 - 19
» Youth Survey (134 one-on-ones) at Carrick and Brashear High Schools

Young people are key to building our communities - they offer vision, energy, ideas, and a distinct point of view about community opportunities and concerns.
Youth from the Hilltop neighborhoods are important to our community: everyone can do something to improve their likelihood of success.

Outreach = Partnerships are key

Youth as leaders & facilitators

Result: Action Teams + Youth-led Community Service and Action Projects
Lessons Learned – The Top Ten

1. Quality, trained facilitators are vital

2. Put together a Steering Committee that is not only reflective of all stakeholders in your community but brings resources to the table

3. Basic community organizing is key prior to starting formal engagement process

4. Set goals

5. Use general to get to specific

6. Neighborhood organizations need to support the Action Teams and connect them to needed resources

7. Funding – a little bit of money can go a long way

8. Capture everything that is said, as it is said, in the dialogues

9. Action recommendations need to reflect realistic goals

10. Education