Building Just Communities

Capacity Building Tools to Foster Equitable Development

Vernice Miller Travis, Skeo
Sarah Malpass, Skeo
Carl Simon, Blue Water Baltimore

September 29, 2016
Overview of Session

- Speaker Introductions
- Framing Equitable Development
- Tools for Equitable Development
  - Building Cultural Competence Training (Baltimore, Maryland)
  - Collaborative Problem Solving (Raleigh, North Carolina)
  - Integrated Planning Process (Birmingham, Alabama)
- Discussion
Why is Equitable Development Needed?

• Traditional sprawl patterns have left holes of disinvestment in urban neighborhoods (right)

• Residents face quality of life challenges:
  - Struggling schools
  - Unemployment and underemployment
  - Lack of access to healthy, affordable food
  - Health impacts of cumulative pollution exposures
  - Presence of vacant and contaminated properties
What is Equitable Development?

Equitable Development: *The practice of enabling communities to prioritize and pursue development that benefits current residents and contributes to neighborhood resilience and quality of life.*

Principles of Equitable Development
(developed by PolicyLink)

1. Integrate strategies that focus on people with those focused on improving places
2. Reduce local and regional disparities
3. Promote investments that are catalytic, coordinated, and result in a triple bottom line
4. Ensure meaningful community participation, leadership, and ownership in change efforts
Innovative revitalization **coalitions** share a commitment to bring disparate parties together in **ever expanding networks**, raising expectations, keeping an eye on the big picture, but **focusing on small attainable successes** and relentlessly building on them.
Building Cultural Competence

Blue Water Baltimore
Baltimore has funding for green infrastructure projects

Deep Blue selects five target neighborhoods impacted by vacant properties, underinvestment and stormwater needs

Deep Blue’s goal is to integrate community input into the selection and prioritization of those GI projects

Opportunity to build new relationships and address community needs through the GI investments
Baltimore’s Oliver Neighborhood & the Deep Blue Project

- Predominately African American neighborhood
- Impacted by long-term disinvestment and presence of vacant properties
- Selected as a Deep Blue target community
- BWB had concerns about how to build productive, trusting relationships between community leaders and BWB’s predominately white, middle class staff
Building Cultural Competence

• Includes discussion of:
  – *Culture*: Expanding the definition and understanding how it influences our behaviors and perceptions
  – *Stereotypes*: The unavoidable presence and impact of stereotypes in multi-cultural societies
  – *The Vicious Circle*: Understanding the impact of “interlocking” stereotypes and breaking the vicious circle
  – *New Outcomes*: Planning for results

• Creates an atmosphere that builds trust and understanding.

• Allows participants to explore sensitive feelings and experiences in the process of creating a shared context for moving forward.
Blue Water Baltimore’s BCC Training Experience

• All day, interactive training.

• Attended by:
  – BWB staff who operate primarily in the office
  – BWB staff who operate out in communities
  – Community leaders from Deep Blue project target communities

• Provided an opportunity for team building.

• Small groups discussions allowed for candid and safe conversations about “raw” experiences.

• Interactive exercises kept it fun and emphasized real-time learning and processing.
Outcomes

Within BWB

- More candid conversations among BWB staff about race, cultural sensitivity and diversity
- Conducted a staff survey about ways to improve the organization and set up an implementation plan for suggestions that were made
- Marked improvement in communication between field and office staff over the course of the past year, which has resulted in improved representation of Blue Water Baltimore to community members in the field.

With the Oliver Neighborhood

- Addressed the “elephant in the room” at the kickoff meeting with Oliver community leaders
- Created an atmosphere of trust and candid conversation
- Led to a more open dialogue about community needs and ways the Deep Blue project could complement and support community priorities for revitalization.
Collaborative Problem Solving

Chavis Park Community Conversation
Chavis Park Community Conversation

- Public Leadership Group (PLG) engages a broad cross-section of park stakeholders including:
  - Long-time African-American residents
  - Newer neighborhood residents
  - Downtown stakeholders

- PLG develops a revised park master plan with the following recommendations:
  - Honor the past
  - New aquatic center and community center
  - Expand sports and fitness
  - New play corridor and amusements
  - Increase connectivity and basic amenities
  - Support community events
  - Celebrate Little Rock Creek and promote stewardship

- Revised master plan has been adopted by City Council.
- Schematic design phase has begun.
Collaborative Problem Solving

- Introduces participants to collaborative problem solving and consensus building techniques
- Defines interests vs. positions
- Discusses types of conflict and conflict styles
- Models collaborative dialogue techniques

---

**DEFINITIONS**

The following definitions are adapted and/or quoted from U.S. EPA’s Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem Solving Model report and the City of Raleigh’s Public Participation Guidelines for Parks Planning.  

Collaborative problem solving is a process through which a group of stakeholders agree to work together to create a collective vision that represents mutually beneficial solutions for all parties. Often, stakeholders represent a variety of community interests and backgrounds, and the problems facing the group may be deeply rooted in a complex community history. Therefore, developing strong, lasting solutions requires active participation and respectful dialogue from all group members.  

Building consensus means "seeking agreement among different and, often times, competing interests. In the collaborative problem-solving process, consensus building meets the needs and interests of each member of the group and requires members to work together to seek creative solutions. While building consensus is important to reaching agreements, it also serves to create and strengthen the relationships that form the basis for current and future collaborations."  

A consensus decision process is "the decision rule that allows collaborative problem solving to work. It is a way for more than two people to reach agreement. Consensus can build trust in order to share information and generate potential solutions to resolve an issue, especially under conditions of conflict. Consensus does not mean that everyone will be equally happy with the decision, rather that there is general or widespread agreement among the members of a group that they have made the best recommendations or decisions, at the time and with the people involved." The consensus decision making process that will be used in the Chavis Community Conversation is described in the Public Leadership Group Charter.

**POSITIONS VS. INTERESTS**

Understanding the difference between positions and interests is key to collaborative problem solving. The following definitions are adapted and/or quoted from the University of Texas at Austin’s Problem Solving Information and Tips webpage:

- **Positions** are "predetermined results or demands that people use to express needs."  
  For example: "I want a new playground."

- **Interests** may be intangible and define what the problem is. They are the reasons for the needs — the motivation that resulted in a position.  
  For example: "I want a safe play space for children and a comfortable seating area for parents to socialize while watching their kids."

Remember, identifying your own interests is just as important as identifying the interests of others. Being able to clearly communicate your own interests and listen with understanding to the interests of others can lead to unexpected breakthroughs and new common ground in the problem-solving process.

CPS: Chavis Park Community Conversation

• Public Leadership Group:
  ▪ Addressed conflicts directly and productively using CPS principles.
  ▪ Used a consensus-based decision making process.
  ▪ Built a welcoming community-of-practice among diverse stakeholders.
  ▪ Developed a revised Park master plan with full consensus.
Integrated Planning Process and Coalition Building

Northern Birmingham Community Coalition
Northern Birmingham History

“Fred [Shuttlesworth] didn’t invite us to come to Birmingham.

He told us we had to come.”

Andrew Young, Southern Christian Leadership Conference
Northern Birmingham Community
What’s included in the tool?

Planning Process


Building Capacity

2. Build an Coalition to lead implementation.

3. Shared Learning

4. Implementation

1. Project Setup & Kickoff Meeting

3. Solutions Development
Planning Process Steps

1. Identify revitalization priorities.
2. Look at what other communities have done.
3. Analyze existing conditions + dialogue with potential implementation partners.
4. Select and prioritize implementation strategies.
5. Publish *Action Plan*.
Building Capacity

- **Collaborative Problem Solving** training
- Build relationships with regional EJ leaders (Jacksonville, Spartanburg, Kansas City)
- Build relationships with local, regional and federal implementation partners (including participating with the Regional IWG focused on Northern Birmingham)
- **Telling the Story** training
- Clean Air Act Rulemaking and Permitting training
- Produced poster for EPA’s Community Air Monitoring Training
- Strengthen NBCC structure
- Raise national awareness
- Invite local implementation partners to formally join NBCC
Vision Statement

“IT IS OUR VISION THAT NORTHERN BIRMINGHAM NEIGHBORHOODS
WILL BE VIBRANT, HEALTHY COMMUNITIES
CELEBRATED FOR THEIR ROLE AS CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC TOUCHSTONES
FOR THE CITY OF BIRMINGHAM’S CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT
AND INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE.

TOGETHER THE NEIGHBORHOODS PROSPER BY SUPPORTING
JOBS, AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND RETAIL OPTIONS
AND FOSTER COMMUNITY WELL-BEING WITH ACCESS TO
COMPREHENSIVE WELLNESS AMENITIES, HEALTH SERVICES,
AND A SAFE AND CLEAN ENVIRONMENT.”
Major Milestones

• NBCC established (2013)
• NBCC achieved federal and state non-profit status (2015)
• Action Plan published (2015)
  ▪ Housing
  ▪ Commercial Revitalization
  ▪ Health
• Action Plan shared with North Birmingham Regional IWG (2015)
• NBCC working on implementation of specific Action Plan strategies with implementation partners (2016 onward)
Contact Information

Carl Simon, Blue Water Baltimore
Director of Programs
csimon@bluewaterbaltimore.org
410.254.1577 x113

Sarah Malpass, Skeo
Associate Planner
smalpass@skeo.com
434.975.6700 x242

Vernice Miller-Travis, Skeo
Senior Environmental Justice Advisor
vmiller-travis@skeo.com
301.537.2115