RESIDENT VOICES IN NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION

CHOICE NEIGHBORHOODS

PROMISING PRACTICE GUIDE

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Resident Voices in Neighborhood Revitalization introduces you to two remarkable women who are mothers, leaders, and change agents for their communities. Uzuri and Jocquelyn have different backgrounds and different stories, but what is similar about them is how the neighborhood transformation process transformed their lives too. When I met both of these women, I was struck by their boundless enthusiasm, generosity, and passion for their family, friends and community.

Working with individuals like Uzuri and Jocquelyn is critical to the success of neighborhood revitalization. Why do I think resident voices, or community engagement as we often call it, is important? For me, it is why I do this work. I never came to this work to crunch numbers or do "deals." Sure, it's hard to keep me away from the smell of sawdust, but I came to this work because, as a young person, I could not believe that in the United States we could have neighborhoods isolated from mainstream society, lacking in resources and lacking in opportunity. Thirty-five plus years later, with battle scars to show, many neighborhoods are as bad as or worse than they were when I started. What keeps me going? It's Uzuri, Jocquelyn, and so many others I have had the privilege of working with and knowing.

Even if you don't subscribe to my reason, try this one: community engagement is good business. Based on decades of experience, I can assure you that including residents as active members of the development team will lead to a smoother process and a better outcome. The redevelopment process, as we all know, is complex with many partners, interests, and demands. Without residents at the table planning and working as a part of the team, the process will bog down. There are times that developers, public housing authorities and city officials may view residents as obstacles. Residents don't trust you. They organize against you. They bring in their lawyers. Well, why should any resident trust the development process after years of living in bad housing in bad neighborhoods and often with years of broken promises?

Residents have the most at stake. It is their lives, their homes, and their neighborhoods. Should residents who want to stay in the community trust that they will ever be welcomed back if they agree to have their homes torn down? Should residents believe in all those pretty architectural drawings? It is the job of the redevelopers and public officials to gain the trust of residents and understand the value they bring to the process. Often redevelopers miss that. Many just assume that they have a good idea and should be trusted. You have to earn the trust of residents by listening, engaging in mutual problem solving and most importantly showing respect. This approach will bring out leaders like Jocquelyn and Uzuri, who both at first were highly skeptical of redevelopment. As Atticus Finch advises Scout in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, "You never really know a man until you stand in his shoes and walk around in them." Update it to substitute "person," and put yourself in the shoes of residents as you work with them. You will find that they are big shoes to fill.

BACKGROUND

HUD's Choice Neighborhoods program helps turn around struggling neighborhoods with distressed public or HUD-assisted housing through a comprehensive approach to neighborhood revitalization. Its success relies on a locally driven approach to revitalization that draws on the vision and expertise of residents, local leaders and stakeholders such as public housing authorities, city government, schools and school systems, private developers and many others to come together to formulate a plan to transform the distressed housing and the surrounding neighborhood.

Choice Neighborhoods requires that grantees have resident participation in the planning and implementation phases of their work. This participation needs to be authentic and meaningful, with residents having a voice, seats at the table, and multiple opportunities to influence decisions that affect their lives. Choice Neighborhoods recognizes that residents are experts on their community – they know their neighborhoods better than planners, developers and city officials. Thus, grantees are expected to partner with residents to reach better outcomes.

This guide tells the stories of two resident leaders from communities with distressed public housing that are undergoing or have been through a comprehensive neighborhood transformation. These leaders actively represent their neighbors, foster strong social networks and educate their peers as their communities are undergoing large-scale revitalization. In their own voices, the resident leaders profiled in this guide share insights into how they became leaders in their neighborhoods, how they have reached out to a diverse range of community members and how their voices have come to represent the priorities and perspectives of their neighbors. Their paths to leadership can serve as lessons for other community leaders and stakeholders seeking to identify, grow, and support strong resident leadership in support of neighborhood change.

A FRAMEWORK FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN NEIGHBORHOOD REVITILIZATION[1]

Robust community engagement has several benefits for communities involved in comprehensive neighborhood revitalization. It ensures that plans for change are well-informed by the expertise, priorities and experiences of residents and thus are more likely to be effective. It increases ownership of agreed-upon changes within the neighborhood because community members have a say in the decisions. Robust community engagement can also promote strong ties and relationships among neighbors, generating social networks and leadership opportunities that have immediate benefits and build neighborhood capacity to sustain change well beyond the scope of a single grant or initiative.

There is no one strategy that ensures that residents and community members are fully informed and engaged. Rather, successful community engagement usually emerges from a variety of approaches that offer residents opportunities to play important roles. The honeycomb, first developed as a framework by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, is one way of visualizing how multiple approaches to community engagement can reinforce each other. Each cell of the honeycomb represents a different approach to community engagement. Although each strategy can be used on its own, when combined the community engagement structure – as with a honeycomb – is stronger and provides the widest range of opportunities and channels through which residents can shape the future of their neighborhood.

RESIDENT LEADER SPOTLIGHT

UZURI PEASE-GREENE – SOUTH POTRERO, SAN FRANCISCO, CA

Uzuri Pease-Greene is a leader in her South Potrero neighborhood in San Francisco, and her leadership has taken many forms. She is currently a community builder with BRIDGE Housing Corporation, the lead Choice Neighborhoods planning grantee for South Potrero. For the past five years, Pease-Greene's leadership has been instrumental in ensuring strong and genuine community engagement in the neighborhood planning process.

Becoming a Resident Leader

A life-long resident of San Francisco, Pease-Greene moved to Potrero Terrace and Annex, a public housing development in South Potrero Hill, in 2001. "I had been homeless for a while," she shared. "My kids were situated with my mom and I was using and doing drugs at that time. When I was offered a spot in either Potrero Hill or Hunter's Point, I actually chose Potrero because I had never used there."

BRIDGE Housing, a nonprofit organization that develops affordable housing, came to South Potrero in 2008. "I got involved with their work because I was just starting to get clean and sober, and when you are going through that, you have to do things differently than before," Pease-Greene explained. "I had to get out of my house and not go get high, but go out and do something positive," she said. "They were also talking about redoing where we live and that really got me out to attend the meetings." She wanted to know what they planned to do, because she knew of other housing redevelopments where people were moved out and never came back. She wanted to ask about the logistics – would they be relocated and for how long, would they be coming back to something better, and understand how residents could be more involved in what was happening to them.

As BRIDGE Housing continued to convene planning meetings, Pease-Greene's participation intensified. "I started asking a lot of questions and getting involved," she said. "I think I only missed one meeting – I've been at all the rest of them."

Her active interest and participation caught the eye of a staff person from the San Francisco Housing Authority who had been in many of those meetings, and in 2010, Pease-Greene was invited to attend the HOPE SF Leadership Academy, a 15-week leadership course for public housing residents. HOPE SF is San Francisco's public housing revitalization project, transforming neighborhoods with public housing to thriving, mixed-income neighborhoods.

Pease-Greene credits that experience with "jumpstarting [her] brain as a leader." The HOPE SF Academy invited residents from each of the housing developments in the city. The Academy was lead by three women with extensive backgrounds in housing, and a solid understanding of resident engagement. "They teach you about how to talk to the developers and explain the terminology and wording that developers use. They teach you that you can question people who come in to your community and that you can challenge them and say: 'This is not going to work in this community.'"

Uzuri Pease-Greene (left) - Resident leader in San Francisco's South Potrero neighborhood

The course also gave Pease-Greene a sense that there were many people out there like her who had a strong vision for their community, and it gave her a useful network of people with whom to exchange ideas. "You find out you're not the only one who wants to do something for your community. You find out that other people have the same views, the same ideas, the same will, the same love for their community," she said. "It also means that now I am able to call somebody else from the class who lives somewhere else and say: 'How are things going over there? Can we collaborate?'"

Such formal leadership training opportunities have been essential stepping stones along Pease-Greene's journey as a resident leader. Pease-Greene also credits the National Alliance of Resident Services in Affordable and Assisted Housing's annual conference in helping her to become a stronger leader in South Potrero.

Soon after completing the leadership academy, BRIDGE Housing hired Pease-Greene as a Junior Community Builder to work with the Rebuild Potrero Community Development Director. "I started as a liaison between BRIDGE and the residents and the community members," she explained. "I helped BRIDGE get a feel for our public housing." She now helps manage the day-to-day implementation of many of the community building activities.

Enlisting Other Residents as Leaders

Pease-Greene's transition from being an active resident to having a formal role as an employee of BRIDGE Housing occurred five years ago (in 2010). She emphasizes that this gradual transition of roles had to be built on a firm foundation of trust: "It took time for me to build up trust because I used to use in Potrero Hill when I first moved here, but I got sober and now worked for BRIDGE," she said. "When I went from being a resident to also working for the developer, it was important to let the other residents understand that I still live here, and I will keep my word and make sure that BRIDGE keeps its word." For Pease-Greene, that meant paying attention to how she portrayed herself in the community and making sure she was consistent and transparent. It also meant setting boundaries and being able to say no when necessary, and being open and accepting of different views and opinions. That, along with the trust that BRIDGE staff built by being open, transparent and very honest, helped create an environment that allowed residents to believe they had their best interests in mind, and would keep clear lines of communication open at all times.

In her current role as a Community Builder, Pease-Greene supervises a range of community building activities in the neighborhood. Many of these, including a Zumba class and the Living Sober club, enlist community volunteers and help build strong social networks among residents. Pease-Greene and BRIDGE host activities that are of clear interest to residents and are guided by residents' priorities. By having consistent, reliable and welcoming community activities, Pease-Greene and her colleagues have discovered that residents become comfortable with the "space for engagement." Feeling comfortable in turn empowers people to step into leadership roles. As an example, Pease-Greene cites the growth of leadership from the healthy living activities: "From these activities, I've seen a lot of natural leaders emerge. I had one resident come forward and offer to run the walking club while I was traveling, not because he wanted to get paid but because it was something he liked to do and he wanted to help," she said. "That's something our community has never seen before."

Connecting to a diverse range of community leaders

The South Potrero neighborhood is also part of a larger area called Potrero Hill. Situated on the southern side of Potrero Hill, the 2.5 square mile area is dominated by the Potrero Terrace and Annex public housing developments and has an average family income of $14,000 per year. The northern side of the Hill, on the other hand, experienced gentrification nearly two decades ago and has an average median household income of $131,000. Within this context, South Potrero's community engagement activities often bring the residents of the two sides of Potrero Hill together. This means Pease-Greene is constantly connecting to community members and leaders who live in Potrero Hill but are not residents of public housing. "I've connected with community leaders from the northern part of Potrero Hill a lot," Pease-Greene said. "I've met them at the Potrero Hill festival that is held every year and through meetings of our Community Building Group, which brings together residents and community members to provide input in to our neighborhood plans."

FIGURE 1

RESIDENT LEADERSHIP TRAININGS

Participating in formal resident leadership training opportunities has been an important part of Uzuri Pease-Greene's development as a resident leader. Below are a few of the opportunities that she's identified as valuable:

- HOPE SF's Leadership Academy offers essential training, information and techniques to engage residents in community revitalization processes, teaches residents how to inform the broader community, and introduces residents to the key staff, agencies and organizations working on HOPE SF.

Additional information is available on their website: **http://www.hope-sf.org/hope-sf-academy.php**.

- Pease-Greene has attended the annual National Alliance of Resident Services in Affordable and Assisted Housing Conference several times and said, "the conference is like a booster shot that you get to be uplifted again." Over three days, participants attend workshops, hear legislative updates, and participate in capacity building activities and networking events. Pease-Greene explained that the conference also gave her valuable information directly from HUD that she could share with her neighbors. "I had one neighbor who was going to be evicted but because I had been to the NAR-SAAH conference and knew the latest rules for public housing residents from HUD, I was able to educate her and she talked to the housing manager and ended up being able to stay."

For more information on NAR-SAAH, visit their website at: **http://www.narsaah.com.**

But she also noted the importance their team places on building and growing a diverse set of leaders within public housing residents living in Potrero Terrace and Annex. "It's a diverse community," she said, describing her neighbors. "I have a Filipino lady next door, a Latino family downstairs and in the middle there's an Asian family, an African American and a Samoan family."

"One of the things that we've done to help build the leadership qualities of a diverse range of residents is offering translation at the activities." Pease-Greene said. "We have professional Cantonese and Spanish translators at our Sober Living and gardening classes, and at Community Building Group meetings. It shows them they are not only welcome, but really valued as part of the community."

Pease-Greene noted the importance of involving young people in the community-building activities and making sure to foster the next generation of community leaders. "Young people will be next in line," she said. "The HOPE SF Leadership Academy had a class for youth leaders, and that was important to ensure that they have the skills to lead too," she said.

Uzuri Pease-Greene's leadership in South Potrero is not only as a decision-maker and resident representative who is at the table with developers and other stakeholders seeking to transform her community. Her resident leadership focuses on building the spirit of community and fostering social ties and social networks among people who are her neighbors. Her leadership ripples throughout the community and draws in a range of residents and community members to be a part of "their" community – a community whose social capital is growing as the neighborhood transformation process moves forward.

FIGURE 2

WHAT IS A COMMUNITY BUILDER?

Uzuri Pease-Greene joined BRIDGE Housing as a Junior Community Builder. Such paid staff positions or resident leadership roles that offer stipends can be opportunities to both foster leadership development and to utilize a resident employee as a natural bridge between residents and the service providers or developers.

In South Potrero, the Junior Community Builder job is to:

- Engage residents in the community building initiative
- Maintain a communications database
- Develop, plan and implement community building events and programs
- Oversee outreach and grassroots efforts
- Participate in ongoing community building programs and activities
- Work with other local stakeholders, including the City Agencies to better serve Potrero residents

Visit http://hope-sf.org/community-builders.php to access the full Community Builder job description.

COMMUNITY BUILDING ACTIVITIES

AND THE COMMUNITY BUILDING GROUP

BRIDGE's community-building model called Trauma Informed Community Building[2] started small and simple, with a walking club. As Pease-Greene described it, "the walking club is just that. It started with me and Emily [Weinstein from BRIDGE] walking with bright pink flyers. We wanted to do something that people could see and get people engaged to slowly change their psyche. So, it was just me and her and then we'd get people to join. Now you get 15-20 people at a time. Some people never spoke. Now people are speaking with each other and hanging out with each other. Their fear is leaving them."

Community-building activities in South Potrero have expanded in response to community demand. Now, residents participate in garden workshops and workdays at two community gardens. The Healthy Living Program that evolved out of the walking club now also hosts meditation, cooking classes and a Sober Living Group. The Healthy Generations Project has families coming together for a parent-child dinner, play and reading groups, and also has a daily walking school bus, where community grown-ups accompany groups of children to get them safely to school.[3]

Other community-building activities respond directly to the need to connect the housing development with the surrounding neighborhood. Several times a year, neighbors from the larger community join Potrero Terrace and Annex residents at Unite Potrero community-wide events. These fun, casual events – organized and implemented by committees of public housing residents, North and South Potrero residents and other Potrero stakeholders – are designed to build social cohesion and shared understanding as people build relationships across the neighborhood.

To establish consistency, reliability, and trustworthiness, BRIDGE uses a simple tool: a monthly calendar. This calendar looks basic but serves as "almost a contract with residents." Pease-Greene talks of the importance of "being consistent and making sure it's sustainable...People don't have to figure out is it going to happen or is it not going to happen. It's on the calendar... nobody has to guess. That in itself has shown people that it happened last month, and it's happening this month, so it really is going to continue to happen. That right there means a lot to residents." These simple, reliable ways to communicate are an important building block for trust and mutual accountability.

And over time, BRIDGE has seen engagement in these activities lead to engagement in planning and implementing neighborhood change. The Rebuild Potrero Community Building Group embodies this change: this group of residents, community members and stakeholders come together every other month to share a meal, celebrate successes and provide ongoing feedback to the Rebuild Potrero Transformation Plan. The group has changed the expectation, both of residents and of systems, about how community engagement will take place. The approach has shown that change can happen by inviting system actors to the community structure rather than the usual approach of inviting residents to an institutional process. The Community Building Group is now in high demand from institutional stakeholders looking for resident input. A concrete example: when transportation planners wanted resident input on new pedestrian routes, they were invited to walk with the walking school bus leaders – rather than asked to come to an institutional meeting – which then informed the new routes.

Jocquelyn Marshall -
Resident leader in the Harmony Oaks neighborhood of New Orleans

RESIDENT LEADER SPOTLIGHT

JOCQUELYN MARSHALL – NEW ORLEANS, LA

Jocquelyn Marshall is now an Associate Project Manager at Urban Strategies, Inc., a national nonprofit that coordinates human services supports in public housing communities that are undergoing comprehensive physical revitalization, and she is a small business owner. She is also a long-time resident of the Harmony Oaks neighborhood in New Orleans, formerly known as the C.J. Peete housing development, which was redeveloped after Hurricane Katrina as part of the HOPE VI program.[4]

Becoming a Resident Leader

Marshall's journey to become an experienced resident leader started when she was only four years old, when her family moved into C.J. Peete. She would spend her childhood growing up and learning the nuances of living in a public housing community. Marshall left C.J. Peete when she finished high school and returned to take care of her mother, who was ill. Seeking a better life for her family, Marshall began taking entrepreneurship classes sponsored by Tulane University at the neighborhood community center. These classes exposed Marshall to other programs and events in her community. When her mother passed away, she remained on the lease, and continued her community involvement, hearing residents concerns and challenges. That eventually led her to attend a resident council meeting, where Marshall realized that many other residents also had a plethora of valid concerns. The attendees at the council meetings were not only C.J. Peete housing residents, but community stakeholders, school representatives, and those living nearby C.J. Peete, who considered it their home as well. She began to attend the council meetings regularly and became an active resident voice.

Marshall was encouraged when she learned there was a process in place to address residents' concerns and create change in her neighborhood. However, she became frustrated when she noticed the resident council would often not acknowledge all of the community concerns. Many of the leaders on the council had been there a long time, and were used to doing things a certain way. Although they might have shared the concerns being raised, they weren't willing to engage new voices to help address the problems. Marshall was adamant about getting the voices of more residents heard, so despite her frustration with the current leadership, she began her own activism and became an informal neighborhood messenger.

As a messenger, she started to engage in more outreach by speaking to residents to identify the needs and concerns of the overall community, and became the bridge to fill the gap between what the council leadership was focusing on, and what the general membership wanted addressed. Her goal was to connect community members to programs, resources and community change efforts that could be helpful resources. Marshall's role as a community leader quickly evolved and expanded, and soon led to her election to the resident council.

The Importance of Resident Representation and Community Organizing

Marshall stressed the importance of building trust when she joined the resident council. She explains that in many low-income communities with public or HUD-assisted housing, there often exists a deep-seeded mistrust from long histories of racism,

disinvestment, and conflict. "In the past resident leaders have been lied to," she explains. "When anybody comes in to the community, residents shy away because time has told us over and over again that we can't trust outside individuals to have our best interest at heart." Marshall's experience as a resident council member gave her the opportunity to rebuild trust between her community and local and other stakeholders.

Reversing perceptions colored by a history of mistrust can take time and effort but her experience at Harmony Oaks has shown that authentic engagement with residents, when it includes full transparency and accountability, pays off. The resident council implemented several changes to achieve this, including adopting Roberts Rules of Order to run meetings, conducting annual audits of the financial system, and sharing meeting minutes with the community. It helped everyone have more of an opportunity to participate, and be equipped with the knowledge about the resources that were coming in and going out.

Eventually, Marshall became the president of the resident council, which allowed her to prioritize direct resident engagement, uplift the importance of resident representation and further the community organizing efforts taking place during the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. She worked with leaders to ensure many perspectives were heard, and let the community shape the direction the council should go in and identify their priorities.

Marshall was the only elected resident council member that chose to return to the neighborhood after Hurricane Katrina shook the Harmony Oaks neighborhood and the larger city of New Orleans. "I felt it was my responsibility to get the resident council up and running again." Marshall went on to say, "after Katrina, it was a do or die situation, I really put myself out there and held myself accountable to the residents."

In the aftermath of the hurricane, the residents who returned found C.J. Peete locked, and the plans that had been underway for redevelopment had been accelerated due to the damage from Katrina. A housing developer, McCormack Baron Salazar and community and supportive services lead, Urban Strategies, had been selected to transform the C.J. Peete public housing site, and the mayor of New Orleans required a memorandum of understanding between the revitalization team and the resident council for how they could work together on the redevelopment of the neighborhood. Many residents, including Marshall, were initially opposed to the redevelopment plans, because they felt they were not involved enough in the beginning of the process, including the selection of the development team. Most wanted to return after the hurricane, but they wanted to return to something better than they'd left behind, making their input in the entire process critical to its success.

Marshall stated, "McCormack came to us and said they 'had some non-negotiables,' and the resident engagement council responded by saying we have some non-negotiables also." This MOU negotiation process allowed the reinvigorated resident council to have strong representation and be equal partners in planning the physical revitalization of the neighborhood. It was an important way for residents who had scattered after Katrina to stay connected, and required a lot of time and effort by Marshall and the resident council leadership to track them down and stay in touch with them on a regular basis.

The partnership with the development team also provided a rare opportunity to explore innovative ways to increase direct engagement through building the knowledge and skills of the residents. Marshall was instrumental in leading the resident council as equal partners in deciding the future of Harmony Oaks. "We made sure that we were organized. It was crucial for us to be at the table when the development firms made decisions. When I use the word 'organized' I mean that we educated the residents on their rights and held learning sessions about the various processes that were to take place in the community, and we played a crucial role in bringing the residents together to understand the relocation process."

Building Resident Leadership through Training and Capacity Building

Marshall currently provides assistance on community engagement and resident leadership to communities across the country as they embark on transformations of their own. She does this in two ways: leading efforts through her work with Urban Strategies and at her own consulting company, TMC Global Network Consulting Network, through which she provides leadership training, using her own resident leadership curriculum, "21st Century Community Leader: Transforming Minds and Communities." She has a forthcoming book, which will serve as a guide to community redevelopment through the eyes of a resident leader.

"When you have lived in an environment most of your life, you come to know exactly what works and what does not work," she explained. Experience is the best teacher but one can teach additional skills through the resident training process. These training and development practices turn experienced community members into trained resident leaders, prepared with the vocabulary and tools to advance the desires of their community.

When assisting communities, Marshall often explains that neighborhood transformation is achieved when residents are "directly engaged and organized." Direct engagement can include training residents on leadership strategies that build their capacity to advocate on their own behalf. It can also include providing skill building for strategic planning, data analysis, policy advocacy, and

being comfortable using their power as experts of their own lives. Marshall acknowledges that sometimes it takes an investment in the training and support of resident leaders to have an equal voice and to make sure the capacity for leadership in the community is sustained through the final stages of redevelopment and beyond. "Resident leaders have to be trained. And over the course of time, resident leaders who have been in place for many years have to embrace the concept of inviting individuals from the younger generation on. You want to create a legacy and you want to pass that torch. It's basically getting the proper training to have those individuals come on board not only on the resident council board but you also need to involve the youth via a youth council. Many of the decisions that are affecting the communities are youth oriented and you want the youth to be at the table and be a part of that process."

Resident Leaders Must Facilitate the Change Process

Marshall says that there is one word that best describes the experience of revitalization in a community: change. Community members have to deal with change in three stages:

(1) embracing change

(2) learning to adapt to change

(3) making change work

At each of these three stages, community engagement strategies have to respond to where residents and community members are at the time. More importantly, these three stages must involve resident leaders and allow them to facilitate the change process in their communities. Marshall knows that issues around race, displacement and gentrification are inevitable but sees having strong resident and community engagement as a tool to bridge those issues and begin to prepare residents for change. "It's all about education at every stage," she says. "Change is going to happen and [you have to] prepare people to adapt. You have to accept the differences in one another. You have to celebrate each other's differences. We created an annual calendar of community building activities, which is inclusive of all cultures, all economic backgrounds."

Today, Marshall remains a resident of the Harmony Oaks community and continues to develop the 21st century community leadership training. When she enters into communities that are just starting their transformation process, she emphasizes the importance of starting early with community engagement and getting residents involved from the very beginning. "If you want residents to be a part of the process, don't wait until you have sat down with the housing authority and have already made the decisions about how you are going to execute change. No decision about the community should be made without the residents being a part of the process."

FIGURE 3

BUILDING INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

After mixed-income housing is built, residents must navigate an environment in which there are often differences in cultures and norms. At the Choice Neighborhoods Conference in June 2014, Marshall and her colleague Esther Shin, Vice President of Urban Strategies, emphasized the need to recognize these dynamics and intentionally plan for inclusive mixed-income communities.

Using their experience from the Harmony Oaks HOPE VI project, they outlined three phases of developing inclusive communities:

1 BEGINNING

Create the community vision and plan with residents and other community members. Be selective when choosing speakers to present sensitive issues, and use terms that everyone will understand.

2 DURING

Work closely with the community throughout the entire planning and implementation process. Provide leadership training that addresses leaders' capacity to function within a mixed-income setting. Prepare residents and community members for life after redevelopment by providing appropriate social service supports and transforming community perceptions. Develop site management policies that represent compromises between different cultures and norms.

3 AFTER

Build cohesion among neighbors by transitioning the Resident Council to a Neighborhood Association, allowing the public and assisted housing residents to decide how they will be represented. Maintain transparency through consistent meetings, engage in outreach, and create ongoing community-building activities.

In New Orleans, it was hard work to transition to a mixed-income community, but that work paid off. Residents and other community members challenged their misperceptions of each other and worked with developers to establish rules for the new developments. They also created a neighborhood association that includes board positions specifically for market rate, public housing, and tax credit resident representatives.

LESSONS TO BE LEARNED

Uzuri Pease-Greene and Jocquelyn Marshall's paths to resident leadership offer several valuable lessons to established and emerging resident leaders and their partners in Choice Neighborhoods:

- **Encourage diverse members of the community to enter into leadership roles through targeted activities and strategies.** Expanding the range of participants in community engagement activities and resident leadership is essential to ensuring that voices from the entire community are heard and represented in the process of shaping the neighborhood's future. This often requires targeted efforts to make residents of various ethnic, racial, religious, gender, and age groups welcome in community engagement activities. In Potrero Hill, Pease-Greene and her team ensure that there are translators at every community meeting and at many of their community building activities, and both Pease-Greene and Marshall emphasize the importance of youth advisory boards and trainings that specifically engage young people in activities and meetings.

- **Offer resident leaders a number of different opportunities for training and professional development at all stages of the transformation process.** As evidenced by Marshall and Pease-Greene's stories, residents become leaders through a number of different channels. Pease-Greene developed as a resident leader by attending a formal HOPE SF leadership academy and then becoming an employee of BRIDGE Housing. Other residents in her community have stepped into leadership roles as volunteers after attending a number of community-building events. Marshall evolved as a resident leader by being elected to represent her fellow residents. It is important to offer residents many different types of opportunities to become involved in community engagement activities, whether they be as volunteers, elected representatives, employees of the housing authority or service provider or trainees in a leadership training academy.

- **Build the capacity of resident leaders to represent their neighbors and to ensure longer-term sustainability of community engagement efforts.** It is essential that resident leaders are given support and training over time to build their own skills, as well as encourage the next generation of leaders to carry the torch. Pease-Greene's training in the HOPE SF Leadership Academy allowed her to better advocate for her neighbors by equipping her with the terminology around housing development. Marshall advocates for formal training on policy advocacy and community organizing to empower residents as decision makers in their communities. Equipping resident leaders with the capacity to lead their own community-building activities and civic bodies also allows the engagement activities to be sustained well beyond the scope of any one grant or program. Resident leaders continue to invite new residents to participate in the ongoing activities and programs, bringing up the next generation of resident leadership.

CONCLUSION

Residents are the anchors of their community, and in HUD-assisted housing communities they are critical partners for neighborhood transformation. From understanding the transformation and development process to giving voice to resident priorities, to developing their own capacity as leaders and participants in the transformation, their inclusion is essential. Jocquelyn Marshall and Uzuri Pease-Greene represent only two of the numerous stories of resident leaders in Choice Neighborhoods. The lessons raised here can inform current resident engagement efforts in Choice Neighborhoods across the country and in other communities planning and implementing neighborhood revitalization.

ENDNOTES

1. "Sustaining Neighborhood Change: The Power of Resident Leadership, Social Networks, and Community Mobilization" can be found online at http://www.cssp.org/publications/neighborhood-investment/making-connections/making-connections-sustaining-neighborhood-change.pdf.

2. "Trauma Informed Community Building: A Model for Strengthening Community in Trauma Affected Neighborhoods." http://bridgehousing.com/PDFs/TICB.Paper5.14.pdf

3. You can learn more about BRIDGE Housing's community building approach by reading BRIDGE's paper at http://bridgehousing.com/PDFs/TICB.Paper5.14.pdf and by visiting Rebuild Potrero's website at http://www.rebuildpotrero.com.

4. For more information about CJ Peete's transition to Harmony Oaks, see the National Housing Institute's paper "The Long Road from CJ Peete to Harmony Oaks." Available online at: http://www.nhi.org/index.php/research/harmony_oaks/.

5. Photo credits of South Potrero Community Building Group meeting: Peter Linenthal

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Washington, DC

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