



NEIGHBORHOOD
INSTITUTE

Spring 2008

January 22 – April 15, 2008

Asset Based Community Development

Asset – n. property that has a market value; anything useful or appealing

Base – n. a foundation; a starting point

Community – n. society in general; those who share a common interest

Development – n. a community where numerous dwellings are located

Community Development is the process by which local capacities are identified and mobilized. This mobilization mainly involves connecting people with capacities to:

- Other people
- Local associations
- Local businesses
- Local institutions
- Capital and credit

Therefore, growing community power requires local groups focus upon connecting people's capacities so they can be useful.

Steps to Asset Based Community Development:

- Step 1: Capacity Inventory
- Step 2: Connecting Capacity Inventory
- Step 3: Community Inventory
- Step 4: Connecting Community Inventory
- Step 5: Mapping Your Neighborhood Assets to Discover Potential Partners

Source: Kretzmann, John P. & McKnight, John L. "Building Communities From the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets"; 1993: ACTA Publications, Chicago.



Asset Based Community Development

- Releasing Individual Capacities
- Connecting Capacity Inventory
- Rediscovering Assets within your community
- Community Inventory

PART 1

Using our own list of individual capacity inventories, work together to form:

- A Service
- A Company
- A Project

With the skills listed from your class members.

PART 2

Each table will have an area of individual interest for your neighborhood; using the same capacity inventories address the opportunities to serve a particular group within your neighborhood.

Groups within Neighborhoods:

Youth – Seniors – Local Artist – Disabled Individuals – Low Income Workers

GROUPS:

YOUTH – Determine a service, a company and a project for this group.

Examples; Fifth and sixth graders who took part in an innovative curriculum at their school walked around their neighborhood to learn about the buildings and the process of community planning. When



officials of their town proposed razing an old barn to build a parking lot, these students went to City Hall armed with information that they had gathered as to why this should not be done.

A group of enterprising youth explored the vacant lot in their neighborhood in search of discarded wood, as a result of “mapping” their local resources, this group now has very successful firewood venture and has build ongoing relationships with several businesses.

SENIORS – Determine a service, a company and a project for this group. Examples: A group of seniors worked with a neighborhood association to secure a loan from a local community development credit union in order to open a consignment shop administrated and staffed entirely by seniors. High school students who are members of a local congregation establish an adoption program with seniors who are living in the affordable housing, which was created by the church’s development corporation.

LOCAL ARTIST – Determine a service, company and project for this group. Examples: A symphony orchestra is given free space at a local church for rehearsal, and in return member of the congregation enjoy the symphony during occasional worship service and are allowed to attend full performance free of charge. A community art gallery had more works of art than it could put on display and in the neighborhood park one of the buildings had a large unoccupied room. As a result the park agreed to let the gallery use this spare room for additional display space. Now the park has a cultural display area, which is available to the public and discovers that more people now visit the park to see this display that might never otherwise have had a reason to use the park facilities. At the same time, the art gallery gets more display space and the artists that this gallery represents get broader and longer lasting exposure for their work.

DISABLED INDIVIDUALS - Determine a service, company and project for this group. Examples: Linda lives in a state institution and hates it. Linda’s mother, Maria asked the neighborhood organization for help. When it was discovered that Linda loves animals, the organization arranged to have Linda spend some time each week at a well-known local pet store. As she continued to work at the pet store for 4 consecutive months without any aggressive behavior, Linda was allowed to leave the institution.



LOW-INCOME WORKERS - Determine a service, company and project for this group. Examples: A woman and her cousin open a dress shop as the culmination of a shared childhood dream of turning their sewing abilities into a business. A mother and daughter team start a small catering truck business to sell their homemade Mexican food around their community.

PART 3

Connecting Capacity Information

In many communities the natural ways of the local people and their associations and institutions constantly connect local capacities.

For example:

Neighborhoods have a tradition of helping each other by trading their skills. Mary repairs a dress while Sue watches her children.

A local association of religious men combines their construction skills and builds a community center

A neighborhood school involved the local students in using the environmental knowledge they've gained to do a study for city council of whether a local pond is polluted.

In addition to these natural developments, other communities have intentionally used tools like the Capacity Inventory to identify local citizen talents. Then these groups have become active in making the necessary connections to mobilize the capacities. Some examples:

A neighborhood organization interviewed over 100 local residents and found many women who had worked in hospitals, hotels or cared for sick and elderly people. Many of these women had families and were unemployed. They wanted to work part time. The association brought them together and they formed a "company" to sell their services as home health care providers. There was great demand for their services and over 80 women were connected to neighbors needing community care. This connection met a community need and increased the income of the women.



A group of residents of a public housing project organized and became powerful enough to gain control of their buildings. Their association took over the management and finances of the project. As a result they were able to employ residents to carry out the maintenance functions such as painting rooms, fixing broken windows, running a Laundromat, etc. In order to exercise their new-found power they needed to know which residents had the necessary skills to do the work of maintenance and management. They used a Capacity Inventory to gather this information and their association connected residents to the new job opportunities that improved the quality of the local buildings.

A local association in a neighborhood collected information from local residents regarding skills that could be used at a job. Then they did an inventory of the kinds of jobs available at all local employers. They then created a brokerage effort connecting people with skills to employers need skills.

It is significant to note 2 common characteristics of each of these efforts. First, a local group acted as CONNECTOR. Second, the local group took people as they were and mobilized their existing capacities. They did not start with the idea that the local people needed to be trained, educated or treated. Instead, they started with the idea that capacities were there and that the community-building task was to:

Identify capacities

Connect them to people, groups and places that can use the capacities.

NEXT WEEK: Bring back 3 examples of Neighborhood Connections in your neighborhood, formal and/or informal



TAKE-HOME ASSIGNMENT:

Bring back 3 examples of Neighborhood Connections in your neighborhood, formal and/or informal.

1.

2.

3.