

## **AN INTRODUCTION TO COM – DEV.**

Community development is a complex and interdisciplinary field of study – one that is boundary spanning in its scope and multidimensional in its applications.

Why is this? It's because community development not only concerns the physical realm of community, but also the social, cultural, economic, political and environmental aspects as well. Evolving from an original needs-based emphasis to one that is more inclusive and asset-based, community development is a now a distinct and recognized field of study. Today, scholars and practitioners of community development are better equipped to respond to the challenges facing communities and regions. Because its applications are wide-ranging yet always aimed at improving quality of life, it is important to understand the underlying foundations and theory of community development as well as the variety of strategies and tools used to achieve desired outcomes. This text seeks to address the challenging and exciting facets of community development by presenting a variety of essential and important topics to help students understand its complexities. The lecture points represent perspectives from both academe and practice, reflecting the applied nature of the discipline. Importantly, this book emphasizes the strong link between community development and economic development which is all too often overlooked in the literature. We believe a discussion of one is incomplete without a discussion of the other.

Hopefully, this book will serve to more closely align the study and practice of these two inextricably related disciplines. This text is presented in the spirit of community development as planned efforts to improve quality of life. With this goal in mind, we will split these lessons to several sub-lessons covering a range of issues have been selected and organized into four major categories:

- (1) foundations;
- (2) preparation and planning;
- (3) programming techniques and strategies, and
- (4) issues impacting community development.

**Part I:** Foundations, provides an introduction and overview of the discipline as well as its underlying premises. In this Section we present the basic concepts and definitions of community development and how it relates to economic development, a central theme Unit. We will also study a variety of ideas from different fields into a theoretical underpinning for community development. This unit will offer seven contextual perspectives that provide

this theoretical core: organizations, power relationships, shared meanings, relationship building, choice making, conflicts, and integration of paradoxes. In this lesson, we will focus on the concept of capacity building, both inside and outside the community. We will explain the value of adopting an asset-based approach, and how it is dramatically different from the needs-based approaches of the past. You will understand how social capital (or capacity) lies at the heart of community development. Analogous to other forms of capital, social capital constitutes a resource that may be used by communities to guide outcomes. We'll outline the foundation of processes and applications introducing students to community development as a practice.

**Part II:** Preparation and planning, covers the variety of ways in which communities organize assess, and plan for community development. In this section the student will go through the process of establishing goals and a vision for the future – essential activities for success in community development. Without this foundation, it is difficult to accomplish the desired outcomes. Will further addresses the all-important question, “How should we be organized?” West outlines different types of community-based organizations and their structures, and shows examples in practice. Topics discussed will touch on the need for communities to effectively integrate

skill development into their activities. The premise is that great leadership leads to the most desirable community development outcomes and provides a broad perspective on the total community assessment process. It discusses comprehensive assessments and the areas that should be considered, including a community's physical, social and human infrastructure and capital. The reason topics to be discussed later is being discussed is because this will allow us to prepare forehand before getting in to it. Further, information on techniques such as asset inventories, identifying potential partners and collaborators, various survey instruments and data collection methods will also be expanded. The part of the lesson in this section, we will discuss how to assess the underlying strengths and weaknesses of the local economy. It provides an overview of economic impact analysis and how it may be used to allocate scarce community financial resources.

**Part III:** Programming techniques and strategies, gives several specific application areas for community development and how these areas may be approached. We'll address the vital question of how to develop a quality workforce in the community. It provides examples of initiatives that communities have used to address this need. The last section provides an overview of how to attract new businesses into a community and expand and retain businesses already there in order to strengthen the local economy.

Creating recognition for the community and identifying the appropriate target audience. We will explain the importance of focusing on businesses already present in communities. An existing business program can help communities in many direct and indirect ways and is often more effective in job creation than other approaches. The issue of entrepreneurship as a community development strategy as a vital component driving economic growth and job creation will be shown in clear examples. The fundamentals for implementing a strategy of supporting entrepreneurs and creating a nurturing environment will be outlined. There are ways in which communities can tap into the lucrative and growing tourism industry. These together with a variety of models and approaches will be reviewed. We will provide a basic understanding of how the housing typology, density and affordability affect housing and community development. In further, we will take a look at the model of participatory neighborhood planning. This model seeks to improve quality of life with comprehensive revitalization strategies grounded in an asset-based approach. Our final contribution to this part, begins with the premise that progress evaluation is not only challenging but vital, and organizations must be able to assess and demonstrate the value and outcome of their activities. Specific types of evaluation are introduced in the context of practical application.

**Part IV:** Issues impacting community development, focuses on a few of the many and diverse issues relevant to community development theory and practice. This will be an overview and explanation of the different types of community development financing from public and private sources. It includes definitions of key terms as well as ideas on structuring funding partnerships. We will give information on how to research and write grant proposals. Grants are a major component of funding for many community development organizations and this specific unit provides ideas for improving the chances of garnering successful funding. The next lecture begins with an overview of the increasing interconnectedness of the global economy. It continues with a discussion of the impacts of globalization on community development and strategies on how to respond. We will provide a basic background on the concept of sustainability and how it applies to both the theory and practice of community development. Will give examples of strategies that may be implemented to help increase sustainable approaches. The final unit offers some concluding observations on issues covered lecture, and discusses the important role of community development in helping shape the future of our society. As stated at the outset, community development is indeed a complex and interdisciplinary field, as evidenced by the breadth and scope of the units presented. We

encourage students of community development to embrace the “ethos” of the community development discipline as one that focuses on creating better places to live and work and increasing quality of life for all.