

# Social capital and community building

Social capital or capacity lies at the heart of community development. If citizens cannot plan and work together effectively and inclusively, then substantial proactive community progress will be limited. This Lecture discusses community social capacity and how it relates to community development. Based on an extensive review of previous studies, the lecture lists and categorizes factors that affect the likelihood that community building efforts can succeed to increase the social capacity of geographically defined communities.

## **Introduction**

The opening Lecture distinguished social capital (sometimes called social capacity) from human, physical, financial, and environmental capital. All of these constitute resources that communities need to function. The extent to which communities have these forms of capital influences their ability to accomplish tasks and to develop themselves. Development of a community includes, in part, the building of its social capacity. Conversely, the level of a community's social capacity both influences the way development evolves for that specific community and the pace at which its development efforts can occur. The opening Lecture of this unit defined social capacity and social capital. It explained how the social capital of

communities relates to the process of community development, both as an antecedent that predisposes a community to further development in the community development chain” and, as a consequence, a feature of the community that increases as a result of community development. The discussion in this lecture places emphasis on social relationships embedded within, and distributed throughout, a community. Individuals can amass social capital, as well as other forms of capital. They can have strong ties to social networks that enable them to do things for themselves. However, unless the social capital that they possess becomes a resource available to and used by the entire community, it has little or no direct effect upon that community’s development.

### **Social capital: what is it?**

Lecture 1 provided some definitions of social capital. In the simplest sense, what comprises the core of these definitions are “social networks and the associated norms of reciprocity”. Analogous to other forms of capital (e.g., financial, human), social capital constitutes a resource. It provides value to individuals and can also benefit communities. It has effects, often called “externalities,” in economics literature. No single definition has achieved universal acceptance though eventually a common standard may emerge. Most definitions stress interconnections among people or social networks. Early definitions tended to place emphasis on how individuals could use social relationships as a resource to

accomplish goals; they did not add a community dimension to the definition. More recent definitions tend to recognize the distinction between social capital at the individual level and social capital at the community level. Social capital or capacity lies at the heart of community development. If citizens cannot plan and work together effectively and inclusively, then substantial proactive community progress will be limited. This lecture discusses community social capacity and how it relates to community development. Based on an extensive review of previous studies, the lecture lists and categorizes factors that affect the likelihood that community building efforts can succeed to increase the social capacity of geographically defined communities. Bourdieu's (1986) early definition, for example, focused on individuals:

*Social capital is an attribute of an individual in a social context. One can acquire social capital through purposeful actions and can transform that capital into conventional economic gains.*

The ability to do so, however, depends on the nature of the social obligations, connections, and networks available to you. In this tradition, social capital “describes circumstances in which individuals can use membership in groups and networks to secure benefits.” Eventually, however, social scientists began to realize that social capital in the control of individuals, but not shared with others in the same community, did not fit into the “community development chain”

illustrated in lecture 1. It does not necessarily produce community social capacity that affects the ability of the community to develop. In fact, individuals who have such capital can even use it to the detriment of their own or other communities.

Consider, for example:

- A gang or a network of organized criminals that lives and operates within a community but uses its close interconnections to commit crimes and to engage in acts that detract from the livability of the community.
- Wealthy elite residents of a small city in a developing country who separate themselves from others in the population, maintain social and business connections with individuals and organizations in other locations, and channel their financial wealth to places outside the country.
- In a financially struggling United States city, a gated cluster of town homes for high-wealth residents who don't engage in ongoing relationships with the local population and who invest most of their money elsewhere. In all the above cases, social capital, not to mention financial capital, exists within a geographically defined area. However, that capital produces few, if any, benefits for the community as a whole. In fact, those who have such capital may actually use it to exploit others in the same locality. A "map" of the social interconnections within any of the communities in the above examples would reveal one or both of the following:

- Individuals with no ties to other individuals in the community but to those outside the community. For example, many of the wealthy members of the developing society, such as residents of the gated community, may have strong ties with business and social associates in locations throughout the world.
- Highly cohesive social networks among one or more subsets of the community, with no strong ties between any of these networks. For example, members of criminal gangs may maintain strong ties with one another or wealthy elite residents in an area may do the same. Recognition of the distinction between individual social capital and community social capital (or community social capacity) does not negate the importance of individual social capital. An individual's social capital provides an important resource for the individual; it has real effects. However, unless amalgamated with the social capital of others in the same community, it does not necessarily produce benefits for that community. As noted in lecture 1, "bonding" capital ties individuals to others like themselves (race, economic status, nationality); "bridging" capital ties individuals to a diverse set of others, some like themselves, some not.

**Community social capacity: what is it?**

Community social capacity is: "The extent to which members of a community can work together effectively." This includes the abilities to: develop and sustain strong relationships; solve problems and make group decisions; and collaborate

effectively to identify goals and get work done. Communities with high community social capacity can identify their needs; establish priorities and goals; develop plans, of which the members of that community consider themselves “owners”; allocate resources to carry out those plans; and carry out the joint work necessary to achieve goals. The term “community social capacity” applies holistically to an entire community. It is an attribute of a community, not of any specific members. The level of community social capacity depends upon the number and strength of ties or bonds that community members have with one another. Thus, it is a form of social capital – since it involves “social networks and norms of reciprocity” – but it distinctly involves interconnections among people who reside in the same community (defined by geographic location). If people who live within the same geographic area do not know one another and have little contact with one another, the likelihood is low that they can get together to define community goals or respond productively with one voice to a community issue. Their community social capacity is low. On the other hand, if people who live within the same geographic area do know one another, share a large number of social ties, and feel a commitment to the place where they live, then community social capacity is high.

### **How does community social capacity influence development?**

The importance of community social capacity is vital for community vitality. Deep

and heterogeneous social relationships seem to enable communities to thrive; barriers imposed upon these relationships seem to lead to community deterioration. The level of community social capacity (or community social capital) influences community development in two broad ways: structural and cognitive. Structurally, interconnections among people within a community create a web of social networks. These networks facilitate community development by enabling the flow of information, ideas, products, and services among residents. Cognitively, interconnections create a shared sense of purpose, increase commitment, promote mutual trust, and strengthen norms of reciprocity among community residents.

### **Intentional action to increase social capacity**

Communities often recognize the need to increase their social capacity and take steps to do so in a community-building process. A brief definition of community building is: “Any identifiable set of activities pursued by a community in order to increase community social capacity.” The elements of community building come across in a longer definition from a review of comprehensive community initiatives. Fundamentally, community building concerns strengthening the capacity of neighborhood residents, associations, and organizations to work, individually and collectively, to foster and sustain positive neighborhood change. For individuals, community building focuses on both the capacity and

“empowerment” of neighborhood residents to identify and access opportunities and effect change, as well as on the development of individual leadership. For associations, community building focuses on the nature, strength, and scope of relationships (both affective and instrumental) among individuals within the neighborhood and through them, connections to networks of association beyond the neighborhood. These are ties through kinship, acquaintance or other more formal means through which information, resources, and assistance can be received and delivered. Finally, for organizations, community building centers on developing the capacity of formal and informal institutions within the neighborhood to provide goods and services effectively, and on the relationships among organizations both within and beyond the neighborhood to maximize resources and coordinate strategies. Community organizing can support community building. It refers to the process of bringing community members together and providing them with the tools to help themselves. The process may include: identification of key local resources, the gathering of information about the community context, the development and training of local leaders to prepare them to serve effectively as representatives of the community and as full partners in an initiative, and the strengthening of the network of the various interests both internal and external to a community.

## **Factors that influence the success of community building efforts**

Communities often wish to improve themselves. They want to attract new businesses, improve housing stock, reduce crime, improve the education of their children, or accomplish any number of tasks that will better the quality of life for community residents. All of these goals, whether adopted individually or together by a community, constitute goals that fall under the umbrella of “community development.” After adopting goals, communities often attempt collaborative action involving individuals and organizations in order to improve themselves.

## **What is community building?**

Community building refers to activities pursued by a community in order to increase the social capacity of its members (the term capacity building is often used interchangeably as in Lecture 1). Community building involves “the practice of building connections among residents, and establishing positive patterns of individual and community behavior based on mutual responsibility and ownership.”

## **What influences the success of community building efforts?**

Factors that influence its success. The factors fall into three categories:

1. Characteristics of community – social, psychological, and geographic attributes of a community and its residents that contribute to the success of a community

building effort.

2. Characteristics of a community-building process – components of the process by which people attempt to build community.

3 Characteristics of Community-building organizers – qualities of the people who organize and lead a community-building effort such as commitment, trust, understanding, and experience. No community building effort has a 100 percent likelihood of success. Whether an effort will succeed depends upon many circumstances, some within and others outside the control of community residents.

Based on the synthesis of research, it is reasonable to assume that the higher a community stands on the factors influencing the success of community building, the greater the likelihood that it will succeed in a community-building effort.

Building community is much like improving or maintaining one's health. If someone eats nutritious food, exercises, and has regular checkups, for example, that person maximizes the likelihood of good health. Good health is not guaranteed but it's much more likely. It is similar to the factors that influence the success of community building. If present, they maximize the likelihood that an effort will succeed but there are no guarantees.

## **Conclusion**

As stated in the opening of this lecture, the development of a community in part includes the building of the community's social capacity. Conversely, the

level of a community's social capacity influences the way community development evolves for that specific community; it also influences the pace at which community development efforts may occur. It should be apparent that communities are never "built" in the finite sense of that word. Community building is a continual process, not a set of steps to a permanent conclusion. In the process of building community, a set of individuals who live in the same geographic region can develop social networks and community social capacity; however, sustaining those networks and the social capacity requires ongoing effort. In this lecture, factors were presented that research has demonstrated as affecting the success of community building, both in initial efforts to build community and ongoing efforts to sustain community social capacity. The greater the extent to which those factors are in place, the greater the likelihood that community building can be successful.

### **Community development practice**

Community development is a wide-ranging discipline that encompasses economic development. Community development is a process whereby all citizens are involved in the process of community change and improvement. Success in community development leads to more success in economic development. A set of

values and beliefs and ethical standards has been developed that should always guide the community development process.

## **Introduction**

As discussed in previous lectures, community development is a broad subject incorporating many different disciplines. As a process and an outcome, it is inextricably linked to economic development, which may also be defined as a process and an outcome. Because of its multidisciplinary nature, recent research on establishing a theoretical foundation for community development has drawn from different fields including sociology, economics, psychology, and many others. The focus of this lecture is on the practice of community development. It provides a broad overview of community development practice as a foundation for subsequent lectures dealing with specific aspects of community development.

### **First step: define the community**

As noted in Lecture 1, a community is not necessarily defined by geographical or legal boundaries. A community could involve interaction among people with common interests who live in a particular area. Or it could involve a collection of people with common social, economic, political, or other interests regardless of residency. Professional community development (CD) practice could involve a community that is comprised of a single city, town, or village. On the other hand, it may involve working with a community comprised of several cities, towns, and

villages, or a community of counties that decide to form a regional development organization. When considering a single city (town or village), it is also important to realize that citizens may not be residents. Those who make investments in, work in, or operate businesses in a city but live outside of the city boundaries are still very much citizens and stakeholders of that community. Similarly, major corporations may also be corporate citizens who invest in a community and represent the interests of the many individuals who have invested in their company. As the city goes, so go the fortunes of the investing corporation and its shareholders. Therefore, when organizing a community development initiative, it is important to carefully define the community and who should be included in the process. The community should not be too narrowly defined. Looking to the future, CD professionals may find themselves working in unique communities such as “virtual communities.” With the great advances in computers and electronic communications, it is possible for individuals with common interests and

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communities without legal or physical boundaries. Their interactions, business dealings, and common concerns may result in an interdependency that requires support from a community developer. This brings a whole set of unique problems and opportunities to the CD professional.

### **Practicing community development**

As noted in lecture 1, community development is both a process and an outcome.

The practice of community development may be described as managing community change that involves citizens in a dialogue on issues to decide what must be done (their shared vision of the future) and then involves them in carrying it out.<sup>1</sup> Critical issues addressed in the CD process include: jobs and economic development (business attraction, expansion and retention, and new business development); education and workforce development; infrastructure development and improvement; quality of life, culture, and recreation; social issues such as housing, crime, teen pregnancy, and substance abuse; leadership development; the quality of governmental services; community image and marketing; and tourism development.

### **Inclusiveness**

CD is based on the idea that all people are important and should have a voice in community decisions, have potential to contribute, resources to share, and a responsibility for community action and outcomes. Citizens are entitled to make

informed decisions about the factors influencing their community. The process is always open and transparent. Therefore, CD is an inclusive approach to working with people who participate in the process to the extent that they are capable and interested. The professional community developer uses many techniques that offer citizens an opportunity to be part of the development process. These techniques may include responding to a survey, being interviewed as part of a community assessment, and participating in a public meeting, task force, subcommittee, or strategic planning committee. These actions greatly increase local citizen involvement and, thus, the potential to improve their quality of life. CD is guided by a set of values and beliefs. These may be thought of as mental tools that professional community developers use to provide guidance and direction for their work. Professional community developers believe in people being proactive within the framework. These values and beliefs help the process of decision making to be open, inclusive, interactive, and focused on the well-being of the entire community, not just one segment.

### **Community development principles of practice**

Over time, a set of principles has evolved that also act as guides to CD practice.

These principles, based on the author's experience and observations from over 25 years as a CD consultant and researcher, are:

1. *Self-help and self-responsibility are required for successful development.* No

one knows better about what must be done or is more committed to change than those who live in a community. It is impossible for CD consultants to do all that is necessary for a community to realize its full potential. They do not possess all the knowledge and skills needed by their clients' community. The CD consultant's role is to organize citizens so that they realize their power, capabilities, and potential during the process of change.

*2. Participation in public decision making should be free and open.*

While not everyone can attend or participate equally in every CD activity, citizens' opinions, ideas, and support can be sought throughout the process. Participation may come in many forms including the completion of surveys, volunteering for a particular project, attending a public meeting, or serving on a committee or task force.

*3. Broad representation and increased breadth of perspective and understanding are conditions that are conducive to effective CD.*

The CD professional strives to organize a leadership group that is representative of the community and its stakeholders. Individuals representing all major groups within the community should be offered membership in this group, and all their constituents should be encouraged to participate to some extent in the many development activities created in support of their shared vision.

*4. Methods that produce accurate information should be used to assess the community, to identify critical issues, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT analysis).*

This assessment, or environmental scan, can result in the creation of a community profile that details all information collected about the community. It may involve a literature review, interviews with key informants, focus group meetings, citizen and business opinion surveys, and a review of multiple statistical and demographic data resources. Assessment results support the creation of a strategic development plan and, eventually, marketing material.

*5. Understanding and general agreement (consensus) is the basis for community change.*

Citizens need to make informed decisions. Community dialogue and assessment feeds that educational process. When making decisions, consensus should be sought. There is an important distinction between consensus and compromise. Compromise may not always result in the best alternative being selected. Usually one group gives up something important to get one thing it wants, and another group does the same. This usually results in neither side getting what they really want, nor the best alternative for everyone. In compromise both sides have win-win and lose-lose outcomes. Consensus seeking, on the other hand, supports creation of an alternative that everyone can support, one that was developed

through an open dialogue on options and is focused on producing the greatest good and positive outcomes. The process involves having all opinions heard, options discussed (including positives and negatives of each option), and developing a course of action that best addresses the identified critical issues. It is problem /solution-focused versus group- or individual-focused. Consensus seeks win-win results that produce positive outcomes for all citizens.

*6. All individuals have the right to be heard in open discussion whether in agreement or disagreement with community norms.*

Participants in community organizations owe it to themselves to hear and consider all ideas and opinions. When everyone's views and ideas are heard, it provides more information for citizens to consider when making decisions. Often ideas from different individuals can be synergistically combined to produce even better solutions. However, individual rights should be exercised with respect and not be abused to the point of disrupting the activities and decisions of the majority of citizens. Individuals do not have a right to filibuster.

*7. All citizens may participate in creating and re-creating their community.* The wonderful thing about community development is that there is a role for everyone. Young and old, rich and poor, highly educated and modestly to uneducated individuals, and citizens of all races and cultures can create or join a project in support of the shared community vision. Those with gardening as a

hobby might get involved in community beautification. Others may have information technology skills that can be utilized in developing a website and creating community marketing material. Still others may have leadership and organizational skills that can be focused on organizing and leading groups. CD professionals and citizens should always be looking for new individuals to involve in the process and align their experience, knowledge, skills, and interests to the work that needs to be done.

*8. With the right of participation comes the responsibility to respect others and their views.*

Every citizen should be treated with respect and kindness. The CD professional must work diligently to facilitate the process so that individuals feel positive about their own participation while respecting the rights of others. It is possible to be both fair and firm. Personal attacks or personalizing issues and ideas is counterproductive. It forces individuals into defensive posturing and conflict that disrupts progress.

*9. Disagreement needs to be focused on issues and solutions, not on personalities or personal or political power.*

Disagreement is not a bad thing. It is a normal result of human interaction. As thinking individuals, humans naturally have opinions and develop alternatives

based on their own life experiences, education, values, culture, and beliefs. CD professionals focus the group on what can be done instead of what cannot be done, and on areas of agreement rather than on areas of disagreement. This focus avoids getting bogged down trying to resolve irreconcilable differences. The focus of CD activities needs to be on problem identification and solutions rather than on who did what to whom when, or whose opinion or idea is the most important. The importance of ideas is not in their origins but in their utility for addressing community concerns.

*10. Trust is essential for effective working relationships and must be developed within the community before it can reach its full potential.*

An old cliché states that trust must be earned before it can be given. There is generally a lack of trust among the very community groups that must work together in order for the community to be successful. This is particularly true in communities where there are many problems. Trust will only be developed if the preceding principles are practiced and supported within the community.

Development of trust will take some time as the group forms and moves through a normal developmental cycle. These principles are very practical and, when used, will protect a working group from selective participation that can create mistrust, rumors, misinformation, destruction of worthwhile efforts, and loss of key participants. Increasing the breadth of representation helps ensure that many

different points of view are heard. This leads to the ability to implement decisions. General agreement also leads to a commitment to implement changes and a positive working relationship that supports long-term development initiatives. By hearing everyone, even those who disagree, it is possible to assemble a broad base of information. Sometimes those who disagree with the majority or general opinion may be right; their “weird” ideas or opinions may foster creative thinking in the group and innovative approaches to solving long-term or difficult problems.

### **The community development process**

The central theme of CD is that people, in an open and free environment, can think and work together to fashion their own future. However, when communities face serious problems, there is a tendency for citizens to feel frustrated and helpless. Anger develops and is often focused on each other. Certainly, someone must have caused these problems. Differences among residents are exaggerated and passions run high. The community tends to splinter (e.g., rich vs. poor, white vs. black, long-term residents vs. newer residents, residents vs. non-resident property owners and business operators, and voters vs. elected officials). The CD professional often begins his or her work in a very contentious environment. One of the most difficult roles that a professional developer has is facilitating communication within the working group so that all views are heard and discussions do not degenerate into non-productive complaint sessions and personal arguments. There is a fine line

between facilitating meetings and manipulating meetings. This is a tightrope that all CD professionals must learn to walk. This is a particularly difficult task for those professionals who live and work full-time in the communities where they are consultants. The professional community developer has to continually reflect on his or her actions to determine whether they are facilitating or directing, providing information or solutions. Information and professional experiences should be shared carefully so as to provide examples, options, and possibilities for consideration versus telling citizens what they must or should do. If actions and ideas come primarily from the professional developer, they are not likely to be supported or implemented. It is important to realize that people support what they help develop. The opposite is also true. Many perfectly written plans created under the direction of knowledgeable professionals with good intentions, and at significant cost, lie unused in city hall bookshelves throughout the world. The consultants did part of their job. They were asked to create a plan and they did; but without citizen participation and ownership, the plan is useless. Participation promotes citizen ownership of and commitment to the actions that have been planned. CD is a process through which people learn how they can help themselves. Self-help is the cornerstone of CD. Through self-help, people and communities become increasingly interdependent and independent rather than dependent on outsiders to make and implement decisions. The CD process is a set

of steps that guide the identification of a program of work and movement toward the ultimate CD goal. These steps require the involvement of community members and serve as a guide to problem solving, planning, and completion. The steps do not necessarily follow a sequential path. They may not follow the exact sequence below, and some may occur concurrently. The steps are as follows:

- *Establish an organizing group* – This might be a strategic planning committee or development task force. It could be a new, independent organization that has broad representation from many different community organizations and includes a broad cross-section of community leaders. Or it might be an inclusive group sponsored by a successful community organization such as a Chamber of Commerce or economic development group. The most successful development organizations are public–private partnerships that involve a blend of prominent citizens, religious and neighborhood leaders, major community stakeholders (such as major property owners and managers of major businesses owned by external investors), elected officials, and local business leaders.

- *Create a mission statement* – This may be a mission statement for a strategic planning committee detailing why it was formed and what they aim to accomplish. This statement is important because it lessens the threat to and helps prevent role conflict with other community organizations by communicating its unique mission and role. Further, it keeps the group focused and helps prevent

“mission creep,” namely a loss of focus and drifting away from the primary purpose for which a group was formed.

- *Identify community stakeholders* – Who are the stakeholders that should be involved in the process? What roles should they play? When? For practical reasons, inviting all citizens to all meetings is not only an inefficient use of human resources, but prevents detailed analysis and discussion of critical issues and the development of strategies. Initially, a representative group of citizens has to be created. As its work progresses, more and more citizens are involved by serving on subcommittees, task forces, or project teams through which they provide information, opinions, ideas, and questions; challenges to the status quo, approval of the final plan, and help in implementing it.

- *Collect and analyze information* – Before beginning work, it is important to identify the current community environment. There are many methods of conducting this environmental scan, and many types of information that may be gathered in support of community development. It is often useful to assemble a community profile. This is a statistical overview of the current and past demographics of the community – income, population growth/decline, age of the population, community boundaries, population density, major employers, employment by sector, and so on. Other useful tools include surveys of various types. A business opinion survey is useful in identifying economic issues and

conditions that are impacting the community. This survey is also useful in retention and expansion program efforts. It surveys a sampling of local businesses and seeks opinions about the quality of local government, infrastructure, workforce, and other issues impacting business growth. Citizen attitude surveys are also useful in identifying a variety of issues that impact both economic and quality of life factors. Other assessments include comprehensive studies, surveys, and leadership workshops that examine all aspects of the community in order to identify critical issues and the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT analysis) impacting development.

- *Develop an effective communications process* – It is extremely important to keep an open line of communication with the public. This will ensure that the process is inclusive and that activities are transparent. Many development activities are conducted by citizen representatives without a large public attendance. It will be important for them to keep their constituents informed, but this should not be the sole source of communications. If possible, involve the local press in the CD process. In addition to newspapers, it may be possible to use local television stations or public access cable channels as well as Internet websites. In addition, strive to establish two-way communications by providing a phone number and an email address which the public can use to send ideas, comments, and questions about what is being done.

- *Expand the community organization* – Once an organizing group is established, additional organizations and citizens can be involved in addressing specific problems that are of direct interest to them. For example, an economic development subcommittee might be created, and its membership expanded to include additional business leaders; representatives from development boards, airport, and port commissions; vocational educational institutions; and economic specialists from the state or other governmental agencies. Similarly, a tourism development subcommittee might be created where additional hotel, restaurant, gift shop, and tourist attraction operators would be invited to participate in discussions to determine how tourism might be expanded and supported within a community. This expansion continues the process of conducting a community dialogue that began with the environmental scan.
- *Create a vision statement* – As soon as the development group have identified the critical issues and conducted a SWOT analysis, they can create a strategic vision. This forward-looking vision statement provides guidance and direction for the actions that will be taken to make improvements. It is usually one sentence that embodies the desired state of the community in the future. It must be a vision that can be realistically achieved within 15 to 20 years but should have enough “stretch” to challenge the community to achieve dramatic positive change.
- *Create a comprehensive strategic plan* – After the development group have

created the vision they would like to achieve; they begin to create a strategic plan to support the achievement of that vision. This can be done by subcommittees or task forces, each working on one of the critical issues. Communication between the subcommittee chairs is important to avoid duplication of effort and to share ideas that may be useful for other groups. The typical structure of a strategic plan is a list several goals, each supported by numerous objectives. An effective plan will be realistic and credible. Objectives are written down so that they have specific completion dates and clear measurable outcomes. They are also supported by specific tasks and milestones that lead to achievement of the objective. Each objective should include the names of individuals responsible for its completion as well as the funding and resources to be used. If an objective does not have an individual responsible for managing it or funding or dedicated resources, it should not be included in the plan.

- *Identify the leadership and establish a plan management team –*

From the very beginning of the process, the CD professional needs to identify those who will become leaders and champions of the process when he or she leaves. These individuals may come from the original organizing group; be the chairs of some of the committees, subcommittees, and task forces; or come from individuals included in the process as it expands to involve more citizens.

Generally, a group of seven to nine individuals should be identified and

selected by the entire planning committee to become a plan management team.

Since it is unrealistic to have a large group of individuals meet frequently, the plan management team is charged with acting on the planning committee's behalf. The team meets periodically to manage the ongoing process, and its membership should reflect the public-private nature of the group by including representatives from each of the critical issue/goal areas. The team's role is to manage the process, assisting those charged with implementing goals and objectives to move the process forward. The plan management team might initially meet twice a month to get an update on the overall progress of the plan. Later they might meet once every two months. They are also charged with making periodic written and verbal reports to the entire group, which might meet quarterly or semi-annually.

Throughout the process, the work is continually being implemented by those responsible for goals and objectives.

- *Implement the plan* – Implementing the plan is when the “rubber meets the road.”

It is a crucial time that the plan management team needs to monitor very closely.

Objective team leaders can be quickly discouraged if they do not see results.

For that reason, it is important to build early successes into the planning process.

When facilitating the process, the CD professional, plan management team, and committee chairs should include some objectives with the following

characteristics:

- short time frame for implementation
- highly visible
- money and resources are available
- popular with the vast majority of residents
- low risk of failure.

Ensuring early success is important because it builds momentum, helps attract additional volunteers, and instills the belief that things are changing for the better.

- *Review and evaluate the planning outcomes* – One key aspect of total quality management is the Plan, Do, Check, and Adjust cycle. It is also important to realize that planning is a dynamic process and that the plan is a living document. Some objectives will be completed ahead of schedule. Others will be delayed, and their time schedule must be revised. Some will have to be eliminated because of changing environmental conditions or the loss or lack of anticipated funding. Most interestingly, however, is the fact that new objectives will be created and added to the plan as environmental conditions change and new challenges and opportunities emerge. The plan management team should perform periodic evaluations of the plan, including a review of each objective. What is going well? What problems need to be addressed? What needs to be changed? Their primary mission is to keep the planning activities and the community's progress moving forward so that the shared vision can be realized.

- *Celebrate the successes* – Winning events need to be built into the planning process. In addition to an annual report and celebration of the community's accomplishments, it is important to have smaller ongoing celebrations that provide reward, recognition, and continued motivation for volunteers and citizens. A comprehensive reinforcement process could be developed and implemented and could include having publicity in the newspaper; drinks and snacks, gifts and discount certificates, and/or awards for volunteers; and special T-shirts or hats for those who do the work. Since motivation is unique to each individual, leaders are charged with structuring celebrations into their activities that continue to recognize, reward, and reinforce volunteer efforts. Simply put, participation in the planning process should be fun, and citizens should want to participate.
- *Create new goals and objectives as needed* – A comprehensive plan usually has several goals, each supported by a number of objectives. It contains a multitude of projects that will be completed at different times. Some objectives actually lay the foundation for what must be done next for the community to realize its shared vision. As stated, above, the community and the plan operate in a dynamic environment. In order to remain relevant, the plan must be continually updated, and new goals and objectives added as others are achieved or completed.

### **How does community development practice relate to economic development?**

Traditional economic development (ED) focused on the attraction and location of

businesses (industrial development) in a community. The focus was strictly on job creation and business investment. In recent years, economic development has been expanded to include the retention and expansion of existing businesses as well as the incubation of new businesses. Attraction of new business development is a very competitive process. Each year thousands of communities in hundreds of countries compete on a continual basis for new business facilities. Location decisions are usually driven by economics, competition, and cost decisions. During the latter part of the twentieth century, much of the rural southern United States lost unskilled jobs to foreign workers. The same quality of labor for cut-and-sew operations, for example, could be found in Honduras, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, and China for a much lower cost. An economic developer might promote a community to a business investor based on a very specific set of objectives, but narrow criteria. However, at some point the investor will visit “short-listed” communities to select a location. It is at that point that the realities of the location are driven home. Not every community can be successful in locating major industries. Often conditions other than available sites and buildings, labor costs, and location incentives impact location decisions. For the decision maker, these other factors may be very subjective and could be related to personal, cultural, sociological, and quality of life issues. Some of these factors are directly under the influence or control of local leaders and citizens. A shortcoming of traditional ED activities is

that they are focused on the “now” rather than on the future. What business can I locate here based on the current resources (e.g., labor, raw materials, location, infrastructure capacity, and available buildings or sites)? What is the best business development match for a specific community based upon its current strengths?

Traditional ED activities were not focused on addressing problems such as social issues that, if solved, could result in making a community an attractive location for different industries. Initially, ED was asset marketing focused on “picking the low-hanging fruit.” On the other hand, community development tends to be a long-term process. It is holistic in that it sees all aspects of the community as related and as affecting development. Citizens and business investors want more than just jobs or a good investment location. They know that their managers and technical workers will move there to work and live. Therefore, other desirable traits, “soft factors,” drive the final selection process. These include:

- Effective community leadership.
- High-quality education for pre-school, primary, secondary, higher education, and workforce training and retraining.
- Economic development that creates a variety of quality job opportunities through the attraction of new businesses, the retention and expansion of existing businesses, and support of entrepreneurship within the community.
- Attractive community known for its “curb appeal.”

- High-quality, affordable housing and a variety of housing for citizens at all income levels.
- Quality and affordable health care and emergency services.
- Recreational and cultural activities (golf courses, resorts, parks, festivals, theaters).
- Safe, crime-free community.
- Honest and effective government that delivers efficient services.
- Good infrastructure including roads, drainage, water and sewage services, solid waste disposal, and so on.
- Reliable and competitively priced utilities (electric, gas, and telecommunications).

### **What do community developers do?**

Positive change in communities is driven by many factors. Therefore, positive change will be difficult to bring about by working on only one or two projects. Community development has to take a holistic approach to organizing, planning, and implementing change. The CD process identifies and organizes local leadership, involves the public, identifies critical issues, creates a plan, and implements actions to solve problems across a broad spectrum of areas so that desired change occurs. CD professionals draw on many knowledges and skill bases in order to be successful in their work. Some professionals are

generalists, while others specialize in one or more areas of the CD practice. In their practice, professionals may be found to perform one or more of the following functions (while not an exhaustive list, the following provides an overview of the broad range of knowledge, skills, and abilities exercised by CD professionals):

- *Community assessment*

- Perform statistical and demographic research.
- Organize citizens to conduct assessments (environmental scans).
- Design and conduct surveys.
- Prepare and present assessment reports.

- *Strategic planning*

- Organize a planning committee.
- Facilitate the planning process.
- Assemble and edit the plan.
- Assist in plan implementation and management.

- *Organizational development*

- Identify stakeholders.
- Recruit volunteers.
- Organize community groups.
- Recruit and work with volunteers.

- *Leadership development*

- Recruit leaders.
- Conduct learning needs assessment; create and evaluate training and development activities.
- Deliver training and development activities.
- *Economic development*
  - Create and manage business attraction programs.
  - Support expansion and retention of existing businesses.
  - Create and deliver entrepreneur training and business incubation activities.
  - Foster technology transfer to help businesses regain/retain their competitiveness.
- *Public and private development financing*
  - Identify governmental grant opportunities and write applications.
  - Identify foundation grant opportunities and write applications.
  - Seek venture capital sources and write applications.
  - Assist businesses in writing bank and financial institution loan applications.
- *Community land-use planning and research*
  - Plan industrial parks, commercial and residential developments.
  - Plan and design utility infrastructure.
  - Plan and design roads.

- Plan and design seaports and airports.
- Plan and design parks and recreational centers.

### **Professional standards of ethical practice**

Every profession has a set of ethical standards that it expects its members to follow. Certified Professional Community and Economic Developers (PCED) subscribe to the following ethical standards adopted by the Community Development Council (CDC – [www.cdccouncil.com](http://www.cdccouncil.com)). These are based largely on the Standards of Ethical Practices of the International Community Development Society from which the CDC professional certification process originated. Failure to adhere to these principles and ethical practices may result in the Community Development Council rescinding a professional's certification.

### **Professional values**

The following values guide the professional practice of community development:

- Honesty
- Loyalty
- Fairness
- Courage
- Caring
- Respect

- Tolerance
- Duty
- Lifelong learning

### **Professional principles**

- The purpose of community development is to raise living standards and improve the quality of life for all citizens.
- Community development seeks to build initiatives around shared values and critical issues after identifying existing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.
- Positive change begins with creating a shared vision that can be transformed into reality by the actions of citizens using goals, objectives, and action plans.
- Community development is inclusive and involves developing leaders and building teams across class, gender, racial, cultural, and religious lines.
- Community development is more than social service programs and “bricks and mortar” construction. It is a comprehensive initiative to improve all aspects of a community’s interdependence: human infrastructure, social infrastructure, economic infrastructure, and physical infrastructure.
- Community development involves consensus building that looks for the best solutions to community problems rather than only those that are politically expedient or popular or that benefit a few citizens.

- Community development is directed toward increasing a community's leadership capacity for solving problems and moving citizens from dependence to interdependence.
- Leadership in community initiatives is shared so that responsibility and commitment are encouraged across a broad base of the population.
- Development leaders work to transform their communities for the better and inspire others to do the same.
- Community development is an educational process that helps citizens understand the economic, social, political, environmental, and psychological aspects of various solutions.
- Community development is focused on action that improves communities by transforming learning into performance.
- Community development includes economic development initiatives that help bring high quality employment, career, and business opportunities to citizens.
- Successful initiatives at the community level lay the groundwork for regional alliances and cooperation directed toward solving common problems.

### **Ethical standards**

Ethical standards adopted by the Community Development Council are as follows:

- Establish and maintain a professional and objective relationship with the client community and its representatives, one that advances the ethical standards of

practice.

- Always perform in a legal and ethical manner.
- Immediately disengage from activities when it becomes apparent that they may be illegal or unethical, reporting illegal activities to the appropriate authorities as required.
- Adhere to the professional principles outlined above.
- Clearly and accurately detail personal knowledge, experience, capabilities, and the outcomes of past consulting when requested.
- Clearly and accurately detail the scope of work to be performed (and its anticipated outcomes), and the fee for and terms of that work prior to engaging in consulting.
- Avoid conflicts of interest and dual relationships, especially those that could result in or appear to result in personal benefit (outside the scope of work) at the expense of a client community or its representatives.
- Disengage from activities that may result in one group or individual unethically or illegally benefiting at the expense of another.
- Adhere to all professional principles and practices regarding selecting, administering, interpreting, and reporting community assessment measures.
- Keep confidences, and only reveal confidential information at appropriate times and with proper authority.

- Maintain confidential records in a secure location and under controlled access.
- Discuss ethical dilemmas that arise with other Certified Professional Community and Economic Developers or the Community Development Council to solicit guidance and opinions regarding possible actions.
- When feasible, consult confidentially with professional colleagues whose behavior is in question or when the colleague requests assistance in resolving ethical or legal dilemmas at a personal level.
- Notify the Community Development Council when ethical and legal dilemmas are unable to be resolved at a personal level.

### **Getting started**

1. *Ground rules* – It is often helpful to make copies of the values, principles, and process of CD and to distribute them to participants in the process.

They may be used as a checklist or reference for guiding the process. You may also help the group create a set of ground rules that will guide their group activities. This might involve such topics as confidentiality, conflict of interest, and resolving disagreements. It may also be useful to guide the group through the creation of a credo that lists their beliefs and values. These actions will help guide the CD process and serve as a tool for the facilitator to refocus the group when problems occur.

2. *Ice breaker* – Ask people to make a list of all the topics they know well enough to teach someone else. Either post the results on a flip chart page, whiteboard, or project the results on a wall or screen using a digital projector and a laptop so that all participants can see the results. This exercise can help citizens come to realize the wide range of resources within the group. You may want to record this information for future reference as a guide for involving individuals in later activities.

### **Conclusion**

This lecture has provided a broad overview of the practice of community development. It has discussed community development values and beliefs, practice principles, the community development process, community development tasks, and professional standards of ethical practice. Professional community developers include consultants and those whose jobs include community and economic development activities. Volunteers who devote a significant portion of their time to community development and community activities might also be classified as professional community developers. People who practice community development should be aware of its underlying beliefs, values, and ethical standards. The more familiar all local citizens – not just professionals – are with the principles of community development practice, the more success a community is likely to enjoy.