Resident-Led
NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING POWERBOOK

Your resource for creating vibrant, equitable communities in the St. Louis region.

INVEST STL

people | power | place | systems

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- Fillable Organization Chart (see Phase 3 Tactics)
- Resident-Led Planning Key Actions (see Play #3: Define Resident-Led)
- Consensus-based decision-making diagram

HI NEIGHBOR!

Welcome to your go-to resource for creating vibrant, equitable communities in the St. Louis region. Whether you're a community leader, planner, or advocate, the Resident-led Neighborhood Planning Powerbook offers the strategies and insights you need to drive meaningful change. Explore proven methods, connect with local stories, and charge your efforts to build a brighter future for all.

The goal of this Powerbook is to inspire those involved in neighborhood planning in St. Louis and beyond to choose a resident-led approach, leading to higher chances of creating a more dignifying legacy with their planning efforts, and a more equitable state of community development.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Invest STL is part funder, part convener, and full-time partner to neighborhood groups striving to transform their communities to be worthy of their lifetime. We believe in and support residents cultivating their power to develop, revitalize, and plan for their own neighborhoods. St. Louis, Missouri, our home, is where we get to be in community with daring, brilliant spirits who are all working for a just and equitable region.

GET TO KNOW US | investstl.org

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT + GRATITUDE

Through observation, participation, interviews, and collaborative refinement, the Powerbook captures lessons we learned alongside the people of the West End and Visitation Park neighborhoods (WE+VP) in St. Louis when they harnessed their power to self-determine the direction of the place they call home.

From the weCollab residents of the West End and Visitation Park to our Invest STL teammates, partners, design consultants, and countless external reviewers, we cannot thank you enough for contributing to the creation, design, and future implementation of this Resident-Led Neighborhood Planning Powerbook.

OVERVIEW

THIS POWERBOOK IS FOR YOU

This Powerbook is meant to be a guide for individuals or groups to practice centering residents in their planning efforts. Use the elements of each play as resources for individual exploration, in neighborhood meetings, or with potential partners.

Remember, none of what we suggest is prescriptive, but hopefully it will give you a place to start as you form or deepen your own resident-led practice. With more groups learning and practicing this approach, resident-led planning can become the new yet ever-evolving standard, especially for St. Louis. Learn more about the West End and Visitation Park neighborhoods (WE+VP) and weCollab neighborhood Planning Process on page 5.

We intend to grow and evolve this document over time as we learn more from our partnerships with different neighborhoods, groups, and organizations.

GETTING STARTED

In these first few sections, understand the significance and application of the Resident-Led Neighborhood Planning Powerbook. We will introduce the core principles and value of resident-led neighborhood planning, the process that informed the Powerbook's learnings, as well as how to navigate the Powerbook content.

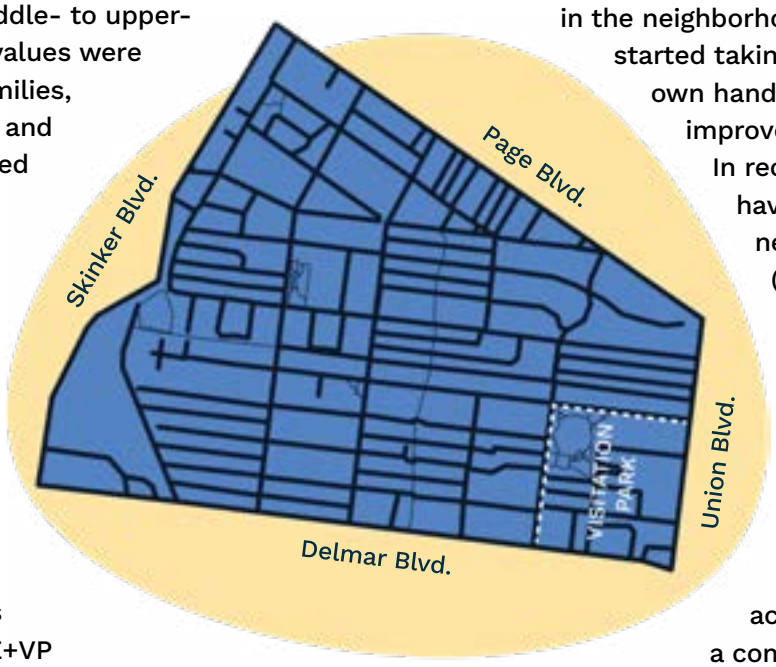
By familiarizing yourself with this information, you'll gain the context and insights needed to fully appreciate and apply the Powerbook's strategies, tactics, plays, and other contents. Then you can explore the actionable steps throughout the document and in the appendix and begin your journey towards impactful, resident-led, community development.

THE WECOLLAB PLANNING HISTORY + PROCESS

THE WEST END + VISITATION PARK

The West End and Visitation Park Neighborhoods (WE+VP) are situated at the westernmost edge of St. Louis City. The north boundary is defined by Page Blvd., with Union Blvd. to the east, and Skinker Blvd./Pkwy to the west. To the south, they are bordered by Delmar Blvd., which has been a division of the city's wealth, races, and importance for decades.

Before 1950, WE+VP contained a predominantly white, middle- to upper-class population. Home values were competitive for white families, while housing covenants and federal redlining prohibited sales to Black families, and segregation limited their mobility into the neighborhood.



After the 1948 Supreme Court ruling that private racial covenants could not be enforced by the state, Black families had new options for where to live. The WE+VP location, housing quality, and variety of amenities made it an attractive place, and Black families sought residence in the neighborhood.

This prompted white residents to flee in record numbers, regardless of the sale price they might have been able to get. As white families fled the neighborhood, governments no longer prioritized it for resources or improvement. Redlining, banking malpractice, and unfair appraisals worked to decrease home values for incoming Black families.

RACIAL EQUITY INSPIRES RESIDENT-LED

With this history of racist real estate practices and a recent increase of development interest in the neighborhood again, residents started taking things into their own hands to preserve and improve their neighborhood. In recent decades, residents have engaged several neighborhood leaders (e.g., neighborhood associations, public officials, etc.) in a series of meetings to discuss the need for neighborhood planning. Residents wanted to ensure that any and all development activities are guided by a common, shared vision of current residents and local interest holders. Many believed that WE+VP was primed and ready to initiate a planning process.

In 2017, a group of Black women living in the West End responded to a funding opportunity Invest STL offered, which came with a pre-selected planning partner. The local community development corporation (CDC), Cornerstone Corporation, agreed to serve as the convener for the planning process, providing the backbone support needed to move

Online References

Video: Watch WE+VP residents talk about Neighborhood transition and stabilization from the 1950s to present day.

the process forward. Together, they mobilized the support they had been building months and years prior.

These key neighborhood interest holders included elected officials; the three neighborhood associations serving residents within the boundaries of WE+VP; and public and private entities (e.g., Bi-State Development, Delmar Divine, Great Rivers Greenway, St. Louis ArtWorks, and the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department to name a few). The WE+VP applicants were awarded funding, and the planning process began.

The residents and Cornerstone Corporation recruited a steering committee of 15 members through an application process to guide the work. The residents who initially pursued the Invest STL funding (all residents of the West End) served as advisors to the committee.

The residents and former Cornerstone Corporation Executive Director at one of their first meetings to apply for the Invest STL grant offered in 2017. From left to right, Treena Thompson, Keaira Anderson, Tonnie Glispie-Smith, and Lisa Potts.

About a year in, the conversation of gentrification emerged as a key motivation for writing this plan. Residents did not want to be displaced or make decisions that would displace other residents with this process. Their reason for a neighborhood plan was much deeper than increasing commercial markets and filling vacant land. There was an emphasis on centering racial equity in the plan to address past harms and preserve the community for existing residents while responding to new market pressures and welcoming new residents.

The steering committee requested and engaged in racial equity training through one of the residents' consulting practices. This discovery process seeded practices and beliefs that residents expected the plan to uphold. As these ideas started to form, COVID-19 emerged, and an unintended pause slowed everyone down enough to sit back and reflect on the work they had done.

> "When folks say gentrification, they really mean race or racism."
>
> – Treena Thompson,
>
> Steering Committee Advisor, Cornerstone CDC Board Member, and Resident of the West End

Residents reviewed successes and challenges to the process so far and determined improvements. They observed discomfort with the lack of their voice and desires being clearly expressed in the direction the plan was going. As the steering committee dug deeper and surveyed residents and leaders, it became evident that if they were going to pursue racial equity in the way they imagined, they would need the proper support. The steering committee decided to select a new planning partner who could identify with their vision and support its execution in the neighborhood plan.

The executive committee (made up of resident co-chairs) and guided by Invest STL and Cornerstone CDC, wrote a Request for Proposal (RFP) to find a new planning partner. Invest STL staff researched and collaborated with the steering committee to develop Characteristics of Equitable Planning as a rubric for their selection, and the residents independently facilitated the public-facing planning partner selection and deliberation process.

The process with the new planning partner started in 2021. They held a public kick-off and released a collaboratively written Summary of Understanding (SOU) about where the group had been and where they wanted to go. The SOU includes the influences of racial equity on the planning process: resident-led planning and decision-making, valuing diversity and inclusion, supporting the growth of businesses owned by historically underrepresented groups, avoiding displacement, and social/emotional healing. You can read more about the history of the planning process and how it upholds racial equity in the Summary of Understanding preceding the plan. The residents decided to call this revamped effort the "weCollab Plan" and it was adopted as such by St. Louis City in June of 2023. View the Adopted plan by visiting the link in the Online References for this section.

Online References

Characteristics of Equitable Planning

Summary of Understanding

Adopted Plan

ROLES IN THE WECOLLAB PLANNING PROCESS

RESIDENTS

Anyone who lived or owned a business in the WE+VP neighborhoods are residents. Some participated in the surveys, pop-ups, and various events about the neighborhood plan. Their feedback and insights were pivotal to shaping the work of the steering committee and planning team. Even residents who did not participate in formal activities of the planning process played a role because their absence was acknowledged and indicated how outreach and engagement efforts might need to be improved.

STEERING COMMITTEE

The Steering Committee was made up of residents from every quadrant of the neighborhood who applied and were selected to work with the planning team to carry out and deliver a comprehensive neighborhood reinvestment plan. They reported to the Executive Committee and received consultation from the advisors.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Residents who managed the planning team, the governance of the steering committee, and served as the authorizing body for the process, holding final decision-making authority for critical decisions made up the Executive Committee. They were accountable to the Steering Committee.

ADVISORS

Residents who ceded positions on the steering committee to allow more voices in the process were considered Advisors. They served as unofficial members of the steering committee who had professional experience in grant writing and neighborhood planning and development. They offered their expertise, connections, and network as a resource to the steering committee and offered support similar to consultants.

ADMINISTRATIVE PARTNER + ADVISOR
Neighborhood-based anchor organization, Cornerstone Corporation (Cornerstone CDC), held the role of Adminstrative Partner + Advisor. Cornerstone CDC was poised to pursue funding and provide staff to the weCollab effort. Initially a faith-based affordable housing ministry, they rose to the occasion of supporting a resident-led planning effort by updating their board members and aligning their mission and vision with what they were hearing residents needed in their neighborhood.

TECHNICAL COMMITTEE
This group worked closely with the planning consultants to review and shape technical recommendations in the plan. These recommendations included adjustments to zoning, land use, and city service coordination. Their partnership ensured the plan met adoption requirements at the city level and that the team had the relevant data they needed. Plan recommendations were more feasible because they were reviewed and assessed by the technical committee along the way. The committee was composed of staff from the City of St. Louis Planning & Urban Design Agency, various City Departments, Environmental and mobility experts, and the local public transportation authority.

CONSULTANTS
YARD & Company was hired as the consultant and assembled a team of local and national subconsultants in different areas of expertise, including design and branding, engagement, retail and entrepreneurship, mobility infrastructure, public relations, and institutional partnerships. They offered and implemented tactical approaches to engage residents and incorporate resident feedback into the plan. YARD & Company oversaw this work and in collaboration with subconsultants and the Technical Committee researched options, designed strategies, synthesized engagement data and qualitative feedback, conducted feasibility studies, and ultimately produced the physical plan that was adopted by the city. They worked closely with the ambassadors to understand the realities of neighborhood conditions and resident experiences.

AMBASSADORS
Residents who were hired to work closely with the consultants and steering committee to design and deploy outreach and engagement strategies, communicating information to and from the entire neighborhood.

FUNDER
Beyond dollars for consultants, Invest STL provided a flexible process that allowed residents to get to the nitty-gritty of what they wanted for their neighborhood. There was dedicated staff in the role of Neighborhood Solidarity Partner that walked with the residents through the planning process. When circumstances demanded it, Invest STL was able to fund resources, mediation and coaching, community healing, and racial equity training, alongside direct capacity-building funding for the administrative partner.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT
The City of St. Louis Planning & Urban Design Agency assigned dedicated staff to walk alongside the weCollab planning process from start to finish. Unlike a traditional planning process, since residents were guiding the process, the city offered oversight and ensured the recommendations set forth in the neighborhood plan would be feasible and meet city requirements.

WECOLLAB PROCESS TIMELINE

PANDEMIC PIVOT

PRE-FUNDING PHASE

DEC 2017: POTENTIAL FUNDING IDENTIFIED

Invest STL invited neighborhood groups to attend an information session about funds available to transform their neighborhood. Funding came with support from a planning partner and capacity-building services. Of the WE+ VP residents in attendance, four women found out they were close neighbors and connected after the meeting at one of their homes, thrilled and charged about the possibility of being funded to execute a neighborhood plan.

JAN 2018: FUNDING APPLICATION SUBMITTED

Using the individual skillsets and networks of these four women, the application was completed with the support of numerous residents and key vested partners. Cornerstone CDC, in consultation and under the leadership of the residents, submitted the application on behalf of the WE+VP. Both neighborhoods were included because of the geographic impact existing organizations and initiatives already had.

FEB 2018: FUNDING AWARDED

The Invest STL funding was awarded to two neighborhood clusters: WE+VP and Dutchtown. For the next 10 months, the planning partner worked with Cornerstone CDC to strengthen their capacity as the anchor organization. It involved aligning Cornerstone CDC's strategic plan, budget, and engagement processes with what they were preparing to undertake with the planning process.

PRE-PLANNING PHASE

JAN 2019: RESIDENT GROUP FORMATION

Residents were recruited to form a steering committee. The process prioritized equity by seeking diversity across geographic location, length of residency, renter or homeowner status, gender, race and age through an open application process. Candidates applied and were interviewed by a panel of residents from other neighborhoods who served in a similar capacity.

JUN 2019: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT, PLANNING KICK-OFF

The residents and planning partner held a Public meeting at Union Avenue Christian Church introducing the process to the neighborhood for the first time.

PLANNING PARTNER SELECTION PROCESS

DEC 2020: NEW PLANNING PARTNER OUTREACH

Invest STL supported the executive committee composed of residents and Cornerstone CDC in redefining the scope of work to attract technical planning partners who could support resident leadership. The steering committee wrote an RFP.

JAN 2021: RESIDENT GROUP RE-FORMATION

The steering committee was opened up to recruit more residents from all corners of the neighborhood. An executive committee was formed to assist in administrative and executive aspects of the process.

APR 2021: NEW PLANNING PARTNER HIRED

Planning partners were evaluated by residents through the public sharing of RFP responses from the top three candidates (determined by the steering committee), and live, public interviews via Zoom. Residents and neighborhood interest holders submitted comments, questions, and ranked the finalists. The steering committee chose YARD & Company (YARD) as the new planning partner.

BUILDING UNDERSTANDING

OCT 2021: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT, PLANNING KICK-OFF, 2ND EDITION

The residents and new planning partner held a public event at Ivory Perry Park in the Visitation Park neighborhood to re-engage residents around the new effort.

APR 2022: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY - RECRUITMENT

YARD worked through Cornerstone CDC to hire residents as community ambassadors, initiating the Ambassador Program that gave them a winning proposal.

Five residents were hired as ambassadors.

MAY 2022: DOCUMENTATION OF EXISTING CONDITIONS FOR PLANNING

YARD and the Steering Committee finalized the document that captured the previous planning process, summarized themes from community engagement, and outlined goals for the upcoming planning process. It is referred to as the SOU and can be found in the appendix of the weCollab plan.

EXPLORING WAYS FORWARD

MAY 2022: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY - AMBASSADOR PROGRAM LAUNCHED

Ambassador program launched and the lead ambassador recruited additional volunteers to support engagement.

Cornerstone CDC developed outreach strategies with Ambassadors, leading data collection for the plan by holding pop-up events and sharing at events by key community interest holders. They spread the word about the planning process and collected resident feedback and vision block by block.

JUN 2022: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT - INITIAL INPUT

The main objectives and strategies that would eventually influence the development initiatives and recommendations in the neighborhood plan were shared in meetings with neighborhood interest holders and outdoor pop-ups.
The planning team sought feedback and collaboration from residents, business leaders, institutions, and elected officials.

REFINING & EMBEDDING THE PLAN

AUG 2022: PLAN DRAFTING - FOCUS AREAS SELECTED

YARD proposed potential physical locations to focus on that would influence widespread development based on community feedback and an analysis of the existing neighborhood amenities and how residents and visitors use them.
The Steering Committee prioritized the focus areas based on resident engagement data, their lived experience, and rigorous discussion.

NOV 2022: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT - CONFIRMING NEIGHBORHOOD VISION

A third round of meetings with neighborhood interest holders was held for feedback on the draft plan and coordination with other development efforts happening in the neighborhood. The draft plan was revealed at a large, public community meeting. In this series of public engagement, the community vision was nearly finalized in the plan.

NOV 2022 - MAY 2023: PLAN DRAFTING - REVISIONS WITH CITY

YARD and Invest STL guided discussions with the steering committee about implementation and designing the system of entities and individuals that will ensure the plan is implemented and won't sit on a shelf (called the weCollab Operating System in the plan).

Meanwhile, YARD coordinated with the City to ensure the plan conforms to city standards and addresses the needs of the city planning process and departments. The Steering Committee voted for Cornerstone CDC to become the administrative partner in plan implementation.

JUN 2023: PLAN ADOPTION

The draft plan received feedback while available at five locations around the neighborhood for a 20-day public comment period. This period was just before the public hearing where the weCollab plan was adopted as a neighborhood plan and supplement to the City's comprehensive plan by the Planning Commission.

The implementation of the neighborhood plan kicked off toward the end of 2023 with a new group of residents from the WE+VP. Learnings from these phases will be added as we collect them.

We celebrate, honor, and continue to learn from this neighborhood and plan in the creation of this power book. We want to acknowledge all the consultants and neighborhood interest holders who contributed energy to the weCollab planning process. Namely, the neighbors of the West End and Visitation Park, Emerging Wisdom, Whitney Benns, and the Black Healers Collective for conflict resolution and community building, YARD & Company as the lead planning partner; their subconsultants Vector Communications, BlackArc, Action STL, &Access, The Lochmueller Group; planning lead Rise Community Development; Missouri Foundation for Health and the countless neighborhood organizations and venues that hosted us throughout the process.

WE HONOR AND RESPECT EVERY RESIDENT WHO COMMITTED TO THIS EFFORT FOR ANY LENGTH OF TIME SINCE IT BEGAN.

Annetta Vickers-Bentil, Steering Committee member, 2018 - 2023

April Walker, Ambassador, 2022 - 2023

Celeste Metcalf, Steering Committee member, 2018 - 2023, Executive Committee member 2021 - 2022

Diana Shead, Steering Committee member, 2018 - 2020

Doneisha Bohannon, Steering Committee member, 2018 - 2022

George Roberts, Steering Committee member, 2018 - 2020

Gordon Carlson, Steering Committee member, 2020 - 2023

Hero Harrell, Steering Committee member, 2020 - 2023

Keaira Anderson, Admin Support, 2017 - 2020

Khatib Waheed, Steering Committee member, 2020 - 2023

Lavelle Caradine, Steering Committee member, 2022 - 2023

Leslie Byrd-Tate, Steering Committee member, 2018 - 2020

Lisa Potts, Steering Committee advisor, 2017 - 2023

Marcelle Perryrhone, Steering Committee member, 2018 - 2020

Margie Williams, Ambassador, 2022 2023

Monique Thomas, Admin Support, 2021 - 2023

Myrina Otey, Steering Committee member, 2020 - 2023

Nancy Mastin, Steering Committee member, 2018 - 2023

Nathan Plumb, Steering Committee member, 2018 - 2023

Rasheedah Furqan, Steering Committee member, 2018 - 2020

Shelia Caradine, Ambassador, 2022 - 2023

Shiron Hagens, Steering Committee member, 2018 - 2023, Executive Committee member 2021 - 2022

Tameka Herrion, Steering Committee member, 2018 - 2020

Tameka Stigers, Steering Committee member, 2018 - 2020

Tonnie Glispie-Smith, Steering Committee advisor, 2017 - 2023

Treena Thompson, Steering Committee advisor, 2017 - 2023

Trina James, Steering Committee member, 2018 - 2020

Valerie Smith, Steering Committee member, 2020 - 2023

WHAT IS RESIDENT-LED NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING?

Neighborhood planning is nothing new, but resident-led efforts like the one you will explore in this Powerbook are distinctly different from traditional planning.

WHY RESIDENT-LED NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING MATTERS

For generations, neighborhood planning and development have often intentionally or unintentionally directed harm toward existing Black communities, people of color, and people with fewer economic means.

This kind of traditional planning is often done in the name of progress, frequently led by people and institutions with little stake in the neighborhoods that they are planning for — inevitably cultivating understandable mistrust, skepticism, and at times disengagement in community processes from residents.

Being truly resident-led means planning with and learning from residents.

There aren't many resources and literature that illuminate how to engage in resident-led neighborhood planning, so Invest STL offers this Resident-Led Neighborhood Planning Powerbook to neighborhood leaders, the national planning and community development field, and funders on how to approach planning with residents in an equitable and resident-first manner.

Based on learnings from this process, we created this chart to highlight the differences.

Ultimately, resident-led processes and plans are owned by the residents with more neighborhood-level participation, expectation, and accountability for plan implementation. They are unique because there is not a single approach or way of doing things. The process is shaped by the relationships, social norms and culture, priorities, lived experiences, and practices of the residents.

COMPARING TRADITIONAL VS. RESIDENT-LED PLANNING

	TRADITIONAL	RESIDENT-LED
LEADERSHIP	Led by local government (a city, township, municipality, etc.) or by consultants hired by local government	Led by a group of residents who organize and commit to seeing the process through and being the primary representatives and communicators in the process with their neighbors.
DECISION-MAKING	While the process has points for resident feedback and input, typically local government or the consultants decide who is involved in the process, when to move from one step to the next, and ultimately what goes in the plan. The final plan is typically a creation of the planning consultant that may reflect some aspects of community feedback but is still largely driven by the consultant's perspective, the municipality's priorities, and local real estate development trends and influences.	Every decision in the process belongs to the representative group of residents leading the process. The consultants are accountable to residents, and the resident leaders are accountable to their neighborhood interest holders to ensure their community has ample opportunity and support to speak up and influence the plan priorities. Residents, not consultants, get the final say.
EXPERTISE	Planners, consultants and others not from the neighborhood are elevated as the experts, often leading to residents being "talked at" and being directed by the technical experts and their teams.	Residents and their lived experiences are elevated and engaged as the primary experts on the history, present, and vision for the neighborhood. Planners, consultants and others provide insight and context by taking time to share complex ideas and options in everyday speech so that residents fully understand, engage, and make the best decision for their community.
TIMING	Marches along to a predetermined set of procedures and a timeline with designated points for feedback from residents and interest holders.	The process slows down or speeds up, revisits topics, and repeats actions as needed to ensure the community has the opportunity to fully explore moments of opportunity and conflict as they arise. It's a flexible and customized approach.
IMPLEMENTATION	Too often, these plans are documents that "sit on a shelf and collect dust" in part because they do not have enough neighborhood-level ownership, interest, or support to move them forward.	Processes and plans are owned by the residents with more neighborhood-level participation, expectation, and accountability for plan implementation.

BENEFITS + YIELDS OF RESIDENT-LED PLANNING

We've learned that taking the less traditional path of resident-led neighborhood planning can benefit those involved in the process as well as those who will be impacted by it.

+ BENEFITS

Resident-led neighborhood planning can...

- improve relations with the communities they are partnering with and working on behalf of to meaningfully build something together for **Neighborhood-Based Organizations + Funders**

- help **Local Governments** gain the support of and be a partner to their constituents by supporting the creation of an actionable plan and adopting constituents' direct aspirations.

- expose **Consultants** to paths they may not have considered on their own and have a greater chance for the plan to be feasible and relevant long after the consulting relationship ends by being directed by residents in what challenges, opportunities, and solutions to explore.

= YIELDS

Responses to a weCollab resident survey demonstrated the following yields.

Resident-led neighborhood planning yields...

POWER

Residents better understand and believe in the reality of their influence on the direction of their neighborhood and decision-making.

CONNECTION

Residents experience an increased ability to lead, collaborate, and be in relationship with their neighbors.

ALIGNMENT

Residents experience increased feelings of unity and agreement with their neighborhood & resident leaders and confidence talking to neighbors and others about their plan and vision for the neighborhood.

PHASES + SEQUENCE OF RESIDENT-LED NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING

PRE-PLANNING

BUILD SOLIDARITY

Residents interested in leading a planning effort take time to get to know each other, uncover their common concerns, form groups, secure funding, and raise awareness among local players. These players include residents plus any groups, organizations, or individuals with a vested interest in the neighborhood.

BUILD UNDERSTANDING

Residents and neighborhood players collect, organize, and make sense of areas of opportunity or concern, the conditions that have influenced the current state of the neighborhood, and their ideas for what their shared future could look and feel like.

PLANNING & ENGAGEMENT

EXPLORE WAYS FORWARD

With the insight of planning consultants and guidance from local governments, residents consider their options for evolving their neighborhood based on what they uncovered and prioritized in the prior stage of building understanding.

REFINE AND EMBED THE PLAN

Ideas are tested for relevance and consensus to define resident priorities and actions as concretely as possible. Consensus among neighborhood players and support from local government for the forming plan are gained and confirmed. Surveys, public meetings, and focus groups are conducted to inform final decisions made in the plan.

POSITION YOUR PLANNING PROCESS FOR SUCCESS

Based on our experience, our resident-led planning process was boosted by having these elements in place. We recommend them if you have access.

COALITION

Residents who are actively engaged in your community and are willing to work together to shape and advance a vision. Not everyone will enter the process with the same views, and that is ok. The will to find common ground in the interest of your community is what matters most.

PLAN REQUIREMENTS

If not fully conducted by local government, seek out guidance early on from your local government on what is required in a planning process and document to ensure what is produced will be honored and supported by local government in implementation.

NEIGHBORHOOD-BASED ANCHOR

A person or an organization within your community that can serve as an anchor for the process and support keeping the coalition of residents and their consultants grounded in what has already been explored and decided, and what is ahead. This role can be seen as a neutral facilitator – someone tasked with keeping the conversation and process advancing productively.

FUNDING

Resources to support a rich process complete with consultants who will listen to and be directed by residents. Funding and technical planning consultants are not required to start a process, but both will be needed for a process and plan that reflects the desires and will of your community and sets a well-informed, actionable vision.

DRAFTING & ADOPTION

The priorities, actions, research, and recommendations are compiled into a document following the locality's process and requirements to be submitted for adoption.

IMPLEMENTATION

This is when the plan is put into action by the efforts of everyone involved: residents and other vested neighborhood groups (including neighborhood-based organizations), local government agencies, developers, and elected officials.

HOW TO USE

The Resident-led Neighborhood Planning Powerbook can be used as a framework for everyday people and community development professionals to engage in more equitable work. Our goal is to inspire those involved in neighborhood planning to take a more just approach and create communities they can be proud of for generations with their efforts.

CHOOSE YOUR PLAYS

The Powerbook contains six sections of “plays” that share what we learned throughout the process of supporting the weCollab steering committee, planning team, and residents of the West End + Visitation Park.

To start, choose a topic that suits the status of your neighborhood involvement and the conditions of your neighborhood, or read through all the plays from start to finish. You will find an affirmation, highlights/examples, practice exercises, reflection prompts, illustrations, and infographics that support the play.

On some plays, you will also find a section called “online references.” It will include links to audio, video, external resources, and other plays that further support that play. Click the links or visit the website to interact with these components as you navigate different plays.

FIND COMMON GROUND

Play #1: Define Scope + Scale
Play #2: Build Solidarity + Awareness
Play #3: Define Resident-Led

SET STRUCTURES

Play #4: Create Accountability
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Play #23: Practice Power Perspectives
Play #24: Identify Warning Signs
Play #25: Celebrate + Invite Joy

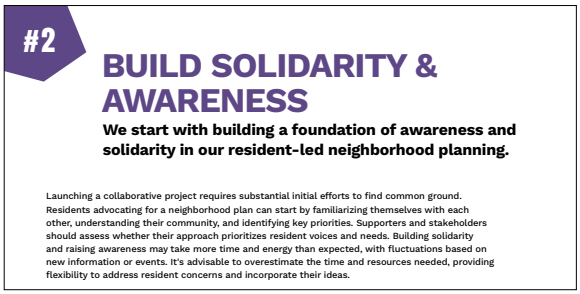
PLAY CONTENTS

Each play has sections of content to help convey what we learned about resident-led neighborhood planning. Get familiar with the different types of information included in each play to make the most of your experience.

#2

THE PLAY

We define each play and how to apply it with a title, affirmation, and text that describes the learning that emerged during the weCollab planning process. The learnings can also be applied to other resident-led community development efforts.


#2

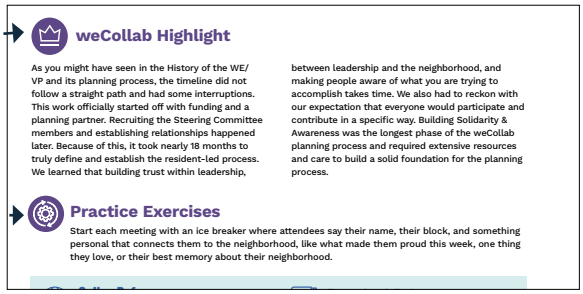
BUILD SOLIDARITY & AWARENESS

We start with building a foundation of awareness and solidarity in our resident-led neighborhood planning.

Launching a collaborative project requires substantial initial efforts to find common ground. Residents advocating for a neighborhood plan can start by familiarizing themselves with each other, understanding their community, and identifying key priorities. Supporters and stakeholders should assess whether their approach prioritizes resident voices and needs. Building solidarity and raising awareness may take more time and energy than expected, with fluctuations based on new information or events. It's advisable to overestimate the time and resources needed, providing flexibility to address resident concerns and incorporate their ideas.

WECOLLAB HIGHLIGHT

Examples of how “the play” showed up in the weCollab planning process.


weCollab Highlight

As you might have seen in the History of the WE/VP and its planning process, the timeline did not follow a straight path and had some interruptions. This work officially started off with funding and a planning partner. Recruiting the Steering Committee members and establishing relationships happened later. Because of this, it took nearly 18 months to truly define and establish the resident-led process. We learned that building trust within leadership, between leadership and the neighborhood, and making people aware of what you are trying to accomplish takes time. We also had to reckon with our expectation that everyone would participate and contribute in a specific way. Building Solidarity & Awareness was the longest phase of the weCollab planning process and required extensive resources and care to build a solid foundation for the planning process.

Practice Exercises

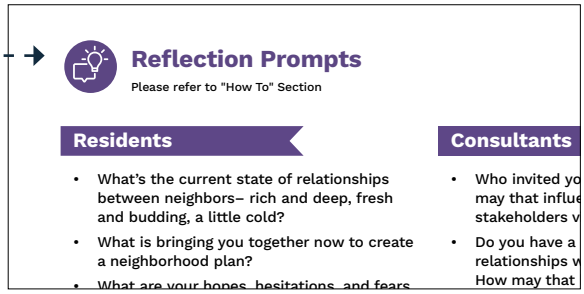
Start each meeting with an ice breaker where attendees say their name, their block, and something personal that connects them to the neighborhood, like what made them proud this week, one thing they love, or their best memory about their neighborhood.

PRACTICE EXERCISES

Activities you can implement for each play that you learn.

REFLECTION PROMPTS

Use these topical questions that speak directly to each “player” to start or expand practices toward a resident-led process.


Reflection Prompts

Please refer to "How To" Section

Residents

- What’s the current state of relationships between neighbors– rich and deep, fresh and budding, a little cold?
- What is bringing you together now to create a neighborhood plan?
- What are your hopes, hesitations, and fears

Consultants

- Who invited yo may that influe stakeholders v
- Do you have a relationships w How may that

THE PLAYERS

We speak directly to typical players in neighborhood planning in the Powerbook. Each play has reflection questions that participants in a neighborhood planning process can ask themselves to start or expand their resident-led practice.

Choose what “player” you are as you go through the plays and think about how you might increase the influence of resident power and voice through how you participate in a resident-led process.

Each player listed here is critical in supporting, amplifying, and acting on the will of residents in the planning process. If each player takes the time to learn their plays, resident-led planning can become the norm.

RESIDENTS: Committed to the community they call home and wish to preserve and improve it to benefit their neighbors and themselves for generations to come.

NEIGHBORHOOD-BASED ANCHORS: Community development corporations (CDCs) and neighborhood associations become anchors when they advance residents' needs and desires. They focus their work in the geographic area associated with the planning process and can support the pursuit and implementation of funds. These organizations have longstanding community relationships and are trusted to acquire resources and partnerships to support planning efforts with staffing and administration that turn aspirations into action.

CONSULTANTS: Includes planning partners, technical assistance providers, designers, marketing agencies, and community engagement or healing specialists. They are hired for the variety of services and expertise they bring to a planning process.

FUNDERS: Entities that make grants and channel resources to neighborhood planning and community development efforts, whether physical or programmatic.

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS: Typically, this position starts with the planning and design, buildings, or public works departments of municipal governments. They may oversee and approve planning processes and are the first point of contact for new development that is proposed in a neighborhood. They also approve the final neighborhood plan that is produced.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT TERMS + DEFINITIONS

There can be lots of unfamiliar terms in neighborhood planning and community development. As more communities get involved in resident-led planning, it is helpful for residents to understand the language used. We have started a list of commonly used terms that you will find throughout the Powerbook. Check them out online:
https://www.investstl.org/planningpowerbook/enter-the-powerbook/how-to-use-the-powerbook/

Contact: info@investstl.org
www.investstl.org/planning-powerbook/find-common-ground

FIND COMMON GROUND

PLAYS IN THIS SECTION

#1 Define Scope + Scale

#2 Build Solidarity + Awareness

#3 Define Resident-Led

Resident-Led
NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING
POWERBOOK

#1

DEFINE SCOPE + SCALE

We are clear on the size of our vision and expectations of those participating in our planning process.

Neighborhood planning varies in complexity, from small tasks like selecting flower pots to larger endeavors such as securing funding and developing unused land. Ensuring everyone is aligned regarding time commitment, phases, priorities, and tactics is crucial. Establishing shared guidelines is key to finding common ground, which can be incorporated into agendas and meeting notes. Effective facilitators play a vital role in maintaining consistent communication.

> "There was one meeting in particular that did a good job of establishing the roles of the organizations involved in the planning process and how everyone came together to get to the part where I came in. I'm feeling more empowered now that I have more background information, and a better understanding the roles and responsibilities of us as committee members."
>
> — Dr. S. Hero Harrell, shared 2023

weCollab Highlight

When the Steering Committee faced a transition with many questions, the Executive Committee addressed this by creating an informative binder. This binder served as a resource with a baseline understanding of the group's objectives and commitments. We held an orientation session to introduce the binder and clarify the Steering Committee's responsibilities. It contained organizational charts, a summary of understanding, job descriptions, and other relevant documents. A hard copy and a digital folder were made available to facilitate note-taking and document storage. Ongoing communication with new participants helped ensure their comprehension and active engagement.

Practice Exercises

- Create a one-page fact sheet with key objectives of the plan, a timeline, and who all is involved and their role.
- Start a binder of the priorities or mission of your neighborhood group. Revisit it before each meeting you attend.

Online References

Audio: Hear a steering committee member describe getting more familiar and starting to feel comfortable with the planning process as scope and scale was defined.

Powerbook References

Play #5: Staffing and Roles

Reflection Prompts

These questions will help you get clear on what neighborhood planning means to each player in your process.

Residents

- What does neighborhood planning mean to you? What actions and people would be needed in its scope and scale to make it meaningful to you?
- How much of your neighborhood do you want to focus on — your block, your street, or the entire neighborhood?
- What assets and issues in your neighborhood are most important to you and your neighbors?

Neighborhood-Based Orgs

- What does neighborhood planning mean to you? What actions and people would be needed in its scope and scale to make it meaningful to you?
- How does your current capacity and reach within the neighborhood allow you to meaningfully engage in and support this process? What limits your capacity for this process?
- What assets and issues do you observe or hear from residents that are most important in the neighborhood?

Funders

- What does neighborhood planning mean to you? What actions does it include? Who does it include?
- What investment is needed for a scope and scale that yield a meaningful neighborhood planning process? What are your investment's limitations?
- What understanding and assumptions about the neighborhood are informing your investment in the process? What do you still need to learn or clarify?

Consultants

- For this neighborhood, what does a planning process need to include? Who needs to participate for it to be meaningful?
- Is there a minimum geography that the process must cover for the neighborhood plan to be viable?
- What understanding and assumptions about the neighborhood are informing your approach to the process? What do you still need to learn or clarify?

Local Government

- What must a neighborhood planning process include to be meaningful and viable? Who must participate in the process?
- Is there a minimum scale or area the process must cover for it to be viable?
- What understanding and assumptions about the neighborhood do you hold? What tools or insights can you provide to clarify or advance insights?

#2

BUILD SOLIDARITY + AWARENESS

We start with building a foundation of awareness and solidarity in our resident-led neighborhood planning.

Launching a collaborative project requires substantial initial efforts to find common ground. Residents advocating for a neighborhood plan can start by familiarizing themselves with each other, understanding their community, and identifying key priorities. Supporters and interest holders should assess whether their approach prioritizes resident voices and needs. Building solidarity and raising awareness may take more time and energy than expected, with fluctuations based on new information or events. It's advisable to overestimate the time and resources needed, providing flexibility to address resident concerns and incorporate their ideas.

weCollab Highlight

As you might have seen in the History of the West End and Visitation Park and its planning process, the timeline did not follow a straight path and had some interruptions. This work officially started off with funding and a planning partner. Recruiting the Steering Committee members and establishing relationships happened later. Because of this, it took nearly 18 months to truly define and establish the resident-led process. We learned that building trust within leadership, between leadership and the neighborhood, and making people aware of what you are trying to accomplish takes time. We also had to reckon with our expectation that everyone would participate and contribute in a specific way. Building Solidarity + Awareness was the longest phase of the weCollab planning process and required extensive resources and care to build a solid foundation for the planning process.

Practice Exercises

Start each meeting with an ice breaker where attendees say their name, their block, and something personal that connects them to the neighborhood, like what made them proud this week, one thing they love, or their best memory about their neighborhood.

Online References

Video: Watch a conversation between the four women who ultimately got the weCollab process going!

Powerbook References

Introduction: weCollab History & Process

Tactics checklist / Pre-planning Phase: actions you can take to help build solidarity and awareness in your neighborhood (see appendix).

Reflection Prompts

Use these questions to reveal what might help or hinder unity in your process.

Residents

- What's the current state of relationships between neighbors – rich and deep, fresh and budding, a little cold?
- What is bringing you together now to create a neighborhood plan?
- What are your hopes, hesitations, and fears about being in a planning process together?

Neighborhood-Based Orgs

- How do long-term residents view your organization's history and work in their neighborhood? How might that influence your participation?
- How are your relationships with residents and other organizations in the neighborhood? Where may repair be needed for you to be effective in this process?
- In what ways are you confident, unsure, or limited in supporting a resident-led process?

Funders

- If you funded efforts in the neighborhood before, how are those investments viewed and engaged by residents now?
- What coalitions of alignment and discord do you observe within neighborhood interest holders that may be harnessed and invested in for a collaborative process?
- Beyond planners, what other supports can you invest in to yield greater alignment and coalition building in the neighborhood?

Consultants

- Who invited you into this process and how may that influence how neighborhood interest holders view your participation?
- Do you have a history of work or relationships within the neighborhood? How may that history or lack thereof affect your participation?
- What coalitions of alignment and discord do you observe within neighborhood interest holders that may be harnessed for a collaborative process?

Local Goverment

- How do residents view local government's history of interactions and investments in their neighborhood? How might that influence your participation?
- What departments have the most connection with the neighborhood? What's the state of those relationships? How may they need repair or repositioning to be effective in this process?
- What ways are you confident, unsure, or limited in supporting a resident-led process?

#3

DEFINE RESIDENT-LED

We define how much we advise or decide on what happens in our neighborhood.

In traditional planning processes, leadership and decision-making typically rest with hired consultants and development agencies. Resident-led planning seeks to return this authority to residents.

Define core leadership and accountability aspects in your process. Does it include ultimate decision-making? Leadership involves your coalition leading every process aspect. In the weCollab process, "resident-led" initially had varied interpretations. There's a spectrum of resident involvement, so establishing the level is crucial before commencing. These examples and prompts can help you shape your desired level of leadership.

weCollab Highlight

Historically overlooked, WE+VP residents sought a clear role in decision-making. Less than a year into the process, the Steering Committee evaluated information flow and decision-making, categorizing actions as leading, approving, advising, or supporting. They held the highest accountability and responsibility to their neighbors for these actions. In practice, the Steering Committee, comprising of resident leaders, was presented with opportunities, challenges, and options, guiding and granting final approval. Collaborators progressively aligned their support and actions with the expectations and decisions of resident leaders.

Practice Exercises

Talk with neighbors about what level of collective decision-making and involvement your group wants to have in the process. Develop your own chart of roles and accountability for key actions to firmly define what resident-led means in your community and process. Download an editable Key Actions chart and complete it with your group.

Powerbook References

Editable Key Actions Chart (see appendix)

Reflection Prompts

Use these questions to clarify what “resident-led” means to you personally, organizationally, and collectively within your neighborhood or planning context.

Residents

- Think back to a time in your neighborhood when a decision was being made or a process was underway for your neighborhood's future. What role did residents play in the decision-making process? How does that experience shape how you and your neighbors want to position yourselves in the decision-making process today?
- What support do you and your neighbors feel you need to lead your own process confidently and with accountability to your neighborhood? Who do you want to assist in providing that support?

Neighborhood-Based Orgs

- Think back to a time when your agency was involved in a place-based process. What was the working relationship between your organization and the residents and other interest holders of that place? How was power shared or allocated? What practices could be replicated or adjusted so that residents are the drivers and decision-makers?
- Based on the role(s) you might play in neighborhood planning or implementation, what would it look like for your agency to support residents in leading a planning process?
- What concerns do you have about a resident-led neighborhood planning process? Are those concerns based on previous experiences or assumptions? What can your organization or others put in place to alleviate the common concerns?

Funders

- What would it look like for the funding you steward to meaningfully support a process for which you have little to no role in deciding direction or priorities? Are there past investments you have made in this way that you can draw lessons from to support a resident-led planning process?

Funders Continued

- What adjustments can you make to your funding terms and expectations for progress so that your investment is supportive rather than burdensome or detracting from the process that is often not swift or linear.
- In addition to direct funding, what else can you provide or leverage to support residents in confidently leading a neighborhood planning process?

Consultants

- How, if at all, is resident-led planning different from your own practice of facilitating neighborhood visioning and change?
- In previous experiences, how have you balanced your technical expertise with the on-the-ground expertise of residents and other neighborhood interest holders? How have you allowed yourself to be led and directed by residents – or not?
- What limitations or hesitations do you have about a resident-led planning process? What enhancements can you make to your own practice to assist residents in confidently leading their neighbors in a process and making informed decisions on their neighborhood's behalf?

Local Goverment

- How, if at all, is resident-led planning different from your own practice of facilitating neighborhood visioning and change?
- In previous experiences, how have you balanced your technical expertise with the on-the-ground expertise of residents and other neighborhood interest holders?
- What, if any, action or decisions in the process are required to be led by government rather than residents?

Contact: info@investstl.org
www.investstl.org/planning-powerbook/set-structures/

SET STRUCTURES

PLAYS IN THIS SECTION

#4 Create Accountability

#5 Staffing + Roles

#6 Partnerships

#7 Managing Partnerships

Resident-Led
NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING
POWERBOOK

#4

CREATE ACCOUNTABILITY

We hold our planning process together with clear accountability.

Think back to Play #3 where you defined the scope and scale of a resident-led process for your neighborhood. Recalling and reaffirming what you committed to in the beginning is essential for accountability and ensuring that new structures benefit the community. In a resident-led planning process, service providers, funders, city officials, and consultants are ultimately accountable to the residents. Revisit your commitments from the beginning to be clear about what you expect from interest holders and yourself.

weCollab Highlight

In the case of the weCollab Steering Committee, they requested research on equitable planning characteristics, reinforcing their commitment to centering racial equity in the process. This commitment guided their decisions, including the selection of planning partners. The residents used a rubric that included advancing economic opportunity and mobility when reviewing proposals. YARD & Company, the chosen planning partner, proposed an ambassador program that aligned with the goal of reinvesting in the community through paid resident engagement.

Seeing this in a proposal reminded the Steering Committee of their aspiration to employ residents who stepped up to do engagement and outreach for the plan. They remained true to their aspiration to advance economic opportunity and mobility by selecting a consultant aligned with this goal.

> "Yard's budget talked about putting money back into the community via the ambassador process."
>
> – Lisa Potts

Practice Exercises

Create checkpoints six months, nine months, and one year into the planning work. Look at where expectations are being met and where they are not. Refer to your one-page fact sheet from the Practice Exercise in 'Define Scope + Scale' as a rubric. Then identify an action the group can take to get the accountability you are looking for, and who will lead it.

Powerbook References

Play #1: Define Scope + Scale

Play #3: Define Resident-led

Refer to the Phase 1 Tactics Checklist (see appendix)

Reflection Prompts

Assess your and your partners' alignment with your expectations with these questions.

Residents

- Do proposals you receive from consultants or partners align with your original goals for the planning process? Refer to the Phase 1 Tactics Checklist.
- How have your expectations or aspirations changed from when you started? Are you making decisions based on current conditions or older ones?
- How are you practicing and encouraging curiosity and speaking up when something is unclear or not meeting your expectations?

Consultants

- Does your planning proposal directly address the aspirations your client expressed?
- What checks and balances do you have in place to preserve resident voice and influence in the plan recommendations you make?
- What experiences have you planned for in the process that allow you to experience life in the neighborhood alongside residents?

Neighborhood-Based Orgs

- How can you hold interest holders accountable to the commitments they make or expect from others?
- What is realistic for your organization to contribute to recruiting and managing involvement from new interest holders – whether individual residents, or deep-pocketed corporations?
- What capacity do you have to help staff functions of the planning process?

Local Goverment

- In any meetings with residents, how transparent are you with the “why” behind the decisions you make and how they impact residents directly?
- What engagement metrics for development proposals strengthen your department’s commitment to resident leadership? Are there any you can add?
- Do your timelines realistically allow for residents to meaningfully engage in your processes?

Funders

- How do you structure funding processes to implement what you learn with each new neighborhood you fund?
- Who is responsible for sharing and institutionalizing learnings for resident-led planning within your organization?
- How do your impact indicators uphold your commitment to resident leadership?

#5

STAFFING + ROLES

We set ourselves up for success by defining clear roles and functions, and by hiring capable, dedicated staff.

In a resident-led planning process, designated support roles are crucial to enhance resident leaders' work. These roles — discussion facilitator, process coordinator, and outreach/engagement coordinator — improve effectiveness and inclusivity. They can be filled by staff, consultants, or community volunteers, and early establishment contributes to success and efficiency.

The Discussion Facilitator assists with session topics, group agreements, ensuring everyone is heard, summarizing insights, reaching agreement, and managing conflicts. Rotating volunteers can prevent burnout if staff cannot be hired to fill this role.

The Process Coordinator manages communication, day-to-day operations, scheduling, materials, timelines, and interest holder engagement, ensuring consistency throughout the process.

The Outreach and Engagement Coordinator identifies community involvement opportunities, collaborates with consultants, and organizes outreach efforts utilizing their deep knowledge of the neighborhood. Ideally this role is filled by a resident.

weCollab Highlight

Hindsight shows that early incorporation of staff could have expedited timelines, minimized errors, and clarified decisions. After much hesitation, residents identified the needed roles and requested that Invest STL staff facilitate discussions, Cornerstone Corporation collaborate as the Process Coordinator, and a resident was hired as the Outreach and Engagement Coordinator to gather feedback and input from neighbors on plan direction and priorities.

Practice Exercises

As a group, write job descriptions for your dream staff for each role recommended to be a part of your planning process. Include responsibilities, requirements, and qualifications. Download this job description template to get started.

Online References

Video: Dara Eskridge, Invest STL CEO
Hear Dara talk about Staffing + Roles in Resident-led Neighborhood planning.

Powerbook References

Job description template (see appendix)

Reflection Prompts

Use these questions to help identify the best staffing fits for your process.

Residents

- Who do you picture when you think about the face of your neighborhood?
- What types of personalities do you think would connect well with the people of your neighborhood?
- What behaviors or actions can you look for in neighborhood planning support staff to earn your group's trust?

Neighborhood-Based Orgs

- What support might you offer towards staffing in the planning process?
- How can others support you in fulfilling some of the staffing needs in this process? What functions require the most technical support/development for your current skills and capacities?
- What ways can you foresee a sustained role for your organization in supporting resident-led work beyond the planning process?

Funders

- How can you help your funded partners identify what staffing they may need to support the process?
- When funding a role, what supports do you have to help funded partners in the hiring process?
- Beyond funding, what ways can you leverage your organization to support filling roles or functions in the planning process and particularly in support of resident leadership?

Consultants

- What functions will need to be performed by others outside of your consulting team?
- How can you support all collaborators in honoring and reinforcing resident leadership as the center of the collaborative structure?
- What signals might you look for that a role is being fulfilled effectively or may need to be better supported or reassigned?

Local Goverment

- What supports might you offer toward staffing in the planning process?
- What technical skill building can you offer to those stepping in to staff the process?
- How can you support all collaborators in honoring and reinforcing resident leadership as the center of the collaborative structure?

#6

PARTNERSHIPS

We strategically align our teams for more efficient, effective effort toward our neighborhood goals.

Partnership is when at least two willing entities form a relationship to address shared objectives. Various types of partnerships are helpful in neighborhood planning. Technical assistance, funding, programmatic support, service delivery, engagement, and the relationships between residents themselves impact the outcome and feel of the development process. Taking time to select the best partners and being clear about needs and expectations upfront help prevent complications. The most important partnership is between residents to ensure they are all working toward the same goal and bringing their neighbors along.

weCollab Highlight

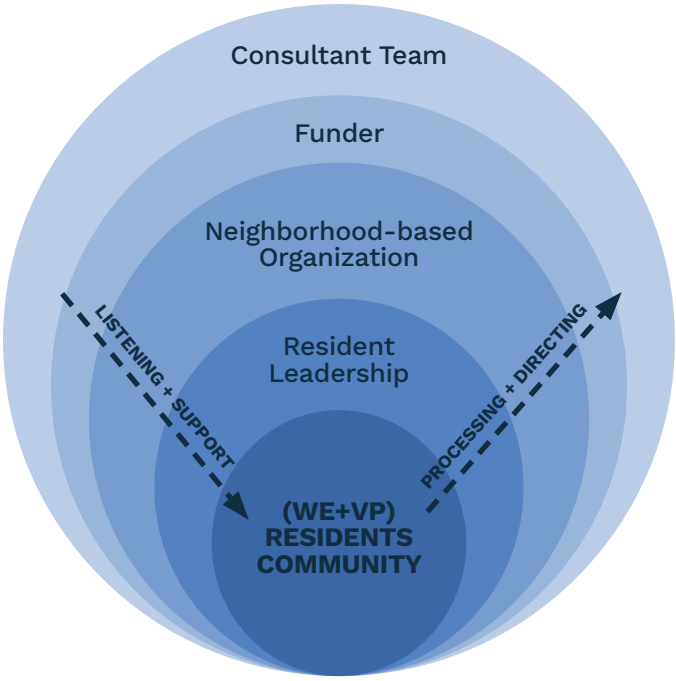
The success of weCollab's plan stemmed from strategic partnerships. As the residents got into planning, they realized the planning lead they were assigned with the funding wasn't the best fit for their goals. We helped them understand why the planning lead wasn't meeting their expectations, identify what they would look for in a new planning lead, and create an Request for Proposal (RFP) to select a new planning lead. Residents found this degree of partnership very helpful though uncommon. Knowing what you need, having the courage to ask, and then acting on the ask is key to forming strong partnerships.

Practice Exercise

Create a visual representation of all active groups and key players involved in or influenced by the neighborhood planning process. List their names on sticky notes, one per organization/individual. Arrange them on a wall based on their operations and accountability to residents. Identify existing functions and any gaps. Sample functions include funding, programs, city coordination, marketing, technical assistance, community engagement, and interest holder engagement.

Call this visual representation your "Partnership Map".

RESIDENT-LED PLANNING
PARTNER RELATIONSHIPS



Reflection Prompts

Use these questions to help identify supportive partnerships in your planning process.

Residents

- What groups/organizations are active in your neighborhood? How do they interact or partner with each other?
- What unique focus, activities, expertise, or relationships does each group have?
- Which functions of your planning process are missing or weak that can be enhanced by groups in your neighborhood? What gaps remain that may be filled by partners outside your neighborhood?

Neighborhood-Based Orgs

- Thinking about how your organization has previously partnered with residents, what parts have been successful and what hasn't worked? How can your organization become a better partner?
- What might they be able to do that your organization can not where you can mutually strengthen each other's efforts?
- Are there any opportunities on the horizon where you can test out a new partnership? How will you evaluate the success of the partnership?

Funders

- How can funding be structured to support a rich partnership experience that is allowed to evolve as the process requires?
- What additional supports are needed to ensure resident leadership is the central partner in the process?
- How can you orient your reporting process to center resident expertise and viewpoint and refrain from deferring to consultants as the primary authority on progress?

Consultants

- What do you and the residents agree are the core functions of the planning process?
- Which process functions are missing or weak that can be enhanced by groups in the neighborhood? What gaps may be filled by an external partner?
- What conditions and agreements are needed for strong partnerships between resident leadership, your consulting team, neighborhood groups, and other partners in the process?

Local Goverment

- What planning process functions can be enhanced by partnership with your departments?
- For each function of the planning process, can you partner with the planning team to ensure standards and requirements are understood and achieved?
- Is there a lead department or internal communication structure to ensure government is a well coordinated and responsive partner to the process?

#7

MANAGING PARTNERSHIPS

We keep partnerships thriving and working for the benefit of the neighborhood.

Choosing partners is vital, but managing them is equally important. You'll compete for their attention, resources, and agreement. Some partners actively participate, while others are affected by outcomes. Knowing their roles and motivations ensures effective interaction, regardless of whether they're paid, volunteer, or interest holders. Roles determine communication, approach, and expectations. Consider group dynamics, especially when trying to unite historically separate groups. Being mindful about timing, purpose, and clarity is essential when bringing people and partners together.

weCollab Highlight

In the early stages of engagement, there were lots of events and opportunities for weCollab to share its progress with interest holders. The Process Coordinator role was shared by multiple partners, so to streamline communication, they created a shared calendar. YARD also held regular meetings to update interest holders on each phase of the planning process. These efforts facilitated coordination and alignment between weCollab's plan and partners' goals as they integrated interest holder feedback.

Powerbook References

Play #6: Partnerships

Practice Exercises

- Take your “visual representation” from the Partnerships exercise a step further by identifying what you’ll share with partners, how often, and in what methods. What are your expectations for your group? Perhaps you will share process updates in a monthly email or set an in-person meeting with an organization’s board of directors.
- Create an online calendar where residents and interest holders can always see what meetings are scheduled ahead of time and sign up for opportunities where they would like to serve and contribute. Share it with all the partners on your Partnership Map from Play #6.
- Similarly, identify clear expectations for each partner’s role in your planning process and what outcomes you desire. Make sure you are communicating these expectations and outcomes to each partner.

Reflection Prompts

Use these questions to streamline and coordinate how partners interact.

Residents

- What values drive how you interact with each partner and how partners should interact with you and your neighborhood?
- For each partner, what are your shared agreements on distribution of responsibilities, timelines, use of resources, decision-making, and expected results?
- What forms and frequencies of communication to and from your partners are most supportive in managing information flow and responsiveness to each other's needs?

Neighborhood-Based Orgs

- What values drive how you interact with each partner and how partners should interact with your organization?
- For partners that you directly share responsibilities and accountability with, when and how might you formalize a partnership agreement?
- What practices can you use to ensure that your partnership with resident leadership is strong, clear, and responsive?

Funders

- What agreements can be established so partners are clear on what to expect from you, when to expect it, and what conditions need to be met to yield your contributions?
- When appropriate, how can you leverage your position as a neighborhood "outsider" to see and elevate strengths and weaknesses between neighborhood partners and others that they may miss?
- What practices can you use to ensure that your partnership with resident leadership is strong, clear, and responsive?

Consultants

- What values drive how you interact with each partner and how partners should interact with your organization?
- When appropriate, how can you leverage your position as a neighborhood "outsider" to see and elevate strengths and weaknesses between neighborhood partners and others that they may miss?
- What practices can you use to ensure that your partnership with resident leadership is strong, clear, and responsive?

Local Goverment

- Between your departments, what is the shared understanding of how government will interact with partners in the planning process?
- What, if any, formal agreements can be established so partners are clear on what to expect from government, when to expect it, and what conditions need to be met to yield your contributions?
- What practices can you use to ensure that your partnership with resident leadership is strong, clear, and responsive?

Contact: info@investstl.org
www.investstl.org/planning-powerbook/foster-collaboration/

FOSTER COLLABORATION

PLAYS IN THIS SECTION

#8 Build Relationships

#9 Set + Manage Expectations

#10 Invite Dialogue

#11 Build Courage

#12 Embrace Conflict

Resident-Led
NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING
POWERBOOK

#8

BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

We live out the importance of relationships in creating a neighborhood plan.

When centering resident voices, it is important to curate space where residents lead the conversation. These conversations help residents form relationships as they learn each other's strengths, motives, passions, communication styles, and what makes them unique. There needs to be opportunities where the only goal is for interest holders (especially residents) to be attentively engaged to learn these things about each other. Some will want to resist this space and being in relationship. It's important to recognize that collaborative relationships can still be valuable even without full trust. While trust often requires time, commitment, authenticity, consistency, deep listening, and showing up, insisting on complete trust before engaging can hinder the success of the planning process. The idea is to negotiate operating in a way and at a pace that the resident group and interest holders can mutually agree on.

weCollab Highlight

weCollab was very intentional about how residents were brought together to be a part of the planning process. Steering Committee members who knew each other or lived in the same block recruited from other parts of the neighborhood to make sure it was evenly represented to help build trust. Residents pushed for landowners and surrounding organizations with influence in the planning footprint to be engaged and informed of the work they were doing. There was a unique dedication to transparency in this planning process that encouraged residents to join. Newer residents joined the effort once they learned which of their neighbors were behind the bold statements being made in early drafts of the plan. Residents and support teams were willing to stay late to discuss difficult topics because of the trust they built that everyone was committed to the work. Time, exposure to each other and different groups, and moving through highs and lows without giving up strengthened the weCollab relationships. Relationships with other interest holders took a different approach. For example, the city's previous failure to follow through on its promises weakened residents' trust in both the city and its programs. Despite their misgivings, weCollab chose to establish a relationship with the Land Reutilization Authority of the city in order to make resident requests known.

Practice Exercises

- Conduct a Rose/Thorn activity at a planning meeting. Everyone can share one positive thing they are feeling/thinking/seeing about the process and one challenge or concern they experience or observe.
- Brainstorm annual events your neighborhood can have to simply bring people together.
- Host a dinner with your planning partner and residents to get to know each other before you kick-off planning work.

Reflection Prompts

Dive deeper into your neighborhood and collaborator relationships with these questions.

Residents

- What do you value about your neighbors?
- Which of your qualities can your neighbors say is reliable and valuable to your efforts together?
- What interactions between you and your neighbors have moved you towards a trusting relationship? What interactions have made trust harder or slower to create?

Neighborhood-Based Orgs

- What do you value about the resident leadership and other groups in the neighborhood?
- What about your organization can residents and other groups say is reliable and valuable to your efforts together?
- What interactions between your organization and neighborhood interest holders have moved you toward a trusting relationship? What interactions have made trust harder or slower to create?

Consultants

- Beyond being your client, what do you value about the resident leaders collectively and individually?
- Particularly with resident leaders and their neighbors, how do you strive to show up for and with your partners?
- How will you cultivate a trusting relationship with resident leaders? Reflecting on your prior work with communities, which of your actions contributed to relationships weak in trust?

Funders

- What do you value about the community you're investing in?
- Viewing the money as nothing more than an input in the process, how do you strive to show up for and with the community and resident leaders you are investing in?
- How will you cultivate mutual trust and value with resident leaders? What actions of yours, if any, might contribute to weakening trust in the relationship?

Local Government

- What do you value about the community you're working in for this process?
- What about your representation and service delivery in planning processes can residents say is reliable and valuable to your efforts together?
- Which interactions and decisions between your representatives and neighborhood interest holders have moved you towards a trusting relationship? Which have made trust harder or slower to build?

#9

SET + MANAGE EXPECTATIONS

We set realistic expectations for ourselves and collaborators to sustain active participation.

Neighborhood planning requires significant commitments in time, talent, and energy. Leaders must set limits and expectations beforehand to distribute work fairly and avoid burnout. Providing clear information to interest holders and partners helps them make informed decisions about their involvement. Explicit collaboration requests foster meaningful participation and alignment. Transparency about needs and commitments aids in effective planning. While collaborators' exact involvement preferences may not always be met, knowing commitment levels enables groups to reasonably manage expectations and adjust when necessary.

weCollab Highlight

Early on, the Steering Committee formed a subgroup of Executive Committee members to guide day-to-day decisions and progress. This subgroup participated in double the meetings and additional discussions to respond to movement in the neighborhood. After experiencing burnout, they asked for some sort of relief. They decided to merge with the larger Steering Committee. This transparent approach safeguarded the time and energy of all committee members, enabling them to remain actively engaged.

Practice Exercises

Research “group norms” or “working agreements.” These are guidelines that define how groups want to work together, and what they want from each other to feel safe and free to learn, explore and discover. Brainstorm a few agreements you think would be beneficial for your group. See examples from weCollab meetings on Play #12 “Embrace Conflict”

Online References

Video: Hear from Khatib Waheed, West End Resident and Steering Committee Member, on what it was like to join the planning process while maintaining healthy expectations.

Powerbook References

Play #12: Embrace conflict

Reflection Prompts

Take a moment to evaluate the strengths of and define healthy boundaries for you and your team.

Residents

- What time, skills, talents, resources, and relationships are you willing to contribute to the planning process?
- Acknowledging we can't be all things to anyone, what should your partners not depend on you for in this process?
- Fill in the blank and share with your partners: So I can contribute meaningfully and stay engaged in this process, it is helpful to me if you/we _____. (ex: schedule meetings a week in advance)

Neighborhood-Based Orgs

- What time, skills, talents, resources, and relationships are you willing to contribute to the planning process?
- Acknowledging organizations have limitations, what should your partners not depend on you for in this process?
- Fill in the blank and share with your partners: So our organization can contribute meaningfully and stay engaged in this process, it is helpful to us if you/we _____. (ex: work together to plan outreach events)

Consultants

- What are the time, resource, and quality constraints for the services and deliverables you commit to in your scope?
- How can you staff the project so residents get continuity in relationship and communication from your team?
- Fill in the blank and share with your partners: So our team can live up to our scope of work, it is helpful to us if you/we _____. (ex: review materials before we gather)

Funders

- Beyond funding, what are you willing to contribute to the planning process?
- What prior constraints on funding and disbursement are you willing to remove or adjust to support a resident-led and -centered process? What constraints are immovable?
- Fill in the blank and share with your partners: So we can contribute meaningfully in this process, it is helpful to us if you/we _____. (ex: let us know when plans change)

Local Government

- What are the time, staffing, information flow and transparency, resource, and decision-making constraints for your departments in this process?
- How can you staff so residents get relationship continuity and information and resource alignment from your departments?
- Fill in the blank and share with your partners: So we can fulfill our role in this process, it is helpful to us if you/we _____. (ex: copy the planning department on all email requests)

#10

INVITE DIALOGUE

We actively listen, observe, and speak to encourage and participate in insightful and generative conversation toward our neighborhood's goals.

We all want to be heard. Oftentimes the best solutions come from a variety of ideas and contributions from different voices. Facilitating strong dialogue can produce rich information that leads to better recommendations and policies. We provided tools in the "Be Observant" play #17 that will help invite dialogue.

> *"Planners have to make room for residents to come up with their own answers. They may just need a little time to think or do their own research."*
>
> – April Walker,
>
> weCollab Ambassador

Everyone has experiences that impact how they show up in planning efforts. It helps to:

- ✔ Observe the ways in which people show up
- ✔ Be curious about why they show up that way
- ✔ Consider how to encourage participation and progress

Viewing everyone's perspective as insightful and an asset with insight to contribute encourages curiosity about what people know. Consultants can invite dialogue with prompts and questions that excite and inspire interest holders to foster collaboration. Local government can create and streamline communication channels from residents through polls, newsletters, or public forums. Interest holders should be sensitive to what makes people comfortable to open up.

weCollab Highlight

Several times throughout the process the Steering Committee engaged residents in unplanned dialogue sessions based on what they heard from residents, specifically tension points. “We hosted a listening session at the beginning of the process to enable residents to freely talk about their experiences in the neighborhood and build a level of trust about the impending planning process. We also hosted sessions to facilitate dialogue about gentrification (facilitated by Creating Whole Communities, University of Missouri-Saint Louis) and racial equity (facilitated by Khatib Waheed of the Racial Equity Learning Exchange)” recalls Treena Thompson, Steering Committee Advisor and resident of the West End.

In working with the weCollab Residents, the planning partner, YARD & Company (YARD), actively modeled how to listen and read the room. This gave residents confidence to challenge the possibilities to get what they truly desired. For example, YARD presented two options to the steering committee but no one really spoke up in favor or against the options. Discussion often led to a third or fourth option that combined or modified parts of the options presented. Invest STL's Neighborhood Solidarity Partner often employed her skills as a facilitator to invite dialogue. She would ask questions to clarify from the planning partner as well as what residents' intentions were with specific questions or positions on a particular topic, even if she personally knew the answer.

Practice Exercises

Consider decisions you have to make in your planning process. Outline scenarios for residents to reflect on and imagine what outcomes they want.

- Invite residents to list pros and cons of each decision.
- Create social opportunities for free discussion.

Powerbook References

Play #17: Be Observant

Reflection Prompts

Use these questions to start or continue conversations between interest holders.

Residents

- How do you like to be invited into a conversation or to add your opinions, experiences, or concerns?
- How and in what spaces do you and your neighbors make your thoughts known and exchange ideas?
- When a partner or interest holder's thought or action seems fuzzy to you, what are your own signals (deep sigh, finger tap, etc) to remind you to ask a question and open up dialogue?

Neighborhood-Based Orgs

- Does your organization's "vibe" encourage residents to be in regular conversation with you? How can it be leveraged or adjusted for this process?
- In what ways and spaces do neighbors already use to let their thoughts be known and exchange ideas?
- When the room is silent after you've given an idea or opinion, what can you ask the room to open up dialogue?

Consultants

- Does your team's "vibe" encourage residents to be in regular conversation with you? How can it be leveraged or adjusted for this process?
- How can you organize sessions with residents so they encourage two-way conversation?
- As you get to know the residents, partners, and other interest holders in this process, what are the signals that you'll look for to open up dialogue instead of assuming a silent room means understanding or agreement?

Funders

- Does your organization's "vibe" encourage residents to be in regular conversation with you? How can it be leveraged or adjusted for this process?
- What points in the process lend themselves to you intentionally checking in with residents and the partners to spark conversation if needed?
- Are there tools or lessons from other initiatives you've funded that can be used in this process to keep dialogue open between partners?

Local Government

- As a whole, does your "vibe" encourage residents to be in regular conversation with you? How can it be leveraged or adjusted for this process?
- In what ways and spaces does the neighborhood already use to let their thoughts be known and exchange ideas that you can plug into?
- Are there tools, methods, or technology from other initiatives that you can lend to support open dialogue throughout this neighborhood's process?

Inviting dialogue is largely about listening. Observe the silence. Why don't certain people speak up? Are certain communication methods better than others?"
– Kevin, YARD & Company

#11

BUILD COURAGE

We practice and engage in activities that take us out of our comfort zone.

Neighborhood development can be daunting, especially for those new to neighborhood planning. Allowing everyday people to lead and devise solutions can create resistance and fear. However, there are ways to overcome it! Practice, exposure, and grace enable everyone to identify, embrace, and enhance their knowledge and unique gifts for more meaningful and equitable planning.

weCollab Highlight

Our planning partners were apprehensive about involving residents in interest holder meetings they typically facilitated alone. But, a resident-led model meant giving residents a seat and voice at these tables. Aligning institutional and resident schedules was a challenge, and there were concerns about interest holders being transparent with residents present.

To uphold a resident-led model, creating space for residents, government officials, and organization leaders to meet became a courageous effort. Residents requested prep time to study and get comfortable with the material they would present to Community Improvement District (CID) leaders, elected officials, and institutional executives. They practiced their talking points and received feedback. Many residents adjusted their schedules to attend interest holder meetings and present parts of the plan, building their confidence in its content and their understanding.

> *"My discomfort shifted when we could see the progress we were making at these meetings!"*
>
> - Steering Committee Member

Practice Exercise

People often feel most courageous when they are operating in their strengths. At your next neighborhood meeting, ask everyone to share their community building superpower. Ask “if you were a superhero in your neighborhood, what would your powers be?” Share with the group your unique skills, experiences, and personality traits that positively contribute to developing the plan.

Reflection Prompts

Evaluate your strengths, the strengths of others, and where you would benefit from skill-building or knowledge to become more confident.

Residents

- What are your strengths when interacting with people or information? Where are you not as strong but want to build the skill and courage to try?
- When you aren't confident in your understanding or ability in this process, how can your neighbors and partners help you move forward confidently?
- What strengths do you see in your neighbors that you encourage them to use in this process?

Neighborhood-Based Orgs

- In what areas of the planning process are you strong? Which are you hesitant about but want to build skill and courage to try?
- What skills or knowledge do you have that you can extend to residents to build their confidence in this process?
- What strengths do you see in residents and your fellow neighborhood organizations that you encourage they use in this process?

Consultants

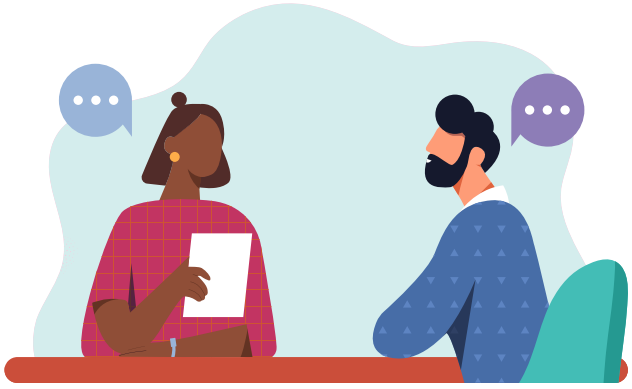
- What about a resident-led process are you hesitant about that you'll need to intentionally build skill and courage for to be successful in your role?
- What skills or knowledge do you have that you can extend to residents to build their confidence and ownership in this process?
- How can you make concepts more relevant and accessible to encourage neighborhood interest interest holders participation and leadership?

Funders

- What about a resident-led process are you hesitant about that you'll need to intentionally build skill and courage for to meaningfully invest?
- What skills or knowledge do you have that you can extend to residents to build their confidence and ownership in this process?
- What experiences or networks outside of your region can you expose resident leaders and their partners to, in order to grow their collective ability and confidence in their work?

Local Government

- In what areas of the planning process are your departments strong? In which areas do they want to build skill and courage?
- How can you make relevant codes, ordinances, tools, and mechanisms that intersect with this process more relevant and accessible so residents can confidently consider them in context of their vision?
- Are there government policies or practices that intersect with this process that may discourage residents from leading or speaking up? How can they be adjusted or eliminated to support resident leadership and courage?



#12

EMBRACE CONFLICT

We embrace conflict in ways that make our collaboration stronger.

In any planning process, conflict will be common. However, conflict doesn't have to derail the critical work of galvanizing and taking action in your neighborhood. When navigating conflict, try these steps to create positive outcomes:

1. Within your group, plainly acknowledge a moment of discomfort without judgment or assigning blame.
2. Invite everyone to internally reflect on what they're feeling and witnessing in the moment - whether that's a pause for journaling or sitting in silence - and identify the source of their discomfort.
3. Follow this reflective practice with an invitation for group dialogue.

Slowing down to explore moments of tension and what seems like disagreement can lead to clarity, closer relationships, and creative solutions. Asking questions and respecting diverse perspectives, anchored in common values, can help resolve conflicts effectively. Using a facilitator during conflicts aids productive resolution. Creating a culture that values everyone's opinions and experiences also yields stronger outcomes from working through conflict.

weCollab Highlight

We observed and heard murmurs of potential conflicts and disagreement among the Steering Committee while serving as facilitators. We reached out to a local group called the Black Healers Collective and organized healing salons to build understanding around conflict. We aimed to build the Steering Committee's understanding around conflict and how it can be generative.

Later in the process, disagreements began to surface from a lack of understanding and a habit of making general statements in planning meetings. We implemented a working agreement to address disagreements effectively by encouraging specific communication.

Practice Exercise

Feel your ears getting hot, your pulse quickening, or you pulling back from the group's conversation?

Take a few breaths to pause, ask a meaningful question and actively listen to the response with an open mind and heart.

Powerbook References

Play #9: Set + Manage Expectations

Reflection Prompts

Use these questions to dig deeper into conflict and identify tactics you can use to navigate conflict.

Residents

- What principles or values are behind your positions when you and your neighbors find yourselves at odds?
- To protect a productive and supportive process, what works for you to do in the heat of the moment to keep yourself from shutting down or going too far? What can others say or do to help you in the moment?
- How will you work together when your group's interactions grow tense?

Neighborhood-Based Orgs

- What principles or values are behind your positions when organizations in the neighborhood are at odds?
- What potential conflicts or misalignments have been brewing in the neighborhood that, with care, can be navigated through to enhance this process?
- What tactics or practices will your organization use to support neighborhood interest holders in embracing and moving through conflict?

Consultants

- What is your natural response when conflict arises? How can you leverage or adjust your response to support a resident-led process?
- What tactics or practices will you use to support neighborhood interest holders in embracing and moving through conflict?
- When there are seemingly opposing views on a concept or recommendation you offer, how will you support the group in uncovering the root of their opposition?

Funders

- What processes do you have in place to navigate conflict when it arises with or among those you invest in?
- When conflict arises between you and neighborhood interest holders, how can you elevate the neighborhood versus using the input of money as permission to overpower?
- What partnerships or other resources can you offer in this process to support neighborhood interest holders to navigate conflict when needed?

Local Government

- What potential conflicts or misalignments have been brewing in the neighborhood that, with care, can be navigated through to enhance this process?
- When conflict arises between your representatives and neighborhood interest holders, how can your representatives elevate the neighborhood versus using the position of government as permission to overpower?
- What partnerships or other resources can you offer in this process to support neighborhood interest holders to navigate conflict when needed?

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CREATE ACCESS

PLAYS IN THIS SECTION

#13 Outreach

#14 Resident-Centered Engagement

#15 Prepare To Respond

#16 Respond To What You Hear

#17 Consistently Evaluate

Resident-Led
NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING
POWERBOOK

#13

OUTREACH

We raise awareness and understanding with our neighbors about the planning process, why it exists, and everyone's role in it.

Outreach and engagement, often conflated, play distinct roles in planning processes. Outreach typically means sharing information to public audiences as one-way communication rather than an exchange. On the other hand, engagement centers on inclusive decision-making and trust-building (adapted from (Jordan), 2007, CES Institute). In community development, outreach involves identifying common concerns; collective visioning; selecting leaders, and reaching out to leaders, organizations, and elected officials. Governments and local organizations inform residents about their services through outreach. Consultants facilitate outreach toward planning goals, and residents continuously reach out to each other to share opinions and gather feedback. Fostering these connections through outreach contributes to shared goals and strengthens solidarity among interest holders.

weCollab Highlight

In the weCollab process, outreach began with identifying resident leaders for the Steering Committee and recruiting evaluators outside the neighborhood to help select the leaders without bias. Ongoing outreach efforts included website use, door-to-door announcements, and information sharing by Ambassadors and Steering Committee members to disseminate plan-related information.

Practice Exercises

- Mail surveys to residents in the planning neighborhood to discover what they know about the planning process and why it's occurring. Include links or QR codes to online surveys as well as printed versions recipients can return by mail.
- Brainstorm questions you might ask someone who wants to be part of leading the planning effort.

Powerbook References

Play #14: Resident-Centered Engagement

Reflection Prompts

Use these questions to think about what existing and potential communication channels will strengthen your planning process.

Residents

- How do you and your neighbors currently learn about what's happening in your neighborhood?
- What are the busiest intersections or places in your neighborhood that you can explore using as a point of outreach?
- Using your planning timeline as a guide, what messages would be helpful for you to reach out to your neighbors, organizations, and other interest holders? When would you share them?

Neighborhood-Based Orgs

- Consider your service population, funders, and partners. Who needs to know what's going on in the planning process?
- What ways have worked in the past for reaching different groups within your neighborhood, like youth, older adults, renters, people who speak limited English, etc?
- How can you integrate information about the planning process into your existing communications to residents and other interest holders?

Consultants

- Using the planning timeline as a guide, what messages shared when would be helpful for outreach to residents and other interest holders?
- How can your team and the resident leaders work together to leverage each of your strengths for an effective outreach strategy?
- What past lessons can you use to help outreach in this community, particularly for typically harder to reach groups like youth, older adults, renters, and people who speak limited English?

Funders

- Through funding and other resources, how can you support a robust outreach strategy for the planning process?
- What, if any, connections do you have within the neighborhood that you can share or support alignment of outreach for the process between groups?
- How can you keep your network up to date during the process and increase the chances of other funders being ready to invest when planning moves to implementation?

Local Goverment

- What existing channels into the neighborhood do you have to get information to residents that can be leveraged for this process?
- What ways have worked in the past for reaching different groups in other neighborhoods, like youth, older adults, renters, people who speak limited English, etc?
- How can your departments and the resident leaders work together to leverage each of your strengths for an effective outreach strategy?

#14

RESIDENT-CENTERED ENGAGEMENT

We involve residents in decisions about their neighborhood every step of the way.

> *"I understood that this would affect me and my household, so I wanted to get involved."*
>
> - Khatib Waheed, West End Resident and Steering Committee Member

Engagement differs from outreach in terms of depth and interaction. Go Vocal defines community engagement as "involving the community in decision-making, fostering trust between residents and their representatives, and streamlining execution." (Fillet), 2025, Go Vocal) Engaging residents in all phases creates a robust plan rooted in lived experiences while shifting decision-making power from external forces to residents.

Creating accessible paths into the work encourages resident engagement. For some, big meetings and poster boards still make residents feel planned for, not with. In a resident-led approach, the messenger is as crucial as the message, and engagement is better received when led by community members who are familiar, respectful, and passionate about involving their neighbors. Traditional engagement must evolve, taking different forms as an ongoing process.

Online References

Audio: Hear the Lead Ambassador share more about her experience with engagement

Powerbook References

Phase 1 Tactics (see appendix)

weCollab Highlight

weCollab Ambassadors were encouraged by the planning partner to organize pop-up events to gather information, spread project details, and collect feedback. They reached underrepresented voices in places such as gas stations, parks, and apartment buildings. Their insights informed plan recommendations. Ultimately, engagement proved effective when residents recognized their power, trust increased, and the planning process was enriched with authentic community experiences.

Practice Exercises

- Think about your next engagement and consider these questions as you plan:
  - What do you want to engage your neighbors about? Why?
  - What is the likelihood of people being where you plan to engage them?
  - Do they speak the same language?
  - Do they have time and attention to interact with you or your information?
  - Moreover, what will they care about most?
- If you're not sure, survey residents before to inform them of your plan to engage them on a particular topic.
  - Create drafts of the materials you plan to use in your engagement effort (fliers, letters, questionnaire, presentation boards, etc.) and circle any words that aren't easy to understand.

    (Download Phase 1 Tactics as a checklist.)

"Be invisible"
was YARD's mantra for taking a back seat to uplift resident voices in sharing with local government and interest holders. They equipped residents to speak confidently and intelligently about the plan.

Reflection Prompts

Use these questions to help optimize social networks and resources for meaningful and effective engagement.

Residents

- When your neighborhood has previously made decisions, who was involved, what information was provided beforehand, and how was input gathered before making the decision?
- Reflecting on a time your voice wasn't included in a process that affected your neighborhood, what's one extra step you wish the organizers took so you could participate meaningfully?
- Who are well connected residents within your neighborhood who can encourage neighbors with different interests and experiences to participate in the process?

Neighborhood-Based Orgs

- Who are well connected residents within the neighborhood who can encourage neighbors with different interests and experiences to participate in the process?
- When decisions have been made for the neighborhood previously, what methods were used to exclude or include residents in the input gathering process that can be learned from?
- What strengths or resources can your organization leverage to meaningfully bring residents with differing backgrounds and experiences and their ideas into this process?

Consultants

- How can your team help resident leaders feel confident and prepared to speak about the plan when engaging their neighbors for feedback?
- If you couldn't use maps or form surveys, how could you learn how residents feel about a specific intersection, block, or building without programming the experience?
- What simple tools or resources could your team create to help all residents understand, speak to, and discuss ideas proposed in the planning process?

Funders

- How can you organize funding to be flexible and timely for engagement to move at the pace, depth, and shape needed in the moment?
- How might your view on success be adjusted to fully support resident-centered and responsive engagement?
- From your investments in similar efforts, are there practices, lessons, or partnerships that can be leveraged to deepen engagement in this process?

Local Goverment

- How might your policies or processes present barriers to a rich, resident-centered engagement process?
- Which of your current communications channels or processes can supplement and extend engagement beyond the planning process to become a consistent feedback loop with neighborhood interest holders?
- How can you collaborate with the planning consultants to translate technical terms and concepts for residents to absorb, consider, and lead discussion on with their neighbors?

#15

PREPARE TO RESPOND

We are intentional about making information clear.

Preparing to respond in a resident-led process involves approaching ideas with dignity and intention. In neighborhoods marked by systemic anti-Black racism, understanding local dynamics is vital, although the impact on how residents engage in planning may not always be clear. While adhering to budgets and deadlines is essential, trust and relationship-building are sometimes more important.

To address residents' concerns effectively, it's beneficial to outline the process for reaching a solution before diving into it. In the dynamic field of neighborhood planning, over-communication can be valuable, and presenting group decisions may require outlining pros and cons for clarity, ensuring everyone is prepared to respond.

Establishing communication structures aid residents in understanding their contributions, and proactive preparation for new situations allows everyone to be effective while maintaining resident leadership.

weCollab Highlight

In the weCollab process, residents expressed a desire to track and comprehend the reasoning behind their planning partner's recommendations. In response, the planning partners began breaking down recommendations in layperson terms before seeking feedback from the Steering Committee. This practice, known as "SHOW YOUR WORK," enabled residents to assess whether the recommendations aligned with their vision and goals. Without this translation from industry jargon to everyday language, residents would not have been able to provide meaningful input. The translation of ideas is a skill that, with practice, can ensure that a planning process remains resident-led.

Practice Exercises

Pull up the agenda for your next neighborhood planning meeting a bit ahead of time. What might help residents make a decision? How can information be prepared so that it is easy to share and understand?

Online References

Video: Kevin Wright, Co-Founder & Principal, YARD & Company, shares what it was like to be responsive in taking direction from residents.

Reflection Prompts

Use these questions to expand the empathy of your practice and prepare to respond accordingly.

Residents

- Think about past development proposals or ideas brought to your neighborhood. Did you have all the information you needed to make decisions or suggestions?
- Where do you go to learn about and be equipped to respond to new development proposals or activation ideas in your neighborhood?
- Think about an upcoming meeting in your neighborhood. What is most important for you and your neighbors to raise for discussion?

Neighborhood-Based Orgs

- Think about the requests or feedback you have received from interest holders in the last 6 months. What conversations or actions can you prioritize to respond to their requests in a meaningful way?
- What resources, staff, or support might your organization require to address unexpected needs emerging in the neighborhood planning process?
- Where there might be a lack of clarity, incomplete information, or misunderstanding that affects how interest holders respond to each other, how might you help clarify and re-align folks' perspectives?

Consultants

- What steps do you take to anticipate the needs of your clients and ensure they can engage with information you prepare?
- What do you need from other interest holders to be prepared to efficiently and effectively respond to resident and emerging situations?
- What information or resources can you contribute to help interest holders collectively understand and respond to emerging information or ideas?

Funders

- What needs might emerge from interest holders in a resident-led planning process that you can support with your funding or programs?
- What signals from residents confirm they have accepted a interest holders' response or feel satisfied with the outcome of a decision?
- How do you prepare to respond to residents? What skills and tools, if any, might prepare you and your team to center resident voice in crafting responses to their needs?

Local Goverment

- What do you need to respond to residents in a way that demonstrates you heard and value their vision and desires?
- What do interest holders need to understand about your role and resources available to set realistic expectations for how you might respond in the planning process?
- In what ways can you be intentional and proactive about how your actions result from or connect to interest holder concerns?

#16

RESPOND TO WHAT YOU HEAR

We are intentional about making information clear.

Being responsive and integrating feedback are key to creating access and building trust because it shows residents and interest holders that what they contribute is valid and can create real change. When people see their ideas translated into actions, they are more likely to stay engaged and share their thoughts. It is important to have a plan that aligns with what residents want, while remaining flexible to address emergent needs and respond to changing conditions. The two most essential practices of this approach are:

- Observation
- Inviting Dialogue

When facilitating dialogue you must be attentive to residents' feelings and thoughts and respond appropriately whether it be managing time differently, adjusting the plan, or incorporating a new way of doing things.

weCollab Highlight

During a resident meeting, weCollab's planning partner, YARD & Co, faced opposition to their outreach timeline. Residents expressed concerns about engaging during winter, prompting YARD to reevaluate and adjust the timeline to commence engagement in the spring, when the weather was more favorable. This direct response to resident input built trust and demonstrated the value placed on resident voices. Encouraging dialogue and implementing residents' suggestions is a powerful way to show that their feedback matters.

Practice Exercises

One way to gauge your responsiveness is to reflect on your recent actions and assess how they connect with residents' suggestions or comments. Even when proposing new actions, make it a practice to acknowledge how residents' feedback influenced the idea. This demonstrates that you value their input and are willing to bring relevant suggestions.

Powerbook References

Play #10: Invite Dialogue

Play #19: Be Observant

Reflection Prompts

Use these questions to help ensure no concern goes unaddressed.

Residents

- What can you learn from how resident input was shared and used or not used in previous neighborhood efforts?
- How will you advocate for neighbors' ideas and concerns to be incorporated in the planning process?
- How can you consistently update neighbors on input opportunities, ideas gathered, and ideas included or eliminated in the process?

Neighborhood-Based Orgs

- What current mechanisms of yours can be leveraged to share out what is heard in the planning process?
- How will you help resident leaders ensure they consider all ideas and views voiced in the planning process?
- How will you help connect interest holders with non-planning concerns or needs voiced in the process to the appropriate responder?

Consultants

- How will you help resident leaders ensure they consider all ideas and views voiced in the planning process?
- What practices can you incorporate to regularly reflect back to neighborhood interest holders what they've shared in the process?
- How can you create a transparent system of vetting and communicating influence of interest holders' ideas on planning actions?

Funders

- How can your funding approach encourage process leaders to actively gather and respond to ideas from neighborhood interest holders?
- How can you tell that consultants and government representatives are intentional about the way resident input is used in a planning process?
- What tools or practices can you leverage from previous efforts to bolster the feedback loop in this process?

Local Goverment

- What current mechanisms of yours can be leveraged to share out what is heard in the planning process?
- What tools or practices can you leverage from previous efforts to bolster the feedback loop in this process?
- How will you help connect interest holders with non-planning concerns or needs voiced in the process to the appropriate responder?

#17

CONSISTENTLY EVALUATE

We pause frequently to see if we are getting the results we expect

When embarking on a resident-led planning process, you may run into situations that are completely unexpected. Or in an unlikely instance, you may see that things are going exactly as you planned. Creating access will require residents and interest holders to be nimble and flexible as situations and objectives change. By using tools and setting up processes to evaluate where you've been, you can identify what works and what doesn't work, creating room to improve. Actions are strengthened by repetition. When creating a process, slightly tweaking it each time, you exponentially apply what you learn. This practice can be referred to as iteration and always involves evaluating an action you took. Introducing new participants to the process offers a natural point to evaluate how the process is going as they bring fresh perspectives and unique questions. Establishing a rhythm and measures for success can allow you to track your progress.

weCollab Highlight

Throughout the weCollab process, we would pause to do a gut check on important topics. For example, when new Steering Committee members joined just before getting into a heavy period of group decision making, we called each Steering Committee member to see how they were feeling about the process overall. We asked if anything was unclear and their expectations for how they would be involved in the next phase. Another example was when the Steering Committee had to choose administrative support for the implementation phase of their plan. We asked Steering Committee members to complete a one-question survey to get a sense of how much of the group was in agreement before and after the discussion of the topic. This ongoing evaluation allowed us to understand how productive conversations had been on the group's ability to collaborate and decide on different issues.

Practice Exercises

With any decision you make in the process, ask: Who is impacted by the decisions we are making? How are they impacted? Is this impact aligned with the current neighborhood's desired outcomes and vision?

Reflection Prompts

Identify what signals indicate success for your planning effort.

Residents

- What does it look and feel like to know you have made progress in your planning process?
- How do you know if your neighbors and other interest holders are aware of progress in the planning process?
- What milestones and benchmarks are important to you in completing your neighborhood plan?

Neighborhood-Based Orgs

- Where do your indicators of success come from and how often are they evaluated? How much influence did residents have in these indicators?
- In what ways can you tell if neighborhood planning process initiatives and activities are successful to the residents?
- What outcomes or key performance indicators can you measure to determine success throughout the planning process?

Consultants

- How often do you reflect on and evaluate the work being done for your clients? What forms of feedback do you receive and how do you know when activities are successful or not?
- What are some common trends in feedback you receive from clients and interest holders about your work in their neighborhoods? What signals might tell you it may be time to check-in with them?
- Beyond your contract, what outcomes or metrics can you measure or add to determine how accurately and thoroughly you are supporting the residents' vision?

Funders

- How often do you collect feedback from your funding activities? What forms of feedback do you receive and how do you know when activities are successful or not?
- What are some common trends you notice in reports or feedback you receive about your funding activities in resident-led planning? How do you know it may be time to check-in with your funded partners?
- What outcomes or key performance indicators can you measure or add to determine how closely the resident's vision for their neighborhood is being achieved?

Local Goverment

- How often do you reflect on and evaluate the work being done for neighborhoods you serve? What forms of feedback do you receive and how do you know when activities are successful or not?
- What are some common trends in feedback you receive from clients and interest holders about your work in their neighborhoods? What signals might tell you it may be time to check-in with them?
- Beyond concrete outcomes of land use and zoning adjustments, what outcomes or metrics can you measure or add to determine how accurately and thoroughly you are supporting residents' visions for their neighborhoods?

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UPSKILL

PLAYS IN THIS SECTION

#18 Lean In

#19 Be Observant

#20 Make Decisions Together

#21 Track Decisions

Resident-Led
NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING
POWERBOOK

#18

LEAN IN

We are prepared to shift our mindset, be flexible, and learn new skills to orient ourselves to resident leadership.

Choosing to adapt to a situation instead of resisting can be referred to as leaning in. A resident-led neighborhood planning process is not often linear or straightforward and often responds to new needs and desires. Interest holders may need to move and show up in ways they are not accustomed to or that may even be outside their assigned scope. This level of flexibility helps ensure gaps are closed and activities progress. In group or collaborative processes, where many voices drive the decisions being made, it takes an intentional approach to ensure direction surfaces from the crowd.

> *"They learned to simplify terms that may be everyday language to them in their field but that was new or unfamiliar to the everyday person"*

– Vontriece McDowell, Former weCollab Neighborhood Solidarity Partner (NSP)

weCollab Highlight

YARD & Co., the planning partner, leaned into resident leadership during the weCollab planning process. Early on, YARD gave a presentation to the Steering Committee on ways to brand the planning effort to wider audiences. Steering Committee members pushed back, questioning why this activity was being prioritized over tangible issues.

Recognizing the community wanted to fully lead in choosing priorities and goals for development in their neighborhood, YARD adjusted their approach, stepping back from directing every step and allowing residents to guide them. A key practice in this approach was simplifying technical language so residents could meaningfully communicate, discuss, and decide on matters.

When gathering feedback, YARD had to be mindful of the jargon they might typically use as planners. “De-jargoning became part of our Quality Assurance/Quality Control. We would have a layman review [our documents] for consistency in accessible language early on,” said Joe from YARD. While more challenging, this approach gave residents an avenue to lead and direct the process, using power they are often denied. If YARD had not leaned into resident leadership, the outcomes may not have reflected residents' needs.

Practice Exercises

Refer back to your roles and job descriptions from the earlier plays (Define Scope + Scale, Define Resident-led, Staffing & Roles, and Partnerships). List all the functions from these various exercises. In another column, list the skills, resources, and strengths that individuals or organizations in your neighborhood have. Are there gaps between the functions needed and strengths of people and organizations in the neighborhood? What might it look like to start filling some of those gaps?

Powerbook References

Play #1: Define Scope + Scale

Play #3: Define Resident-Led

Play #5: Staffing + Roles

Play #6: Partnerships

Reflection Prompts

Assess what makes you and your team special and where you can step up to meet emerging needs.

Residents

- What unique skills and interests do you have that could support your neighborhood planning process?
- What common needs among your neighbors are emerging that don't yet have a resource or solution?
- As a resident, what do you uniquely bring to the table?

Neighborhood-Based Orgs

- What unique role do you play in the process? How does it compare to intrinsic strengths your organization has?
- What programming or engagement needs are emerging from the planning process that may not already be assigned a resource or solution?
- In what ways can you show up outside of your assigned role to demonstrate your unique skills and capabilities?

Consultants

- Beyond offering technical assistance and planning expertise, what unique capabilities do you have that could contribute to a planning process?
- What expectations do you have of interest holders in the process? Are there any gaps in their performance that you have the capacity to fill?
- How might your unique capabilities suit apparent and emerging needs in the planning process? What shifts might be required to meet those needs?

Funders

- Beyond funding, what unique capabilities do you have that could contribute to the planning process?
- What needs are emerging from the planning process? What interest holders are exhibiting unique capabilities?
- In what ways can you show up outside of providing funding to demonstrate your unique skills and capabilities? What shifts might be required to meet those needs?

Local Goverment

- Outside of departmental functions, what resources, programs, and capabilities do you have or know about that support resident-led neighborhood planning? ... (continued on next page)
- What roles do you see interest holders playing that might appear unconventional?
- In what ways can you apply your capabilities and resources to or remove barriers from neighborhood planning processes that may at first seem unconventional?

#19

BE OBSERVANT

We exercise the art and skill of observation to navigate our neighborhood planning process well.

Someone's tone, nonverbal signals, and body language are just as important as what they may say or do. Silence speaks volumes and doesn't always indicate agreement or disagreement. Someone who is quiet in a meeting may be confused about the discussion, overwhelmed by personal issues, or simply listening to glean information without much participation. We learned there are lots of insights in listening and watching how people engage and show up in discussions. Being aware and watchful of the many ways your collaborators are communicating with your group is a practice for everyone to use, though if you have a designated discussion facilitator, they can play a critical role in highlighting and bringing out what others might miss or disregard.

weCollab Highlight

Early on, we noticed silence and retreat from usually engaged steering committee members. Nonverbal cues like looks, throat clearing, or crossed arms hinted at unspoken feelings. To address this, consultant Whitney Benns observed group interactions during meetings for signs of alignment, discord, and joy. She would share her observations and invite the group into a safe space to revisit moments when all that needed to be said wasn't expressed. Whitney emphasized, "Addressing these issues prevented further challenges and allowed everyone to fully engage in the work." Without pausing to address tension we observed and crafting ways forward, the process could have been much more taxing. Sometimes conversations called for a one-on-one outside of the group setting. Long-standing issues and historical harm may have continued to snowball into more damaging conflict. Being observant allows you to face issues at hand and address them, so people feel comfortable continuing to bring their full selves to the work.

Online References

Audio: Hear from Whitney Benns on her practice of one-on-ones with residents

Powerbook References

Play #5: Staffing and Roles

Practice Exercises

In the next neighborhood meeting, watch people's body language, when they seem to perk up, become distracted, or disengage. Where do you notice tension? Where does there appear to be agreement or harmony? Do you notice a pattern of reactions to certain topics, phrases, or speakers? In your personal meeting notes, try to jot down the non-verbal signs (example: Stacy and Doug were the only ones who didn't say anything on this topic) so you can build up your own understanding of your group's "language."

Reflection Prompts

Use these questions to sharpen your awareness in group dynamics to support your planning process.

Residents

- How do you show up when you're excited or inspired by an idea or topic? Where do you feel it in your body?
- What are non-verbal cues you have observed in your group when there is conflict? What about alignment?
- In what ways might you gain clarity about what you observe in a meeting, group activity, community engagement, or presentation?

Neighborhood-Based Orgs

- In past collaborations with residents and interest holders, when you were confident about a proposal, hesitant, or opposed to a specific direction in the process, how was it expressed?
- Beyond what is verbally expressed, how do you know residents are pleased about a proposal or solution compared to when they are not?
- In what ways can you add clarity to different situations in the planning process and invite residents to open up about what they might see?

Consultants

- On past neighborhood planning processes, how did you express when you were confident in your recommendations and aligned with interest holders vs. opposed or misaligned with interest holders?
- Beyond what is verbally expressed, what signals indicate to you a interest holder's position on a certain topic or direction of the process?
- In what ways can you add clarity to topics and phases of the planning process and invite interest holders to open up about what they might see?

Funders

- What nonverbal responses can you identify in yourself or from staff in discussions or interactions with residents?
- How are interest holders responding to investments you make directly in their communities?
- In what ways can you add clarity to different situations in the planning process or invite interest holders to open up about what they might see?

Local Goverment

- In past planning processes, how did you show up in interactions with neighborhood interest holders?
- Keeping in mind interest holders, nonverbal cues and reactions, what do you notice about their behavior at different moments throughout the planning process – when do you notice residents' faces lighting up or heads nodding vs. arms folding, scoffing, or grunting?
- In what ways can you add clarity to different situations in the planning process or invite interest holders to open up about what they might see?

#20

MAKE DECISIONS TOGETHER

We practice skills for building quick consensus and steering discussion toward conclusive decisions.

Making decisions together is probably one of the most important skills a resident-led group can develop. It's also where residents may walk away from the effort if they don't feel heard or don't like the decisions being made. When a decision can affect hundreds or thousands of people in a neighborhood, making decisions that carefully represent the wants and needs of the residents can demonstrate collective power and resident leadership. A resident-led process will put new demands and strain on residents' time and energy so it's helpful to find ways to lessen that burden. Tools for making decisions efficiently is one way to help your group reach its goals with less strain.

It's helpful to establish structures for how the group will discuss complex topics. For example, before a meeting that will require discussion on a multi-layered decision, you may want to break down the decision into smaller parts and distribute a brief survey for quick votes. With varying attendance at some of the meetings, we found it helpful to decide who is a part of the group willing to take ownership of making major decisions by defining a quorum. A quorum is a way to ensure important decision-makers are present before a discussion and decisions are made. It can consist of how many members are present, the percentage of meetings members must attend, or ensuring certain chairs or positions within the committee are present before going to a vote. Methods for group decision making include:

Majority vote: when over half the people present agree, you have a majority vote. In this method, members of the group discuss a decision to be made, loosely identify a proposal, then vote on it.

Surveying: This is similar to casting a vote, just in a written form instead of open discussion. Sometimes this format gives people more space and time to think without the pressure of needing to answer in a group setting. When sent in advance, it also saves time during the meeting where a decision needs to be made.

"Consensus-based group decision making" is a process used by many institutions and organizations in which group members deliberately come to agreement on a decision. It involves introducing and clarifying the issue, discussion, forming a proposal and amending if necessary, then testing for agreement. The proposal process is repeated until all are in agreement. It leaves room for members to raise reservations or stand aside and refine the decision into something everyone can live with.

weCollab Highlight

In Phase III, we faced challenges prompting the introduction of consensus-based decision-making. This approach enabled us to visualize and refine decisions in real-time while addressing members' concerns. It proved to be a valuable tool for effective decision-making.

Practice Exercises

Draw a consensus-based decision-making diagram on a whiteboard or chart paper at your next meeting where you may have hard decisions to make as a group. Read the instructions and track the conversation. Make sticky notes with each member's name and move them along so they can see where they are in the process of the group making a collective decision.

Online References

Consensus-based decision-making diagram (see appendix)

Reflection Prompts

Use these questions to get familiar with how your group might best make decisions together.

Residents

- Which of the decision-making methods described in this play resonate with you?
- Describe the type of decision-making method you think might work for your group. How does it look, sound, and feel?
- What is important to you about how your group builds consensus on minor decisions? What about major decisions with greater impact?

Neighborhood-Based Orgs

- In what ways have you supported resident decision-making in the past?
- What methods have been most effective or well received by residents when building consensus in the past?
- What other exposure and information can you share to help inform resident decision making in the planning process?

Consultants

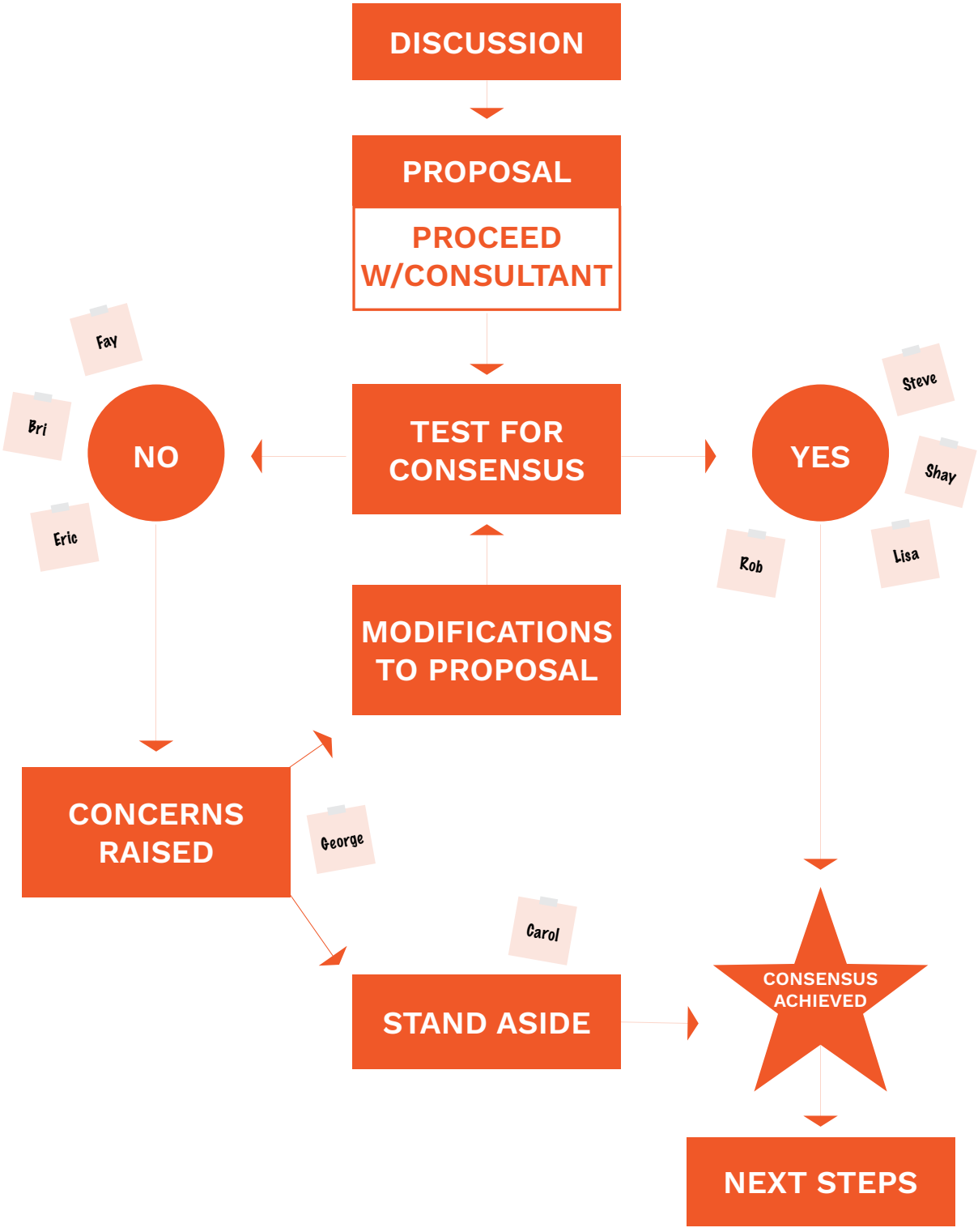
- What decision-making tools or methods have been most effective to your work and building resident consensus in the past?
- In what ways can you tell when consensus has been reached? How do residents demonstrate that they understand the effect their decisions have on the planning recommendations it proposes?
- In what ways do you document, hold, and carry resident decisions throughout the neighborhood planning process?

Funders

- What role do you play in helping residents understand decisions to be made and reaching consensus?
- In what ways can you tell when consensus has been reached?
- What tools and resources can you offer to support neighborhood interest holders in making decisions?

Local Goverment

- In what phases of the process can you help residents understand decisions that must be made? What role do you play in helping residents reach consensus?
- In what ways can you tell when consensus has been reached about a certain topic or action in a neighborhood planning process?
- What practices and procedures get used in governmental decision-making that might easily lend themselves to neighborhood planning?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TEST FOR CONSENSUS
NO
Fay
Bri
Eric
YES
Steve
Shay
Lisa
Rob
MODIFICATIONS TO PROPOSAL
CONCERNS RAISED
George
Carol
STAND ASIDE
CONSENSUS ACHIEVED
NEXT STEPS

#21

TRACK DECISIONS

We move our group forward by building on each decision we make.

In multi-year planning, maintaining a clear record is vital to prevent revisiting resolved matters. A record ensures forward-moving discussions and helps in decision-making. There are various practices for creating and maintaining a record:

Spreadsheet: Use it for tracking attendance, voting privileges, and adherence to agreed-upon guidelines. It provides a clear overview of where everyone stands and who has represented the group's decisions.

Tracking document: Similar to running notes, update it after each meeting, with a separate column for recording decisions. Sync it with the meeting agenda for easy reference, allowing you to see discussion items and decisions side by side.

Meeting Notes: These are downloadable and printable as Word documents. They include the date, attendees, and topics discussed. Some may prefer printed copies for later reference.

Survey: Transform group decisions into online surveys or printable questionnaires. These can be sent in advance to prepare attendees for discussion or as a follow-up to record attendees' votes. Sharing results helps track decision rationale.

weCollab Highlight

In our multi-year volunteer effort, not all Steering Committee members attended every meeting. Naturally, members who missed a previous meeting would have questions in the present meeting that would sometimes lead to rehashing of ideas and decision points, temporarily stalling the group's progress. There was a tendency to repeat discussions which would sometimes frustrate those who attended meetings more often. To address this, we began summarizing recent work at each meeting using visual slides to highlight key points and decisions from the previous meeting. This practice benefited absent members and streamlined our discussions.

Powerbook References

Decision Tracking document
(see appendix)

Practice Exercises

Designate someone from your group to record who attends each meeting. When something comes to a vote, record the proposed decision and results of the vote. To get started, download an attendance and voting template that you can use digitally or print.

Reflection Prompts

Use these questions to strengthen your decision-tracking practices.

Residents

- What facts or progress in the planning process need reminders? Milestones? Meeting dates? Resident engagements?
- How do you best retain information and decisions made by a group – through writing? Reading? Or a conversation with a trusted neighbor?
- What factors or considerations are most critical to your current group decisions?

Neighborhood-Based Orgs

- What method do you use to remember decisions residents recently made?
- What's your workflow between resident feedback and staff implementation on planning-related issues?
- How do you make your staff aware of decisions that affect their work or your organization's support of resident-led efforts?

Consultants

- Where else can you document resident decisions throughout the process outside of finished plan deliverables?
- How can you share progress with other partners in an easily digestible way, for example in a summary after each milestone?
- What is your workflow for incorporating resident feedback into your work?

Funders

- How can you most efficiently facilitate and fund community members in recording their decisions?
- Where do you record decisions residents have made that affect the process?
- How does your staff stay grounded in the now and the future of the work you fund?

Local Goverment

- What newsletters or digests do you need to be a part of to stay informed of movements in neighborhood planning efforts?
- What process do you use for residents making decisions on things happening in their neighborhood? How does it track with their history in the neighborhood?
- How do resident decisions about their neighborhood reflect in your budgets for these areas?

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ENDURE BEYOND

PLAYS IN THIS SECTION

#22 Remember + Reflect

#23 Practice Power Perspectives

#24 Identify Warning Signs

#25 Celebrate + Invite Joy

Resident-Led
NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING
POWERBOOK

#22

REMEMBER + REFLECT

We frequently ground ourselves in our current place within the bigger picture.

A lengthy planning process with endless possibilities for neighborhood transformation can be overwhelming. Feelings of overwhelm can quickly lead to exhaustion and frustration by all the considerations and actions the group has to take. To stay motivated, keep the end goal in mind and acknowledge your accomplishments. Repetition of where you are in the process and milestones you have achieved helps keep a healthy perspective on the progress you've made and where you are going. Keeping the end in mind while acknowledging what you have accomplished to-date can help your group stay centered, energized, and encouraged to press on.

weCollab Highlight

As we neared the halfway point in the planning process, the Steering Committee engaged in a "story harvesting" process so members could reflect on their work and involvement to-date. In the story harvest, folks shared feeling burned out and overwhelmed. One learning that came out of story harvesting was that "building consensus on important topics while frequently celebrating the past unites and strengthens the committee." From this learning, we decided to add a segment to the beginning of each meeting that included a recap of recent wins and events, recent decisions made, and the process timeline so members could see where they've been, where they are, and where they're going in the process. Remembering how far they had come affirmed the Steering Committee members in their power and know-how while motivating them to see the process through to completion – one step at a time.

Practice Exercises

Tell stories from your experience of the process with the planning committee at different stages.

Use these questions to get started:

- At what point has planning been easy?
- What points were challenging?
- What made it shift?
- What could you confidently talk about and share with others outside the project?
- What topics are confusing to you or do you find complex?
- What feelings have you experienced throughout the process?
- What caused them?

Reflection Prompts

Use these questions to help ground yourself in the present while keeping an eye on the future and applying all you've learned from the past.

Residents

- What were the last 3 milestones you can recall that had a major impact on your planning process?
- Think about all you've gone through as a group to get to where you are today. How does that make you feel?
- Do you need clarity about the end goal and results of the planning process? What questions might you ask?

Funders

- How do you acknowledge resident-led work that you fund as it happens?
- In what ways do you capture and reflect back milestones and learnings to funded partners involved and doing the work?
- In what ways can you express the major milestones and wins of initiatives you fund to a broader audience that could further support the work?

Neighborhood-Based Orgs

- In what ways do you ground yourself in the present work to be done with a peripheral view on past wins and upcoming goals?
- In what ways can you help interest holders understand the overall arc of the planning process and their part in it?
- How can you regularly remind the planning team of the ultimate vision you are all working toward?

Local Goverment

- Though you may be accustomed to managing timelines and measuring progress, how do you ground yourself in the current work?
- How can you identify different interest holders' perspectives of where they are in the planning process? Is their perception aligned with the realities of the process?
- What milestones can you share with interest holders to contribute to their understanding of the planning process from a government perspective?

Consultants

- Though you may be accustomed to managing timelines and measuring progress, how do you ground yourself in the current work?
- How do you incorporate interest holder reflections on the process itself into your work?
- How can you concisely communicate the big picture of the planning process to your clients, highlighting where you've been, where you are, and where you're going? What cadence of communication would be helpful to keep everyone on the same page?

#23

PRACTICE POWER PERSPECTIVES

We push through mental barriers with powerful mindset shifts.

What We Learned

Resident-led neighborhood planning involves shifting decision-making power from external forces to residents. Sustaining this approach requires multiple shifts. Especially in communities that have been systematically neglected for generations, envisioning success is challenging.

To foster imagination, celebrate residents' past work, empower them to lead outreach efforts, and demystify the process of initiating neighborhood activity. Address belief barriers by equipping residents with tools, allowing them to realize their potential through small victories, overcoming doubt and fear, and increasing their confidence in their ability to succeed.

weCollab Highlight

In weCollab's planning process, we embraced a "Dream Big, Start Small" theme. Residents emphasized the need for small, simple investments that enhance their daily lives and existing community spaces, like improving street and park lighting, adding speed humps, and activating parks with markets and recreational activities. Tackling these small wins demonstrates the practicality of initiatives in the plan and reinforces residents' belief in their capacity to shape their neighborhood.

Practice Exercises

Brainstorm some common negative narratives and perceptions around development in your neighborhood. What message can you send to counter this narrative? Draft a script incorporating this message to use at your next outreach opportunity.

Here’s an example from the weCollab planning process: Residents would say, “Why have I never heard of your neighborhood plan?” Steering Committee Members would respond: “I’m not sure, but welcome to the party!”

Reflection Prompts

Uncover your beliefs about power-holders in your neighborhood or process and where they may need to shift.

Residents

- Who do you perceive has the most power in initiating change in your neighborhood?
- What entities do you think other interest holders believe hold the most power in initiating change in your neighborhood?
- How often do you focus on what you're accomplishing versus the work it takes or will take to get there?

Neighborhood-Based Orgs

- How do you view the distribution of power among interest holders in your neighborhood, including residents? Does this align with actual demonstrations of power by different groups?
- What does it look like to you when a interest holder successfully wields their power? / How do you think other neighborhood interest holders view their power? Is it aligned with the reality of what they are capable of with their resources and position?
- How might you shift your beliefs about who holds power in the neighborhoods you serve to align it with what's really possible?

Consultants

- What do you believe about the contributions of residents to the work of neighborhood planning?
- What does it look like to you when interest holders successfully wield their power? / In what ways do neighborhood interest holders demonstrate their perceived or actual power?
- What shifts might you need to make in how you think to dignify residents' contributions to your planning work?

Funders

- Who holds power in neighborhoods you might work in or fund? Does this align with what people perceive as power?
- What does it look and sound like when funded partners successfully wield their power? / What are beliefs among interest holders in the neighborhoods you serve about who holds power and how that power is demonstrated?
- In what ways could your funding challenge the boundaries of what residents are typically expected to do or capable of in your neighborhood planning work? Where can you seed more power to residents?

Local Goverment

- How do you perceive power in the neighborhoods you serve? What are some real demonstrations of power that you have observed in your work?
- What does it look like to you when a neighborhood interest holder successfully wields their power? / How do residents and interest holders demonstrate their understanding of who holds power in their neighborhood?
- In what ways can you demonstrate that resident voice and contributions to neighborhood planning have a real impact on your work and decisions?

#24

IDENTIFY WARNING SIGNS

We identify warning signs and take action to prevent burnout.

We made adjustments to keep the process dynamic when we observed the following signs of burnout:

- the same people consistently engaged from one phase to another
- reduced attendance or silence at meetings
- interest holder meetings without clear outcomes

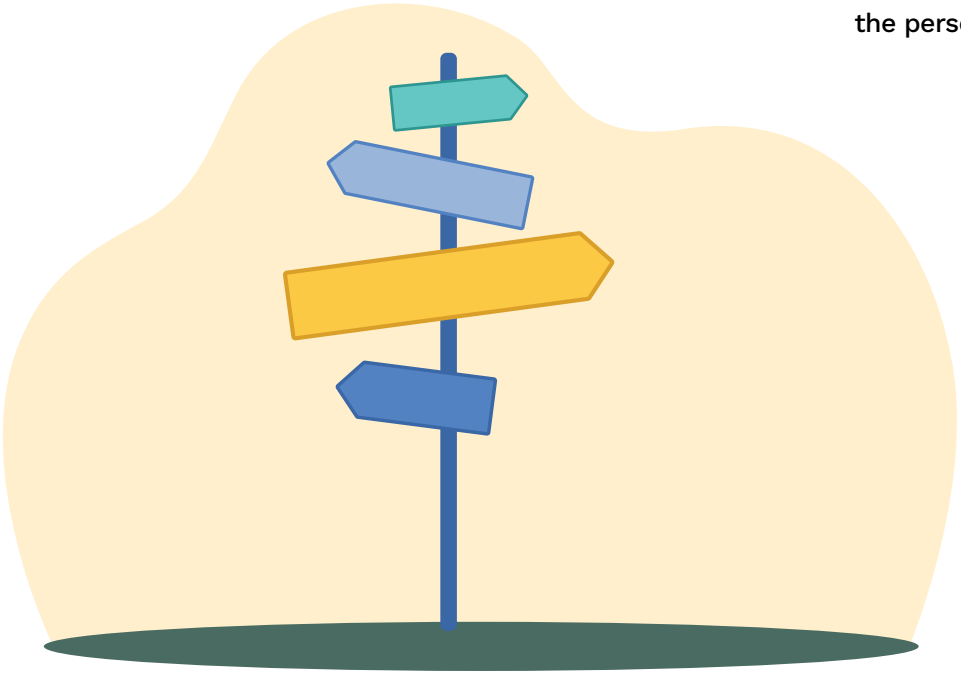
Balancing the type of work or relationships with everyone's time and talent helps maintain momentum and get the best use of everyone's time and energy. Once residents are engaged across all demographics and have their common ground for the work established, getting feedback on planning concepts and drafting a plan becomes much easier.

weCollab Highlight

Addressing frustrations and misunderstandings was crucial during Steering Committee meetings. A "don't leave in the gray" working agreement encouraged participants to communicate openly and seek clarity.

Practice Exercises

Select 2 volunteers to call all the members of your leadership group one-on-one. Note any major concerns they have or adjustments that can be made to keep everyone active. See how it worked for us in the play "consistently evaluate." Track attendance at meetings and look for patterns of missed attendance. Reach out when it's appropriate to see how to keep the person engaged.



Reflection Prompts

Use these questions to equip you and your team to endure the challenges of a planning process.

Residents

- How can you tell if you are “in the gray” on something or feeling de-energized by or unmotivated about the planning process?
- How can you tell if others are losing motivation or interest in the planning process?
- What’s the one thing keeping you committed to the process? How can you remind yourself of this when the work gets tough?

Neighborhood-Based Orgs

- How can you tell if you or any of your staff supporting a planning process are “in the gray” on something or losing energy and motivation in the process?
- What signals have you noticed in the past before a interest holder made a shift in their commitment level, behavior, or involvement?
- In the past, what has helped you re-engage after a decline in energy or motivation and made your work in neighborhood planning feel worthwhile?

Consultants

- How can you tell when you or your staff might be losing steam on a project?
- What signals have you noticed from interest holders that they might be unclear about something or losing will for the process?
- In your experience, what has helped you or your team and clients to stay engaged after showing signs of waning willpower?

Funders

- How can you tell if you or any of your staff supporting a planning process are “in the gray” on something or losing energy and motivation in the process?
- What signals have you noticed in the past before a interest holder made a shift in their commitment level, behavior, or involvement?
- How can you help shift your or interest holders energy back to a place of progress and dedication after a lull in engagement?

Local Goverment

- How can you tell when you or your staff might be losing steam on a project or planning process?
- What signals have you noticed from interest holders that they might be unclear about something or losing will for the process?
- In your experience, what has helped you or your team and neighborhood interest holders you serve to stay engaged after showing signs of waning willpower?

#25

CELEBRATE + INVITE JOY

We celebrate every win and endure the planning process with JOY.

In difficult work, it is important to find the things that bring you and your group joy to sustain you through the challenges. It can be easy to forget all you have overcome when new or more difficult challenges arise. Making space for laughter and incorporating play in everything you do can make the work more enjoyable and fulfilling. Also, setting goals that give you reason to work hard and celebrating when you reach those goals can give you and your team sustaining joy.

weCollab Highlight

weCollab embraces fun and chose a planning partner, YARD, that got the memo. When YARD visited St. Louis, they often met the Steering Committee members and staff for dinner at restaurants, once even gathering in a residents' garden. As the process intensified, we started meetings with music and included a "celebrate your wins" segment to share success stories like community event turnouts, smooth partnerships, updates on survey responses and new milestones in the planning process. Celebrating these wins allowed residents to share what was keeping them excited and motivated about the work. YARD even submitted the weCollab plan to the Charter awards given by the Congress for New Urbanism, and the plan won!

Steering Committee members attended the award ceremony in Charlotte, North Carolina, and the achievement was covered by local news and recognized by the State of Missouri, Mayor of the City of St. Louis, and the Board of Aldermen. **Nothing is too small to celebrate** and stay encouraged in this work.

Practice Exercises

Throughout your process, check often for accomplishments of your group and recognize where you are doing things that are against the "status quo" in your neighborhood or city. Make sure to celebrate those areas where you push the boundaries and innovate. What might seem small is still worth celebrating.

While awards don't make a plan more or less successful, challenge your group to find a neighborhood plan competition and submit your plan. This can inspire your group about what to achieve and expose your work to a wider audience that may be able to support it. Here are a few organizations to start with: Congress for New Urbanism (CNU) Charter Awards, Urban Land Institute, American Planning Association, the National Organization of Minority Architects, American Institute of Architects, The Plan Award.

Online References

Video: Valerie reflects on what it was like to receive an award from the Charter for New Urbanism as she leads her neighbors in singing the weCollab jingle she wrote.

Reflection Prompts

Use these questions to remind you and your team to enjoy the process!

Residents

- What fun traditions do you have with your neighbors?
- What brings people together in your neighborhood?
- In what ways might you encourage your planning team to come together for leisure and not related to planning work?

Neighborhood-Based Orgs

- What history do you have in the planning process that motivates you to keep going?
- What does it look like for all the interest holders in a planning process to champion and celebrate it?
- In what ways do you or can you start celebrating resident work?

Consultants

- What about your work makes you proud and grateful to support neighborhood planning?
- What types of activities and experiences seemed to have brought residents and interest holders joy throughout the planning process?
- How can you demonstrate the value of resident-led planning to a broader regional or national audience, encouraging other places or clients to engage in the practice of resident-led planning?

Funders

- What does it look like for you and your team to celebrate your work in neighborhood planning processes?
- What types of activities and experiences seemed to have brought residents and interest holders joy throughout the planning process?
- How can you elevate the success of the planning work among your networks?

Local Goverment

- What about your work makes you proud and grateful to support neighborhood planning?
- What types of activities and experiences seemed to have brought residents and interest holders joy in past planning processes?
- How can you demonstrate the value of resident-led planning throughout your departments and regionally?

STAY ENGAGED

If you'd like regular updates on the *Resident-led Neighborhood Planning Powerbook*, please sign up for updates on our website: **investstl.org/newsletter**.

If you have direct questions or feedback about the initiative, contact: **info@investstl.org**.

For media inquiries, please contact: **apotter@investstl.org**.

ABOUT INVEST STL

We're dedicated to shifting the St. Louis Region's approach to neighborhood development.

OUR MISSION

Invest STL facilitates investment in the power of people and their neighborhoods to develop communities of justice and opportunity in places that continue to endure the legacy of systemic anti-Black racism.

OUR INVESTMENT AREAS

- Neighborhood Investing
- System Investing
- Influencing Policies + Decision-making
- Reframing Narratives

OUR 20-YEAR THEORY OF CHANGE

Our 20-Year Theory of Change focuses our resources and energy to build a thriving ecosystem of leaders, organizations, and neighborhoods to deliver on this vision in one generation and sunset Invest STL by 2042.

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APPENDIX

Resources to support the resident-led planning process.

- Pre-Planning Tactics Checklist
- Planning + Engagement Tactics Checklist
- Drafting + Adoption Tactics Checklist
- Practice Exercises
- Audience Engagement Check
- Fillable Decision Tracker (see Play #21: Tracking Decisions)
- Fillable Attendance + Vote Tracker (see Play #21: Tracking Decisions)
- Staff Job Descriptions (see Play #5: Staffing & Roles)
- Volunteer Roles +Responsibilities in Engagement (see Phase 2 Tactics)
- Fillable Organization Chart (see Phase 3 Tactics)
- Resident-Led Planning Key Actions (see Play #3: Define Resident-Led)
- Consensus-based decision-making diagram

CITATIONS

(Jordan, 2007) CES Institute, https://www.cesinstitute.ca/how-engagement-different-outreach, accessed Dec. 2025

(Fillet, 2025) Go Vocal, formerly CitizenLab, www.govocal.com/blog/differencecommunity-engagement-community-development, accessed May 2023

PHASE 1 TACTICS CHECKLIST

PRE-PLANNING (estimated 12-18 months)

Pre-planning is the phase before engagement with the neighborhood really starts and planning gets underway. It mostly consists of the three following activities:

1. **Building solidarity** among resident leaders, partners, and collaborators.
2. **Taking inventory** of where the neighborhood currently is, identifying strengths and weaknesses, and defining its goals.
3. **Raising awareness** of the common needs, leadership opportunities, and outlook for the process.

It can take as little as 6 months, or as long as 18 months for this phase depending on how organized your neighborhood is already. We have outlined these as steps and as a checklist for your process.

View the resources and Plays referenced for more information about how to complete the task:

- ☐ Recruit and organize the group of residents that will lead the planning effort & make decisions. (See Plays #1 and #8)
    - ☐ Decide what the various roles are within the planning effort. This may include creating job descriptions, an org chart, and neighborhood system map. (See Plays #3 and #5)
    - ☐ Create a way to notify residents of the opportunity. For example, you may mail a letter with a “call-to-action” to residents in the neighborhood. (See Play #2)
    - ☐ Create a recruitment strategy and selection process. Perhaps create an application and have other residents review the applications to choose the best candidates. (See Play #2)
- ☐ Inventory the strengths of your neighborhood and people. (See Plays #1 and #8)
- ☐ Select a visual identity (like a brand logo & colors) that the neighborhood will connect with. (See Play #1)
- ☐ Establish a rhythm of meetings for the group that will lead and govern the process - this can be weekly, every other week, or monthly. Ensure the meetings are frequent enough so that information is not lost over time, but not so frequent that they become redundant or work is not able to commence between them. This frequency may change throughout the process depending on the work being done. (See Play #1)
- ☐ Set an annual calendar of events you want to hold around issues the neighborhood faces and how residents can get involved. (See Play #1)
- ☐ Collect as much information as you can about how your neighborhood works - What groups exist? What do they do? (See Plays #1 and #8)
- ☐ Research and understand your local processes and requirements for a planning process and neighborhood plan. This can sometimes include engagement requirements, timing, category/type, and format. Solicit technical assistance from the local government to help with anything you don’t understand as well as providing details about the requirements. (See Plays #1 and #6)
- ☐ Recruit local organizations and stakeholders to contribute feedback around the mission of the plan effort in the upcoming phases. (See Plays #6 and #8)

PHASE 1 TACTICS, continued

- [ ] Share the proposed project timeline and key points where they can contribute. (See Play #1)
- [ ] Source funding & partnerships. (See Plays #6 and #8)
- [ ] Establish up front where you will house information and tracking of the process, i.e. website, social media page, google group, recorded phone calls, or physical noticeboard. (See Play #2)
    - [ ] Keep in mind the ways your community best interacts with information and make it accessible to your neighbors. (See Play #14)
    - [ ] Delegate someone to manage the information and keep it up to date. (See Plays #3 and #5)
- [ ] Establish consistent communication with residents about who you are and what you are doing (i.e. a monthly or quarterly mailer, social media, email newsletter, etc.). (See Plays #10 and #13)

PHASE 2 TACTICS CHECKLIST

PLANNING + ENGAGEMENT (estimated 6-12 months)

This phase contains most of the activity to collect the information, insight, and resident voice that fuels the plan.
You will want to get all the pieces in place to start the engagement and planning process to make it a success! Follow these steps to ensure you don't miss anything.

- ☐ Hire technical consultants needed to create the plan. (See Plays #3, #4, and #6)
- ☐ Share inventory and neighborhood infrastructure information with the consultants. (See Play #7)
- ☐ Engage city officials to walk alongside the plan development process to stay informed and advise on their expectations. (See Plays #6 and #7)
- ☐ Evaluate your objectives with consultant expertise. (See Play #16)
- ☐ Decide the areas of work and what the roles and responsibilities are, for example: engagement and planning events, purchasing, creating surveys, administrative tasks, marketing, and door-to-door outreach to name a few. (See Plays #1, #5, and Roles + Responsibilities template)
- ☐ Recruit volunteers and establish volunteer work areas and pipelines. (See Plays #5, #7, and #14)
    - ☐ Consider paying dedicated residents as neighborhood ambassadors to help with surveys and events (See Plays #4, #5, and #13)
- ☐ Gather community insight and feedback (See Plays #13, #14, and #15)
- ☐ Consider creating Surveys or interactive maps to collect community feedback (See Plays #2 and #13)

PHASE 3 TACTICS CHECKLIST

PLAN DRAFTING + ADOPTION (estimated 6-8 months)

Major activities for this phase include reviewing drafts of the plan document, revisiting your locality's process and requirements, and submitting the plan for adoption. A lot of times, the consultant really owns this process as they navigate the technicalities of urban planning. However, it is still important for residents to get an understanding of how feedback is being applied and expressed in solutions and proposals and hold everyone accountable to the feedback of the community. This phase can be fairly swift if a strong foundation is laid in Phases 1 and 2.

- ☐ Residents guide consultant recommendations and draft a plan. (See Play #10)
- ☐ Pull together stakeholders and consultants as needed to review plan recommendations, consent, and offer insight. (See Plays #7 and #20)
- ☐ Develop an action implementation matrix with priorities for timeline & key partners. (See Plays #3 and #4)
- ☐ Revisit your local planning processes and requirements. (See Play #1)
- ☐ Submit the plan following your city's requirements. (See Play #25)
- ☐ Outline what resident leadership will look like in plan implementation. (See Play #3)

PRACTICE EXERCISES

This list contains the "Practice Exercises" you will find in each section. You don't have to complete them in order. Track which actions you complete as you move through your process.

FIND COMMON GROUND:

- ☐ Create a fact sheet about your planning process (See Play #1)
- ☐ Create a binder of priorities and mission of your group (See Play #1)
- ☐ Get to know your neighbors with ice breakers (See Play #2)
- ☐ Complete a Key Actions role & accountability chart (See Play #3 + template)

SET STRUCTURES:

- ☐ Establish accountability checkpoints multiple times per year (See Play #4)
- ☐ Create job descriptions for staff you may need (See Play #5 + template)
- ☐ Create a partnerships map (See Play #6)
- ☐ Define partner expectations and shared calendar (See Play #7)

FOSTER COLLABORATION:

- ☐ Conduct team building activities (See Play #8)
- ☐ Create working agreements for official meetings (See Play #9)
- ☐ Imagine and evaluate outcomes of different decisions (See Play #10)
- ☐ Inventory skills with a superhero activity (See Play #11)
- ☐ Pause and invite curiosity in a tense moment (See Play #12)

CREATE ACCESS:

- ☐ Raise awareness through mailer and mini-quiz questions (See Play #13)
- ☐ Plan your next engagements (See Play #14)
- ☐ Preview and prepare for meetings (See Play #15)
- ☐ Connect the dots from resident input to action/decisions (See Play #16)
- ☐ Frequently reflect on equity questions (See Play #19)

UPSKILL:

- ☐ Identify gaps in process functions needed (See Play #18)
- ☐ Practice intentional people watching (See Play #19)
- ☐ Try consensus-based decision making. (See Play #20 + template)
- ☐ Take attendance and record votes (See Play #21 + template)

ENDURE BEYOND:

- ☐ Tell stories from your process (See Play #22)
- ☐ Develop positive messaging scripts/guidelines (See Play #23)
- ☐ Call your neighbors by phone to check in (See Play #24)
- ☐ Celebrate innovations and win awards! (See Play #25)

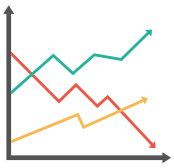
RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT CHECK

PURPOSE

This worksheet offers a framework to assess your own engagement level and that of residents in your neighborhood before and throughout a planning process.

Assessing how active and experienced you are can help you identify the best opportunities for you to get involved in neighborhood planning.

Knowing how you can contribute and how you might best approach other residents helps you better plan, organize, and delegate, while keeping realistic expectations for yourself and others.



ACTIVITY LEVEL

How much activity one participates in: frequency, length of time, duration of consistent service (months, years?), depth of involvement.

EXPERIENCE LEVEL

The depth, length, and breadth of someones exposure to and involvement in resident-led activity.

Keep in mind the differences between these levels to find the type of engagement that might work best for you and your neighbors.

Generally, there are 5 levels of engagement that you might find among residents in a resident-led planning effort. There are recommended approaches for each to bring them deeper into the work.

- **Present:** Someone who lives in the neighborhood but is not aware of or involved in neighborhood improvement activities.
  - Communicate with these residents, informing them of your work so that they become aware. Go door-to-door, hold pop-up information booths, or free and open meet & greets.
- **Aware:** One who has a sense of neighborhood improvement activities but may not have a full understanding and are not active in those activities.
  - Cultivate cooperation among residents that become aware of your work so that your efforts are mutually beneficial. Find easy ways for them to get involved like volunteering at a cleanup or passing out flyers for events.
- **Active:** Involved in neighborhood improvement activities by sharing, learning, or participating, but need direction or guidance to engage or promote activities.
  - Coordinate active residents so their efforts reach toward the collective goals of the neighborhood and resident efforts. Assign or look for a small project or initiative they/you can take ownership of.
- **Influential:** Well-connected residents who influence or encourage others to become aware or participate, directly or indirectly.
  - Collaborate with influential residents to share in the creation and tracking of ideas, processes, activities, and outcomes in a neighborhood planning process.
- **Fully Engaged:** A self-starter who seeks out information and activity, often prioritizing neighborhood improvement activities in their life or work. They have initiated significant work and held long-term commitments in their neighborhood.
  - Champion residents that are fully engaged, supporting their ideas and initiatives, and participating in and promoting the initiatives they lead. Find platforms for their work to have impact toward collective goals.

DECISION TRACKER

See play #21 Tracking Decisions | Upskill

Date	Agenda Items / Discussion	Decisions made

ATTENDANCE + VOTE TRACKING

See play #21 Tracking Decisions | Upskill

Meeting Dates:	MM/DD/YYYY		MM/DD/YYYY		MM/DD/YYYY	
Resident name	Vote	absent	Vote	absent	Vote	absent
		☐		☐		☐
		☐		☐		☐
		☐		☐		☐
		☐		☐		☐
		☐		☐		☐
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STAFF JOB DESCRIPTIONS

For each of the following roles, list the purpose within your planning and implementation effort, responsibilities (there may be subcategories), and qualifications; using the samples below as a guide. Work with your place-based anchor organization to identify adequate compensation and schedule (see Play #5 in Set Structures).

Discussion Facilitator: Ensures everyone is heard and keeps interactions between stakeholders moving toward the resident goals.

Responsibilities might include:

- assisting with outlining session topics and creating and sending agendas
- suggesting group agreements and managing conflict
- summarizing insights from meetings into notes that can be tracked and shared
- affirming when the group is reaching agreement

Skills and qualifications might include:

- background in social work or project management
- strong familiarity and respect within the community or the ability to cultivate it.
- strong active listening skills and empathy for a variety of perspectives and opinions

Process Coordinator: Keeps stakeholders informed, ensures consistency throughout the process, and ensures everyone has what they need when they need it.

Responsibilities might include:

- managing communication
- managing day-to-day operations like scheduling, budgets, timelines, and sourcing materials

Skills and qualifications might include:

- attention to detail
- business administration
- communications

Outreach and Engagement Coordinator: Leverages their deep knowledge of the neighborhood to connect key stakeholders to the planning effort through collaborative outreach efforts.

Responsibilities might include:

- collaborating with consultants on information needed
- planning and marketing events and activities
- managing project budgets

Skills and qualifications might include:

- event planning
- communications

Resident-Led
NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING POWERBOOK

ROLES + RESPONSIBILITIES

Decide who will be a part of your planning effort and what they will do during your engagement phase. Use the following components to think through what you need and how you might recruit residents for the work (see Phase 2 Tactics - Planning + Engagement).

Outline	Introduce the planning effort and what role you need volunteers to fill. You can list the main activities here.
Role Title	Give the role an appealing name relevant to the task.
Skills and experience needed	Should they be outgoing or introverted? Detail-oriented or focused on the big picture? Consider also how long they have been in the neighborhood and how engaged they are. What might they need to know to do this role effectively?
Benefits of their contribution	Share what volunteers could gain by participating in this role. It could be getting to know new neighbors, influencing the vision for the neighborhood, or networking with local officials and organization leaders.
When and Where	Outline the exact time and location, or frequency of dates and locations. If it is an ongoing role, perhaps create a schedule and what you hope volunteers can commit.
Support	Identify who will be the point of contact for the volunteer to get resources, support, training, and out of pocket expenses. Explain how they can get started and who to contact if they have any questions.

Consider using this table to track assignments and progress:

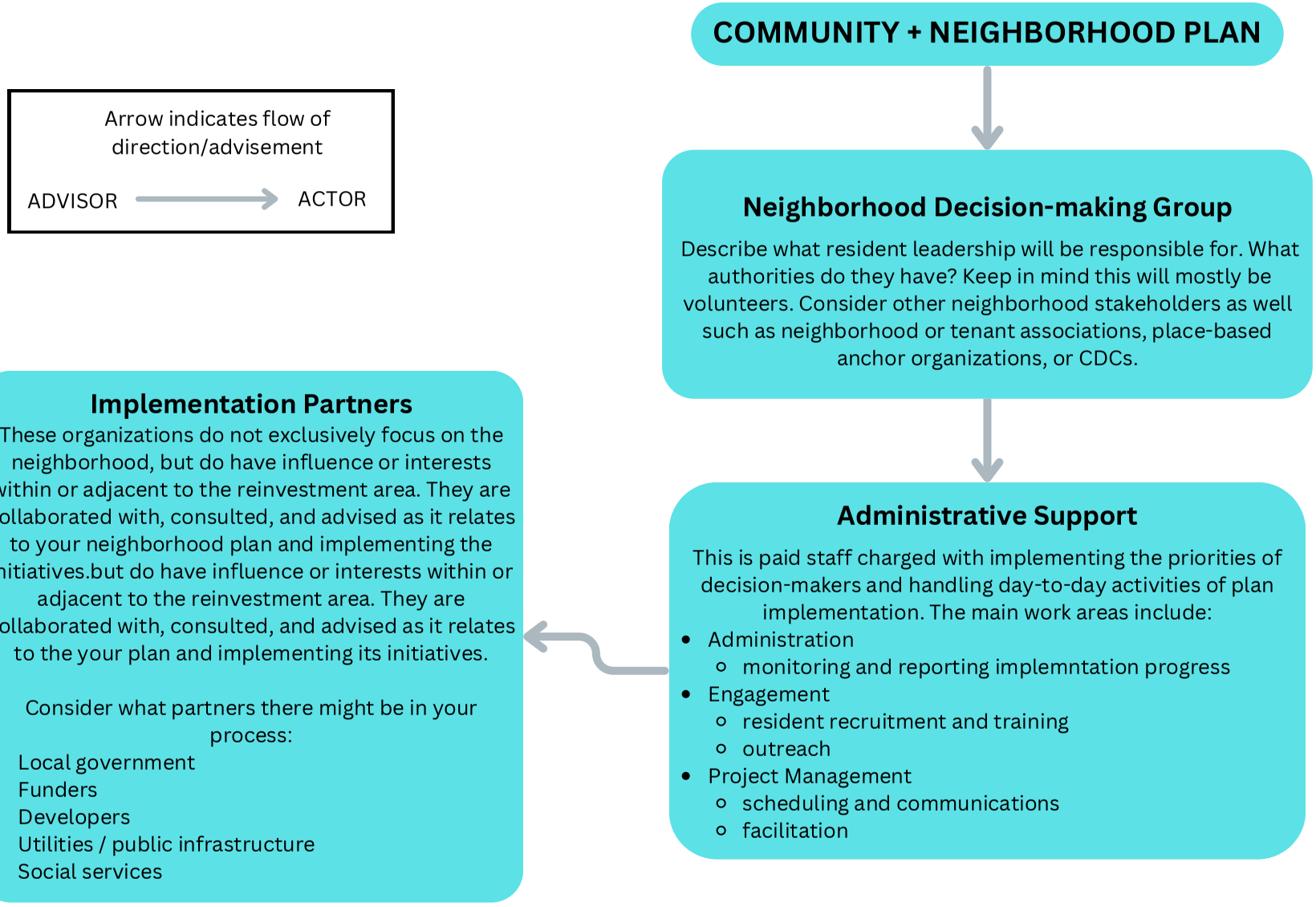
Name	**Task**	**Key Dates**	**Notes**
Kerry	Distribute flyers on 4400 block of Wonder Lane	5/20	2 weeks before first engagement event

INVEST STL

Resident-Led
NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING
POWERBOOK

ORGANIZATION CHART TEMPLATE

The purpose of this organization chart is to identify the entities that will carry out the vision of the plan. How would your group describe this effort? How will you define the decision-making body of residents? How will they be supported and engage with local resources?

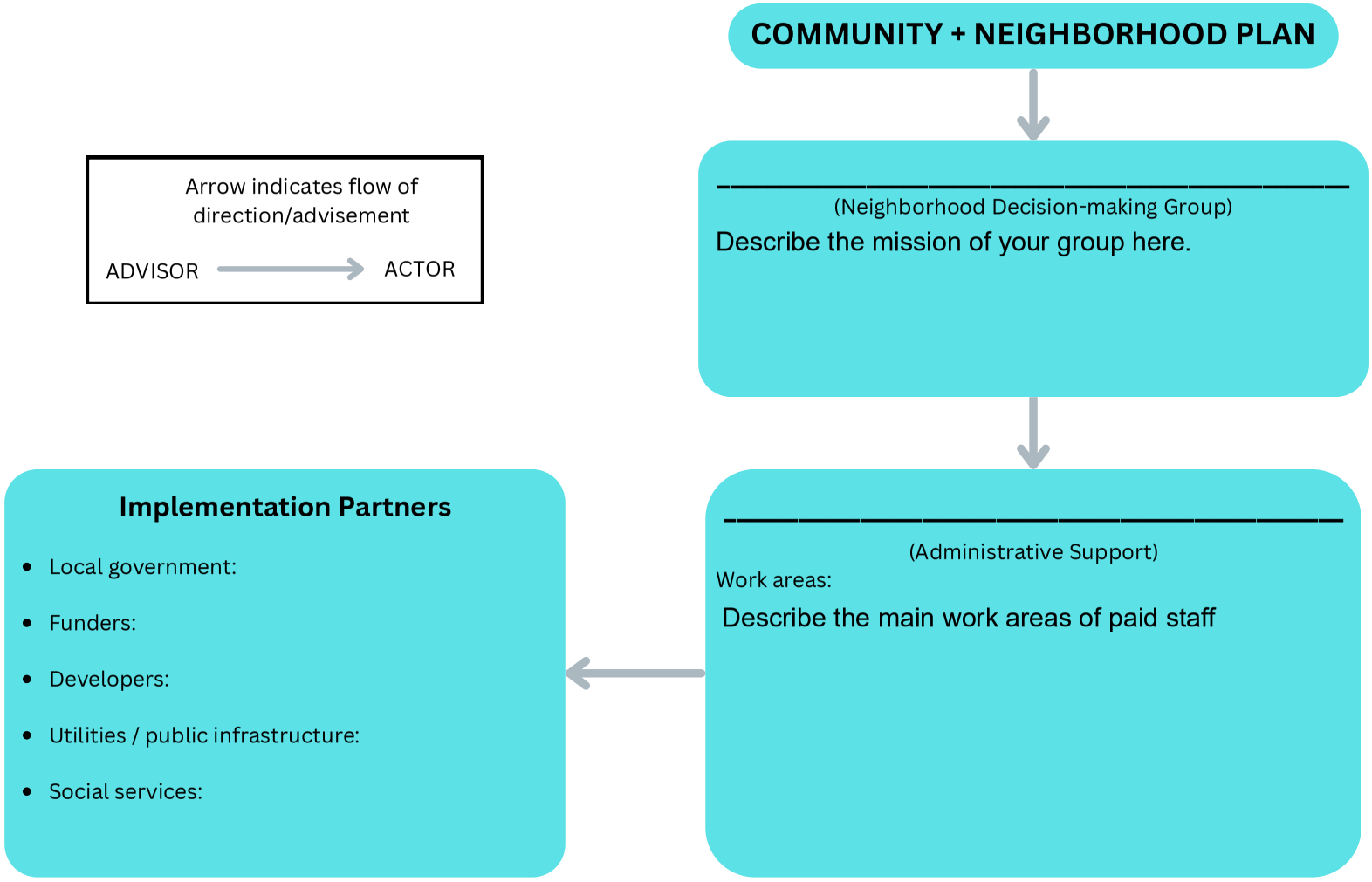


Name of your neighborhood planning effort ORGANIZATION CHART

Purpose statement: _____

_____

_____



DEFINE RESIDENT-LED

For a groups in a planning process or other activities related to the improvement of their neighborhood, defining resident-led begins with residents choosing the roles they want, decisions they want to make, and the level of authority they want to have. Key Actions that take place in a planning process are listed along the left of the chart, while roles that can be played within each action are across the top of the chart. As you fill in the chart, consider the outcomes of your choices; for example: if you decide that your resident planning group will only support or approve most key actions, you may reconsider if you are taking a resident-led approach.

Roles to choose from: **DIRECT** (Most accountability) **IMPLEMENT** (Lead actions based on direction given) **APPROVE** (Final word) **ADVISE** (Significant authority/expertise to influence decision-making) **SUPPORT** (Help as requested from those directing the work)						
Key Actions	Resident Planning Group	Neighborhood	Place-based Partner Org.	Funder	Consultants	Local Government
Coordinating process and actors						
Relaying info to community						
Receiving + incorporating info from community						
Selecting team members						
Setting approach						
Setting Priorities						
Selecting Strategies						
Selecting next steps partners						
Approving plan						
City adopting plan						

Consensus Flowchart

Stage 1: **Introduce and clarify the issue**
Share background information. Work out the remit of the discussion - i.e. what questions do you need to decide about now?

↓

Stage 2: **Open out the discussion**
Make space for everyone to share their needs and opinions before launching into trying to solve the problem. If ideas come up already, you could hear them briefly, then park them for the next stage.

↓

Stage 3: Explore ideas in a broad discussion
Come up with lots of different ways forward. Explore the pros and cons of different options. Identify key concerns, needs and objectives.

↓

Stage 4: **Form a proposal**
Look for a solution that meets everyone's most important needs. This might involve weaving together elements of different ideas.

↓

Stage 5: Amend the proposal
Look for changes that will make the proposal even stronger.

↓

Stage 6: Test for agreement
Clearly state the proposal and check whether there is real agreement. Starting by asking for who is against the proposal makes it easier for people to voice their concerns. E.g.:

Any **blocks**?
Any **stand-asides**?
Any **reservations**?
Do we have **consensus**?

If you have a block, or too many stand-asides you will need to go back a stage, and amend the proposal further, or create a new one.

↓

Stage 7: Work out how to implement the decision
Work out what needs to happen, by when, and who will do it!

www.seedsforchange.org.uk

Contact: info@investstl.org
Website: www.investstl.org/planning-powerbook