Developing and Sustaining Communities for a Lifetime

Presenters:
Rachel B. Cohen, MUP, MSW
Third Age, Inc.
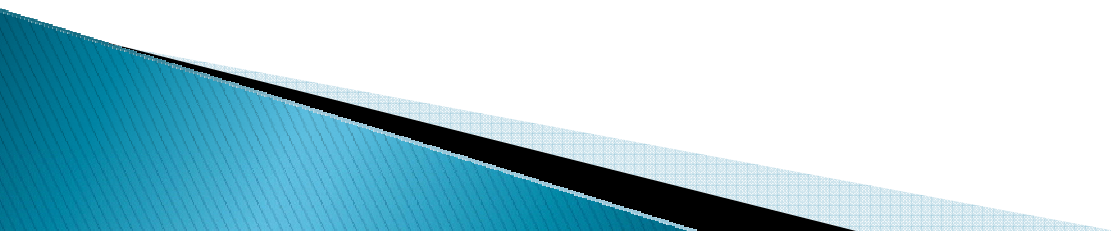
Imanni Wilkes, MPH
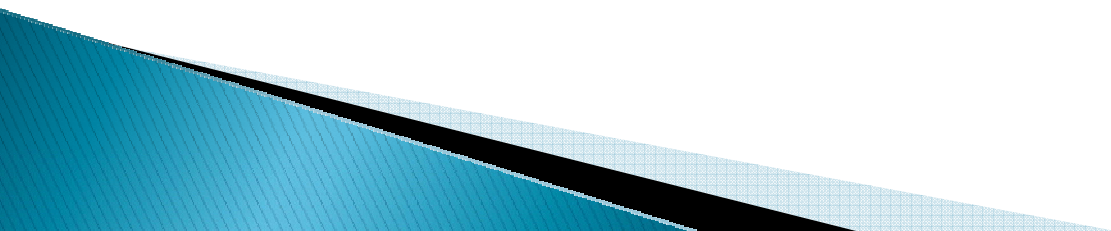The Enterprise Center Community Development Corporation

THIRD AGE INCORPORATED

The Enterprise Center
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
CORPORATION

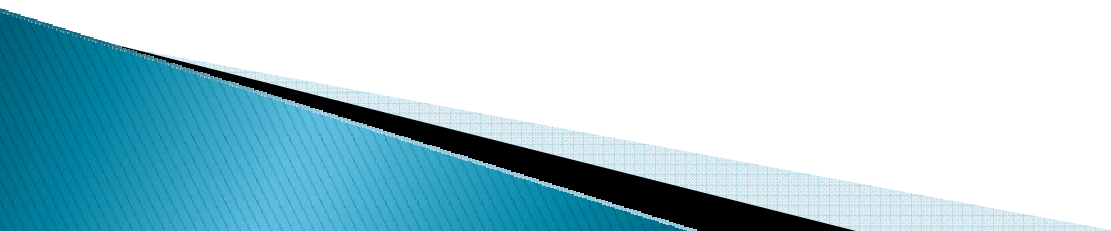# Our Journey

- Introductions
- Meaning of Home
- Who and What is in a Neighborhood?
- Sharing a Lens
- From Plans to Practice: A Case Study of the Walnut Hill Neighborhood
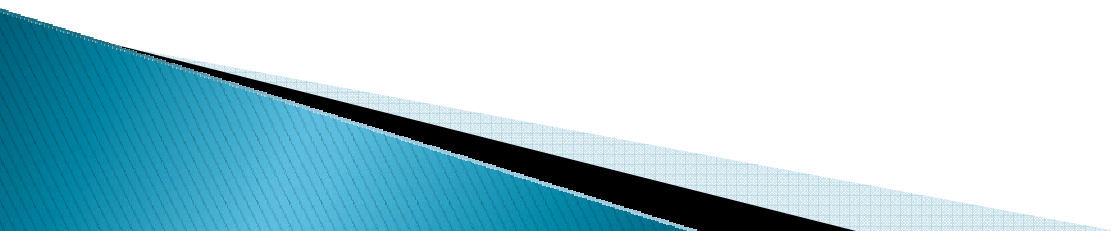- Practical Steps for Your Community

Meaning of Home

- "Home" is more than a physical structure

- Home has "psychological metaphysical significance over and above being a shelter in which to conduct everyday life." (Leon Pastalan, 1993)

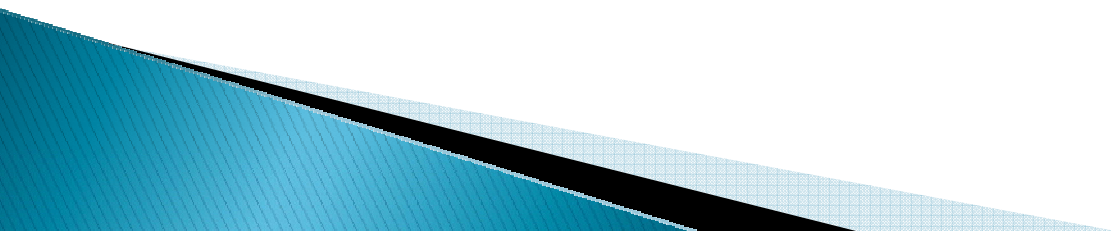- Interwoven nature of the physical and social fabrics

Who and What's In a Neighborhood?

"Elder Friendly"

- Elder Friendly = Accessible by all generations
- A neighborhood which has the design components, services (transportation, social, health), economic opportunities and social aspects which support someone aging in place.
- Provide for the needs of its residents throughout their lifetime.

"As one grows older, has more limited income, and health becomes frailer, the tendency to restrict one's life space to the immediate neighborhood increases." M. Cantor (1979) *Life Space and Social Support*

A Day In The Life

Older Adult

- Wake up, get ready for the day
- Breakfast, read newspaper
- Attend fitness class and lunch at Senior Center
- Home at 2; sit on front porch
- Dinner
- Bed

Youth

- Wake up, get ready for school
- Breakfast
- School
- Home at 2:30
- Playtime/Homework
- Dinner
- Bed

A Closer Look

Older Adult

- Lives in childhood home– 3 stories, 5 bedrooms, no bathroom on 1st floor, 5 steps to front porch
- Reliant on corner store for groceries
- Cracked sidewalks, broken street lights and quick cross walk signals make the walk to the bus/senior center treacherous
- Senior center closes at 2
- Uncovered bus stops
- Quick cross walk signals

Youth

- Lives with 3 brothers and parents in a 2 bedroom house
- Parents work from 7am–7pm
- Rarely fresh fruit or vegetables
- Struggling with reading
- No one home in the afternoon
- Homework rarely gets done and playtime is unsupervised
- Cracked sidewalks, broken streetlights and quick cross walk signals make walking to school dangerous.

Look for Opportunities

- The older adult is a retired journalist, the senior center closes at 2
  - Develop a mentoring/tutoring program with older adult volunteers and students from the school
  - Develop an intergenerational Community Center (shared space with senior center, child day care, and general community center)
- Lack of fresh vegetables and fruit at corner store
  - Develop a community garden encouraging shared intergenerational plots
  - Hold workshops for whole community on gardening and cooking with weekly pot lucks
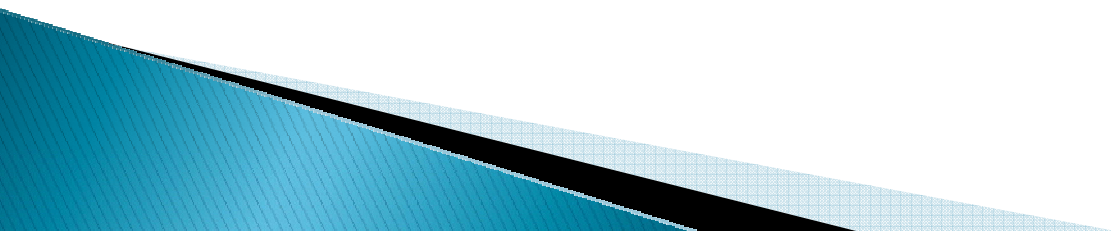
The Intergenerational Lens

Older Adult

- Housing options
- Safe Passage
- Safety (perceived and real)
- Fresh Food Sources
- Neighborhood social networks
- Outdoor recreation opportunities
- Volunteer opportunities
- Clean air/water
- Social activities

Youth

- Housing options
- Safe Passage
- Safety (perceived and real)
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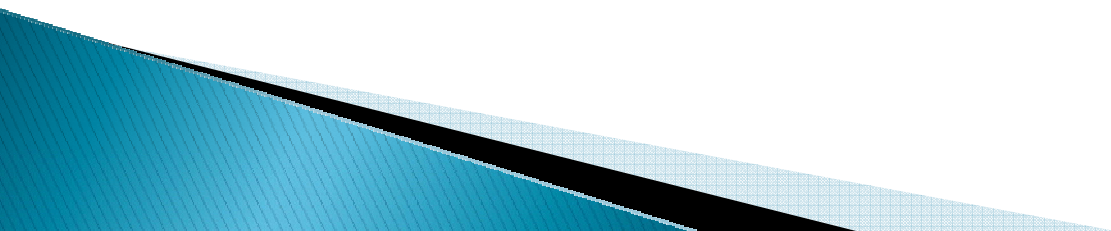# Breaking Through the Barriers

- Sounds too complex
- Have no experience working with seniors, youth, gardening, streetscape, planners etc.
- Funders are siloed—fund one age group, one use, don't fund physical development, geographically specific
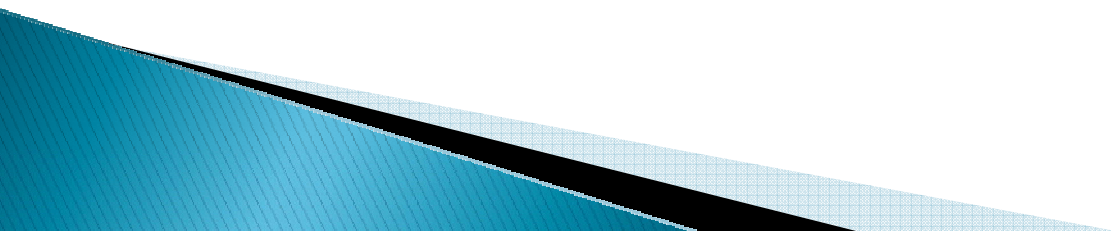- Budgets are tight, not enough money

A Collaborative In Action

- The Senior Collaborative (2005-2008)
- Initially developed for Aging in Place initiative
- Became a multi-disciplinary collaborative
- Rebuilding Together Philadelphia + AARP + University of the Sciences + Southwest Community Enrichment Center + Community Design Collaborative + multi-agency Health Fair + Legal workshop
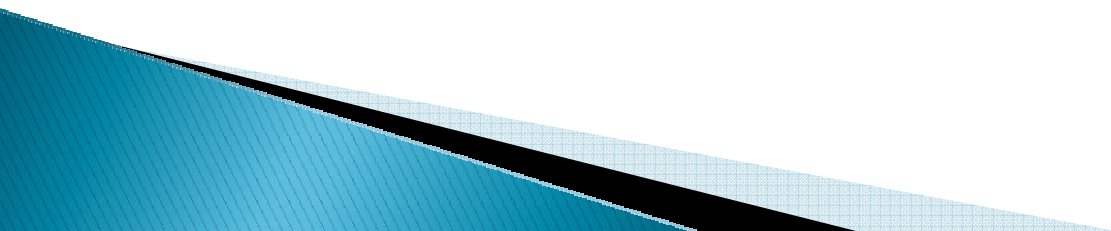- Multiple projects completed plus enduring connections

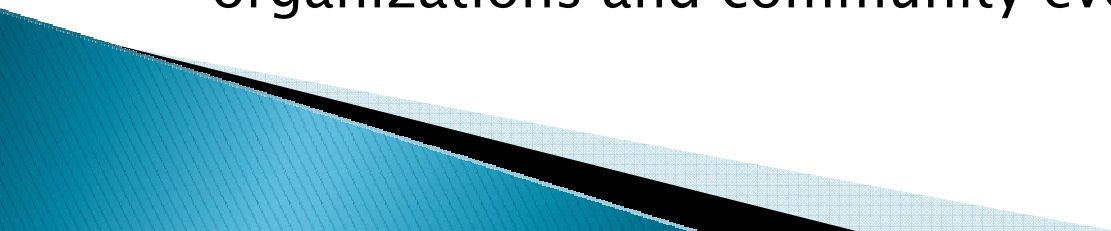# The Enterprise Center Community Development Corporation
West Philadelphia

Mission and Vision

- Founded in 2001

- Mission: to build neighborhoods where people are willing, able, and organized to achieve their common goals

- Asset-based community development approach in the Walnut Hill neighborhood (45th Street to 52nd Street from Market Street to Spruce Street in West Philadelphia)

Objectives

- Neighbors will effectively engage each other and work collaboratively to achieve shared goals.

  - Strong resident leadership is necessary for a healthy neighborhood.

- Residents will be well served by educational and social services that respond to self-identified needs and aspirations.

  - Many challenges facing Walnut Hill are solvable, and there are organizations working to solve them.

- The neighborhood will have an active local economy that creates opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship.

  - Commercial life contributes to community pride and wealth creation.

- Walnut Hill will remain racially and socioeconomically mixed.

  - Diverse communities are stronger, more resilient, and create learning opportunities for their residents.

Methods

- Active listening to residents through neighborhood planning process
  - Shaped by the ideas of 572 resident stakeholders, including 418 survey respondents interviewed in their homes
  - Participants 13 to 85 years old
- Resident-led projects
  - Community members lead every part of projects of their choice, with TEC-CDC providing support
- Walnut Hill Street Team
  - 10 known and trusted Walnut Hill residents who go door-to-door to door to connect neighbors to service organizations and community events

Walnut Hill Neighborhood

West Philadelphia High School under construction, c. 1913. Source: Phillyhistory.org

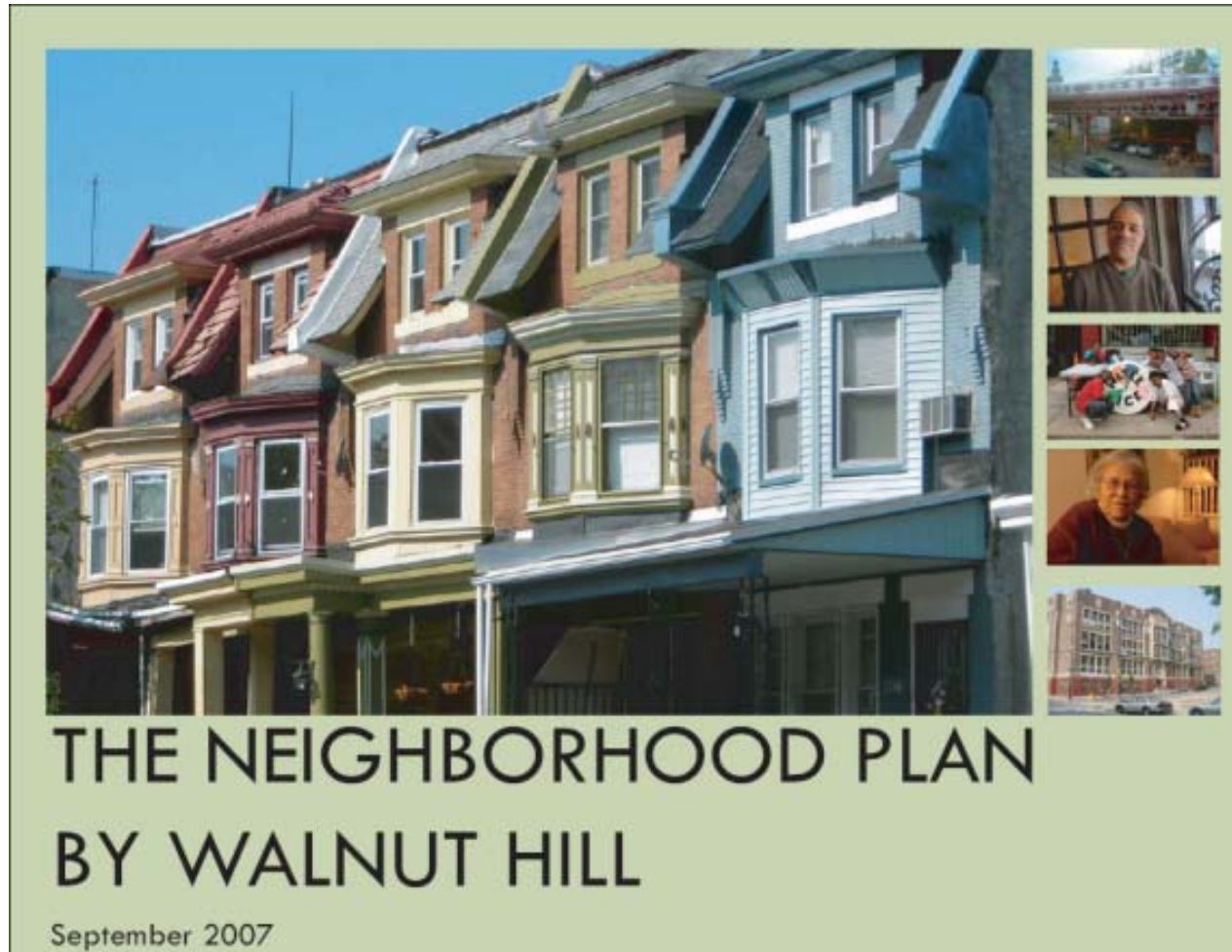Provident Mutual Building in 1931. Source: Phillyhistory.org

AMERICAN BANDSTAND

Walnut Hill Neighborhood

- Neighborhood of approximately 8,500 residents in central West Philadelphia

- 1.2 square miles

- 81% Black, 11% White, 5% Asian, 3% Latino

- Median household income: $19,772

- 31% of residents live below the poverty line

2007 Neighborhood Plan

THE NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN
BY WALNUT HILL

September 2007

Neighborhood Plan Findings

- Key findings of the resident survey:
  - Nearly 30% of respondents had lived in Walnut Hill for over 20 years, and 40% of respondents had lived here for less than 5 years
  - Neighborhood friendliness and community pride were residents' favorite thing about Walnut Hill
  - Crime and drug use were a major concern, for example when 52nd and Market was described as Philadelphia's most dangerous corner
  - Fragmented social networks and significant isolation:
    - 41% of renters know 1 to 3 of their neighbors
    - 10% of renters don't know any of their neighbors

Putting the Plan into Action

▸ Hiring Walnut Hill Street Team as TEC-CDC's part-time community outreach staff addresses social isolation and fosters connections

Putting the Plan into Action

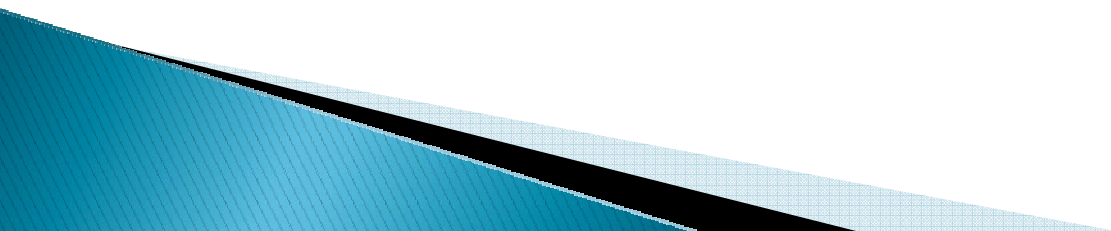▸ Resident–led projects that build community pride are an invaluable organizing tool
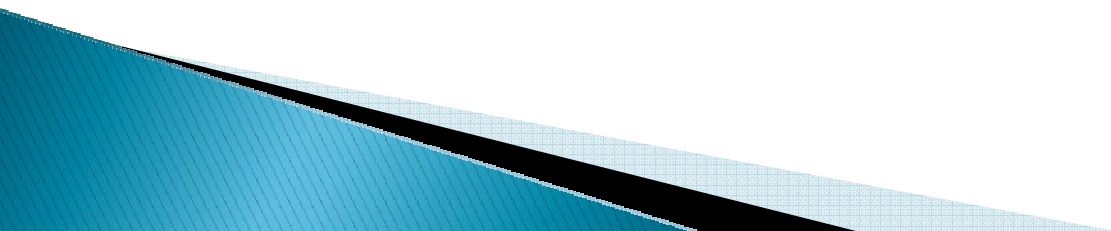
Putting the Plan into Action

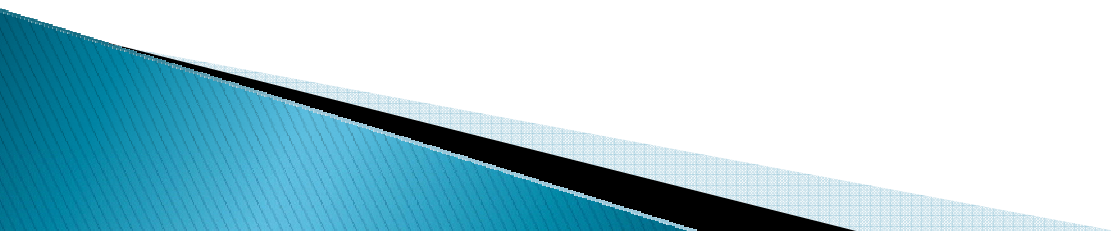- Development of Aging in Place initiative to improve quality of life for older adults

Goals of Aging in Place Initiative

- Use door-to-door outreach by trusted neighbors to enhance access to the health and social services necessary for independent living.
- Improve access to local health care systems and increase the availability of health promotion and wellness activities.
- Promote intergenerational activities that encourage older residents to use their talents.
- Integrate community organizing, health services, and social services to empower older adults to take a proactive approach to their health.
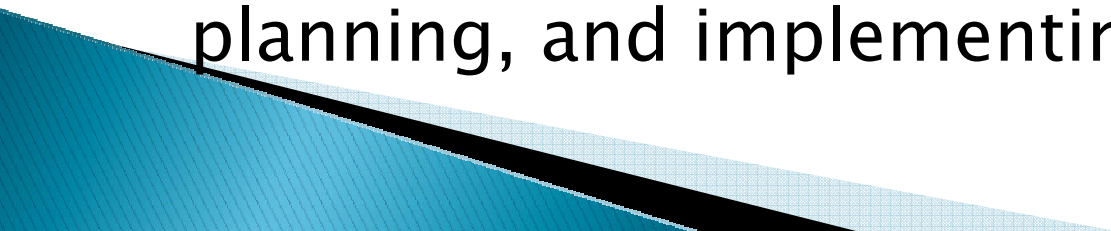
Partners for Aging in Place Initiative

- Several Philadelphia nonprofit organizations:
  - Mercy Health System
  - University of Pennsylvania LIFE Center
  - Philadelphia Corporation for Aging
  - Coming of Age and Temple University Center for Intergenerational Learning
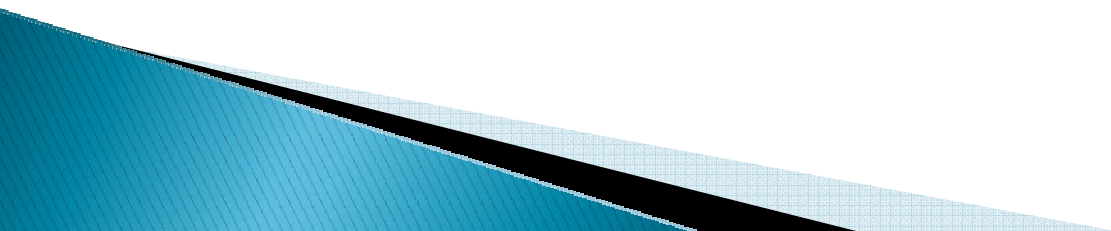 - Walnut Hill Community Association

Aging in Place Initiative Programs

- Walnut Hill Time Bank
- Primary care assessment survey, in partnership with Mercy Health System
- Senior Committee of Walnut Hill Community Association for enrichment opportunities
- Peer-directed financial empowerment education, in partnership with Greater Philadelphia Urban Affairs Coalition

Lessons Learned

▸ Many common themes across the lifespan: education, social opportunities, safety; important to residents of all ages.

▸ Collaboration is the Key: Many organizations are working on one or two facets of creating sustainable communities for older adults: important to integrate these organizations through collaborations.

▸ Create a dialogue, leverage resources, advocate for inclusive holistic funding, planning, and implementing

Lessons Learned (cont.)

▸ Build from residents' self-identified interests and goals when developing initiatives.
▸ View the neighborhood from multiple perspectives: physical, social, health etc.
▸ Residents want to get involved in and lead community revitalization—just ask!

Questions?

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