ANC Sketches
Building a Neighbourhood Renewal Process

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Preface

This paper was developed by a group of people brought together by the Action for Neighbourhood Change initiative. It presents an understanding of how change occurs in a neighbourhood which is based on previous and current community and neighbourhood revitalization efforts. The author would like to take this opportunity to thank the following individuals for their input and thoughtful comments on the construction of this paper: Pat Steenberg, Cheryl Gorman, Susan Taylor-Simpson, Louise Kearney, Sherri Torjman, Mark Cabaj and Rachel Chaiton. The project descriptions were written with the assistance of neighbourhood residents and ANC staff members. The author also gratefully acknowledges the layout and production work carried out by Laura Antal at Tamarack – An Institute for Community Engagement.

INTRODUCTION

Action for Neighbourhood Change (ANC) is a two-year neighbourhood renewal initiative that seeks to improve the quality of life for the residents of neighbourhoods in five Canadian cities – Surrey, Regina, Thunder Bay, Toronto and Halifax. Interventions undertaken since the project began in March 2005 were based on the medical axiom of doing no harm, knowing that in the complex system of a neighbourhood, it is impossible to anticipate all the possible outcomes of actions. Beginning with a clear goal – neighbourhood renewal – provided a wide enough target that virtually any activity or starting point could be shown to help move residents in a positive direction. The short duration of ANC, however, made it necessary to focus on achieving a critical level of support for sustainability. Ultimately, residents must possess the skills, organizational capacity and self-confidence to address challenges for themselves.

ANC's neighbourhood work is similar to that going on in many parts of Canada and internationally. It fits within the communities agenda, an idea which has yet to achieve a widely-recognized definition but which may be understood as a framework for promoting strong and vibrant communities [Torjman forthcoming]. Though not yet fully articulated, the communities agenda is gathering strength as governments begin to recognize the importance of place-based initiatives and devolve power and finances to local orders of government [External Advisory Committee on Cities and Communities 2006]. ANC is significant in that it has been deliberate in trying to understand how change occurs – both on a large, conceptual level and on a practical, neighbourhood level.

ANC was conceived as an action research (learning by doing) project, recognizing that change can never be completely understood or described. Our appreciation of change rests on certain ideas or theories. This paper describes ANC's current understanding of change at the neighbourhood level. It presents 11 sketches of work done in the five sites that demonstrate theory in action. It ends with an analysis which provides further feedback and insight into the theory of change itself.

This publication is modelled after one developed for Vibrant Communities – a pan-Canadian learning initiative launched in 2002 that brings together participants from many sectors in order to reduce poverty and enhance community vitality. *In From the Field* was produced to capture poverty-reduction strategies, and discern trends and lessons from which to draw future project directions [Cabaj, Makhoul, Leviten-Reid 2006]. Similarly, *ANC Sketches* provides a snapshot of projects which help planners to reflect on and refine their understanding of the change process. It also is meant to act as a resource to other neighbourhood or community organizers who wish to learn about effective interventions.

Theory of Change

Building a neighbourhood renewal process is like building a stairway to the stars – challenging, inspiring, but never complete. In order to begin the process, organizers need to consider their ideas – or theories – of how change occurs.

By definition, a theory is "… a system of ideas explaining something, especially one based on general principles independent of the particular thing being explained" [Allen ed. 1990]. Articulating the steps by which neighbourhood renewal will occur comprises a theory of change.

> A theory of change statement is a brief description of the context in which the initiative is taking place, the goals and targets it is pursuing and the strategies it has adopted. It presents the ideas and assumptions guiding the initiative and explains the unfolding pathway it anticipates following to achieve its intended results. The theory of change serves as a conceptual baseline against which progress and lessons learned can be identified as the initiative evolves [Leviten-Reid 2005:4].

When people start a journey, there are sights they expect to see. In a neighbourhood, people instinctively look for certain things by which they assess its livability. The appearance of a neighbourhood, however, is only one indication of how well it functions. It takes time to meet residents and find out how interconnected they are. In neighbourhood renewal efforts, it is the invisible connections between and among individuals which, along with physical and economic assets, help define the vitality of a neighbourhood. ANC has been engaged in an ongoing effort to create an index to measure neighbourhood vitality. A preliminary version of the Neighbourhood Vitality Index (NVI) will be released in early 2007. Vitality is defined as the capacity and will to take collective action to meet collective needs.

THE NEIGHBOURHOOD VITALITY INDEX ASSERTS THAT:

- A vital neighbourhood can improve the quality of life of its residents.

- Vitality is *not* about poverty; a neighbourhood may be both poor and vital.

- Vital neighbourhoods identify and respond to opportunities and challenges on an ongoing basis by acting together in ways that reflect the collective priorities of the people who live and work there.

ANC NEIGHBOURHOOD RESIDENT TOTALS (ESTIMATED)

Halifax (Spryfield)	4,500
Toronto (Scarborough Village)	13,725
Thunder Bay (Simpson-Ogden)	5,000
Regina (North Central)	10,350
Regina (The Core)*	4,500
Bridgeview (Surrey)	1,895

* Regina's ANC project shifted neighbourhoods in the second year of the project. Renewal work continues in North Central.

A general theory of neighbourhood change recognizes that vitality is a function of the mix and level of its social, physical and economic characteristics. The presence of these features and changes in their levels over time indicate increasing or decreasing vitality. Neighbourhood vitality can be strengthened by strategic interventions that alter the extent and mix of neighbourhood elements. It is also important to recognize that a neighbourhood is a complex system which is embedded in a wider complex support system. Organizations that service and support the quality of life for neighbourhood residents – but whose decisions may or may not take local priorities into account – are referred to collectively as a system of support. These can include local, provincial and national government, philanthrophic organizations, nonprofits and social and cultural organizations. Their resources make it possible to broaden and extend the work initiated at the neighbourhood level. For example, a local school might initiate a literacy program for its preschool children, but the system of support – the school board and provincial Ministry of Education – might be in a position to offer financial and program resources to include programs to teach parenting and ESL to neighbourhood parents.
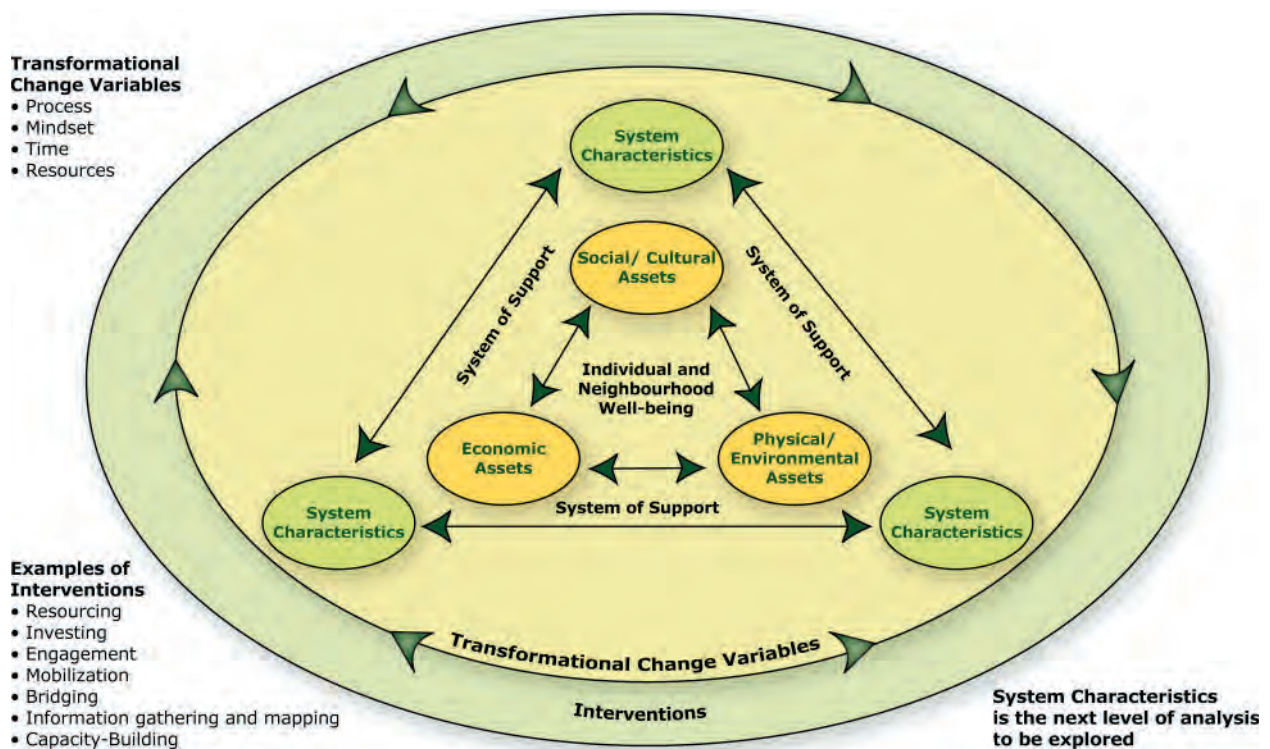

Figure 1: ANC Theory of Change

Vitality is linked to the concept of resilience – the ability not only to cope but also to thrive in the face of tough problems and continual change [Torjman 2006]. The ANC theory of change maintains that neighbourhoods can be strengthened and develop resilience as a result of interventions that connect residents and link them with supporting organizations. In the initial stages, work must be done to help residents create a shared vision and mission. This includes developing and building organizational skills so that residents may act collectively to improve the social, cultural, physical and economic assets of the neighbourhood. Resilience increases as residents learn how to access resources inside and outside the neighbourhood. Ultimately, there is a strong sense of collective efficacy – residents are able to intervene for the well-being of their neighbourhood and expect that their fellow citizens will do the same. Throughout their efforts, residents engage in continuous assessment and course correction.

THE THEORY OF CHANGE IS GUIDED BY SEVERAL CORE BELIEFS EXPLICIT IN THE ANC APPROACH:

- all neighbourhoods have assets upon which to build – renewal should begin by identifying and strengthening these assets
- residents ultimately know best what needs to change
- given each neighbourhood's vitality profile, certain interventions are likely to be more effective than others in achieving a certain outcome
- external or contextual factors (e.g., champions, dedicated resources) can affect how well an intervention will work.

Within ANC, turning theory into methodology has meant that neighbourhood renewal should begin by mapping the assets already present and determining their strength. Next, organizers need to determine which strategies or interventions are most likely to rally residents and supportive organizations in the short- to medium-term. Experience demonstrates that early, visible action is critically important. Residents must be convinced that an initiative has both the human and financial resources to make change happen. However, a long-term focus and commitment to improvement is essential to maintaining the momentum of the work. As mentioned previously, continuous assessment and course correction must be embedded into the renewal process.

ONCE SHORT-TERM PROJECTS HAVE BEGUN, PLANNING FOR LONG-TERM, TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE IS ESSENTIAL. THIS INCLUDES RESEARCHING AND THINKING ABOUT:

- new processes – governance, communication, accountability, funding, capacity building
- new mindsets – attitudes, values, resolve
- new resources – champions, financial investment, technical assistance, knowledge
- new understanding of how long it takes to effect change by neighbourhood stakeholders – residents, bridging institutions such as United Way and systems of support, such as community health organizations.

ANC's commitment to resident-led change assumes the presence of resident leadership. Leaders are a vital element in the process of neighbourhood renewal – identifying, inspiring and training residents as leaders helps carry the work beyond the initial project phase.

Lasting and effective change requires interventions and processes that are participatory, inclusive and collaborative. To ensure they encourage deep and durable change, it is also important that they be holistic, strategic and iterative. Evaluation and action learning, which include gathering and sharing information, are used at regular intervals to correct course – the forward, backward or sideways dance steps of change.

How Change Works in a Neighbourhood

For the purposes of ANC, a neighbourhood is a particular geographic location and the people who live and work in it. It possesses economic, social and cultural, and physical assets, as detailed in Figure 2.

Social/ Cultural Assets (People)
- Demographics
- Community organizations
- Social networks
- Cultural networks
- Community services

Economic Assets ($)
- Investment in infrastructure
- Commercial services
- Connection to world of work - opportunity
- Adequate family income
- Skills and expertise

Physical/Environmental Assets (Place)
- Safe streets
- Transportation
- Housing
- Meeting and playing spaces
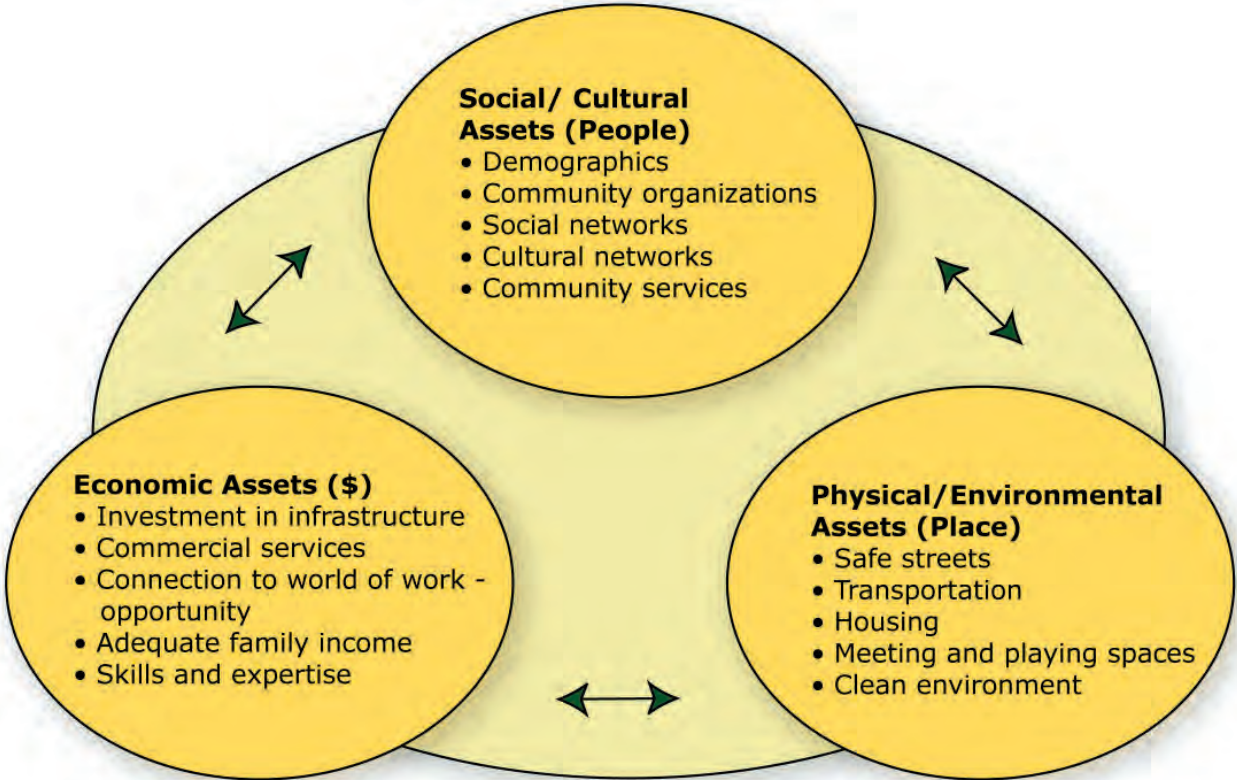- Clean environment

Figure 2: What Makes a Neighbourhood?

Figure 3 presents a more detailed explanation of the transformational change variables which are active at various levels in a neighbourhood – among residents, project managers and systems of support. It also serves as a means of assessing where a particular group of people might find themselves in the process of defining issues and concerns that require further work.
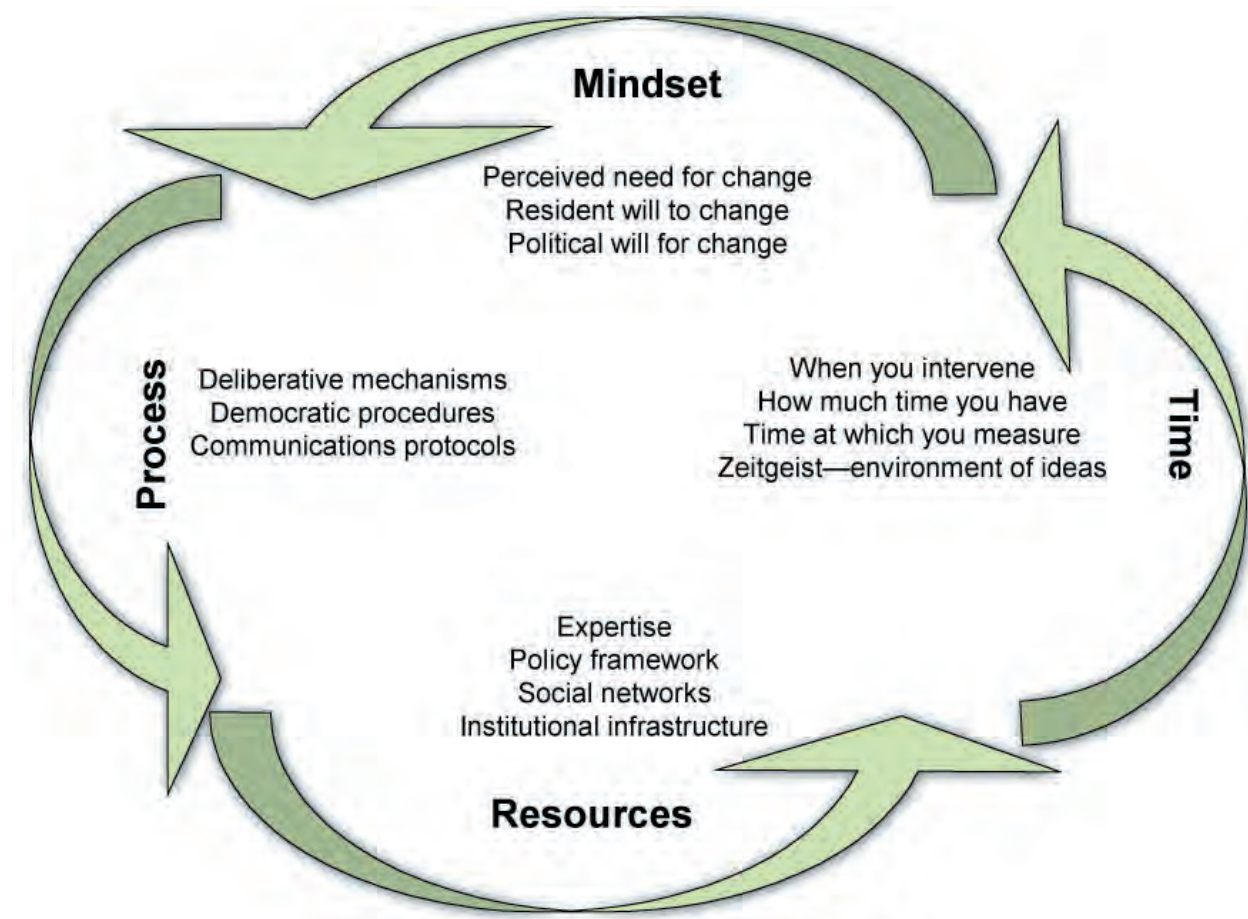
Figure 3: Understanding Change

The selection of projects to profile was determined by the ANC site managers. They were chosen on the basis of their anticipated impact on long-term, transformational change. For each initiative, the author worked with site managers, project directors or residents to prepare a two-page summary of the challenge the initiative is designed to address, the strategy employed and the outcomes achieved. Each summary is followed by a table and brief analysis of the key learnings. The concluding section summarizes important questions raised by the sketches and their possible impact on the evolution of the ANC theory of change.

INITIATIVES BY COMMUNITY

Spryfield (Halifax)	
Greystone's Community Garden	Spryfield Urban Farm Museum establishes a community garden to supply a low-income housing development with fresh produce and to provide activities for children.
Feasibility Study for a Spryfield Family and Children Multi-service Centre	The YWCA Halifax and Spryfield child care advocates work together to assess the impact of a provincial government decision to re-package affordable child care spaces as portable spaces.
The Spryfield Business Directory	The Spryfield and District Business Commission establish a business directory to entice residents to shop locally and to encourage business owners to get more involved in the commission.

Scarborough Village (Toronto)	
Community Animators	ANC staff members select and train nine residents from diverse language and cultural backgrounds to help reach non-English speaking and non-mainstream voices.
Heritage Language Classes	ANC staff members help parents from several language groups to access school board officials and prepare a list of interested families in order to secure language classes for their children at a neighbourhood school.
Neighbourhood Women Engage with Elected Officials	ANC staff members provide support, training and advice to a group of neighbourhood women who wanted greater contact with municipal officials responsible for the efficient operation of neighbourhood services.

Simpson-Ogden (Thunder Bay)	
Establishing a Neighbourhood Advisory Committee	ANC guides a large group of residents as they struggle to define a process and structure which will transform them from interested residents into an effective neighbourhood revitalization convenor structure.
Engaging Youth to Help Build a Resilient Community	ANC staff members establish two youth-focused committees and apply for funds to finance the long-term work of attracting young people – including street youth – to the business of neighbourhood revitalization.

North Central and The Core (Regina)	
Foundational Relationship Work	ANC in North Central works to reach a functional relationship with an earlier revitalization initiative, with strong efforts on both sides to resolve differences in perception and operation.

Bridgeview (Surrey)	
Bridgeview in Motion – Building a Shared Vision and Mission	Residents who had not previously been involved in an established community organization begin various cleanup efforts in the community, their numbers grow and they begin to conceive of a newer, stronger collaboration of the two groups.
Linking Up Community Services	ANC staff members invite representation from a wide variety of support organizations into the neighbourhood selection process at the project outset – with excellent, far-reaching results.

Spryfield (Halifax): Greystone's Community Garden

Challenge

Greystone, Spryfield's largest affordable housing complex, was built in the 1970s on rocky, barren soil which had been trucked in as landfill. Few residents have the resources or experience to establish food or flower gardens. A number of them were accessing a local food bank for items that included fresh fruits and vegetables.

Members of the Spryfield Urban Farm Museum Society had been discussing the idea of developing community gardens in neighbourhoods throughout Spryfield to serve as an example of urban food production for other areas of Halifax Regional Municipality. They were also aware that several residents in Greystone had expressed interest in establishing more organized activities for their children – the complex is located up a steep hill, with only one access road and minimal public transit service. Museum society members had noticed that children from Greystone participated in programs at the farm during the school year, but wanted to find activities that would allow children to be more involved in their own neighbourhood. Greystone residents were receptive to the idea of establishing a community garden to tackle the issues of food security and activities for children.

Strategy

Some of the funds from ANC's year one Action Grants were awarded to the museum society to manage the Greystone community garden project. Other society grant money was used to hire a Greystone resident to supplement and coordinate volunteer efforts. Society volunteers began building positive relationships with that individual and the children who became involved in the project.

ANC paid the costs of establishing growing beds in an abandoned playground. The original play structures had long been dismantled and the Metropolitan Regional Housing Authority agreed to repair the neglected enclosure fence, which had presented a safety hazard to children for many years. In cooperation with the regional government, the housing authority also refurbished an adjoining basketball court, providing an outlet for children's energy when gardening work slowed down.

In return for issuing a charitable tax receipt, a local sawmill provided the museum society with a discounted price on 8x8-inch hemlock bed dividers – the only wood that can withstand Nova Scotia's cool, wet climate. Most of the ANC grant was used to pay for soil, shredded bark to lay pathways, the rental of a bobcat and wages for a labourer to do heavy lifting. The remainder covered seed, fertilizer and food vouchers, which were provided to garden volunteers to purchase healthy snacks throughout the summer.

Because the grants had to be spent by the end of March, all of the beds were ready for planting in April. The summer of 2006 was very wet. While many local gardens planted at the usual time in May failed to thrive, the early-planted Greystone Community Garden flourished.

Outcomes

Organizers had tried to enlist adult volunteers in advance of the garden's construction work, but none had come forward. As the hemlock timbers were being laid, however, men began appearing at the sidelines, offering tools and help. The local resident who had been hired as the coordinator gained work experience that reinforced what she was learning at school (e.g., computer skills). She also planned and organized children's activities and other garden events and improved her literacy skills.

The average age of the children working in the garden was 10, but older siblings dropped in from time to time. The garden's 'no fighting' rule helped create a safe atmosphere that reassured children and adults alike. In the early fall, garden volunteers became spectators for a squad of high school cheerleaders, and the ongoing presence of teens seemed to act as insurance against vandalism – there was one incident where garden tools were stolen from a nearby storage shed, but no other damage was done to the garden or its crops.

Although the museum society's original intention was to see an even split between children and adult participants in the community garden, they fell far short of that goal. Only three adults participated, but 57 children – ages 3 to 17 – took part. From March until mid-October, children came to the site three afternoons a week from 3:30 until dinnertime. Besides experiencing the pure pleasure of establishing the gardening beds and watching plants sprout and mature, children expressed pride in being able to provide food for their families. Learning from the success of the Greystone garden, a number of parents started talking about establishing their own gardens the following year.

Greystone is adjacent to Rockingstone Heights School, a kindergarten to Grade 9 facility. Staff there had spoken with the museum society about literacy and the importance of connecting children's life experiences with the written word. Gardening is a good hands-on learning activity and the school made sure to stock gardening books to support the new community project. As spring became summer, the children brought their classroom experiences to the garden.

Organizers were aware that the program would take time to attract more adult participation. Many Greystone residents have seen pilot projects come and go and are wary of new initiatives. Society members are working to stabilize the garden as a feature of the community that will provide a tangible, ongoing service. Funding from the Chebucto Community Health Board has been committed to pay the garden coordinator's salary for the 2007 growing season. Society members are planning gardening education and advice sessions for the coming winter which will be hosted by the Greystone Tenants' Association. Funding from the United Way Halifax Region will pay a coordinator to establish more partnerships among the organizations that serve Greystone with the aim of strengthening residents' ties with the rest of Spryfield.

Illustration of the Theory of Change – Halifax: Greystone's Community Garden

Challenge statement – unmet need	• Lack of fresh food source • Need for activities for children
Interventions, level of a particular neighbourhood characteristic	• *Physical:* Growing space for food crops • *Social/Economic:* Activities for children and adults • *Economic:* Access to fresh food at a reasonable cost
Changes resulting	• Main objective achieved, created additional value by increasing social networks • Additional resources committed in 2007 for training • Literacy tie-in with school
Core beliefs	• *Residents know best:* They had requested activities for children • *Contextual variables specific to neighbourhood:* Farm Museum Society critical to success
Transformative change achieved or pointed to	• *Mindset:* Children's pride in contributing to the family good • Mindset of children and adults changed
Questions arising from the theory of change	• Will the buy-in happen as a result of the additional resources for adults? • Will the learning and relationships which resulted from this project make a long-term difference? • The intervention focused on all three aspects of neighbourhood vitality. Is there a relationship between number of aspects addressed and successful outcome?

The twin goals of the project were realized, and short-term impacts – increased project visibility, child and youth participation, food production – were achieved. Adult participation rates were lower than expected, but course corrections in the form of additional resources for training in 2007 may help attract more participants. It is early in the project's life to determine whether the community garden will become established as a neighbourhood asset. The inclusion of all three aspects of vitality – social, physical and economic – and the successful outcome of this project provide another level of consideration in the design of future projects.

Spryfield (Halifax): Feasibility Study for a Spryfield Family and Children Multi-Service Centre

Challenge

In 2004, Spryfield saw the closure of a well-used, nonprofit child care centre for children aged 18 months to 6 years; all 81 spaces had been subsidized by government. To tackle administrative and financial difficulties that had persisted as the result of a fire in 2003, staff at the Riverview Child Care Centre took action. They formulated a proactive, community-supported business plan and applied to the provincial government for $30,000 required to continue operations. The application was denied, the centre closed in 2004, and all 81 subsidized spaces were lost. The spaces sat unused for one year, costing the province an estimated $400,000. Closing Riverview for one month would have enabled the centre to re-open at no cost to the government and allowed Spryfield to hold on to all its subsidized spaces.

After the loss of 81 child care spaces, Spryfield now has a total 151 child care spaces available to parents, half of which are subsidized. Planners know that the area's affordable rents continue to attract young, pregnant women, so the demand for subsidized spaces continues to grow.

Riverview's troubles coincided with a provincial government decision to reassign subsidized places as portable spaces – that is, each space is 'attached' to an individual child rather than a child care centre. The intent was to give parents choice about the type of space they would use – private, public, near home or work – but the effect has been a collective parental headache. Currently, 360 families in the Halifax region are on multiple waiting lists, hoping that at the precise moment a subsidized space becomes available, their applications are aligned to get the most suitable one. In reality, parents who secure subsidized child care must now travel throughout the Halifax region to put their children in care, get to their work location, and repeat the journey at the end of each day. If they have more than one child, there is no guarantee that both children will secure a place in the same child care facility. The transportation and time barriers presented by such placement scenarios have made it impossible for some parents living on low income to continue working.

Strategy

In 2004, the Halifax YWCA was participating in a YWCA Canada research project that took a 'blue sky,' grassroots approach to building the architecture for an integrated child care system. The local project task force envisioned an accessible community hub for early learning and family support with child care at its heart. This integrated child care model would have public health, recreation, schools, libraries, and other family and child-centred organizations working together in an integrated, coordinated fashion.

Discussions between the YWCA and Spryfield child care advocates continued after Riverview closed, and the announcement of ANC Action Grants in February 2005 was the impetus for the creation of a task force aimed at establishing a Spryfield Family and Children Multi-Service Centre. The Action Grant helped to pay for a community collaboration process for one month, after which the YWCA agreed to devote additional resources to continue the work of the task force. Its 15 members include representatives

from public health, Halifax Regional Municipality, Understanding the Early Years, the health department and Spryfield residents. The Spryfield task force supported a community hub concept for delivering early learning and care programs.

Impact

The provincial government's decision to create portable spaces has created enormous challenges for administrators who wish to open child care centres that can serve families which most need help, and it is contrary to the express wishes of child care advocates in Spryfield. The effect of the task force, however, has been to strengthen the community's resolve not to be victimized by the new provincial policy, but to identify its effects and advocate for change.

When the new Conservative government announced that it would not renew the multilateral agreements on child care, unspent money in Nova Scotia was put toward capital expansion grants that communities could access to increase child care spaces. The Spryfield task force is building a case for creating a block of portable spaces that can be put at the community's disposal. The ANC-funded community consultations helped direct the YWCA's efforts in this undertaking – a necessary and welcome shift in the Y's continuing efforts to engage in meaningful community collaboration that truly engages local residents.

In addition to their efforts to shift public policy, task force members are also bypassing it. They have applied for private grants to act as bridge financing from which they can pay child care costs for parents who require subsidies. This proactive way of thinking and acting has helped empower Spryfield residents; the task force members are writing to seven provincial ministers to tell them why a block of spaces ought to be available for Spryfield residents.

Part of building an integrated child care system involves changing the way governments and the community deliver services. Thanks to a connection made by ANC, a significant conversation took place between local MLA Michelle Raymond and the Minister of Economic Development which underlined the connection between child care and economic development.

The province's two-page child care strategy was deemed insufficient by Spryfield child care advocates. The YWCA released its own 20-year plan which referenced Spryfield research and highlighted the stories of local women. The plan was well received and supported by the province's two opposition party leaders.

The synergy created by the Spryfield community's efforts to realize a multi-service child care centre and the YWCA's work to lobby for better child care policy are creating an unstoppable force for change. Thanks in part to the resources provided by ANC, Spryfield is strongly positioned to obtain a child care expansion grant in early 2007.

Illustration of the Theory of Change – Halifax: Feasibility Study for a Spryfield Family and Children Multi-Service Centre

Challenge statement – unmet need	• Removal of 81 subsidized child care spaces • Changes in provincial policy – subsidized spaces reassigned as portable spaces
Interventions, level of a particular neighbourhood characteristic	• *Social/Economic:* Creation of a 15-member task force to conduct community consultation • *Social/Economic:* Application for private grants for bridge funding for parents who need subsidized spaces • *Social/Economic:* Building a case for a block of portable spaces for Spryfield
Changes resulting	• Perceived need and will to change are evident • New approach to policy – action over resignation • Strengthened community commitment to an accessible community hub for early learning • Champions emerge – synergy created between YWCA and Spryfield child care advocates
Core beliefs	• All neighbourhoods have assets upon which to build • External or contextual factors and variables can affect how well an intervention will work (YWCA as collaborator)
Transformative change achieved or pointed to	• *Resources:* Community anticipates obtaining a child care expansion grant • Community anticipates securing a block of subsidized child care spaces • *Mindset:* New community-driven process that goes around institutional hurdles
Questions arising from the theory of change	• Will the energy and commitment remain strong if efforts to secure block spaces prove unsuccessful? • Will the community-driven process successfully offset the government policy change?

This project's success builds on a well-established set of relationships and connections already present in the neighbourhood. The work was precipitated by a significant loss and a widely-held view about how child care services should be structured. The collaboration, research and thought that had preceded ANC's participation and contribution provided rich ground for the subsequent powerful changes in mindset: the neighbourhood's resolution not to view itself as victim, but to be proactive about working with and around policy decisions.

Spryfield (Halifax): The Spryfield Business Directory

Challenge

Early ANC community consultations made it clear that Spryfield residents wanted a greater variety of shops and services available in the neighbourhoood. It was also revealed that residents were largely unaware of many small, home-based businesses that already existed in the area. For more than six years, members of the Spryfield and District Business Commission had realized the value of establishing a business directory. Not only would it encourage residents to use local businesses, but it would help the commission establish stronger connections with business owners in the small communities and homesteads near Spryfield. Unfortunately, members of the business commission – a voluntary organization – did not have the time to create a directory themselves, nor the funds to hire staff to do the job.

It was hoped that, once established, the directory would sell advertising space and become self-sustaining. If residents made greater use of local businesses and these enterprises grew, residents would essentially also create more employment opportunities in the area. As local efforts to increase literacy and improve high school graduation rates bear fruit, new jobs could be filled by Spryfield residents. In this way, a business directory could have a positive impact on local long-term employment strategies.

Strategy

The most labour-intensive part of establishing a business directory is finding the businesses and collecting pertinent information about them. Spryfield and the surrounding district is a combination of suburban and rural properties, and many business owners operate from their homes, with only themselves or one or two other people as employees. Many are not listed in the telephone book, nor do they have business signage on their properties.

Reg Horner, Executive Director of the business commission and owner of a home-based publishing business, obtained an ANC grant to establish a directory. He hired Ian Bigenwald, a Dalhousie University Commerce student, on a 12-week work placement. Ian's first task was to walk or drive down every street and road in Spryfield and the surrounding district looking for signs of business activity, knock on every likely door and write down contact information listed on vans and trucks – he even followed commercial vehicles to their business locations. While gathering information for the directory, Ian also did his best to fill out a survey for the business commission, but the information gathered has not been as complete or useful as was originally hoped.

In late November 2006, some 12,000 copies of the directory were delivered to every Spryfield and district resident and business. Some 230 enterprises are listed in the publication and only four people have called to say that their businesses were missed.

Organizers recognize that as businesses move and change, it will be necessary to re-publish the directory every couple of years. Ian's third task was to sell directory advertising. Ads would give the directory form and shape and the revenue they generated would pay for future editions. He was successful in raising $4,000 before the end of his 12-week placement.

The first round of ANC grant applications had to be submitted on a very short timeline and Reg was aware that he was taking a best guess at expenses. In the end, his projection was about $4,000 short of his actual costs, so the advertising revenues will help meet first edition expenses. Any additional ad revenue will be held in readiness for a second edition. Reg is pleased with a decision to spend more on the directory's production – its professional appearance is one of its key features.

Outcomes

One of the four people whose businesses did not appear in the directory was an artist from nearby Purcell's Cove. She and Reg have begun discussing how to get more artists and artisans involved with the business commission and finding new ways to promote their work. The Lions Club and YWCA took out advertising space in the directory and the business commission itself used space to describe its purpose, direction and philosophy. All three organizations are committed to improving the quality of life for the residents of Spryfield and district, and the directory helps spread that message. It is a tangible representation of the Spryfield and District Business Commission's volunteer efforts and has provided members with a sense of accomplishment. The directory will soon be available on the www.spryfield.ca website.

Illustration of the Theory of Change – Halifax: The Spryfield Business Directory

Challenge statement – unmet need	• Residents want more businesses and available services • Residents unwaware of existing businesses and services • Business association wants to attract and help new members
Interventions, level of a particular neighbourhood characteristic	• *Economic*: Creation of a business directory • *Economic*: Businesses surveyed • *Economic*: Advertising dollars raised to make directory self-sustaining
Changes resulting	• 230 local businesses profiled in the newly-published directory • New business owners investigate ways to become involved with the business association • Business commission reaffirmed in its work by producing a tangible benefit
Core beliefs	• All neighbourhoods have assets upon which to build
Transformative change achieved or pointed to	• *Resources:* Creation of the business directory may result in business expansions, greater employment for residents, more services available locally
Questions arising from the theory of change	• Will the directory result in increased growth of local businesses? • Will long-term health of local businesses lead to more resident employment?

The business commission's work has been highlighted and given concrete form by the directory. Its long-term impact on business growth and employment are yet to be determined. This project also demonstrates the importance of building on existing assets in order to capitalize on new mindsets (attitudes toward the commission and local businesses) and resources. Commission members have had this project in mind for several years, underlining the importance of sufficient project resources to fund time-consuming initiatives.

Scarborough Village (Toronto): Community Animators

Challenge

With 13,725 residents, Scarborough Village is the largest of the five ANC sites. Data from Statistics Canada indicates that 49 percent of residents have a home language other than English and 8,372 were born outside of Canada. Clearly, ANC organizers needed an efficient way to make contact with residents in their home languages.

ANC project staff had previous experience locating and training local residents who could act as 'community animators' – residents who provide links to the community – during the highly-publicized redesign and reconstruction of Toronto's Regent Park neighbourhood in 2004. The ideal candidates for this work are residents who have established connections, trust and networks within a particular cultural or linguistic group. Using community animators to develop and build understanding of ANC would demonstrate a respect for linguistic and cultural comfort levels and ways of working, while honouring social networks. By acting as a bridge to ANC, animators involved people in the initiative who might otherwise have been lost or overlooked.

Community animators generally exhibit leadership characteristics which can be enhanced and extended with training and greater understanding of community change processes. Since ANC is a resident-led initiative, animators are well positioned to assume leadership roles and should be encouraged to do so.

Strategy

ANC staff wanted to make sure they found animators who represented the cultural and age groups present in the neighbourhood. They needed to be dispersed throughout Scarborough Village and there were requirements that the people selected be sensitive to the political and personal currents present in their communities. Through key informant interviews, staff identified possible animator candidates, eventually hiring nine individuals – two each that spoke Tamil, Urdu and Bengali, one youth and two Afro-Caribbean residents.

Besides their animation work, most of the Scarborough Village community animators are working either full- or part-time. Other than the youth animator, most are middle-aged with families and have built their networks through their connections with the school system and involvement in other community work. Most have lived in the neighbourhood for more than five years and all are passionate about finding ways to improve their community, using relationships as a springboard to positive change.

Hiring people from within the neighbourhood demonstrated a commitment to Scarborough Village's economic and social development. The training each animator received provided them "…with an education about the democratic structures of Canadian society, about participation in civic life and about their own community" [Meagher and Boston 2003].

Training took the form of one-on-one and group sessions in which participants learned about ANC's goals, mandate and method of operation and were provided with reading materials. They discussed question and answer documents, building a base of knowledge about the project and the local services in the neighbourhood. Animators were provided with ANC material in their home languages to help deepen their understanding of the project and make it easier for them to discuss it with fellow residents. They shared key lessons with their communities and returned with the opinions and questions of the people to whom they had spoken. This information became a crucial foundation for shaping the work of the project.

Outcomes

Individual and larger-setting discussions provided opportunities to build neighbourhood consensus about what was feasible to achieve within ANC's two-year time frame. Discussions also proved important for making collective decisions about projects of interest to specific groups (see sketch entitled "Neighbourhood Women Engage with Elected Officials").

Animators received valuable leadership training as they learned to identify and move forward neighbourhood revitalization issues which were of value to their communities. They gained a practical sense of what a change process looks like and the steps for getting there. Contacting local agencies, talking to elected officials and gaining access to municipal services are elements of basic citizenship which are often not easily accessible to newcomers or who lack language skills and self-confidence.

Community animators helped provide both an entry point into citizenship for their communities and a vital access point for ANC to gain greater understanding of how to tailor its communications approaches.

Time and funding considerations make it important for organizers to be deliberate about their goals for their work with community animators. To be done effectively, animation must be supported and funded, and the information it generates must be linked to the neighbourhood vision.

Reference:

Meagher, S. and T. Boston. (2003). *Community Engagement and the Regent Park Redevelopment.* Toronto: Public Interest Strategy and Communications.

Illustration of the Theory of Change – Toronto: Community Animators

Challenge statement – unmet need	• Establishing links and relationships with residents who speak languages other than English or French
Interventions, level of a particular neighbourhood characteristic	• *Social/cultural*: Identification of cultural group leaders who were interested in becoming involved • *Social/economic*: Training provided
Changes resulting	• Animators experience greater connection with ANC initiative, municipal officials • Animators provide an entry point for citizenship for residents • ANC learns how to tailor its communication approaches
Core beliefs	• Given each neighbourhood's vitality profile, certain interventions are likely to be more effective in producing a specific change – diversity of neighbourhood meant that the small staff team would be insufficient to establish networks • Engage in continuous assessment and course correction – project selection relied on animators
Transformative change achieved or pointed to	• *Processes*: Communication; capacity building • *Mindset*: attitudes, value • *Resources:* Each animator is an access point to another group of residents
Questions arising from the theory of change	• How do you ensure a proper mix and balance of animators to reflect the neighbourhood's demographics and relationship web? • Will animators see improvements in their paid work as a result of skill development? • Will the neighbourhood reach a tipping point of engaged citizens such that community animators are no longer required?

This initiative offers ethnically and culturally diverse communities or neighbourhoods an important means of contacting resident groups and engaging them in renewal work. In areas where existing community organizations are already in place, community animators can extend the reach and representation of participants – particularly important in urban areas which are experiencing growth or a shift in demographics or cultural representation.

Animators must be sufficiently and continuously well trained in the goals, values and operations of the initiative to successfully communicate this information to their cultural or ethnic group.

Scarborough Village (Toronto): Heritage Language Classes

Challenge

Community animators (see previous sketch), during discussions with Tamil- and Urdu-speaking parents, heard many express a desire for language instruction for their children in their home languages. Parents in the Urdu-speaking community had volunteered to run such classes and were hoping that the closest local school would lend them space.

Strategy

Heritage Language Classes in Tamil were already taking place at one of Scarborough Village's two public elementary schools. For $25 per year, children could receive language instruction one day a week, either after school or on Saturdays. However, Tamil-speaking families with children at Scarborough Village's Cedar Drive Public School would have to walk two kilometres to take the classes – a long, cold walk in the winter months. In addition, Urdu language classes had not yet been established and Cedar Drive was the closest school for most of the families interested.

Though they had identified a concern about language training, many parents did not know how to access existing resources, nor how to have a new class in Urdu established in an easily-accessed location. ANC staff and animators helped connect parents with the principals at the two schools. Both administrators understood the importance of home language training and were very responsive to the community's needs. Key parents and the community animators secured the names of more than 100 children interested in a program at Cedar Drive, presented the list to the school and contacted the school board's language program coordinator. Based on this evidence of community initiative and demand for the program, the school undertook the next stage in the process – a language needs survey (to provide an estimate of how many children would be involved) and initiated a sign-up day. Community animators helped to spread the word about the classes and registration requirements. The response exceeded everyone's expectations. To demonstrate its responsiveness to the community and engage the children in the program, the school board agreed to initiate classes immediately, even though it was close to the end of the school year.

Beginning in May 2006, three Urdu classes and one Tamil class got under way at Cedar Drive, each with 20 students. Though classes broke for the summer, the program held a second signup in the fall and classes restarted early in the new school year. The students are divided into age appropriate groupings, and classes run after school on Wednesdays from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. Children are taught by trained facilitators, including a Tamil-speaking resident who is also a teacher at the second public elementary school.

Outcomes

Establishing the heritage language classes helped demonstrate the tangible results of community engagement. The process connected many families that had not been previously involved with ANC and other local initiatives. It gave them real evidence that the school system could be responsive to their

needs. Tamil residents in another part of the city heard what had happened in Scarborough Village and began collecting names to run language programs in two other schools. These parents contacted ANC for support, have had successful meetings with the two principals and are soon to meet with the school board program coordinator.

Word-of-mouth advertising again proved its effectiveness. Besides Urdu and Tamil speakers, two other language groups – Dari and Farsi, both languages spoken in Afghanistan – came to the April sign-up day. Classes for these two groups ran through the spring, but were not renewed in September. ANC staff are uncertain of why this occurred and recognize it as a signal that their connection with this neighbourhood group is not as strong as they would like it. It was a useful reminder that ideas do not always succeed in the way they are envisioned, nor that one solution will fit all groups' needs.

Illustration of the Theory of Change – Toronto: Heritage Language Classes

Challenge statement – unmet need	• New Canadian families wanted home language classes for their children
Interventions, level of a particular neighbourhood characteristic	• *Social/cultural:* Parents connected with school administrators, classes established
Changes resulting	• Classes operational • Parents experience the benefits of collaborating with a neighbourhood renewal initiative
Core beliefs	• All neighbourhoods have assets that can be built upon (school) • External or contextual factors and variables can affect how well an intervention will work – e.g., why did one group not maintain their participation? • There is a need to engage in continuous assessment and course correction – e.g., investigate why the process worked with one group, but not another
Transformative change achieved or pointed to	• *Mindset*: Residents learn to express needs and find the structures that can support them • *Process*: Points to new communication processes required – e.g., why were parents unaware of an existing service?
Questions arising from the theory of change	• How do change initiatives continue to attract members for whom the established processes have proven unsuccessful? • What contextual factors influenced the success of classes for two cultural groups and the declining interest of two others?

Despite the successful outcome of this initiative for some language groups, it raised important questions about what other factors influence a group to make use of an existing service. In cases where no community animators have yet been identified for a particular group of residents, planners must continue to investigate other means of engaging representatives – who is not at the table is just as important as who is at the table.

Scarborough Village (Toronto): Neighbourhood Women Engage with Elected Officials

Challenge

During their regular contacts with residents to discuss issues of concern, ANC community animators (see sketch entitled "Community Animators"), heard a strong desire among a group of Pakistani women to learn more about which municipal officials are responsible for particular tasks in the community. They were particularly concerned about snow removal and about getting buses which were accessible to small children and mothers with strollers onto a route that was utilized by many families in the neighbourhood. They wanted to meet with Toronto's Mayor to get answers and to make sure the City would fulfill its public works obligations.

Strategy

ANC staff members were appreciative of the fact that residents were ready to engage with local officials to have their concerns addressed and suggested they begin the process by speaking with Scarborough Village's city councillor. ANC helped the women identify the specific tasks they felt needed attention, then provided information and instruction on how to access the appropriate people within the city's organizational structure. To ensure that everyone was comfortable with the process of making an initial contact, residents were coached on how they would approach a municipal representative and in what forum. They learned strategies for phrasing the points they wanted to make and, with ANC's help, set up a first meeting with their city councillor in the spring of 2006.

That first meeting was deemed a great success by all the women involved. They felt they got their points across in conversation and had documents ready to provide the councillor with background information. He agreed to meeting regularly to follow up the issues they had discussed. Since then, the two sides have met another two times and the residents feel that a number of their original concerns have been addressed. Improvements to snow clearing practices and the opening of a new policing office close to one of the Village's main thoroughfares addressed two of the items they had identified, though both responses had already been in the works before any meetings with the local councillor had taken place. New buses which were accessible to young children and mothers with strollers were added to the route the women had identified, thanks to monitoring done by the Toronto Transit Authority. Despite the happy coincidence of concerns expressed and work already under way, residents felt energized and pleased by the responsiveness of city officials generally and their councillor in particular.

One of the major concerns raised by residents was safety. The councillor arranged for a safety audit to be done in the identified portion of the neighbourhood. Unfortunately, little progress has been achieved on this issue and the women are working with members of the neighbourhood association to determine their next steps.

Outcomes

ANC provided the support and tools residents needed to establish contact with their local government. The women's sense that they had become part of a mutually respectful process has helped increase their confidence in themselves and their ability to engage municipal officials. Many are feeling more engaged in their neighbourhood and more interested in taking on new challenges. They recently submitted a proposal for ANC project funding to establish a South Asian Women's Group.

The women who became involved in this initiative met through conversation groups at Scarborough Village elementary schools. Mostly Urdu-speaking (the most commonly spoken language in Pakistan), their discussions attracted interest from Bengali-speaking women who now have established their own social club. ANC is actively promoting such cross-linkages among language and other groups. As people build trusting relationships, it reaffirms their sense that they can work together for the betterment of the neighbourhood.

ANC's role in providing coaching and teaching the process of gaining access to elected officials were key ingredients in the success of this undertaking. Their efforts included helping residents to clearly identify the types of work they would like to address and determining which ones were the responsibility of municipal officials.

ANC also helped to create a learning environment for parents, responding to their concerns for continued information. For example, presentations by an immigration lawyer and a health official were offered in response to community interest. ANC will continue operations in Toronto after the project's end date in March 2007. The hope is that the social clubs created through the initiative will continue to attract more residents, providing them a space in which they can become more self-sufficient.

Illustration of the Theory of Change – Toronto: Neighbourhood Women Engage with Elected Official

Challenge statement – unmet need	• Women wanting to understand municipal services, chains of command
Interventions, level of a particular neighbourhood characteristic	• *Social/cultural:* Coaching provided in how to approach elected and public service officials and administrators • Issues identification • Meeting with elected official • Regular communication and meetings schedule established
Changes resulting	• Relationship established with local councillor • Greater community engagement by women involved • Women submitted a proposal for a social club • Engagement of other cultural groups similarly interested in establishing social clubs
Core beliefs	• Residents ultimately know best what needs to be changed • Given a neighbourhood's particular vitality profile, certain interventions are more likely to be more effective in producing a particular change
Transformative change achieved or pointed to	• *Process*: Communication, accountability • *Resources*: Champion councillor • *Mindset*: New understanding of change processes, how long it takes to effect change
Questions arising from the theory of change	• What happens when champions move on? • How do relationships build in resiliency in order to resolve tough issues? • What impact will the increased social network of the women have on other neighbourhood characteristics?

The most significant result of this work from the perspective of residents was their connection with a city councillor. But in the longer term, the existence of new social clubs may prove to be an effective mechanism for engaging elected and appointed municipal officials and expressing community needs and wishes.

Simpson-Ogden (Thunder Bay): Establishing a Neighbourhood Advisory Committee

Challenge

Moving from a large collection of residents interested in forwarding a neighbourhood vision to an advisory committee with clearly defined goals and roles is a key challenge in community development work. In Thunder Bay's Simpson-Ogden neighbourhood, no clear leaders had yet emerged among 22 interested residents by the end of the project's visioning and planning day in January 2006. Communications were made cumbersome by the fact that not all 22 people were connected by e-mail or telephone – in some cases, residents had to be visited in person or have reading materials dropped off at their homes.

Strategy

To ensure an efficient but community-centred process, ANC organizers arranged for a professional facilitator to meet with the fledgling neighbourhood association in February 2006. Participants spent time discussing their reasons for involvement in ANC, their concerns and the neighbourhood's assets. A second, full-day meeting identified common areas of interest as well as areas where work could begin immediately. At the end of that day, the group had established a neighbourhood vision and mapped out a preliminary plan for early win projects.

In March, the group finalized its vision statement and members were beginning to identify their leaders. They decided to hold elections for the positions of chair, vice-chair, secretary and vice-secretary in April. The elected members agreed to act for a four-month formation term during which structure, policies and group identities would be formulated. As much as possible, the group preferred to achieve consensus rather than put issues to a vote, and the chair was skilled at allowing an open process where no one person or concern was allowed to dominate discussions. Though ANC staff had been careful to affirm that the neighbourhood was in charge of its own direction and processes, residents continued to see a role for ANC at the table as a non-voting participant that could provide information and resources, as required.

In the fifth month of the association's operations, ANC invited a speaker to present the pros and cons of incorporating the new board and the group became convinced that doing so would help them gain credibility among neighbourhood residents. The group decided to adopt a Carver governance model (a model developed for nonprofits by John Carver and Miriam Mayhew Carver) with positions for chair, vice-chair, secretary, treasurer and past president. One evening, members held a potluck dinner where they shared their biographies with one another. This event helped to deepen relationships inside the group, which resulted in a smooth second set of elections in October. A decision is pending on how many members will constitute the soon-to-be-established board.

The goal of ANC was to work its way out of the job of overseeing neighbourhood planning work. ANC staff members perceived that their role was to walk slightly ahead of the committee, offering advice and information in a timely but not overly directive fashion. The challenge in the early stages of setting up a neighbourhood advisory committee was that many of those who come forward wanted to do hands-on project work. It took several months for members of the Neighbourhood Action Committee to realize that they would be a structured committee that would oversee neighbourhood revitalization work, rather than do the work themselves. By summer's end, the committee had gone from 22 to 15 members.

Outcomes

During the process of sorting out how the committee would work, there were discussions about exactly what role ANC should play. Two residents felt that ANC had been too directive in its approach and this opinion forced some intense discussion over exactly how the committee should be structured. Ultimately, these discussions helped build bonds of trust among the various members and they realized that certain hurdles needed to be cleared before they could go it alone. Letting the committee makes its own decision around ANC's role laid to rest any perception that ANC was trying to impose its will on residents.

Overall, the slow speed of the process was extremely beneficial. Going at the residents' pace meant that decisions were arrived at in a thoughtful, thorough way. The 15 who have remained involved are now committed for the long haul. The energy and enthusiasm they bring to the work is growing – meeting by meeting.

Illustration of the Theory of Change – Thunder Bay: Establishing a Neighbourhood Advisory Committee

Challenge statement – unmet need	• Formation of a neighbourhood advisory committee, capable of sustaining the neighbourhood revitalization work begun by ANC
Interventions, level of a particular neighbourhood characteristic	• *Social-cultural*: Guided development of a committee, overseen – but not led by – ANC
Changes resulting	• Residents assume responsibility and ownership of the committee's development and outcomes
Core beliefs	• All neighbourhoods have assets that can be built upon • Interventions can lead to change
Transformative change achieved or pointed to	• *Mindset*: Residents adopt greater responsibility for long-term change efforts • *Process*: Resident-led, ANC-supported • *Process*: Comfort with conflict led to decision that was grounded in both the needs of residents and the advice of technical experts • *Time*: Time required for residents to move from project to governance focus
Questions arising from the theory of change	• What happens if community structures evolve too slowly to attain self-sufficiency? • Will having a stable governance group result in more projects being achieved than if the group had gone forward with a project focus? • What other resources will this group bring?

Funding agencies often underestimate the time required to build relationships and structures which are capable of sustaining short- and long-term change initiatives. Volunteer turnover is high when expectations do not match with project requirements, but when individual skills and capacities are respected and supported, significant progress can be achieved.

Simpson-Ogden (Thunder Bay): Building Resilient Communities by Engaging Youth

Challenge

When ANC set out to engage residents in Thunder Bay's Simpson-Ogden neighbourhood, they were particularly interested in finding effective ways to connect with youth – those living with their families or independently and attending school or work, those at risk of becoming engaged with drugs, violence or the sex trade and those living in the streets. As part of the overall goal of building a resilient community, Thunder Bay ANC's youth engagement strategy would also include bringing together community agencies, businesses and residents with an interest in youth issues.

Over the last decade, Thunder Bay's remote location has contributed to a local perception that its needs are 'out of sight, out of mind' when it comes to gaining support for youth programming initiatives from the province. Community agency representatives have noted a downward trend in levels of financial support from the provincial government since the mid-1990s. Fewer funds have resulted in greater intra-agency competition to secure what resources were available; rather than work together on projects of mutual interest, individual organizations have worked to maintain their particular mandates and services. Encouraging community organizations to build a youth component into their existing mandates would take time.

Strategy

Throughout its first year of operations, staff at ANC built relationships with community agency representatives, shared information about community revitalization processes and helped build leadership and program options. Early efforts to encourage existing youth-oriented organizations to work collaboratively and engage youth in ANC activities had proven less successful. The two largest youth-oriented organizations in the Simpson-Ogden neighbourhood are the Thunder Bay Boys and Girls Club and the Underground Gym – a privately run, after-hours gymnasium and recreational facility. A third organization, the Multicultural Youth Centre, is located just outside Simpson-Ogden. Established 20 years ago, its director provides important connection with First Nations youth in Thunder Bay and northwestern Ontario. At the end of ANC's first year of operations, it was clear that the staff of these organizations were interested in the possibilities ANC represented for building up the neighbourhood, but the amount of time they could devote to planning was limited.

By March 2006, ANC staff members realized they did not possess the time they needed to launch a concerted youth engagement effort. That month, they responded to an invitation to submit to the McConnell Foundation to develop a Youth Strategy. In July 2006, the project designated funds to hire youth facilitators to assist ANC. The following months were spent developing a strategy and messages for the undertaking, and in the fall, three young people – two residents of Simpson-Ogden and a student attending a local college – were hired as youth engagement workers for the period from September to December.

These individuals met with numerous neighbourhood youth-based organizations and circulated the neighbourhood, setting up booths during community events where they could survey youth about their perceptions of the neighbourhood's strengths and challenges (60 surveys were completed). They also developed a presence in local schools by promoting ANC events and connecting with in-house co-operative education and other youth-oriented intiatives, including the provincial anti-tobacco strategy and the Urban Aboriginal Strategy. By late fall, they had reached hundreds of youth in the neighbhourhood and in the schools. The three workers documented their engagement efforts, keeping a diary of who they spoke to, notes on meetings they attended or convened and whether their strategies were effective.

By now, those youth who had begun to participate in the work referred to themselves as the Action for Neighbourhood Change Youth Group. Several hundred youth had attended ANC events and a group of 25 youth and 20 adults came together at an ANC-led Youth and Community Leadership Forum at the Simpson-Ogden community centre in November 2006. This event presented a unique opportunity to identify youth leaders in the community, familiarize them with ANC's mission and encourage others to get involved.

ANC staff became more deliberate in their efforts to forge a Youth Steering Committee. Now composed of 30 organization representatives and individuals (including several youth), the committee helped ANC structure a proposal for funding from the McConnell Foundation's "Building Resilient Communities by Engaging Youth" initiative. By February 2007, if its bid is successful, ANC will be awarded $300,000 over three years, with matching in-kind funds secured from community, government and nonprofit partners.

ANC's proposal was structured around issues identified by neighbourhood youth and community organizations. These include: fostering the youth voice in Thunder Bay, developing accessible youth spaces in challenged neighbourhoods, addressing the youth experience of safety within their neighbourhoods, finding ways to increase the effectiveness of limited resources and supports and coordinating resources, and services among groups and individuals that were previously working in isolation. Until February, the ANC youth engagement coordinator will continue to work with the Youth Steering Committee and 17-member youth committee to develop transportation, safety and financial policies and practices that will guide future youth engagement projects.

Outcomes

Many relationships have been strengthened and strategies developed as a result of the youth engagement work, but some areas need further development. ANC staff recognize that youth cannot themselves build relationships of trust with street engaged youth, for example. The McConnell proposal became the first of several planned applications for foundation funds to continue youth engagement efforts. More work to access and mobilize provincial government funding and liaising with other youth-focused organization in Ontario will strengthen the work already under way. As a testament to the collaborative approach taken by ANC, the Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth is launching a new youth engagement program and, upon Ministry approval, 4.6 youth workers and 186 summer jobs will be assigned to Simpson-Ogden area for the summer of 2007 and they are using the ANC work as a model of neighbourhood building.

Illustration of the Theory of Change – Thunder Bay: Engaging Youth to Help Build a Resilient Community

Challenge statement – unmet need	• Establishing youth engagement and leadership strategies
Interventions, level of a particular neighbourhood characteristic	• *System of support*: ANC grant application to the McConnell Foundation to engage youth • Convening local providers of youth services
Changes resulting	• 17 youth leaders identified; youth committee created • Youth Steering Committee created • Youth-focused community organizations beginning discussions to identify resources and supports for youth
Core beliefs	• All neighbourhoods have assets upon which to build • Engage in continuous assessment and course correction
Transformative change achieved or pointed to	• *Mindset*: Youth are a vital component of community; community matters to youth • *Process*: Opportunities to develop and demonstrate leadership are important to engage youth
Questions arising from the theory of change	• How can processes and structures be made more welcoming and relevant to youth and other groups that are not comfortable with traditional methods of engagement? • Will youth participation create positive effects in others areas of their lives (e.g., school performance)?

While inviting youth into a community development process acknowledges their place, finding the right invitation process also requires time and dedicated resources. Intra-agency programming opportunities can be created in an atmosphere of collaboration and cooperation. ANC's process of engagement has been recognized by the Ontario government as a model for a summer youth internship program.

North Central (Regina): Foundational Relationship Work

Challenge

Rather than going through a neighbourhood selection process like the United Ways in ANC's four other cities, United Way of Regina was informed that the North Central neighbourhood had been pre-selected by ANC's government partners. This part of the city had already undergone significant revitalization efforts which – government partners believed – could benefit from an infusion of grassroots participation. Since 2003, the Regina Inner City Community Partnership (RICCP) had developed a cross-sectoral working group whose members were striving to address many serious, poverty-related issues in North Central. These included creating a process for identifying and remediating substandard housing, working with youth and employers to overcome barriers to employment, and attracting investment and services into the neighbourhood.

Even with concerted efforts by United Way of Regina and RICCP to mesh the two initiatives, a perception took hold that the 'bottom up,' resident-focused model of ANC was working at cross purposes with the more bureaucratic structure of RICCP. This flashpoint is an important and predictable one in community work – the moment when participatory democracy (residents) clashes with representative (elected or appointed) democracy.[1] It also illustrates a second point of conflict: the moment when a new initiative is perceived as a competitor to community revitalization efforts already under way.

Strategy

North Central residents had been consulted during a door-to-door information gathering campaign in 2002 which led to the identification of nine action priorities. Three of these – crime and safety, housing and employment – were selected for immediate action by the RICCP, based on members' perceptions of movement that could be achieved in accord with their organizational mandates. The newly-named partnership unveiled a community vision and action plan in September 2003 and work began to move forward. The president of the North Central Community Association was invited to sit on the RICCP Steering Committee and several North Central residents were asked to participate in the work of sub-committees.

As ANC got under way in March 2005, United Way Regina and ANC staff members believed that they were operating from the same set of goals and assumptions as RICCP. The two-year mission of ANC was to support the implementation of the vision and to encourage greater resident participation and input. There were several champions who understood the importance of United Way of Regina's evolving role as a community builder and recognized its ability to forge connections among governments, nonprofit and community organizations, and North Central residents.

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[1] *This notion of participatory versus representative democracy is credited to Duncan Maclennan, from his presentation at the ANC Policy Forum, October 2005, Ottawa.*

Near the end of the first year of ANC operations in January 2006, RICCP, United Way and ANC staff met to review a number of concerns. The meeting was called in recognition of the fact that participants had come to the table with different assumptions and it concluded with an understanding that common ground must be found to forge a path ahead. From that moment, everyone began to work on correcting their separate assumptions, clarifying intentions and coming to a better understanding of the partners' environments and pressures.

Since March 2006, the plan for ANC and RICCP to create a shared action plan has remained in the discussion phase. When the March conversation turned to expanding ANC activities into the adjacent Core neighbourhood for the project's second year, RICCP members were interested in identifying opportunities for convergence and mutual support. The ANC project manager continues to update RICCP about project developments and consider activity areas that the United Way of Regina can fund after ANC winds down in March 2007.

Outcomes

The work in North Central confirmed United Way of Regina's appreciation of the need to continually build understanding among project partners. It also affirmed that misunderstandings are unavoidable. Conflict cannot be anticipated or avoided, it is an integral part of the process of change. It can lead to strengthened relationships as long as all parties take the time from the outset to adopt a positive, long-term, goal-centred approach to the work. Organizers must be sure they have a clear, shared understanding of the project vision and that each player respects their role within the larger undertaking.

Individual personalities are also key to successful outcomes. The departure of one supportive and influential city hall employee reaffirmed the lesson that community work must be supported by a diverse and multilayered series of relationships.

The language and concept nuances that exist among people are important elements of relationship. Members of multipartner initiatives like ANC must continue to be respectful of one another's approaches to the work. The same lesson gets reinforced when hiring or assigning work tasks. Appropriate time must be taken to talk about sensitivities and areas of agreement and difference. Striving for a good alignment of values and philosophy is the best way to ensure harmonious relationships and outcomes.

Illustration of the Theory of Change – Regina: Foundational Relationship Work

Challenge statement – unmet need	• An existing community revitalization initiative clashes with a newer one • Differences between residents' perceptions and elected or appointed officials' perceptions of change efforts under way
Interventions, level of a particular neighbourhood characteristic	• *System of support*: Identification of differences in approach, assumptions, intentions • Improved understanding and appreciation of partners' environments and pressures; agreement to identify continuing opportunities for mutual support and involvement
Changes resulting	• Relationship difficulties recognized, not bridged
Core beliefs	• Engage in continuous assessment and course correction • External or contextual factors and variables can affect how well an intervention will work
Transformative change achieved or pointed to	• *Mindset:* Essential conflicts understood • *Process:* Communication efforts address points of conflict with an open, positive attitude • Still difficult to shift balance of power
Questions arising from the theory of change	• Can change efforts continue successfully after a breach occurs and one party stops talking? • How does this type of problem affect systems of support inside and outside the neighbourhood? • Was being an appointed site (not a chosen one) an impediment to progress?

Regina was the only ANC site that was appointed externally and the only one in which there was a comprehensive, multipartner revitalization process already in place. To what extent was the missing development experience of identifying, engaging and mobilizing new residents a factor in the change process? Has this missing step also had an impact on the degree of resident participation? Regina's experience demonstrates the sensitivity with which any new initiative must proceed in order not to operate at cross purposes with existing neighbourhood work.

Bridgeview (Surrey): Bridgeview in Motion – Building a Shared Vision and Mission

Challenge

When ANC staff came to Bridgeview in June 2005, they were welcomed by the existing Bridgeview Hall Community Association that operated out of the community centre in the neighbourhood's northwestern quadrant. It soon became clear, however, that many Bridgeview residents had never received such a welcome. Many were unaware that the Community Hall was a space they had a right to enter, nor that its board had been running community events and programs for 61 years. The centre manager – experienced in the job but not a resident of Bridgeview – was unable to offer ANC staff adequate work and meeting space inside the already busy Community Hall. Within two months, ANC operations had moved to the nearby elementary school.

ANC took a different approach to community building than had been experienced in Bridgeview previously. Staff worked hard to hear as many neighbourhood voices as possible, including people who had not been part of established community structures. Many were immigrant Canadians who brought new languages, customs and ways of working. The spectre of a second group of people active in the community raised concerns that the old and the new would come into competition with one another. The underlying tension stemmed from a fear of change.

Strategy

Since residents first engaged the municipality in discussions about the neighbourhood's open ditches in the 1970s, these structures have become symbolic of Bridgeview's low status among Surrey neighbourhoods. People from outside Bridgeview dump trash there as a matter of habit – old furniture, shopping carts, bags of household garbage – the large drainage ditches make convenient receptacles for people driving in and out of the neighbourhood.

The issue of unsightly garbage brought out several volunteers who wanted to take action. Attempts to get the city bylaw officer on side to advocate for more garbage receptacles and more regular garbage pickups proved unsuccessful. With encouragement from ANC staff, resident Mike Ryan contacted the City of Surrey's public works department and got gloves, pickup sticks and yellow garbage bags delivered to Bridgeview on a regular basis for organized monthly garbage cleanup days. Neighbourhood volunteers are given a hot lunch at the Community Hall after each session. Some of them became part of an emerging ANC community group which by February 2006 had named itself "Bridgeview in Motion."

By choosing to focus on cleaning up the ditches, Bridgeview in Motion supplied a project for volunteers where their efforts could immediately been seen as providing a tangible benefit. As the project and work has unfolded, the ditches have emerged as a symbol of community pride against a history of perceived neglect by the city. The monthly cleanup group continues to attract new members, links with city staff are being forged and resident leaders are emerging.

An "Adopt-a-Street" program has existed in Surrey for some time. It provides citizens with collection materials and arranges for removal of the trash. To date, half of the streets in Bridgeview have been adopted by residents, thereby taking their cleanup work several steps further and demonstrating an increased sense of civic responsibility.

Bridgeview in Motion has produced a 20-page legacy document describing its association with ANC, its activities, community partners and hopes for the future. Sprinkled liberally with photographs, it demonstrates pride in its accomplishments and provides an invitation to others who would like the work to move forward. As ANC reaches the end of its two-year operations, Bridgeview in Motion is considering whether it will incorporate. This discussion is helping residents to confront the difficult issue of what relationships will best serve Bridgeview's needs, or whether the existing Community Association can expand its mandate to include the participation of the whole community. Two members of each organization attend both sets of meetings. The groups share information and have held joint meetings to discuss the project pool funds available through ANC. The Community Association is willing to sponsor Bridgeview in Motion projects.

Outcomes

ANC staff members consider the community engagement work as helping to move residents in a direction – slowly and carefully – rather than applying a specific strategy. As more people get involved in events and activities, Bridgeview in Motion has learned that it needs to continually engage residents in conversations to course correct and assess their efforts. Once residents gain confidence in their ability to self-organize, ANC staff will continue to offer new ways of engaging and attracting people to the work of community revitalization. The multicultural personality of Bridgeview and the recent hiring of a staff member with language and musical gifts offer a new means of celebrating the community through art, music and food. The continuous cycle of engagement, issue identification, action and evaluation provide a model for ongoing work. The question of which community groups will direct resident activity will likely resolve itself through continued efforts to refine Bridgeview's vision of change.

Illustration of the Theory of Change – Surrey: Bridgeview in Motion – Building a Shared Vision and Mission

Challenge statement – unmet need	• Formation of a neighbourhood advisory committee, capable of sustaining the neighbourhood revitalization work begun by ANC, but able to mesh its work with an existing community structure
Interventions, level of a particular neighbourhood characteristic	• *Social-cultural*: Guided development of a committee overseen, but not led by, ANC • Association legacy document created • *Environmental*: Regular clean up days and Adopt-a-Street campaigns strengthen bonds between residents
Changes resulting	• Residents assume responsibility and ownership of the committee's development and outcomes • Residents identify opportunities for action and engagement • Two community groups begin the process of merging people and processes • Residents able to talk with municipal government in a manner that brings action on identified needs
Core beliefs	• All neighbourhoods have assets that can be built upon • Residents know best what needs to be changed • Engage in continuous assessment and course correction to ensure broad participation and common understanding of the work under way
Transformative change achieved or pointed to	• *Mindset*: Residents adopt greater responsibility for long-term change efforts, address differences in opinion, outlook and operation • *Process:* Resident-led, ANC-supported
Questions arising from the theory of change	• What happens if community structures evolve too slowly to attain self-sufficiency? • Is it necessary for two community organizations to overcome differences and work as one? • Is it possible? • Can mindsets change without a shared experience?

Like Regina, Bridgeview residents must build strong relationships to create shared vision and undertake concerted, directed action for neighbourhood improvement. In this instance, a community symbol of neglect became a source of pride.

Bridgeview (Surrey): Linking Up Community Services

Challenge

Though the City of Surrey is one of Canada's fastest-growing municipalities – its population of 450,000 will soon be larger than Vancouver's – community organizers estimate that it possesses only one-eighth the social services, government infrastructure and networks of its higher profile neighbour. United Way of the Lower Mainland (UWLM) staff members knew that whatever neighbourhood was chosen for ANC, it would benefit by having a stronger system of support among Surrey decision-makers.

Strategy

UWLM staff members designed a neighbourhood selection process which allowed them an opportunity to build and strengthen relationships among Surrey community agencies and key stakeholders. They invited representatives from 40 organizations to review statistical information about several Surrey neighbourhoods and to help identify readiness indicators that were appropriate for a short duration project like ANC. Through a two-month, six-meeting process, the group decided that the neighbourhood chosen should have a balance of assets and needs and already have a sense of community.

Because schools are often the only neutral space in a neighbourhood where people can come together, the group also made the decision to define neighbourhood boundaries on the basis of elementary school catchment areas. A key indicator for neighbourhood selection was how well children scored on a provincial Early Development Indicator – a screening tool administered to kindergarten-aged children on a neighbourhood-by-neighbourhood basis. (Bridgeview's children scored at the extreme lower end, with results similar to those achieved in isolated northern communities.)

The 40 organizations were invited to attend the ANC launch in Bridgeview in the summer of 2005. Many were already keen to get involved in the community but ANC staff knew that the project focus must now be placed on hearing resident voices. Organizations were invited to a fall 'systems of support' meeting where a Tamarack representative spoke about the historical perspective of community work, neighbourhood engagement, place-based strategies and the role organizations could play in such efforts.

Impacts

As time went by, UWLM staff realized that their work to build a larger system of support during the neighbourhood selection phase paid great dividends later. Bridgeview's local system of support – the elementary school principal; a city parks, recreation and culture liaison officer; school's public health nurse; RCMP school liaison officer; coordinator of a provincially funded parent resource centre – all began to work in a more coordinated fashion. As these local supporters brought in new programs to fill service gaps, they made sure that schedules allowed residents to take advantage of new services and not miss out on established ones.

As word spread of the work under way in Bridgeview, other agencies became more involved. Now called The Friends of Bridgeview, this larger circle of support was watching and influencing decisions at a policy level that had a direct impact on program decisions at the neighbourhood level. Support at higher bureaucratic levels translated to greater efforts to bring services from Whalley – a Surrey subdivision of which Bridgeview is a part – 'down the hill' – a reference to Bridgeview's low-lying location. The number and variety of programs established since UWLM's first agency meeting – and the level of in-kind contributions – have been outstanding.

Bridgeview is now the beneficiary of an increasingly complex web of supports. The local support network's focus on families with young children has resulted in Bridgeview being chosen as a pilot site for a provincially funded family literacy program. That program resulted from the alignment of provincial funding and a proposal to the school district from the preschool resource centre coordinator and elementary school principal. Bridgeview's cultural diversity and the number of non-English-speaking grandparents who provide child care stimulated interest in language programming. A family night with a dinner, translators and agency information and representation attracted many residents and generated ideas for future initiatives. A further indicator of success is the increased use of the family resource centre, another place where parents can pick up useful parenting tips and make connections with their neighbours. The centre is now investigating innovative child care programming options.

ANC's community grants have paid for new services, including a weekly food bank satellite location, resources for a youth lounge at the local Community Hall and more resources for the family centre. Surrey Parks, Recreation and Culture continues to add new programs. The school district has made a decision not to charge for space for any community events held there, including ANC organizational meetings. Another agency – Pacific Community Resources Society – was contracted by ANC to hire a youth worker to engage Bridgeview youth. That organization chose to continue funding that position on their own once ANC program funds ran out.

Newer issues require greater levels of resident cooperation and participation, along with an understanding of the delicate dance of responsibility played out with provincial departments, municipal departments and community organizations. Bridgeview has recently learned that a new, four-lane "Gateway" highway will be built along its northern perimeter. The project announcement has generated both optimism and dread, and will provide a true test as to how well residents have learned to listen to one another and communicate their concerns through their local and larger systems of support.

Illustration of the Theory of Change – Surrey: Linking Up Community Services

Challenge statement – unmet need	• Municipality in which neighbourhood is located is severely underserviced by community and government organizations
Interventions, level of a particular neighbourhood characteristic	• System of support: Neighbourhood selection process includes representatives from more than 40 community agencies that provide services to the neighbourhood
Changes resulting	• Many selection committee members remain involved in ANC in Bridgeview and supply 'higher level' support for local initiatives • Collaboration between agencies and expansion of existing programs to meet newly-identified service gaps now under way
Core beliefs	• External or contextual factors and variables can affect how well an intervention will work • Engage in continuous assessment and course correction
Transformative change achieved or pointed to	• *Mindset and resources*: Wider systems of support players become interested in supporting Bridgeview, find ways of expanding services to help that community • *Mindset and processes*: Local systems of support increase their level of collaboration with one another • *Process*: Importance of involving higher levels of support from the onset of a project seen as vitally important
Questions arising from the theory of change	• How can the external system of support be encouraged to expand its interest and activity for all needy neighbourhoods in a municipality? • Are there higher level policy-makers who need to be involved in this work? • Why was engaging the system of support essential at the beginning of the project – in parallel with work completed within the neighbourhood?

By inviting people and organizations they knew would be interested in the work about to start in Surrey, UWLM acted as a community animator for the project. It provided the information and vision that got people excited about community change and inspired them to look for new ways of working in a specific neighbourhood.

Themes, questions, and impact on the ANC Theory of Change

The preceding project sketches and summaries are contributions to the body of thought and community of practice which is emerging from the communities agenda. They may act as inspiration to other revitalization initiatives – ideas that can be transferred or adapted to particular neighbourhoods or communities. They also identify a set of questions about the ANC Theory of Change at one point in time and act as raw data for assessment and course correction in the planning of new interventions.

The purpose of this section is to position projects undertaken by the five sites against ANC's Theory of Change, using it as a lens to speculate upon the reasons why some initiatives seem to have greater depth and impact within their communities and where others might require greater emphasis, planning or resources to make them more effective.

Another way to summarize the ANC Theory of Change is presented in chart form on the following page. Figure 4 makes clear the three-plus-one phases of neighbourhood work: engaging and mobilizing residents, evolving a collective vision or mission, and taking action – all within a continuous cycle of assessment and evaluation. Program managers are working within their particular mix of system variables (social/cultural, physical, environmental, economic) and change variables (mindset, process, resources and time). Figure 4 also allows a way of assessing a strategy's ability to effect longer-term or transformational change. It offers a cognitive map for 'stretching' an existing initiative so that it is better supported and nurtured for deeper levels of participation and change.
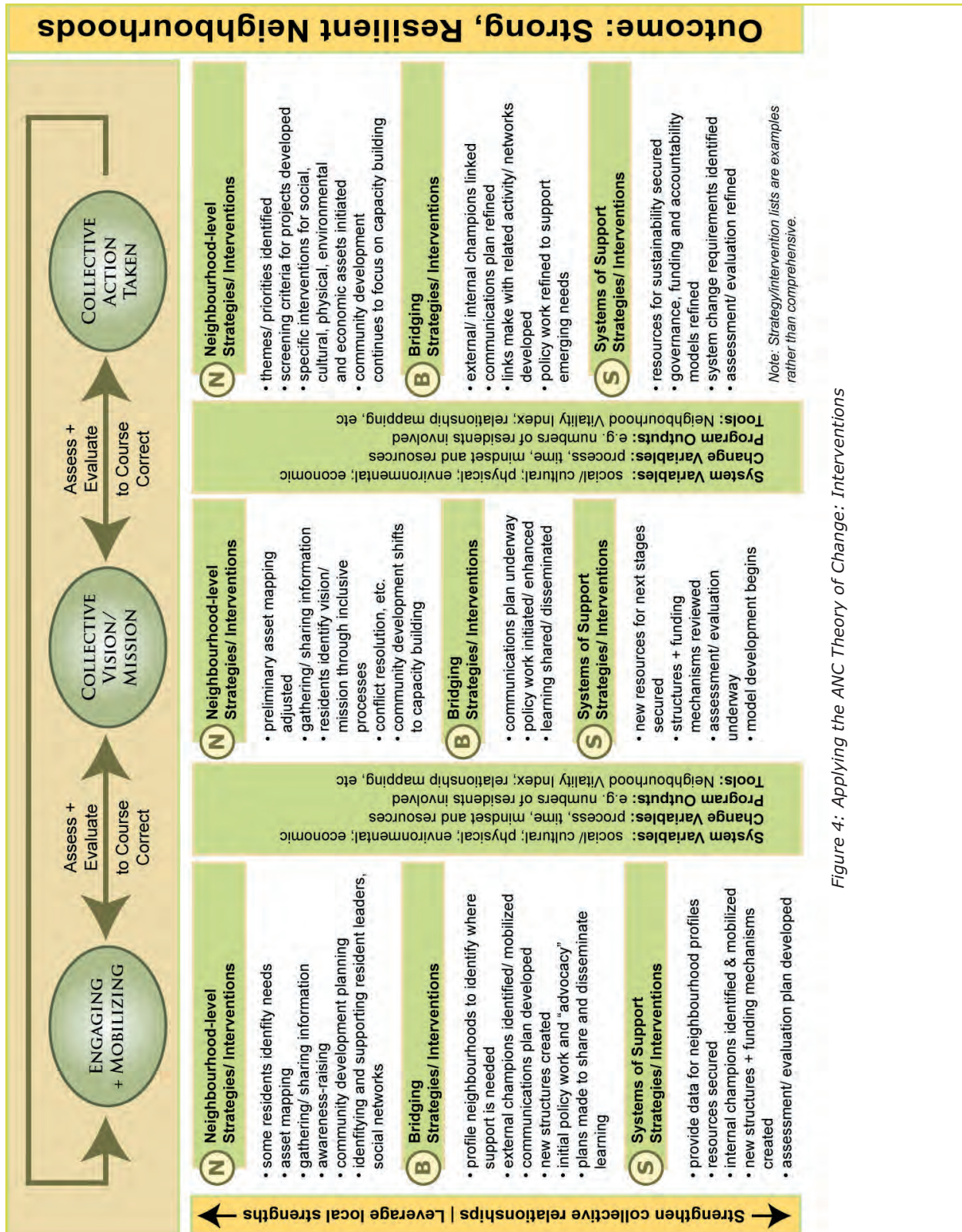
Outcome: Strong, Resilient Neighbourhoods

← Strengthen collective relationships | Leverage local strengths →

ENGAGING + MOBILIZING

N Neighbourhood-level Strategies/ Interventions
- some residents identify needs
- asset mapping
- gathering/ sharing information
- awareness-raising
- community development planning
- identifying and supporting resident leaders, social networks

B Bridging Strategies/ Interventions
- profile neighbourhoods to identify where support is needed
- external champions identified/ mobilized
- communications plan developed
- new structures created
- initial policy work and "advocacy"
- plans made to share and disseminate learning

S Systems of Support Strategies/ Interventions
- provide data for neighbourhood profiles
- resources secured
- internal champions identified & mobilized
- new structures + funding mechanisms created
- assessment/ evaluation plan developed

System Variables: social/ cultural; physical; environmental; economic
Change Variables: process; time, mindset and resources
Program Outputs: e.g. numbers of residents involved
Tools: Neighbourhood Vitality Index; relationship mapping, etc

Assess + Evaluate to Course Correct

COLLECTIVE VISION/ MISSION

N Neighbourhood-level Strategies/ Interventions
- preliminary asset mapping adjusted
- gathering/ sharing information
- residents identify vision/ mission through inclusive processes
- conflict resolution, etc.
- community development shifts to capacity building

B Bridging Strategies/ Interventions
- communications plan underway
- policy work initiated/ enhanced
- learning shared/ disseminated

S Systems of Support Strategies/ Interventions
- new resources for next stages secured
- structures + funding mechanisms reviewed
- assessment/ evaluation underway
- model development begins

System Variables: social/ cultural; physical; environmental; economic
Change Variables: process; time, mindset and resources
Program Outputs: e.g. numbers of residents involved
Tools: Neighbourhood Vitality Index; relationship mapping, etc

Assess + Evaluate to Course Correct

COLLECTIVE ACTION TAKEN

N Neighbourhood-level Strategies/ Interventions
- themes/ priorities identified
- screening criteria for projects developed
- specific interventions for social, cultural, physical, environmental and economic assets initiated
- community development continues to focus on capacity building

B Bridging Strategies/ Interventions
- external/ internal champions linked
- communications plan refined
- links make with related activity/ networks developed
- policy work refined to support emerging needs

S Systems of Support Strategies/ Interventions
- resources for sustainability secured
- governance, funding and accountability models refined
- system change requirements identified
- assessment/ evaluation refined

Note: Strategy/intervention lists are examples rather than comprehensive.

Figure 4: Applying the ANC Theory of Change: Interventions

The projects undertaken to date by ANC provide a baseline for measuring progress and an opportunity to reflect on lessons learned. The ANC Theory of Change allows us to consider whether strategies have the potential to effect transformational change, or whether their impacts will mainly be felt in the short term. This lens also allows each initiative to be categorized by its level of intervention – neighbourhood (N), bridging (B) or systems of support (S).

Strategy offers short-term or limited change opportunities

Scarborough Village (Toronto) – Heritage Language Classes Ⓝ Ⓑ
Scarborough Village (Toronto) – Neighbourhood Women Engage with Elected Officials Ⓝ Ⓑ

The language class experience underlined the fact that organizers did not have the time they would like to have invested in their community animator network. Two cultural groups that initially were involved in trying to establish language classes withdrew – and may prove more difficult to re-engage in neighbourhood change efforts. At this time, no community animator exists for either group.

The women who consulted with their city councillor were pleased to be offered an entry into ANC's work in Scarborough and they were pleasantly surprised by the councillor's level of concern. However, they also were aware that ongoing efforts by the city to address their immediate concerns had already been in the works. Whether they will continue to pursue greater and deeper consultation with elected and appointed officials is uncertain. While it is critically important for residents to engage with local officials, the achievement of sustained, meaningful impact is a significant, time-consuming job.

Transformational change seen or anticipated

Scarborough Village (Toronto) – Community Animators Ⓝ Ⓑ
Simpson-Ogden (Thunder Bay) – Engaging Youth to Help Build a Resilient Community Ⓝ Ⓑ

Both of these initiatives underline the importance of engaging key groups within a neighbourhood in a deliberate way. Community animators are able to expedite the process of finding and communicating with residents who come from other cultures or speak other languages and builds on their existing social networks. They are the neighbourhood bridge into territory which organizers might not otherwise be able to reach, and if utilized consistently and given ongoing training, they can help to both extend existing strategies and suggest new ones which percolate up through their neighbourhood connections. The real value of this strategy is the building of relationships and trust within the neighbourhood (social capital).

Developing a comprehensive strategy to engage traditionally difficult to engage groups (e.g., youth) has led organizers to widen their view of programming options to include funding and provincial agencies not previously considered. By using skills development as a means of increasing youth's capacity to be participating citizens, social capital is built. By investing in youth, a neighbourhood accumulates social capital that may translate into rich relationships in the decades to come. The experience of engaging residents not traditionally involved with neighbourhood development may also help organizers shape invitations for other hard-to-reach groups.

Strategy offers short-term or limited change opportunities

Spryfield (Halifax) – The Spryfield Business Directory (N) (B)
North Central and The Core (Regina) – Foundational Relationship Work (S)

Spryfield's Business Directory represents the fruition of a five-year dream and provides a useful community tool. Its ability to achieve the longer-term goals of ANC – greater uptake of local business offerings and increased employment for residents – has yet to be seen. The goals and methodology for this project were clear, but the long-term lessons and future path for the work are the factors that will actually determine its long-term impact.

The Regina experience of keeping relationships central to neighbourhood and community work will be more fully described in an ANC community story to be released in spring 2007. Though efforts to improve, extend and enrich relationships among the many community players in Regina are ongoing, the ability of local ANC organizers to initiate short- and long-term action in these two neighbourhoods have been overshadowed by continuing questions about roles and authority. This initiative continues to offer lessons for neighbourhood and community organizers: neighbourhood revitalization involves a continuous cycle of relationship management – work which is time-consuming and politically charged. Developing robust relationships requires conveners who possess the relationship skill set and communications expertise that are the basis of change.

Transformational change seen or anticipated

Spryfield (Halifax) – Feasibility Study for a Spryfield Family and Children Multi-service Centre (B) (S)

This work has effected a fundamental shift in perception – from policy change victim to empowered solution generator – for both the residents and organizational representatives involved in this work. However, one question for organizers to consider is whether this is an example of serendipity – did ANC just happen to

be in the right place at the right time to help connect people and issues – or is it possible for organizers to deliberately scan the horizon for change opportunities? Had the Riverview Child Care Centre and the Halifax YWCA not already come together, would ANC have been able to mobilize such a committed, effective group? Is this more a lesson about harnessing opportunities as they arise, or does it suggest that community organizers should work to specifically identify and organize around policy issues which have impacts on their neighbourhoods?

Simpson-Ogden (Thunder Bay) – Establishing a Neighbourhood Advisory Committee **(N)**
Bridgeview (Surrey) – Bridgeview in Motion – Building a Shared Vision and Mission **(N)**

Both of these sketches describe the necessary time, energy and planning required to build the social capital that glues neighbourhoods together. In neither case was there a specific moment or crisis that became the impetus for organization. Both these stories point to the importance of identifying existing social capital, investing in it and rebuilding it where it has been lost or requires new blood.

Strategy offers short-term or limited change opportunities

Spryfield (Halifax) – Greystone's Community Garden **(N) (B)**

This initiative emerged from careful engagement, visioning and action, and the strategy addressed the full spectrum of factors (social/cultural, physical, environmental, economic). Whether the garden will prove to be self-sustaining and its ultimate impact on residents, however, are difficult to predict. Organizers continue to work to embed the garden lessons into other engagement opportunities, such as evening garden discussions among adult residents, and to consider ways to continue funding the work.

Transformational change seen or anticipated

Bridgeview (Surrey) – Linking Up Community Services **(B) (S)**

This sketch demonstrates the long-term benefits and program and policy changes that can result when relationships go right. The three phases of transformational change – engaging and mobilizing residents, articulating a collective vision or mission, and taking action – all were present in the minds of ANC staff when they decided to assemble a network of support for the neighbourhood selected in Surrey.

Last words

Using a Theory of Change model allows organizers the opportunity to review past and present efforts, and to consider how each strategy may be 'stretched' conceptually, provided with greater support and nurtured so that it can allow for deeper levels of resident participation and change. Greystone's Community Garden organizers might wish, for example, to encourage local garden and seed centres to offer purchasing incentives for resident gardeners. They might explore systems of support strategies and interventions and apply to the provincial agriculture ministry for funding (sustainability) or a local organic foods association for further linkages with their sources of information and possible funding options.

This type of continuous assessment and course correction are what builds up the body of practice that defines the communities agenda. ANC has just begun to scratch the surface of how we 'do' neighbourhood revitalization work in the present context. Its Theory of Change defines a contextual framework within which this work will occur and helps define the questions that organizers can use to course correct and move forward.

It is difficult to predict the specific outcomes which may result from the efforts presented in this document. However, using the continuous evaluation principle embedded in our Theory of Change, we can stop, reflect and course correct. While we still have questions, we can say with certainty that the projects described have improved the quality of relationships and residents' capacity to address complex local challenges. And we are beginning to understand how.

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