

**Neighborhood Associations: An Untapped Powerhouse For Action?**

Robert S. Ogilvie Ph.D.

The different types of neighborhood organizations

- Not all neighborhood organizations are alike! There are two general types:
 1. Community organizations
 2. Community-serving organizations

What is a community organization?

- A community organization is one that is rooted in a location and is "of, for and by' the communities they serve."

What is a community serving organizations

- A community-serving organization is not rooted in a place and is "run by credentialed professionals, . . . pursuing agendas set by constituencies other than those being served" or other than those who are doing the serving.

The benefits of working with community organizations

- Community organizations provide opportunities for their members to participate, to build skills and become more effective citizens.
- Community organizations allow neighborhood voices and concerns to be heard.

Two types of community organizations

- Not all community organizations are alike, however.

Different types of community organizations

1. Mutual Benefit Organizations (MBOs) and Public Benefit Organizations (PBOs).
2. Private Interest and Common Interest organizations.

Mutual Benefit Organizations

- MBOs & PBOs both benefit the public at large.
- Examples of MBOs include cooperatives (food and otherwise), unions and most neighborhood organizations.
- Examples of PBOs include most foundations and environmental organizations.

Private Interest and Common Interest Organizations

- Private Interest and Common Interest organizations are those which are formed for personal income or gain.
- There is no public benefit effect of the work of these organizations, rather their success in accruing a private benefit often comes at the public expense.

Private Interest and Common Interest Organizations

- Included within this growing category are homeowner's associations and private investment groups such as real estate investment trusts.
- These are the organizations most likely to be NIMBYS.

Steps to take when working with community organizations

- Build a strong *organizational structure*
- Build a supportive *context*
- Change the *political/ normative environment*
- Build the *functional capacity* of the organizations

Building the organizational structure

- There are two levels to this work:
 1. organizational
 2. individual

Building organizational structure at the individual level

- At the individual level the two most important issues are as follows:
 1. recruiting and retaining a broad base of participants
 2. developing effective leadership.

Building organizational structure at the organizational level

- At the organizational level the two important issues are as follows:
 1. rotating leadership
 2. inclusionary membership rules
 3. dispersed responsibility

Building a supportive context

- Community organizations will be more successful if they exist within a supportive context.

Building a supportive context

- There are 2 elements to this work:
 1. Getting public sector employees, funders and others to treat the community organizations as partners and to support them.
 2. Providing necessary technical assistance to the community organizations so that they can do their work.

Changing the political/normative environment

- To be effective and to continue to recruit and retain members, community organizations need to exist in an environment that supports their ability to do important work.

Changing the political/normative environment

- People will only stay on as members of the organizations if they have real tangible work to participate in and if they can see change as a result of their efforts.

Changing the political/normative environment

- Two major elements of this work:
 1. Creating deliberative partnerships with civic and funding partners
 2. Listening to and acting on community input

What is a deliberative partnership?

- A deliberative partnership is one in which members are willing to let their opinions and actions be affected by the discussions that take place among the partners.

The importance of listening to the community and acting on their input

- So if collaboration comes to certain conclusions on such matters as the location of a community garden or of a local sourcing ordinance, the all of the partners need to be willing to abide by those conclusions and act accordingly.

The political consequences of ignoring deliberation

- If the City is not willing to act according to the deliberations of the collaborative partnerships, then the collaborations won't last long, and they will alienate those who were recruited into participation.

The political consequences of ignoring deliberation

- My hypothesis is that NIMBYs are defensive reactions to powerlessness, and that as the City and businesses become more willing to work in tandem with neighborhood organizations for the public benefit, the tendency toward NIMBYs will decrease.

Building the functional capacity of community organizations

- There are 2 major aspects of this work
 1. Developing the capacity of community organizations to deliver services and run facilities.
 2. Developing the capacity of civic and funding organizations to work with and support community organizations

Developing the capacity of community organizations

- Members of community organizations need to be given the skills and knowledge to perform a greater degree of public functions.

Building the capacity of civic organizations and funders

- City, county and state employees need to be taught how to work with and support community partners.
- Working with community partners should be seen as part of the job description.