

Community Building to Drive Change

Strategies for the Atlanta Civic Site

THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION



APRIL 2014

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Contents

Introduction	3
Community-Building Strategies	8
Transparent Dialogue	8
Participatory Planning	10
Resident Organizing	12
Organizational Capacity Building	14
Conclusion	16
Appendix	17

Introduction

Atlanta is one of two cities that the Annie E. Casey Foundation designates as a civic site, a place where the Foundation has a long-term commitment to building brighter futures for low-income families and their children.¹ In 2001, the Foundation identified a group of five Atlanta neighborhoods with high concentrations of poverty and began supporting an integrated set of place-based strategies to improve the lives of children and families living in those communities. Community building, the practice of working with residents and community-based organizations to strengthen civic life and develop community-driven responses to common challenges, has been foundational to this work.² This paper is intended to share key principles, strategies and tactics that the Foundation's Atlanta Civic Site team has identified as key components of its community-building framework over the last decade.

NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING UNIT V

The neighborhoods that comprise the Atlanta Civic Site are located just south of downtown and part of Neighborhood Planning Unit V (NPU-V), a city designation that creates a quasi-governmental structure for communities to work together on planning, zoning and related issues. At the turn of the 20th century, the neighborhoods that now make up NPU-V were a checkerboard of black and immigrant communities bustling with commerce, theaters, a hospital, schools and street cars. Although constrained by racial zoning policies and a lack of city investment in public amenities, these communities created their own schools, started and supported local businesses and had a rich public life.³ By mid-century, as African-American political leaders negotiated with the city's political and business elite for expansion of black residential districts and challenged formal segregation, residents of NPU-V began to move out of the neighborhoods in search of new housing opportunities.⁴ Urban renewal policies enabled the use of eminent domain to raze thousands of houses in NPU-V for the construction of interstate highway systems and a baseball stadium. In the 1990s, development for the Olympic Games disrupted community life and

¹ Atlanta was chosen as a civic site because it is the corporate headquarters for UPS. The Foundation's other civic site is its hometown of Baltimore.

² Atlanta was part of the initial group of sites involved in Making Connections, the Foundation's 10-year community change initiative. As part of the initiative, Casey made an ambitious commitment to place-based work that prioritized resident engagement and capacity building. For an account of the lessons from Making Connections, visit www.aecf.org/mclessons.

³ Kelsey, R. (2011). *Pittsburgh: A sense of community: Historic reflections of an Atlanta neighborhood*. Cleveland, OH: Publishing Associates, Inc.

⁴ At the same time, many white residents in these or adjoining communities actively resisted integration or left the city altogether. For a detailed analysis of residential segregation in Atlanta and the responses to it, see:
Kruse, K. (2005). *White flight: Atlanta and the making of modern conservatism*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
Brown-Nagin, T. (2011). *Courage to dissent: Atlanta and the long history of the civil rights movement*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

displaced residents yet again.⁵ By 2001, the communities of NPU-V had become a challenging place for many children and families to live. At that time, 59 percent of children were living in poverty, and the graduation rate at the local high school was 28 percent.⁶

Given this history, the Foundation began its work in Atlanta by developing relationships with residents and building trust. As an outside entity coming into neighborhoods that had experienced significant economic and social trauma, Casey knew its first job was to learn from residents what challenges families and children were facing; work with them to identify assets to help address those challenges; and support institutions and networks that contributed to a strong, healthy community. This approach has guided the civic site team's work over the past decade, resulting in significant improvements in the physical infrastructure, educational opportunities and workforce training and support for families in NPU-V.

In the Atlanta and Baltimore civic sites, the Foundation pursues three comprehensive, integrated strategies and goals:

- **Education achievement:** Children are healthy, thriving socially and emotionally and developing on track to achieve academic success by third grade.
- **Family economic success:** Adults are employed and on a pathway to a family-supporting career, accessing work supports and building assets and wealth.
- **Neighborhood transformation:** Neighborhoods are safe and have sustainable and affordable housing, high-achieving schools, well-paying jobs and opportunities for residents to improve their communities.

Over the last decade, the Foundation has supported innovative programs that are improving outcomes for NPU-V children and families. These programs intentionally serve kids and their parents in a coordinated manner, providing high-quality early education while also helping adults connect to jobs and other resources that enable them to better support their family's needs. For example, Casey and several partners established the Dunbar Learning Complex, an educational model serving kids from six weeks of age through fifth grade, as well as their families.⁷ The

⁵ Keating, L. (2001). *Atlanta: Race, class and urban expansion*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

⁶ The Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2004). *Neighborhoods count: A look at NPU-V in 2004*. Baltimore, MD: Author.

⁷ The Dunbar Learning Complex is home to Educare Atlanta, an early learning center, and Paul Laurence Dunbar Elementary School. Educare Atlanta is managed by the nonprofit Sheltering Arms Early Education and Family Centers, while Dunbar Elementary (located upstairs in the same building) is part of the Atlanta Public Schools system. The two schools work closely together to ensure their curricula, assessments and standards are aligned to keep children on track to achieve reading proficiency by the end of third grade, a critical milestone. Sheltering Arms, Atlanta Public Schools and the Casey Foundation are the lead partners in this innovative education center. For more about this model, visit www.dunbarlearningcomplex.org.

complex houses an early learning center with a public elementary school and works to ensure children are proficient readers by the end of third grade — a predictor of long-term success.

The Dunbar model demonstrates that, given the right foundation, children can succeed in school. After the complex's first year of operation, 63 percent of students at the early learning center who moved on to kindergarten at the elementary school were reading at or above grade level, compared to only 47 percent of their peers who did not attend that center. In spring 2013, pre-K students at the center outperformed the national average for Head Start students on the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, which measures how well a child is moving toward literacy and learning language. And in fall 2013, kindergartners who had attended the early learning center scored seven percentage points higher on the test than their counterparts who did not have that early-learning-center experience.

In its efforts to support Dunbar parents and other adults, Casey also helped launch the Center for Working Families Inc., a community-based nonprofit that helps residents achieve financial stability. Since its opening in 2005, the center has placed participants in more than 1,700 jobs and connected more than 7,000 residents with public benefits totaling more than \$7.3 million. As part of its commitment to improving the physical environment, the Foundation has leveraged more than \$170 million in public and private dollars to improve the neighborhoods' parks and recreation centers and to redevelop single-family homes into quality affordable housing. In addition, the Atlanta Civic Site team has trained more than 450 residents on leadership skills and community development and supported community-based organizations and resident networks in taking action to address community issues.

To catalyze and sustain continued neighborhood improvements and opportunities for residents, the Foundation is committed to increasing the capacity of community institutions and strengthening the civic environment, while at the same time inviting residents to inform its investments. The civic site team does this through practices that promote transparent dialogue, participatory planning, resident organizing and organizational capacity building, all of which will be described in this paper. Before exploring this community-building framework, however, this paper offers thoughts on the Foundation's contribution as a place-based funder.

ROLE OF A PLACE-BASED FUNDER

Many place-based funders have wrestled with how to pursue community building in a way that leverages their strategic position while acknowledging the dynamics between large institutions and residents. Place-based funders have convening power and influence with public and private partners; they are mission-driven entities that often have significant flexibility in defining their priorities, and, in being committed to a specific area, they can be particularly responsive to local realities and changing conditions. Like many, the Foundation is well-positioned to model best practices for other institutions, particularly as it relates to community engagement, participatory

planning and transparency. At the same time, grant-making and technical-assistance programs allow for supporting organizations and grassroots activities that strengthen the civic environment.

While the Foundation's long-term investment in one place and community-building activities allow it to develop strong relationships, it is keenly aware that it cannot relate to residents in the same way a community-based organization might. While such organizations consist of or represent a constituency in their place, Casey is neither designed to be representative of, nor accountable to, residents in the same way. Foundation staff tasked with community engagement may find themselves caught between the constituency they have developed in the community and internal expectations or priorities. To address this, the Foundation prioritizes connecting residents to and supporting the formation of organized groups over actively building a constituency of individual residents. All of the community-building activities in the Atlanta Civic Site — even those that engage individual residents in activities or meetings — are geared toward connecting people to formal or informal networks organized around a common interest. The hope is to open up strategic conversations with organized groups of residents as they articulate their vision so that civic site staff can listen for how the Foundation can contribute to that vision as a place-based funder. In this way, the Foundation acknowledges its role as one institution among many that residents negotiate with and seek to influence to achieve their goals.

COMMUNITY-BUILDING STRATEGIES

To put lessons learned into action, the Atlanta Civic Site team has organized its community-building framework into four strategies: **transparent dialogue**, **participatory planning**, **resident organizing** and **organizational capacity building** (see appendix). Through transparent dialogue and participatory planning, civic site staff design processes and model practices that enable them and peer institutions to increase their accountability to the people who live in NPU-V. By fostering community organizing and building capacity within organizations, the team acts as a grant maker, resource partner and technical assistance provider to strengthen the civic infrastructure that allows neighborhood constituencies to act on issues of common concern.

These strategies represent a holistic approach to working within the existing civic environment, while at the same time strengthening it. While supporting established community-based organizations and resident groups in carrying out their community change agendas, civic site staff also work to engage unaffiliated residents and connect them to such groups — or help form and expand networks.

The diverse tactics within each strategy address the fact that the barriers to an effective civic infrastructure and, ultimately, neighborhood improvements represent technical problems and

adaptive challenges.⁸ For example, the efficacy of many community-based organizations and resident groups is hampered by a lack of resources and staff to carry out the type of intensive organizing required (a technical problem of attracting and successfully managing resources). For others, the ability to exert influence to advance their agenda may be impacted by entrenched group dynamics or conflict over core values (an adaptive challenge).

Large public and private institutions encounter the same difficulties: While they may lack staff expertise or capacity to manage authentic and ongoing engagement (technical), success often relies on their willingness to increase transparency and share power (adaptive). The civic site team therefore needs to be familiar enough with the many stakeholders to identify the technical and adaptive challenges and offer the appropriate resources; whereas, in some cases, a grant would make all the difference, in others, the work will not move ahead until a catalyzing event shifts the dynamics or surfaces new paths forward. Team members also may be able to shift some of these dynamics by modeling the kind of transparent and responsive interaction with residents that they believe would — if taken up by community-based organizations and public and private entities — transform the civic environment.

The sections that follow explore each of the community-building strategies in the Atlanta Civic Site, including guiding principles behind them and examples from Casey's on-the-ground work.⁹

⁸ Ronald and Laurie Heifetz describe technical problems as those for which there are known solutions and procedures. Adaptive challenges, on the other hand, require testing new hypothesis, making iterative adjustments in many interrelated areas and changing values, attitudes and behaviors. For more about this, see Heifetz, R., & Heifetz, L. (2009). *Practice of adaptive leadership: Tools and tactics for changing your organization and the world*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business Press.

⁹ For a more in-depth review of past community-building activities and resulting lessons, see *Community Building in the Atlanta Civic Site: Reflections on a Decade of Learning* at www.aecf.org.

Community-Building Strategies in the Atlanta Civic Site

STRATEGY 1: TRANSPARENT DIALOGUE

Codesign and execute communication activities that allow funder and community members to give and get information and feedback.

Principles

- Initiate opportunities to share information about Foundation goals, activities and data.
- Find out how people want to communicate (email, phone, meetings, etc.).
- Prioritize connecting residents to each other and stakeholders over connecting them to the Foundation.

Tactics

Community Forum

An annual NPU-V-wide community forum provides an opportunity for residents, community-based organizations and Atlanta Civic Site staff to connect across neighborhood lines and identify opportunities to work together. In 2013, a team of eight residents representing all the NPU-V neighborhoods worked with civic site staff to plan and host a forum that attracted more than 150 people. One of the forum highlights was the participation of 20 community-based organizations and citywide advocacy groups in a civic engagement fair, including a bicycling organization, an equitable development advocacy group, a group working against tire dumping, a farmer's market and the neighborhood associations of each community. While creating an opportunity for residents to meet and discuss ideas with civic site staff, it also encouraged new relationships between neighbors and member recruitment opportunities for the community organizations and volunteer groups.

Neighborhood Meet and Greets

In addition to the community forum, meet and greets in each of the NPU-V communities provide an opportunity to understand their unique strengths, challenges and priorities. These events are designed with local civic associations to encourage community residents to discuss — with civic site staff and each other — the best way to take advantage of community assets and partner with the civic site team. While offering a more intimate setting for the Foundation to share information and receive feedback on its activities, these sessions also serve as a platform for civic site staff and community groups to engage a broad sector of neighborhood residents to share concerns or ideas.

On-the-Ground Communication

In addition to email, phone and in-person outreach, the Atlanta Civic Site team has supported establishing an on-the-ground point of contact to connect residents, community-based organizations and other resource partners. The team has employed this particular strategy in its work in Pittsburgh, the NPU-V neighborhood hardest hit in the recent foreclosure crisis. There, the Foundation is redeveloping more than 50 single-family homes to help address the massive damage resulting from the crisis and to begin reversing the community's population loss.

While civic site staff have partnered with the Pittsburgh Community Improvement Association (PCIA), the local community development corporation and housing partner, to increase the number of quality homes available in the neighborhood, they recognize that homeowners and renters are struggling with housing issues such as lead and mold, overgrown lots and vacant and dilapidated homes. They therefore have hired a resident consultant to serve as a housing advocate. This individual, who lives in Pittsburgh, conducts door-to-door outreach and works with PCIA and the neighborhood public safety committee to identify homes with active code violations. When the housing advocate meets homeowners or renters in need of assistance, she connects them to one of many community partners that offer home repair, lead and mold testing and abatement and legal assistance. Once redeveloped homes become available, she disseminates information to her community network to ensure residents are aware of housing opportunities. The advocate fills a critical information gap to connect residents to resources while providing partners with insight into the housing issues in the Pittsburgh community.

Why It Matters

Activities that promote transparency, dialogue and the steady flow of information at the community level are not unique or complicated. The greatest lesson on communication is to be consistent and include residents in the design of communication platforms. By communicating in regular and diverse ways that also support network-building, the Foundation has learned that it can strengthen the civic environment and be more accountable to the community at the same time.

STRATEGY 2: PARTICIPATORY PLANNING

*Design, model and promote participatory planning processes that create spaces for residents to negotiate priorities, identify common ground and develop action steps to ensure ongoing participation in decision making.*¹⁰

Principles

- Participation starts with access (transportation, child care, meals, physically accessible space).
- Codesigning the process with stakeholders creates better processes and results.
- Engagement is most successful if there are multiple entry points and levels of participation (design, input, decision making, etc.).
- Understanding how group identities (race, class, gender, etc.) shape power dynamics and using appropriate facilitation techniques that name and shift these dynamics are critical to effective processes.
- Many processes, but not all, will require mechanisms to ensure sustainability and accountability (ongoing advisory groups, etc.).

Tactics

Stakeholder Engagement Analysis

To identify potential stakeholders and design a participatory process with them in mind and at the table, Atlanta Civic Site staff use several tools to facilitate planning conversations. One such tool is stakeholder engagement analysis, which helps identify who will be most affected by a particular decision, the level of organization of these possibly diverse constituent groups and the engagement strategies that may be required to ensure those most affected are involved in a planning process. The people most affected should be at the center of decisions that have a significant impact on them; thus it is important to begin planning by identifying who those people may be. Asking how well organized the constituent group or population is then helps identify a possible engagement strategy. In many instances, those most affected by an issue may not be well organized (such as high school students in a school faced with massive budget cuts). To make sure their voice is heard and that they are at the table, the engagement strategy may

¹⁰ Urban-planning practitioner and academic John Forester describes participatory planning as “people working with others to remake their common future...inquiring and learning with others in the face of difference and conflict, telling compelling stories and arguing together in negotiations, coming to see issues, relationships, and options in new ways, thus arguing and acting together.” From Forester, J. (2009). *Deliberative practitioner: Encouraging participatory planning practices*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

require significant outreach, organizing and leadership development. If a representative group is already well organized, the engagement strategy may simply be meeting to learn the group's point of view on the issue or making sure it knows about the opportunity to participate in a planning process.

Staff and Resident Working Groups

Casey's participatory planning activities emphasize access — transportation to the meeting for those who need it, child care, roles for youth volunteers — and building relationships. Activities are planned and executed with community volunteers, and special attention is placed on building connections through culture, such as song, performances and art. Whether conducting neighborhood master planning or getting feedback on a community art project, civic site staff invite volunteers to serve on working groups to create, facilitate and execute engagement activities. This generates more creative ideas, local ownership and community activities planned and executed by residents instead of the funder.

Community-Led Engagement

The Foundation has been able to use its role as a place-based funder to provide technical assistance to public and private partners seeking to conduct participatory planning. Through a partnership with Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed's office, for example, the civic site team helped create a youth-led engagement strategy to support the mayor's Centers of Hope initiative, which focused on reopening and providing quality programming in the city's recreation centers.

As part of this strategy, the civic site team and the mayor's office created an eight-week paid summer internship for 10 high school students to develop leadership skills while surveying their communities on what they would like to see in the recreation centers. The youth community organizers learned about their local recreation centers, taught each other about their respective communities and developed a survey tool and series of community open houses in conjunction with recreation center staff. Though focused on surveying other teens, they also conducted outreach at community events and meetings and put together a report on their work for the Atlanta Mayoral Board of Service. Their recommendations have informed the teen programming strategy at several centers and influenced the city to focus on improving employment opportunities for young adults. The two city recreation centers in NPU-V have received more than \$1 million in facility improvements, increased their programs for children and adults and continue to develop innovative strategies to engage teens.

Why It Matters

The planning process involves determining how to engage the people most affected by an issue in defining the problem or opportunity; deciding on the information necessary to understand the issue and on how to collect that information; and figuring out how those affected by that issue will

be involved in addressing it. Designing effective ways to do all of this is challenging for several reasons, not least because public and private institutions have a track record of poor community engagement, which has created distrust in the process. In addition, no process can include everyone; while the inherent challenges of representation and voice can be mitigated with careful planning and strong facilitation, they can never be fully resolved.

Participatory planning is an area in which place-based funders can play an important role in advancing promising practices. Funders tend to have more flexibility and longer time horizons than most to engage stakeholders in planning, as well as the resources to test strategies and support other entities to do the same. As conveners or facilitators, they also have a strategic role to play in leveraging knowledge of and relationships with the community to help support public and private entities that often lack capacity for this kind of planning process.

STRATEGY 3: RESIDENT ORGANIZING

Support ad hoc, informal or fledgling resident groups to take action on issues of community concern.

Principles

- Self-determination: The people most impacted by an issue must play a central role in determining how to address it.
- Civic engagement is a muscle that needs to be built up over time so that it can be flexed when critical opportunities arise.
- Building power and sustaining action require individuals working in concert with others.

Tactics

Sponsorship Fund

Many of the tactics the Foundation uses to foster resident action in the Atlanta Civic Site are tried and true among place-based funders. The sponsorship fund for community events — a pool of \$10,000 allocated on a first-come, first-served basis — is one small way in which Casey co-invests in the many resident-driven activities that create a strong community. The sponsorship fund has a simple, one-page application and provides up to \$300 annually to resident groups or community-based organizations to plan activities or events that involve and impact NPU-V residents. Fund-supported activities have ranged from a three-on-three basketball tournament for youth to a bike ride that showcases housing opportunities in the neighborhood. This is one of the ongoing opportunities shared with residents at neighborhood meet and greets, community forums and when civic site staff provide technical assistance.

Community Investment Fund

While the sponsorship fund is a discretionary fund to support community events, the Community Investment Fund is a formal grant process led by a team of resident volunteers. Through this program, the Foundation provides small grants to community-based organizations and resident networks to develop community-driven responses to common challenges.¹¹ Civic site staff work with a resident grant-making team — a group of volunteers selected from each neighborhood (with new members chosen by the existing team) to design the application, funding criteria and grant-making process. Advisory team members are tasked with promoting the grant process within their community networks and managing the grants, from conducting site visits to troubleshooting with grantees. The team works closely with a civic site staff member to allocate \$50,000 in grants throughout the year. Because the fund is one of only a few local grant opportunities open to groups without nonprofit status, many of the grantees are volunteer groups or start-ups that are able to leverage a \$1,500-\$5,000 investment in many ways to maximize their impact.

One such group, which received a 2013 grant, is the 555 Community Information Champions, a network of residents ages 55 and older who participate in field trips, volunteer days and a potluck lunch-and-learn series designed to highlight services and issues in their community. Through 10 lunch-and-learn sessions, the network of 60 residents learned about the new health care law, growing and cooking healthy food, and illegal tire and trash dumping and what to do about it. While addressing many of the concerns seniors had voiced in the Atlanta Civic Site Community Forum and other meetings, the network also partnered with other Community Investment Fund grantees to learn what they were doing in the communities and how seniors could get involved.

Coaching

In NPU-V's Peoplestown neighborhood, community members came together in 2012 to stop their local school, D.H. Stanton Elementary, from being closed as part of a citywide school redistricting plan. With only a week's notice before the vote, a diverse coalition of parents, students and longtime and new residents successfully organized to convince the school board to keep the elementary school open. One idea that emerged for attracting more families and resources to the school was the establishment of an early learning center on campus. When the organizing committee approached the Foundation's civic site team for support, staff began working with them to explore options for a public-private partnership similar to the Dunbar Learning Complex in the Mechanicsville community. The civic site team worked with partners at the complex to organize a tour of Educare Atlanta, the early learning center, and Dunbar Elementary and met

¹¹ This fund evolved from the Community Investment Cycle, a community development strategy created by the Rensselaerville Institute and used during the Foundation's Making Connections initiative.

with the Peoplestown group to share lessons from the first three years of this innovative public-private education model. Civic site staff provided extensive one-on-one and group coaching to develop an outreach plan, support agenda development and facilitation and create a timeline for engaging parents, community stakeholders and the school district in ongoing discussions about replicating the Dunbar model. While civic site staff provided technical assistance and logistical support, community members led planning sessions, outreach activities and public meetings. The group's first success was a Q&A session with school district board members and Sheltering Arms, the nonprofit early learning partner at the Dunbar Learning Complex. Recognizing the opportunity to replicate the successful Dunbar model, the school district and Sheltering Arms have begun negotiations to locate an early learning center on the Stanton Elementary campus.

Why It Matters

Fostering resident action means directing financial and other resources to a resident agenda for community change. The Foundation acknowledges, however, that it has a point of view about how community change happens. The type of technical assistance that the civic site team offers to residents reflects its bias toward self-determination of those most affected; broad inclusion that takes into account group identities and the dynamics they create; and participatory planning. In addition, there are concrete skills, such as data collection and campaign planning, that groups may need to move effectively from talk to action. One of the challenges the civic site team has encountered is the stated desire of many groups to become formal organizations before moving to action on their issue of concern. Driven in part by funders, this may also be a result of limited experience with flat organizational structures or horizontal governance processes (such as consensus based decision-making¹²), which may be better suited for volunteer groups. While providing groups with concrete tools that support effective collective action, the Foundation also encourages them to embrace some level of ambiguity and flexibility while they develop a core constituency and dig into the issue. By providing some of the structural support that more established groups already have (such as funding for materials and meetings) and assisting with process issues (such as agenda planning and facilitation), Casey believes it can increase the ability of ordinary people working together to get results for their communities.

STRATEGY 4: ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING

Support existing or new community-based organizations, groups and networks to recruit and activate constituencies in the community, create campaign or action plans and attract resources to carry them out.

¹² For more information on consensus-based decision making, see Saint S., & Lawson, J.R. (1994). *Rules for reaching consensus: A modern approach to decision making*. San Diego, CA: Pfeiffer.

Principles

- In every neighborhood, diverse constituencies (youth, those with criminal convictions, renters, environmentalists) experience their community differently and, therefore, may have different priorities and needs.
- The ideal civic fabric includes organizations that can address the needs of multiple constituencies, as well as organizations that represent particular ones, especially those constituencies that are often marginalized.
- Community-based organizations are more effective if they are representative of and accountable to a constituency.
- Community-based organizations are more effective if they are able to collaborate to attract resources rather than compete for them.

Tactics

Technical Assistance

Over the last decade, the Foundation's civic site team has been instrumental in building the capacity of several key organizations in the NPU-V neighborhoods, including the previously mentioned Center for Working Families Inc. and Pittsburgh Community Improvement Association.

Many community-based organizations in NPU-V have relied on the civic site team as a partner for data collection, evaluation, resource development and policy expertise. By working with organizations to improve their use of data and train them to have a results-driven focus, Casey has helped them identify critical issues, define success and make the case to advance their community change agenda. For example, the Atlanta Civic Site team offers its partners an annual Results-Based Accountability™ training course to strengthen their performance management and use of data to drive strategies.¹³ In addition, civic site staff work with organizations to strengthen their outreach strategies and community engagement.

One of the most critical lessons the Foundation has learned after more than a decade of community-building work in the Atlanta Civic Site is the importance of staying out of implementation as a place-based funder. Instead, Casey seeks to convene and support its partners in identifying common agendas and effecting change. In addition, the Foundation has learned that if it aligns itself too closely with the work, it may be hard for implementing

¹³ Results-Based Accountability™ is a performance-management framework that helps groups to identify the population-level results they aim to achieve and how they can measure their impact. For more on this framework, see Friedman, M. (2005). *Trying hard is not good enough: How to produce measurable improvements for customers and communities*. Victoria, BC: Trafford Publishing.

organizations to attract other resource partners. By using the Foundation platform to lift up the work of community-based organizations and resident groups in NPU-V, Casey can help strengthen their connections to opportunities and resources outside the community.

Why It Matters

Organizational capacity building includes a focus on data, community engagement and contribution to a broader community change agenda that promotes opportunities for the families living in NPU-V. The Foundation seeks to support organizations that are representative of and accountable to a community constituency and provide platforms for people to take action. As a place-based funder, one of the most critical measures of success is a strong infrastructure of civic associations, community-based organizations, volunteer groups and public and private institutions that are responsive to the people who live in the community.

Conclusion

This paper has described the community-building framework for the Atlanta Civic Site and reflected on lessons learned after more than a decade on the ground in the NPU-V neighborhoods. The strategies that guide this work represent how the civic site team seeks to balance its commitment to building deep, authentic relationships with Casey's role as a place-based funder. More important than the strategies, however, is the dedication to act in a learning mode at all times — to not get ahead of the community as the Foundation charts its way forward and to create open and intentional spaces for reflection and revision.

Through its work in the Atlanta Civic Site, the Casey Foundation aims to catalyze and support policies, practices and platforms in its focus neighborhoods that increase safety, provide durable affordable housing options, create well-paying jobs, offer access to high-quality education and create opportunities for civic participation. While any number of activities can improve a place or impact the people living there, having a clear framework for community building challenges the Foundation to pursue strategies that support people's collective and individual capacity to manage change in their neighborhoods. Ultimately, Casey must measure its impact by proxy: Its contribution is only as relevant, effective and powerful as the people themselves are as they instigate, sustain and manage community change.

Appendix

Community Building in the Atlanta Civic Site: A Framework

<p>Institutional Accountability</p>	<p>Transparent Dialogue</p> <p><i>Codesign and execute communication activities that allow funder and community members to give and get information and feedback.</i></p> <p>Target participants: NPU-V neighborhood stakeholders</p> <p>Tactics: neighborhood meet and greets; community forums; peer advocates; email, phone and in-person outreach</p>	<p>Participatory Planning</p> <p><i>Design, model and promote planning processes that create spaces for residents to negotiate priorities, identify common ground and develop steps for ongoing participation in decision making.</i></p> <p>Target participants: NPU-V neighborhood stakeholders, public entities, private partners</p> <p>Tactics: stakeholder engagement analysis; staff and resident working groups; community-led engagement, process design and coaching; agenda development; meeting facilitation; documentation</p>
<p>Community Infrastructure</p>	<p>Resident Organizing</p> <p><i>Support ad hoc, informal or fledgling resident groups to take action on issues of community concern.</i></p> <p>Target participants: individuals who live, work, attend school or are otherwise stakeholders in the focus neighborhoods</p> <p>Tactics: mini grants, sponsorships, training, facilitated coaching and planning, technical assistance, attracting more resource partners</p>	<p>Organizational Capacity Building</p> <p><i>Support existing or new community-based organizations, groups and networks to recruit and activate constituencies, create campaigns or action plans and attract resources to carry them out.</i></p> <p>Target participants: community-based organizations, community development corporations, community-organizing or advocacy groups</p> <p>Tactics: grants, sponsorships, training, facilitated coaching and planning, technical assistance, attracting more resource partners</p>