2018 Place Matters
Mid-Year Report
September 2018
The Community Building Institute (CBI) completed the Place Matters Mid-Year evaluation in the summer of 2018. Feedback for the evaluation was collected in three ways:

**Initial Interviews with Lead Organizations**

CBI met with each lead organization for an interview. Topics covered in the interview included social capital survey findings, successes, challenges, surprises, changes in work over time, resident leadership development, planning and strategic direction, communication, partnerships, outcomes and impact, poverty, equity, and funder support. Initial interviews were conducted in late July and early August.

**3-Way Community Feedback Meetings and Community Feedback Surveys**

For each community, CBI conducted one meeting with a resident, a lead organization board member, and a representative from a partner organization. Surveys were conducted with targeted survey recipients, which included residents, businesses, the public sector, lead organization board members, partner organizations, or other stakeholders that were identified as having a deep knowledge of the lead organization and their activities and impact. Topics covered in both the meetings and survey included role of the lead organization in community, successes, challenges, changes in work over time, outcomes and impact, communication, and advice to increase impact. Participants for both the meetings and surveys were nominated by the lead organizations. Meetings and surveys were conducted in August and early September.

**Follow-up Interviews with Lead Organizations**

CBI staff met with each lead organization following the community meetings and surveys to discuss community feedback and to review progress on Work Plan objectives. Follow-up interviews were conducted in late August and early September.
Recommendations: 
Highlights

This report includes insights and recommendations for the Place Matters initiative and each community based on a qualitative analysis of lead organization interviews, 3-way community feedback meetings, and community feedback surveys.

18 Recommendations are organized into three key areas:

Community Engagement and Resident Leadership  
Organizational Effectiveness  
Equitable Development

All recommendations apply to all communities. This report also identifies priority recommendations for each Place Matters community.
Recommendations

**Community Engagement and Resident Leadership Recommendations:**

**Rec 1** Leads should work with community council leadership to clearly define roles and responsibilities for each group.

**Rec 2** Leads should look for ways to support resident leadership development and capacity, for both traditional and non-traditional community leadership.

**Rec 3** Leads should clearly define their role in supporting leadership development (examples: provide training opportunities, assist with thinking strategically, helping facilitate and convene meetings).

**Rec 4** Leads should evaluate how their communication reaches different parts of the community, and look for ways to expand their reach.

**Rec 5** Leads should work with community leadership to expand the leadership table within communities by defining and valuing leadership qualities more broadly and by working to identify and lift up the strengths of individuals.
**Organizational Effectiveness Recommendations:**

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Equitable Development
Recommendations:

Rec 15 The Place Matters table and leads must support and advocate equitable growth strategies at all levels.

Rec 16 Leads must define their role in equitable development including their relationship with private and non-profit developers, government, and community stakeholders.

Rec 17 Place Matters should support training opportunities for residents so that they can better understand how development works, the demographic and market changes underway in their community, and available responses to redevelopment.

Rec 18 Leads should continue to develop and strengthen social networks and social infrastructure in communities as a way to promote equitable outcomes at the neighborhood level.
Community Engagement and Resident Leadership

Recommendations

Engaging with Traditional Community Leaders

The relationship between community councils and lead organizations is complex and is in constant motion. New community council leadership can signal a shift in the relationship between the council and the lead organization. There is a constant need to build relationships between resident leaders and lead organization staff. Leads also expressed concern about the depth of community council leadership.

Rec 1 Leads should work with community council leadership to clearly define roles and responsibilities for each group.

Broadening Community Engagement

Lead organizations are increasingly supporting resident-led initiatives beyond the formal community council structure. There are residents and community members with great ideas that might need help connecting in community or thinking strategically through their ideas. Supporting these initiatives can often broaden the reach of lead organizations in the community, connecting them with residents that have traditionally been hard to engage.

Rec 2 Leads should look for ways to support resident leadership development and capacity, for both traditional and non-traditional community leadership.
Rec 3 Leads should clearly define their role in supporting leadership development (examples: provide training opportunities, assist with thinking strategically, helping facilitate and convene meetings).

Expanding the Image of Resident Leader

Leads ask a lot of, and rely a lot upon, volunteer resident leaders. Community councils and community plan leadership committees often have some combination of the following skills: project management, meeting management, budgeting, meeting minutes, and organization. They often don’t reflect the economic diversity of the community. Often the skills found in their daytime jobs cleanly translate to their volunteer commitments. Leads might have a harder time including residents with strengths that might not appear to so easily translate into leadership positions at community council or on lead organization boards.

Rec 4 Leads should evaluate how their communication reaches different parts of the community, and look for ways to expand their reach.

Rec 5 Leads should work with community leadership to expand the leadership table within communities by defining and valuing leadership qualities more broadly and by working to identify and lift up the strengths of individuals.
Organizational Effectiveness
Recommendations

Getting to Scale

Getting to scale means reaching more people and serving them more broadly. Most leads and several community meeting and survey respondents expressed a tension between being comprehensive and strategic. Leads face questions of where to focus geographically, and where to focus programmatically and operationally. Institutions, funders, and local governments see the success of leads in a focused geography, and want them to expand that success more broadly geographically. Leads see the complexity and depth of opportunities and challenges in the communities where they work, and they feel the pull to do more and be more.

Rec 6 Leads should find a balance between being focused and comprehensive by continuing to do a diversity of things, and also applying strategic focus and energy behind a few key initiatives.

Being Strategic

Several lead organizations indicated that it was time to set a new strategic direction for the organization. A new strategic direction might be needed with new staff leadership, new board leadership, or when the existing strategy and priorities have largely been accomplished or because of unforeseen development impacting the community.

Rec 7 Leads should evaluate the need for organizational or board strategic planning.
Making Decisions

Related to strategic direction, most organizations struggle with how to evaluate new opportunities, and how to respond to potential new work. Leads need a way to evaluate and respond to opportunities with current and potential partners.

Rec 8  Leads should establish evaluation criteria that can help them respond to partnership and collaboration requests.

Sustaining Partnerships

Lead organizations serve as the connection point between local and regional organizations and initiatives and communities. Partnerships and collaborations are essential to addressing the comprehensive set of opportunities and challenges facing each community. Partnerships and collaborations are grounded in one-on-one relationships.

Rec 9  Leads should evaluate their existing relationships with partners to determine how each benefits from the arrangement, and whether course corrections may be needed to strengthen or change the partnership.

Maintaining Operating Support

Finding and maintaining operating support is a challenge for lead organizations. All leads expressed a concern for maintaining current funding levels, with potential cuts impacting staffing levels and capacity. Operating support from multiple sources for several lead organizations has been cut over the past year. Funder priorities and commitment levels have an impact on what funding leads can access, and the type of work that they can support.

Rec 10  Funders and leads should join together to support increased advocacy for comprehensive community development to support increased investment in physical and social infrastructure in communities.

Rec 11  Place Matters funding commitments should reflect expected outcomes.
Managing Through Staff Changes

Both Price Hill Will and the Walnut Hills Redevelopment Foundation lost longtime Executive Directors in 2018. In addition to those changes, several organizations have lost program managers. In both Price Hill and Walnut Hills, the boards of the lead organizations stepped up in a big way to conduct talent searches, and to keep the organizations operational. Both now have new leaders that can help keep the positive momentum underway going. Change in leadership and program managers provides organizations an opportunity and platform to re-engage and connect with the neighborhood, and to better reflect shifting priorities in each community through new hires or reprogrammed staff.

**Rec 12** Leads should take advantage of staff changes as an opportunity to re-engage with their communities, develop new relationships, and set new strategic priorities through staffing decisions.

Connecting Residents with Resources

Leads are connecting residents with resources they need, and advocating on their behalf. This is happening in big and small ways. Leads are stepping up to share resources and information on topics that impact community quality of life, for example hosting a housing forum and producing a housing resources directory. As a result, residents now see leads as a resource and potential connection point to additional resources and information. Leads are providing vital supports that might help residents get the help they need to stay in their communities and improve their quality of life.

**Rec 13** Leads and Place Matters should explore ways to support existing residents. Residents need access to honest, unbiased information on selling or staying in their home, rehabbing their home, and accessing resources to support rehab.
The expanding Place Matters table of seven communities offers an opportunity to reflect on the fundamental components of comprehensive community development through the lens of long established organizations to newly formed and staffed organizations. The work of comprehensive community development has no end date.

**Rec 14** Leads must make a commitment to continuous development and support and share creative and effective best practices within the network in these areas:

- Staff capacity and diversity
- Board capacity and diversity
- Resident leadership
- Communication
- Diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Relationship building to support partnerships and collaborations
Advocating for Equitable Growth

PolicyLink provides a useful definition and framing for understanding equitable regions:

Regions are equitable when all residents – regardless of race/ethnicity, nativity, neighborhood, age, gender, or other characteristics – can fully participate in the region’s economic vitality, contribute to its readiness for the future, and connect to its assets and resources.

Strong, equitable regions:

• Possess economic vitality, providing high quality jobs to their residents and producing new ideas, products, businesses, and economic activity so the region remains sustainable and competitive.

• Are ready for the future, with a skilled, ready workforce, and a healthy population.

• Are places of connection, where residents can access the essential ingredients to live healthy and productive lives in their own neighborhoods, reach opportunities located throughout the region (and beyond) via transportation or technology, participate in political processes, and interact with other diverse residents.

(Source: Equitable Growth Profile of the Omaha-Council Bluffs Region)

Local and regional partners must collectively pursue equitable growth by promoting and advocating strategies that advance equitable growth. These strategies include growing industries and
businesses that create good accessible jobs, supporting entrepreneurs of color and business ownership in low-income communities, leveraging regional investment and planning for equitable growth, removing barriers to employment (criminal records, undocumented status, and structural racism and implicit bias), raising the floor of existing low-wage work, connecting workers to job opportunities and good careers, and strengthening the pre-K-to-career education pipeline. (Source: PolicyLink, Key Strategies to Advance Equitable Growth in Regions)

Rec 15 The Place Matters table and leads must support and advocate equitable growth strategies at all levels.

As leads think about their role in equitable development, here are a few observations:

- Lead organizations may be the only development partner in the community that is interested in protecting or providing affordable housing
- Lead organizations have a unique position of understanding real estate markets and development deals, and can consider community impact on a project-by-project basis, but also at a more global community level
- Leads have a potential role to play in connecting developers for individual projects with community voice and leadership (hosting development conversations, acting as an intermediary, or advocating)
- Lead organizations may be able to play a role in brokering an honest dialogue around the benefits and challenges of redevelopment occurring in communities
- Residents need better information on how real estate markets and development deals work
• All of the Place Matters communities are seeing increased investment, accompanied by rising home values and rents (this investment follows first-in investment made by the lead organizations and their partners)

• Leads may be able to play a role in connecting and involving the community to change by inviting participation and engagement before, during, and after physical development occurs (i.e., creative placemaking)

Lead organizations are working to define their role in promoting equitable development. Equity toolkits and rubrics are being development by leads, local organizations, and community councils. Some of these tools are newly developed and haven’t yet been put to use.

Rec 16 Leads must define their role in equitable development including their relationship with private and non-profit developers, government, and community stakeholders.

Rec 17 Place Matters should support training opportunities for residents so that they can better understand how development works, the demographic and market changes underway in their community, and available responses to redevelopment.

A recent study of social networks found that communities are most successful in transforming communities when “local interests find ways to pull together, form networks, share information, take collective action on local issues, and forcefully promote their own understanding of local needs and opportunities to government and outside investors.” (Source: Stanford Social Innovation Review, Strong Social Networks are Key to Turning Around Communities)
Physical places are important for making social connections too. In *Palaces for the People*, Richard Florida makes the case for how social infrastructure, the “set of physical places and organizations that shape our interactions,” can help to fight inequality, polarization, and the decline of civic life. *(Source: https://www.citylab.com/life/2018/09/how-social-infrastructure-can-knit-america-together/569854/)*

Leads play a vital role in supporting the places, events, and connections in community that help deepen social networks and social infrastructure. Social networks and social infrastructure are especially important in times of neighborhood change. They can provide a platform and a connection point for intentional planning to ensure new investments in communities produce positive outcomes existing residents.

**Rec 18**  
Leads should continue to develop and strengthen social networks and social infrastructure in communities as a way to promote equitable outcomes at the neighborhood level.
Avondale Recommendations

While all recommendations apply in Avondale, the Avondale Development Corporation should prioritize implementation of the following recommendations:

Rec 2 Leads should look for ways to support resident leadership development and capacity, for both traditional and non-traditional community leadership.

Rec 5 Leads should work with community leadership to expand the leadership table within communities by defining and valuing leadership qualities more broadly and by working to identify and lift up the strengths of individuals.

Rec 9 Leads should evaluate their existing relationships with partners to determine how each benefits from the arrangement, and whether course corrections may be needed to strengthen or change the partnership.

Rec 16 Leads must define their role in equitable development including their relationship with private and non-profit developers, government, and community stakeholders.
Covington Recommendations

While all recommendations apply in Covington, the Center for Great Neighborhoods should prioritize implementation of the following recommendations:

**Rec 6** Leads should find a balance between being focused and comprehensive by continuing to do a diversity of things, and also applying strategic focus and energy behind a few key initiatives.

**Rec 9** Leads should evaluate their existing relationships with partners to determine how each benefits from the arrangement, and whether course corrections may be needed to strengthen or change the partnership.

**Rec 16** Leads must define their role in equitable development including their relationship with private and non-profit developers, government, and community stakeholders.
Madisonville Recommendations

While all recommendations apply in Madisonville, the Madisonville Community Urban Redevelopment Corporation should prioritize implementation of the following recommendations:

Rec 1 Leads should work with community council leadership to clearly define roles and responsibilities for each group.

Rec 4 Leads should evaluate how their communication reaches different parts of the community, and look for ways to expand their reach.

Rec 12 Leads should take advantage of staff changes as an opportunity to re-engage with their communities, develop new relationships, and set new strategic priorities through staffing decisions.

Rec 13 Leads and Place Matters should explore ways to support existing residents. Residents need access to honest, unbiased information on selling or staying in their home, rehabbing their home, and accessing resources to support rehab.

Rec 16 Leads must define their role in equitable development including their relationship with private and non-profit developers, government, and community stakeholders.
Newport
Recommendations

While all recommendations apply in Newport, ReNewport should prioritize implementation of the following recommendations:

**Rec 3** Leads should clearly define their role in supporting leadership development (examples: provide training opportunities, assist with thinking strategically, helping facilitate and convene meetings).

**Rec 4** Leads should evaluate how their communication reaches different parts of the community, and look for ways to expand their reach.

**Rec 14** Leads must make a commitment to continuous development and support and share creative and effective best practices within the network.

**Rec 5** Leads should work with community leadership to expand the leadership table within communities by defining and valuing leadership qualities more broadly and by working to identify and lift up the strengths of individuals.

**Rec 6** Leads should find a balance between being focused and comprehensive by continuing to do a diversity of things, and also applying strategic focus and energy behind a few key initiatives.
Price Hill
Recommendations

While all recommendations apply in Price Hill, Price Hill Will and Santa Maria Community Services should prioritize implementation of the following recommendations:

**Rec 2** Leads should look for ways to support resident leadership development and capacity, for both traditional and non-traditional community leadership.

**Rec 4** Leads should evaluate how their communication reaches different parts of the community, and look for ways to expand their reach.

**Rec 7** Leads should evaluate the need for organizational or board strategic planning.

**Rec 8** Leads should establish evaluation criteria that can help them respond to partnership and collaboration requests.

**Rec 12** Leads should take advantage of staff changes as an opportunity to re-engage with their communities, develop new relationships, and set new strategic priorities through staffing decisions.
Walnut Hills
Recommendations

While all recommendations apply in Walnut Hills, the Walnut Hills Redevelopment Foundation should prioritize implementation of the following recommendations:

**Rec 2** Leads should look for ways to support resident leadership development and capacity, for both traditional and non-traditional community leadership.

**Rec 12** Leads should take advantage of staff changes as an opportunity to re-engage with their communities, develop new relationships, and set new strategic priorities through staffing decisions.

**Rec 13** Leads and Place Matters should explore ways to support existing residents. Residents need access to honest, unbiased information on selling or staying in their home, rehabbing their home, and accessing resources to support rehab.

**Rec 16** Leads must define their role in equitable development including their relationship with private and non-profit developers, government, and community stakeholders.
West End
Recommendations

While all recommendations apply in the West End, Seven Hills Neighborhood Houses should prioritize implementation of the following recommendations:

Rec 1  Leads should work with community council leadership to clearly define roles and responsibilities for each group.

Rec 6  Leads should find a balance between being focused and comprehensive by continuing to do a diversity of things, and also applying strategic focus and energy behind a few key initiatives.

Rec 7  Leads should evaluate the need for organizational or board strategic planning.

Rec 13  Leads and Place Matters should explore ways to support existing residents. Residents need access to honest, unbiased information on selling or staying in their home, rehabbing their home, and accessing resources to support rehab.

Rec 16  Leads must define their role in equitable development including their relationship with private and non-profit developers, government, and community stakeholders.