

Milwaukee Healthy Neighborhoods Initiative

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What Makes a Neighborhood Healthy?

- It must make economic sense for people to invest their time, energy, and money there;
- It must be a place where neighbors have the capacity to manage day to day issues.

Key Outcome Areas

- An ***image*** that communicates positive choice and confidence...that people want to be there and are proud to be there;
- A real estate ***market*** that can attract and retain positive choices;
- ***Physical conditions*** that show pride;

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- ① ***Social connections*** among neighbors are stronger ...people being neighborly, feeling safe, and able to manage day to day issues.

Intervention strategies need to aim directly at these outcome areas.

Some Basics

- ◉ An intervention focused on middle-market neighborhoods;
- ◉ Organized in late 2005;
- ◉ First group of neighborhoods(4) funded in 2006
- ◉ Currently in nine neighborhoods

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- Grew up around a set of values and principles versus strict criteria.
 - A different role for the Foundation....not just a funder but an active leader in moving this initiative forward and in helping to build partners and resources.

Not a program but a way of thinking...

- Build upon neighborhood strengths;
- Attract and retain strong households;
- Neighbors as key decision makers;
- Influencing behaviors;
- Neighborhood confidence as an outcome;

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- ◉ Do things people can see and understand;
 - ◉ Engaging neighbors in doing and use the doing to strengthen connections.

What MHNI Groups Do

- ◉ Market neighborhoods and attract home buyers;
- ◉ Engage neighbors in block focused activities;
- ◉ Carry out events that help change neighborhood image

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- ◉ Key actions on neighborhood anchors
...parks, entry points;
 - ◉ Promote reinvestment in properties
using existing program tools and
inventing new ones.

What's Happening?

- More grass roots activities that promote a positive neighborhood image. Since 2006 there have been 357 block activities and community events that have engaged over 21,000 residents.
- More residents are making choices to improve their homes. Since 2006 MHNI groups have impacted 853 properties representing \$9.9 million in reinvestment.

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- While property values have declined, neighborhood confidence among residents in the MHNI neighborhoods is higher than that for residents as a whole for Milwaukee.

A Simple Strategy: The Home Tours

- 425 people on tours;
- 53 properties featured – 35 sold to owner occupants;
- 86% of tour participants had an improved perception of the neighborhood after the tour.

The UWM Neighborhood Confidence Survey

- Why do this?
- 32.5% say the neighborhood will get better in three years;
- 66.5% say they would move there again;
- 87.6% see neighbors improving/maintaining their properties;

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- 19.8% have participated in some kind of neighborhood event;
 - 27.2% say their block has improved in the last two years;
 - 90% feel safe or very safe in the neighborhood.

Key Lessons

- It is important to think small.
- Understand neighborhood symbols.
- Neighborhood marketing is key...identifying target markets, crafting the right messages, and implementing the marketing strategy are important in weaker market neighborhoods.

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- ① While a community planning process can be a good thing, the plan is not the outcome. We find ways to engage neighbors beyond planning into doing.
 - ① Moving local staff from a program orientation to a broader way of thinking that incorporates the basic precepts into all facets of the organization's work is important and has its own challenges.

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- Neighborhood life has to be more than solving problems....we build around fun activities that engage people and celebrate the neighborhood.
 - Neighborhood change is in many ways about seeding positive behaviors.