

Asset-Based Community Development



abcd
INSTITUTE

Basic ABCD PowerPoint Presentation

The ABCD staff interviewed over a thousand residents of 20 cities in 300 neighborhoods. The basic question they asked was, "What have neighbors who live here done, together, that made the neighborhood better?" The stories the residents told them were analyzed to see what the neighbors had used when they made things better. In almost every case, they drew from a pool of 6 local resources. We call these resources, assets, the basic building blocks of strong communities.

The Dilemma . . .

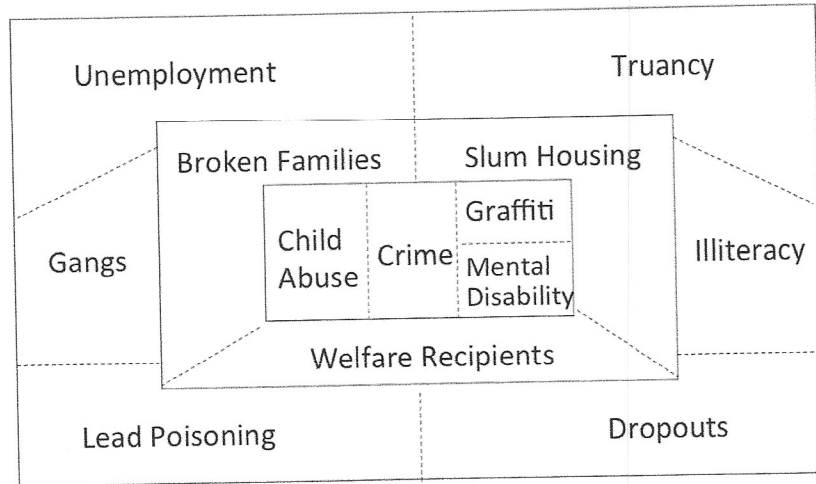


People and Communities
have *deficiencies & needs*

Individuals and Communities
have *assets and capacities*

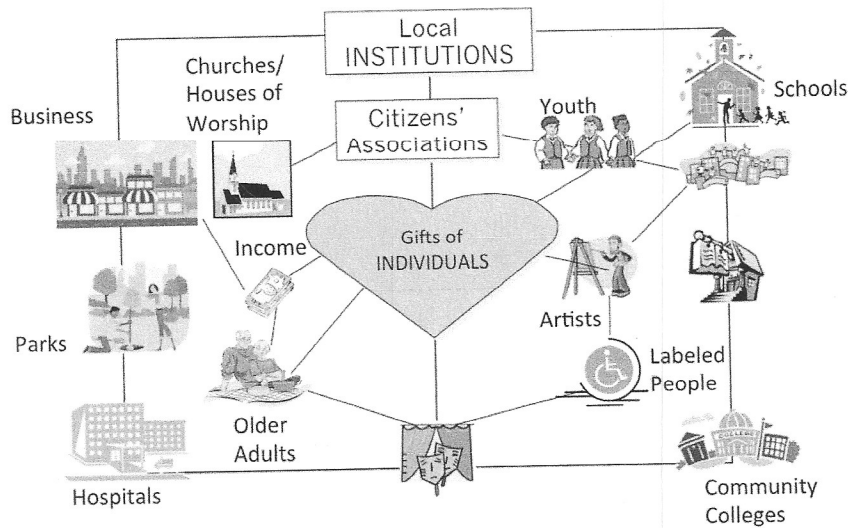
All of us are like this glass – half full and half empty. We each have our gifts, talents and capacities as well as our problems, deficits and needs. The same thing is true of neighborhoods,. They have assets and deficits.

Neighborhoods Needs Map



If you look at a neighborhood in terms of needs, this is how it looks.

Community Assets Map



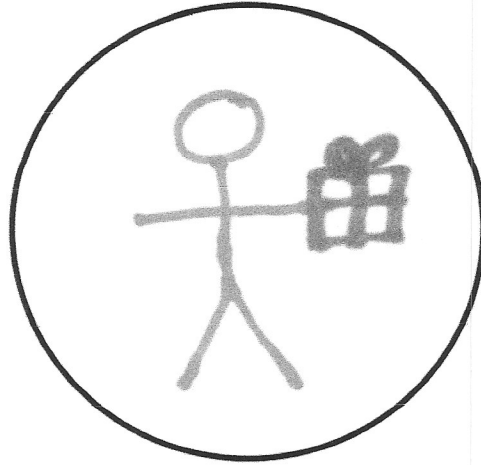
This is the same neighborhood if you look at its assets.

Consequences of the Needs Map for Local Residents

- “We are deficient”
- Our local relationships are damaged
- Most money comes into our community for programs – often narrowly defined
- Money can get misdirected towards professional helpers, not residents
- We place focus on leaders who magnify deficiencies
- We reward failure and foster dependency on systems
- Our community has a poor self-image
- We experience hopelessness

While many institutions and funders focus neighborhoods on their needs, this approach to neighborhood development has many negative consequences.

Individuals



The first asset is the gifts of local residents. This is the only asset that appears in every story. It is, therefore, the most important.

Sample Personal Capacity Inventory

Gifts I Can Give To My Community

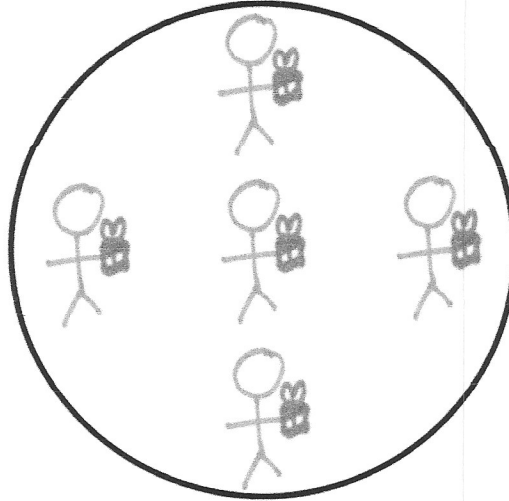
Gifts of the Head (Things I know something about and would enjoy talking about with others, e.g., art, history, movies, birds).

Gifts of the Hands (Things or skills I know how to do and would like to share with others, e.g., carpentry, sports, gardening, cooking).

Gifts of the Heart (Things I care deeply about, e.g., protection of the environment, civic life, children).

One simple method of finding the gifts of neighbors is to ask about their gifts of the head, hand and heart. Some people also add "Gift of Human Connection"

Associations



The second asset is local clubs, groups and associations. Many associations are unnamed. Pooling the gifts of individuals in associations makes those gifts more powerful. People give their gifts when they are in association

What are Local Voluntary Associations?

- Groups of two or more residents joined together around a common activity or interest, often sharing a common passion, care and interest.
- Might have a small paid staff, but
- Members always create the vision and engage in the work to achieve the goal.

The key to this definition is that the basic work is done by unpaid members who create the vision and produce the outcomes.

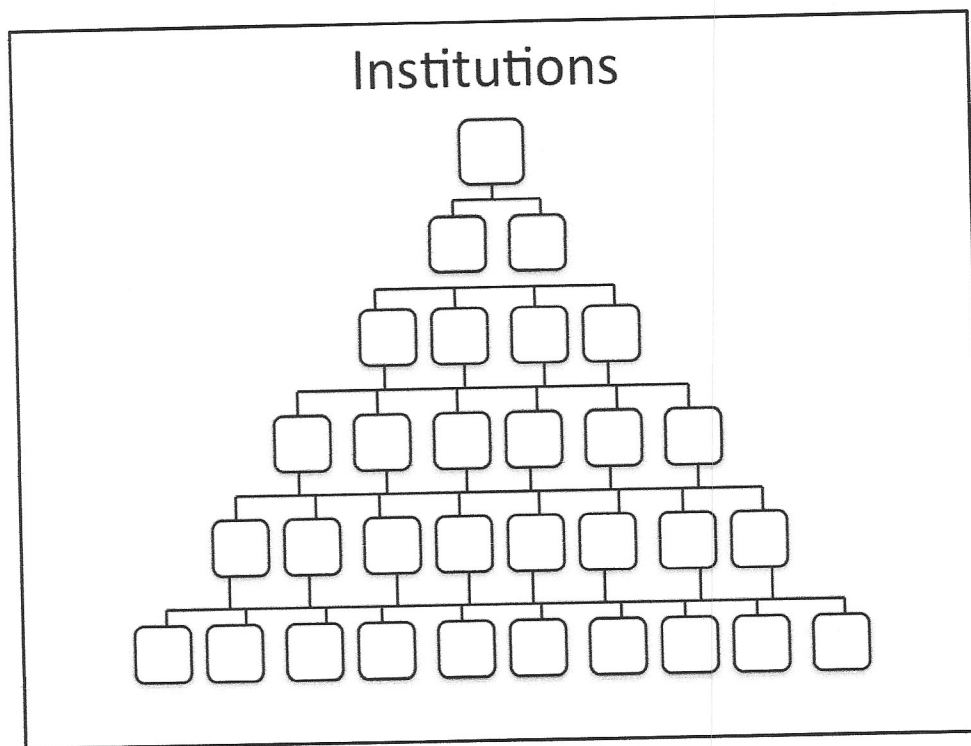
Typical Neighborhood Associations

- Addiction Prevention and Recovery Groups
- Advisory Community Support Groups
- Animal Care Groups
- Anti Crime Groups
- Block Clubs
- Business Organizations/Support Groups
- Charitable Groups and Drives
- Civic Events Groups
- Cultural Groups
- Disability/Special Needs Groups
- Education Groups
- Elderly Groups
- Environmental Groups
- Family Support Groups
- Health Advocacy & Fitness Groups

These two slides comprise a list of the kinds of associations neighbors tend to belong to. Often they are much harder to find than the local institutions.

Typical Neighborhood Associations (cont'd)

- Heritage Groups
- Hobby and Collectors Groups
- Men's Groups
- Mentoring Groups
- Mutual Support Groups
- Neighborhood Improvement Groups
- Political Organizations
- Recreation Groups
- Religious Groups
- Service Clubs
- Social Groups
- Social Cause/Advocacy Issues Groups
- Unions
- Veteran's Groups
- Women's Groups
- Youth Groups

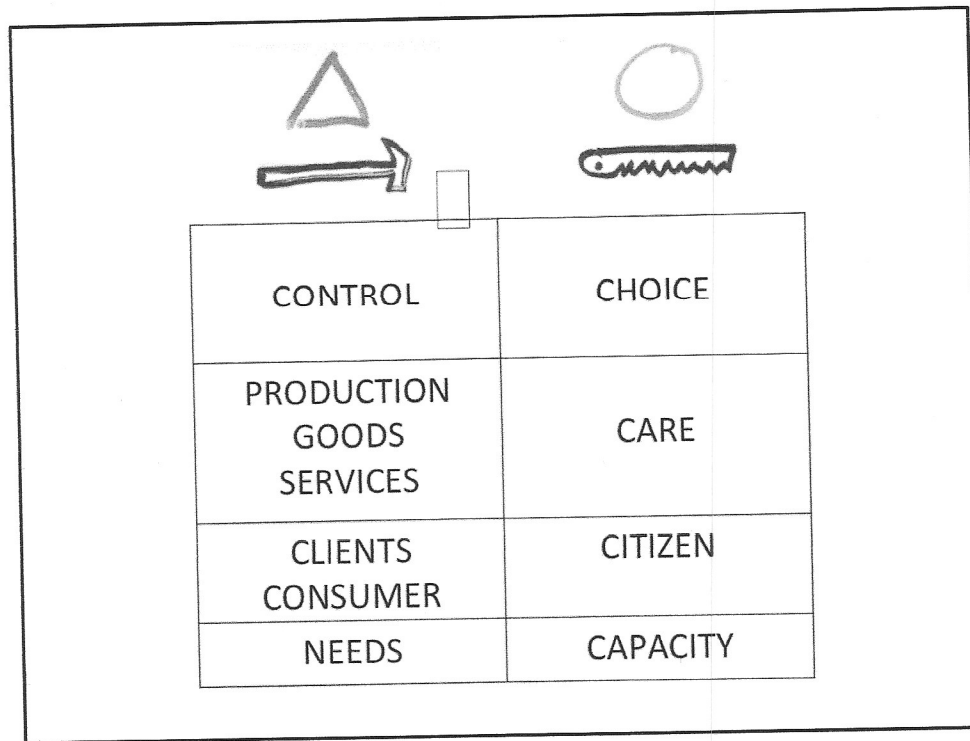


The third asset is local institutions. There are 3 kinds: profit, not-for-profit and governmental. Unlike associations, their members are paid to do the work.

Local Institutions

- Schools
- Libraries
- Parks
- Law Enforcement
- Colleges, Universities, Trade Schools
- Health and Human Services Agencies
- Non-Profits
- Private Business

This is a list of the kinds of institutions that are in many neighborhoods. Institutions can have a positive influence in a neighborhood by opening up their resources to the community.



In order to have an effective relationship between local neighborhoods and large outside institutions it is important to clearly understand the functions that each is uniquely designed to fulfill.

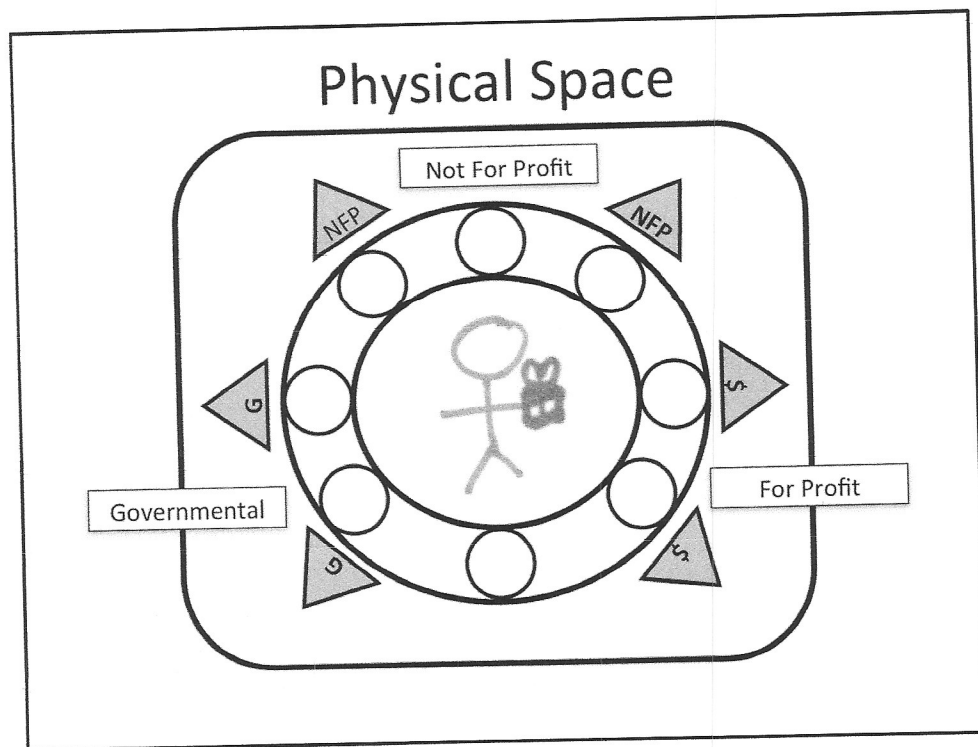
Institutions and neighborhood associations are like two tools. Each is useful and important, but neither can do the work of the other.

The unique characteristics of large institutions is that:

1. They are designed so that a few people can control many other people.
2. They are able to produce lots of standardized goods and services.
3. They need clients and consumers.
4. Their basic raw material is needs and deficits.

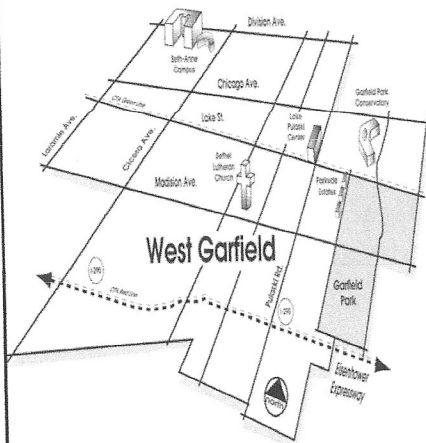
The unique characteristics of local neighborhood associations is that:

1. The members are participating by choice. This is why they are called voluntary associations. Their members are held together by trust whereas institutions are held together by money.
2. Associations are groups that care about each other and/or the same thing. They are the site of care in a community. Institutions are the site of services. Care is the free given commitment of one person to another. Service is the paid benefit of one person provides another.
3. The critical person in associational life is a citizen (not meant legally) –a person

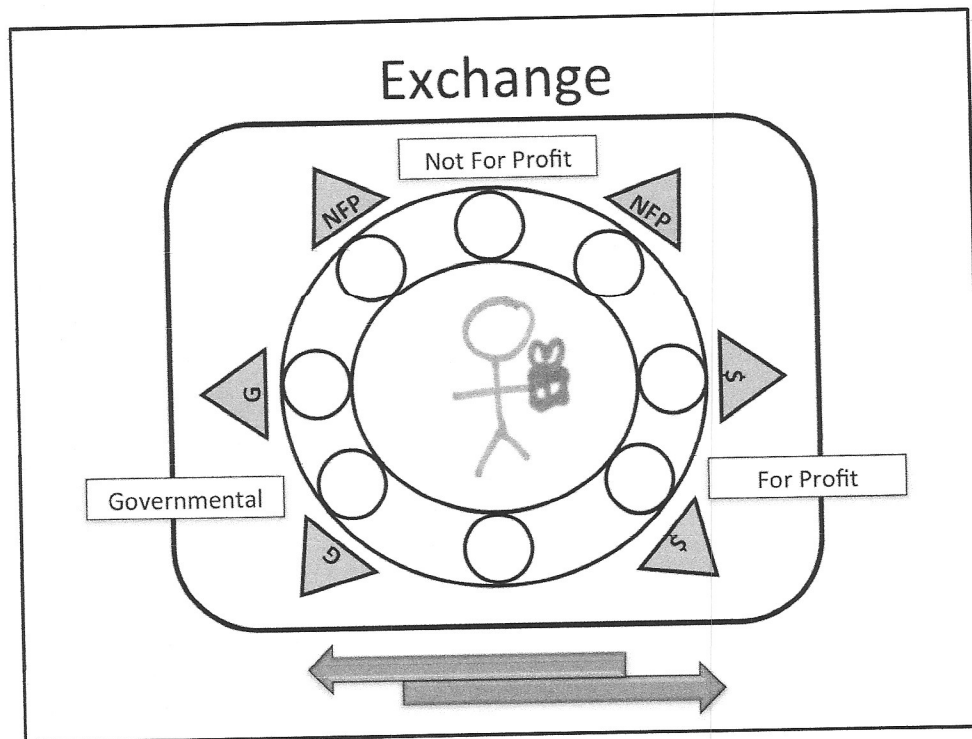


The fourth asset is the land, indicated by the line surrounding the first 3 human assets. The land and everything on it and below it is a valuable neighborhood asset. The climate can also be an asset, i.e. the ability to have community gardens year round.

Assets- Community (physical, social capital, economy)



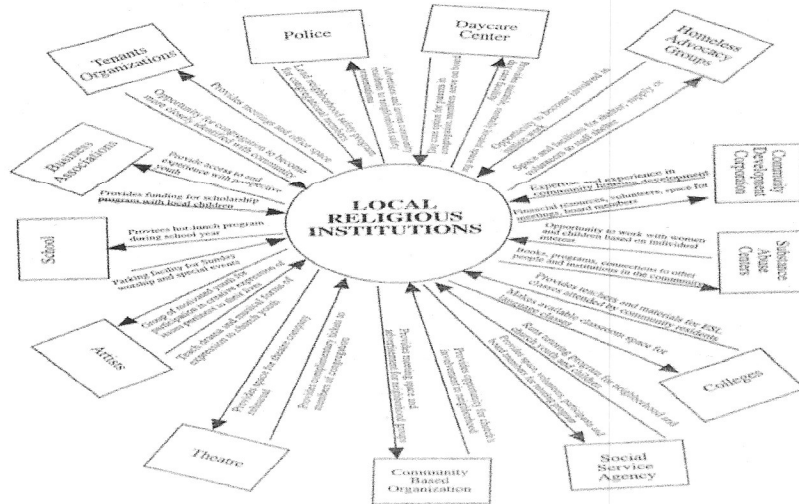
- Recognize your physical assets & economic ones
- Look with new eyes
- Bethel - abandoned school, closed down hospital, transit stop, conservatory
- Look at the assets of the economy of the community-businesses, etc.
- Build partnerships
- Keep evolving



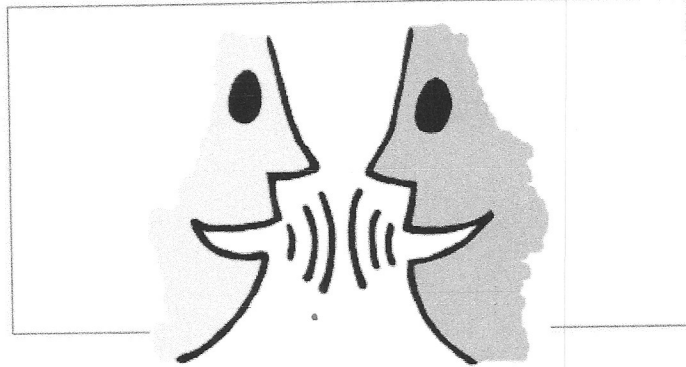
The fifth asset is all kinds of exchanges. It is indicated by the two arrows at the bottom of the slide. These exchanges, among people in the neighborhood, include giving, sharing, trading, bartering, exchanging, buying and selling, time banking, babysitting co-ops.

RELEASING THE POWER OF LOCAL ASSOCIATIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS

Chart Three: One on One Relationships



Culture, Stories and History



The sixth asset is culture, stories and history. These remind neighbors of how they have done things successfully in the past. They also strengthen the culture of the neighborhood by creating a common history, culture and identity. Use of stories through video, and photos bears witness to how assets are making change.

Six Community Assets

Individuals

Associations

Institutions

Physical Space

Exchange

Culture/Stories/History

Here is a list of all 6 assets. Every story of neighbors making things better involves using one or more of these 6 basic building blocks.

Basic ABCD Findings

- In every story, neighbors know about the local assets.
- Successful neighborhood action is the result of assets that were not connected being connected.
- To connect assets there must be a connector, i.e. individuals, associations or local institutions.

These are the three basic findings about how assets build powerful neighborhoods. They indicate the importance of people or groups that initiate a connecting process.

Connector's Skills

- Gift centered
- Well connected
- Trusted
- Believes community is welcoming

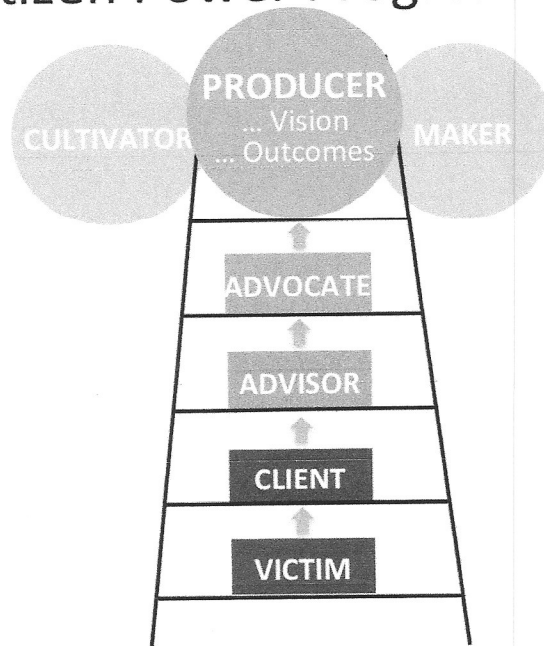
ABCD has done research regarding effective connectors. These are their basic characteristics. People with these characteristics exist on every block. Therefore, you don't train a connector, you find them in a neighborhood.

Three Planning Questions

- As neighbors, what can we achieve by using our own assets?
- What can we achieve with our own assets if we get some outside help?
- What can't we do with our assets that must be done by outsiders?

We have found that powerful neighborhood associations follow 3 steps in doing their work. It is the asset-based neighborhood development process. This process does not start by asking, "What are our problems and what outside institutions can fix them?" Instead, the ABCD process always begins by asking, "What is our vision and what asset do we have to make that vision come true?"

Citizen Power Progression



This is the neighborhood "Power Ladder." It gives us a way to measure the kind of neighborhood we are and where we need to go. The most powerful neighborhood is a place where neighbors are producers of the future rather than just victim, clients, consumers or just advocate.

Community Development



*Go to the people
Live among them
Learn from them
Love them
Start with what they know
Build on what they have;
But of the best leaders
when their task is done
The people will remark
"We have done it ourselves."*