IMPACT FOR EQUITY℠
Combating injustice together

BUILDING WELCOMING,
INCLUSIVE MIXED-INCOME
COMMUNITIES:

A Chicago
Perspective

JULY 2023

About Impact for Equity

Impact for Equity (formerly BPI) is a law and policy center that fights for racial, economic, and social justice in Illinois. In April 2023, BPI announced its new name: Impact for Equity. This new name reflects Impact for Equity's commitment to a future where everyone in Chicago can live a full life in a thriving community, free of systemic barriers.

Impact for Equity attorneys serve as legal representatives for Chicago's public housing residents and applicants in the federal Gautreaux v. Chicago Housing Authority lawsuit, which dates back to 1966. Through Gautreaux, Impact for Equity staff have participated in stakeholder working groups created by the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) at each of its mixed-income communities in Chicago. The Chicago Mixed-Income Community Building Convening, hosted by Impact for Equity in September 2022, grew out of this working group experience and was designed to provide an opportunity for the people involved in the CHA mixed-income communities to share the successes, challenges, practices, and outcomes of their community building efforts and learn from others working to create positive change.

Acknowledgments

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Executive Summary

On September 10, 2022, Impact for Equity (then BPI) convened and hosted the Chicago Mixed-Income Community Building Convening. Dozens of residents, property managers, developers, and community builders came together to share successes and challenges experienced in Chicago mixed-income communities, learn about community building work in other cities, and discuss ways to work together to build inclusive and welcoming communities in Chicago. The Convening included panel presentations and discussions, and collaborative conversations in breakout groups and site-specific working groups.

Creating communities where people feel they belong, regardless of their racial, social, and economic identities, can help create connection and a shared sense of responsibility to their neighbors and others who comprise their community. This connection can affect critical community qualities like safety, health and wellness, and education, both within the mixed-income community and in the surrounding neighborhood. These efforts can also contribute to ongoing, wider-ranging strategies to address issues creatively and humanely and support the formation of healthy, thriving communities.

This Report documents the information and perspectives that panelists and attendees shared and highlights several themes, strategies, and practices identified during the Chicago Mixed-Income Community Building Convening. It concludes with recommendations to further community building work in Chicago and includes a list of academic and practitioner-focused community building resources.

Panel Summaries:

PANEL ONE

Panel One discussed examples of successful and innovative community building strategies at mixed-income developments in Seattle, Pittsburgh, and Toronto. The panelists emphasized that community building should begin during the planning phase of development, and they highlighted practices that help residents build connections to the places they live and with their neighbors.

TREK Development Group, a regional, private development and property management firm based in Pittsburgh, carries out community building through its property management and operating culture. TREK's leadership promotes an organizational culture that prioritizes intentional community building and a shared commitment to inclusive communities. Their strategies include intentional staffing, collaboration in problem-solving, Action Teams, and ritualized gatherings to foster relationships and inclusivity among residents.

Community building has been part of the **Seattle Housing Authority's (SHA)** approach and its organizational culture for a long time. The SHA staff includes dedicated community builders that focus on resident involvement and building relationships among neighbors before, during, and after redevelopment. Community builders at Yesler Terrace, one of the largest mixed-income developments in the United States, create opportunities for residents to connect through events and programs and prioritize building strong relationships and mutual respect among different groups. SHA included a community council in Yesler Terrace's redevelopment plan and budget.

Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC) involves residents throughout the planning and redevelopment process at Regent Park, Toronto's largest housing development. They use activities like the Youth Ambassadors Program and Taste of Regent Park to foster cohesion and facilitate resident participation, and they look for ways to simultaneously build community and resident capacity. TCHC designed a collaborative governance structure that includes homeowners and tenants from different income backgrounds.

PANEL TWO

Panel Two was comprised of Chicago-based community builders and highlighted successful community building approaches and explored opportunities for growth. The panelists shared an emphasis on the need for authenticity, openness, transparency, security, and a customer service approach.

The Community Builders (TCB) is a national nonprofit real estate developer with a focus on community building. Leadership and staff with TCB prioritize helping residents build connections and share power. In Chicago, TCB has successfully implemented resident-led organizations, monthly meetings, rental assistance resources, and health programs, and they address challenges through intentional partnerships.

Bickerdike Redevelopment Corporation, a local community-based real estate developer, uses several community engagement strategies at the Lathrop mixed-income site, which include an operating culture of meeting people where they are, organizing events focused on socialization, establishing a Resident Ambassador program, hosting regular meetings, and engaging with external community members. Bickerdike uses events and activities to foster communication and connection and looks for ways to bring people together over shared interests rather than income categories.

The Michaels Organization (TMO), a national residential real estate developer, has a local Resident Services Team that values collective accountability and inclusivity in community building. They encourage property managers to hold each other accountable, adopt a customer service mindset, and approach interactions with authenticity and care. They also advocate for understanding that a person's perspective can be shaped by the role they play in the community and how decisions may impact them, and they work with community partners to address challenges.

PANEL THREE

Panel Three featured **mixed-income residents** from Chicago who discussed the importance of intentional community building and the need for collaboration, communication, and a sense of belonging. They called for stronger relationships between residents, developers, and property managers and improved responsiveness from management. They also emphasized that disagreement can be constructive when approached with open communication, and they shared their desire for collaboration, inclusion, and the involvement of all community members.

After the panels, participants joined breakout sections to discuss the panels and then formed "working groups" with others from the sites where they live or work to strategize about community building in their own communities.

Key Findings and Insights

Key findings and insights emerged during the presentations and discussions at the Convening. The Convening Sessions section and the Themes section of this Report discuss many of these insights, which include:

- Community building should be intentionally built into planning processes. Residents want a voice in shaping their communities, and they would like to see developers increase opportunities for resident involvement in the communities where they are building.

- Residents believe a sense of belonging, connection, shared purpose, and mutual support is very important, and many feel it is missing in their mixed-income communities. Like residents, property management and community building staff believe these outcomes will be beneficial, not only for residents but also for the people who work in the mixed-income communities.

- Conflict and disagreement are opportunities for growth, as long as all parties understand the importance of open, respectful communication. Building strong relationships can help people overcome their differences and navigate competing priorities.

- Regular resident meetings, mental health support, enhanced security, and useful information resources are essential for fostering a strong community.

- Safety has been a key concern for many residents, and they link feeling safe to community engagement and thriving neighborhoods.

Recommendations

For Chicago-based participants, the Convening was a unique opportunity to connect with people in different roles and locations. They expressed interest in having more opportunities to share their ideas and experiences and learn from people across the city. However, because Chicago's mixed-income communities are owned and operated by private entities, it is challenging to develop and apply a shared understanding of community building. This highlights a need for city-wide, structural support to shape and implement practices that contribute to inclusive, welcoming communities.

The strategies panelists shared in their presentations and candid discussions between participants in breakout groups and site-based working groups are listed at the end of this Report and inform several key recommendations:

1. Create a community building framework
A shared understanding of the goals of community building and its best practices would benefit everyone who lives and works in the CHA mixed-income communities. A task force comprised of residents, practitioners and stakeholders should lead the development of a framework that elevates resident voice and results in shared definitions and goals related to community building. The task force could be hosted by the CHA, the Mayor's Office, or the mixed-income developers themselves.

2. Recognize community building as an institutional value and make it a specific priority
Developers, property managers, and the CHA should adopt inclusion and belonging as an institutional value and promote meaningful engagement by infusing community building throughout ownership, management, and organizational structures. Additionally, these entities should incorporate community building strategies and practices into training and job functions, dedicate both staff to support activities and resources for spaces focused on community building, and increase opportunities for resident-led initiatives.

3. Create opportunities to encourage social connection
To increase and improve communication among, and engagement with, everyone in a mixed-income development—among residents and between residents, property managers, and owners—events and activities should include opportunities for interaction, connection, and the sharing of ideas, while leaving space for residents to engage and lead in ways that feel organic and authentic. Events and activities that focus on the goal of bringing people together to get to know each other should be prioritized.

4. Incorporate resident voice and build capacity for leadership
To build stronger connections among people and to the communities, development, property management, site-based teams, and the CHA should incorporate resident input during planning processes and after construction is completed. Staff can facilitate regular meetings between residents, property managers, and owners and foster opportunities for residents to identify and fill leadership roles. Activities should be informed by resident input.

5. Develop effective modes of communication and information sharing
Residents, site-based staff, property managers, and developers should develop and use materials like welcome manuals and resource guides to help residents feel connected to the development and broader community, which in turn fosters the potential to have a voice on issues within the development and in the broader community. Residents and site-based staff will have valuable insights about the content and format that would be most useful and how to ensure that information about community building initiatives, upcoming events and meetings, and updates during and after emergencies is easily accessible and widely communicated.

Background

In the 1990s the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA), one of the nation's largest housing authorities, began replacing its large high-rise public housing developments with mixed-income housing. In 1999, the CHA announced a "Plan for Transformation," planning to continue this effort and to rehabilitate its remaining public housing stock. More than two decades later, some redevelopment sites are nearly complete, some are mid-way in the process, and some are just in the planning stage with construction not yet begun. Most of these communities include a mix of public, affordable, and non-subsidized ("market rate") housing, both rental and homeownership.

For many years, creating these mixed-income communities on Chicago's public housing sites has focused on developing and managing buildings. Creating intentionally welcoming, inclusive, and connected networks of people who live and work in mixed-income sites has not always been discussed or celebrated. Nevertheless, the importance of intentional community building is more widely recognized today than it was in the early years of the redevelopment effort, both in Chicago and nationally.

Creating communities where people feel they belong, regardless of their racial, social, and economic identities, can help create connection and a shared sense of

responsibility to their neighbors and others who comprise their community. This connection can affect critical community qualities like safety, health and wellness, and education, both within the mixed-income community and in the surrounding neighborhood. These efforts can also contribute to ongoing, wider-ranging strategies to address issues creatively and humanely and support the formation of healthy, thriving communities.

In Chicago, where different developers, property managers, community building staff and residents have approached building community in very different ways—and these approaches have evolved over time—there are opportunities to explore what has been working and what has not. Accordingly, Impact for Equity planned the Convening with a focus on the people involved in mixed-income communities. The Convening provided an opportunity for participants to connect across locations and different roles. Together they shared lessons learned, successes and challenges, practices and outcomes, and spent time in the company of others hoping to create positive change in their communities.

Chicago Mixed-Income Community Building Convening Overview

Summary of the Day

The Chicago Mixed-Income Community Building Convening proceeded with three sessions:

First, a moderated panel discussion highlighted examples of successful and innovative community building strategies at mixed-income developments in Seattle, Pittsburgh, and Toronto.

Second, two panels featuring Chicago community building staff and residents highlighted community building approaches underway in several CHA mixed-income developments.

Then, participants moved into breakout groups to discuss the morning's panels, and they continued these discussions over lunch.

Third, working groups, or "teams," organized by development site met to discuss new ways they could build welcoming and inclusive communities and to create site-specific goals. Each working group then shared their decisions with the full Convening.

Session 1
Panel 1: Perspectives from Other Cities (Pittsburgh, Seattle, and Toronto)

Community building leaders Bethany Friel (Pittsburgh), Ben Wheeler (Seattle), and Julio Rigores (Toronto) highlighted examples of successful and innovative strategies in their respective mixed-income communities. Mark Joseph, Founding Director of the National Initiative on Mixed-Income Communities (NIMC), moderated the discussion among the panelists and an audience question and answer session. The panelists emphasized that community building should begin during the planning phase of development, and they highlighted practices that help residents build deep connections to the places they live and with their neighbors. Some of their examples appear in the Concrete Strategies and Practices section of this Report.

TREK DEVELOPMENT GROUP

Bethany Friel spoke on behalf of TREK Development Group, a private regional developer in Pittsburgh committed to community building among owners, staff, and residents. To carry out its mission of creating value, strengthening communities, and enhancing lives, TREK weaves community building into its property management and development operations. TREK prefers smaller developments, approaching each one with innovation and creativity. TREK's portfolio includes developments in rural, suburban, and urban settings, and it has also participated in public housing transformation initiatives in areas with entrenched poverty.

TREK's leadership promotes an organizational culture that prioritizes intentional community building and a shared commitment to inclusive communities. For example, TREK has used hospitality covenants for nearly seven years. The TREK Hospitality Covenant has helped bind the TREK team together and ensure consistency across its properties. Everyone in the company, including the president, has declared their commitment to promote positive interactions. TREK's leadership and staff make the pledge to each other and to residents, and residents make the pledge in return. The TREK Hospitality Covenant is discussed when applicants

TREK DEVELOPMENT GROUP
HOSPITALITY COVENANT
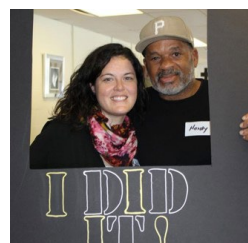
TREAT OTHERS WITH THE KINDNESS WE ALL WANT

TAKE CARE OF THE PLACE WE LIVE AND WORK

HELP EACH OTHER ACHIEVE OUR GOALS AND ASPIRATIONS

are viewing the property, signing a lease, and reviewing the handbook on move-in day.

Other strategies TREK has used to create a culture of support for community building include:

Intentional staffing
Because affordable housing requires significant administrative and compliance work, TREK adds additional administrative support to the property management team, allowing managers to spend more time getting to know residents and building relationships. Investing in these relationships helps managers and residents handle conflict resolution down the line. TREK also includes staff with community building experience in corporate positions.

Collaboration while problem solving
TREK tries to understand underlying problems before offering solutions. To do this, TREK invites everyone involved in community-wide issues, including its president, to join meetings and discuss problems.

Action Teams
TREK residents and staff, both maintenance and management, join teams for six months at a time to work on leadership development skills. Each team member identifies a personal goal to work on, and they also work collectively to engage the broader community. Action Teams include a stipend for residents, and all members contribute time to this work on a weekly basis.

Ritualized gatherings
TREK holds resident-led, staff-supported gatherings that feature many tools and opportunities to bring everyone to the table for a chance to speak. TREK partnered with NIMC and community building consultants Trusted Space Partners to strengthen opportunities for engagement and connection at meetings and gatherings. Together, they designed and implemented rituals for TREK gatherings. Rituals support relationship building by creating consistency and predictability for gatherings. Rituals can also create entry points for newcomers trying to join an existing activity. Similarly, someone who has missed meetings can return and know things will work the same way.

TREK's Monthly Network Night Rituals
Network Night includes residents and staff and features three main components:

New & Good: Participants share things that are new and good in their lives. This activity generates positive energy and creates openings for people to connect. They often continue sharing these updates even after the meeting ends.

Table Talk Time: Participants take turns hosting a conversation related to a question, problem, or idea. Table Talks have been especially helpful for planning and making decisions about projects to try.

Marketplace: People make requests and offers, for example, assistance with a specific activity. This is often the time when things really start to bubble up and people take action.

SEATTLE HOUSING AUTHORITY

Ben Wheeler is a full-time community builder for the Seattle Housing Authority (SHA), and he lives and works at Yesler Terrace, one of the largest public housing developments in the country. SHA owns and operates over 8,000 apartments and single-family homes at nearly 400 sites in Seattle. SHA also provides rental assistance, including Housing Choice Vouchers and project-based vouchers. SHA's Housing Operations Department manages SHA's housing units. It includes the Community Services division and SHA's Community Builder Program, which both focus on resident involvement and building relationships among neighbors before, during, and after a site's redevelopment. Ben and his SHA colleagues believe that community building is an ongoing process and that their neighbors at Yesler Terrace always have something to teach them.

Between 1997 and 2016, SHA redeveloped three large communities from public housing to mixed-income developments. It is now redeveloping Yesler Terrace, one of the United States' first racially diverse subsidized housing developments. Redevelopment began in 2013. The original 561 subsidized garden-style townhomes will eventually be part of a community with over 5,000 mixed-income rental units, including 1,100 subsidized housing units primarily managed by SHA and 4,000 non-SHA market rate rental units, 20% of which will be set aside as affordable units. SHA staff are the developers, property managers, and community builders for the 1,100 SHA units, while the market rate and affordable units are privately developed and managed. This mixed-income model differs from Chicago's, where a private developer builds and owns the entire development, which is also privately managed.

Throughout this massive redevelopment effort, SHA has a continuing commitment to Yesler Terrace's original households. Through the "Yesler Promise," every Yesler SHA resident has an opportunity to return to Yesler. SHA reaches out to former Yesler residents at least once a year, and about 60% of families have returned or remained in Yesler; those that have not affirmatively declined to do so. The Yesler Promise also includes commitments to environmental sustainability, neighborhood governance, and economic opportunity.

Community building has been part of SHA's approach and its organizational culture for a long time. SHA employs nine community builders and hopes to hire more. Ben works as a community builder alongside the redevelopment

Seattle Housing Authority's community builders prioritize active listening and intentional engagement.

team at Yesler, but his role with SHA predated the redevelopment and will continue after the project's completion. SHA community builders prioritize active listening and intentional engagement. They regularly try to understand what drives resident interaction and when there are meetings that affect the community, they ask who is present and who is missing. Ben directs his team to spend time connecting with residents and listening for their strengths, emotions, and motivations before trying to start projects.

A core aspect of SHA's community building is a focus on racial equity. SHA has a Racial and Social Justice Initiative that works to advance equity at the agency, neighborhood, and individual level.

Examples of opportunities for Yesler community builders and residents to connect

Walk About Wednesdays: A community builder walks around the development—often with books and snacks—and starts conversations with people about where and why they are gathering.

Spring Fest: SHA hosted a party with food trucks and provided paper for residents to write what they could share with their neighbors, how they could step into leadership, and how they could lead upcoming programs.

Taste of Yesler: When residents expressed interest in a large event where they could share their many different cultures, Ben helped get funding from Yesler's Owners' Association, the community-focused association comprised of SHA and the private property owners within Yesler Terrace. Word about the event spread to Seattle City Council members who also wanted to join. The Taste of Yesler event brought people together to share their cultures and stories and gave them a chance to connect over shared concerns and goals for their community.

Neighborhood Connectors meetings: Before the pandemic, Neighborhood Connectors meetings provided informal opportunities for market rate residents to meet SHA residents and simply talk. Some market rate residents suggested holding meetings in their building. They welcomed their SHA neighbors at the front door and accompanied everyone to the meeting. The meetings were initially scheduled to take place quarterly but were so popular they became monthly meetings. Because they were held in the building kitchen, they often felt like dinner parties.

Youth Opportunities: Yesler Terrace has several ways for young people to participate in their community and develop leadership skills.

The Yesler Terrace Youth Media program provides an online venue (available at http://ytyouthmedia.com) for youth expression as they examine the history of Yesler Terrace, explore the diversity in their community, and document the impact of the redevelopment project. Youth can also participate in youth advisory councils, internships, and summer programs. SHA recently hired a young Yesler Terrace resident who, with an SHA community builder's mentorship, has led several successful academic and summer programs.

TORONTO COMMUNITY HOUSING CORPORATION

Julio Rigores, Manager of the Tenant Engagement System for Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC), shared his experience with community building at Regent Park, Toronto's largest housing development. TCHC, owned by the City of Toronto, is Canada's largest social housing provider. The nonprofit organization has over 2,000 buildings that provide homes for over 100,000 people in nearly 60,000 low- and moderate-income households.

Julio and TCHC share a conviction that mixed-income integration—mixing and connecting people with different economic and social backgrounds— should begin during a development's planning phase. Like many of Chicago's mixed-income sites, Regent Park started as a public housing development and is transitioning to a mixed-income, multi-use community. Regent Park's rental buildings include three different income types: market rate, affordable (tied to 80% of Area Median Income), and rent-geared-to-income (Toronto's version of public housing units). Like some of Chicago's mixed-income developments, Regent Park includes privately

owned for-sale condominiums and affordable homes. However, unlike Chicago, TCHC owns and manages Regent Park's rental buildings, which provides a centralized structure for planning and adopting community building practices.

Before revitalization, Regent Park's limited community amenities and then-existing property management policies inhibited opportunities for people to come together for programming and discussion, which contributed to negative characterizations of the neighborhood. In contrast, recent efforts included a community building focus in the planning phase, which has led to more shared amenities and increased attention to relationships within the development and with the rest of Toronto.

Because TCHC intentionally included community building in its earliest planning processes, residents' voices have been accounted for throughout the phased redevelopment process:

Predevelopment
When discussions of the redevelopment started, Toronto's city council directed TCHC to include a plan to manage the social transformation that would take place. The plan led to key aspects of the redevelopment, including the identification of twelve community planning principles and the decision to design properties that would be indistinguishable based on income type. As redevelopment continues, a design review panel includes residents who participate in a selection process with architects and help make key decisions that affect all aspects of the development.

Planning and approval process
Multi-lingual resident "Community Animators" representing Regent Park's diversity have been trained on all aspects of redevelopment and engage with residents during planning processes. Animators share

updates with their neighbors, collect information for the revitalization team, and encourage residents to participate in revitalization activities.

Relocation
Resident feedback after each relocation cycle is incorporated in future cycles. For example, because of resident input, Julio and his team aligned their relocation timelines with the school year to better support families with children.

Demolition and construction
Resident input has influenced ongoing development decisions through structured input activities. Residents have also secured outcomes that were important to them by using their voices outside of

pre-planned processes. Residents of one building organized on their own and petitioned for new units instead of minor rehabilitation of existing ones.

Turnover and return
When residents return to Regent Park after relocation, Julio's team and the City of Toronto organize celebratory events to reintroduce them to available service providers and programs. These events also help reconnect them with people they may not have seen in a while.

Julio stressed that creating conditions for cohesion and facilitating ways for people to co-exist and grow together is very important for community building.

Examples of activities that help facilitate cohesion and community building at Regent Park

Youth Ambassadors Program: This program helps young residents participate in the neighborhood's redevelopment effort so that changes happen with them, not to them. Youth Ambassadors build capacity by surveying young people and planning activities that respond to their needs and goals. For example, when young residents expressed an interest in career development and connecting with other residents, the Youth Ambassadors organized a series of

roundtables where volunteers with careers in areas of interest shared information about career paths and set up mentoring relationships with young residents.

The "Taste of Regent Park:" This market began as a one-time event for residents to sell homemade products reflecting their diverse ethnicities and talents. With resident interest and leadership, it evolved into a market that meets weekly during summer and fall months.
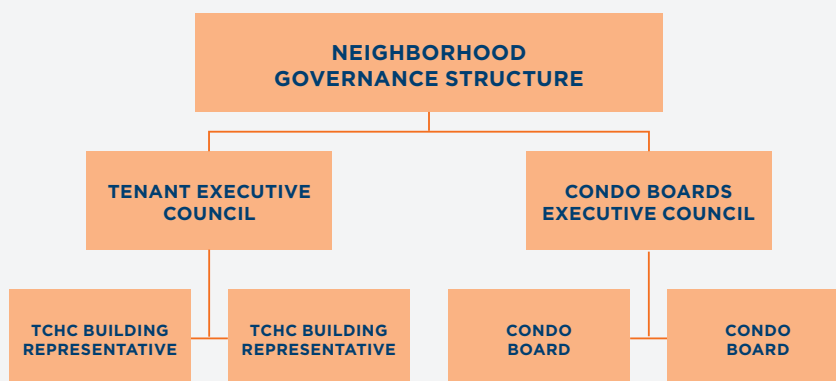
When community builders meet residents where they are—and at the same time use opportunities to build resident capacity—residents often naturally step into roles as community leaders and organizers.

As Regent Park shifted to a mixed-income community, there was a need to incorporate new voices. TCHC included residents in reshaping Regent Park's mechanisms for resident participation. Through a community consultation and visioning process, TCHC residents mapped how they currently made decisions and how they wanted their new neighbors—condo owners—to join the process. THCH used what they learned from the community to identify shared priorities and design the shared governance structure Regent Park uses today.

Under the new governance structure, each mixed-income rental building elects representatives, creating a body of about 80 tenants. Five of the tenant representatives are selected to sit on the Tenant Executive Council. Similarly, each condo building has a three-person board of directors and, collectively, the condo boards select five delegates that sit on the Condo Board Executive Council. The two executive councils form the Regent Park Neighbourhood Association (RPNA), an organization that represents and advocates for all residents of Regent Park. This structure brings tenants and homeowners together, and participants at all levels are able to build their capacity as advocates for their community.

Regent Park's current governance structure forms the RPNA, with equal representation from residents and homeowners

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                NEIGHBORHOOD
            GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE
            /                    \
  TENANT EXECUTIVE          CONDO BOARDS
      COUNCIL              EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
    /         \             /           \
TCHC BUILDING  TCHC BUILDING   CONDO      CONDO
REPRESENTATIVE REPRESENTATIVE  BOARD      BOARD
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Julio advocates for building resident capacity for organizing and making decisions that affect their neighborhood, including through the many types of events that also promote community building. A resident who volunteers in a supporting role for a building celebration might step up to organize a future one, and while organizing future events, that resident is often in conversation with their neighbors about interests, priorities, and concerns. When community builders meet residents where they are—and at the same time use opportunities to build resident capacity—residents often naturally step into roles as community leaders and organizers.

MODERATED DISCUSSION AND Q&A

After the panel presentations, Mark Joseph moderated a discussion that touched on core insights and governance structures to facilitate inclusive decision-making.

Core Insights

Mark asked the panelists to share a personal, core insight from their many years of community building.

- Bethany, bringing the perspective of owners, developers, and property managers, stressed two principles. First, there is room for everyone to contribute, and everyone is important. Second, owners, developers, and management companies must follow through on their word, and when they cannot do that, they must explain why. This transparency builds trust, which is key to community building. Mark reflected that often people tend to cover up mistakes instead of adopting Bethany's approach and explaining when things go wrong.

- Ben advised to "build connection before correction." Community builders must keep asking themselves how they can build relationships with different groups. As conflict is unavoidable, it is important for relationships to be strong before they are put to the test. Mark noted that because disagreements are inevitable, building mutual respect is more helpful than trying to avoid them.

- Julio emphasized that community building, as the foundation for successful mixed-income communities, must be intentional. It is not something that happens out of the goodness of one's heart: community building requires investment in policies and the ways that people navigate their community.

Governance

Mark identified governance and decision-making as mechanisms that unite everything the panelists discussed. CHA mixed-income communities do not have local advisory councils (LACs) as had previously existed in the public housing developments on the sites. Mixed-income sites that include condos have condo associations— required by state and local laws—that give a voice to owners. The CHA also has a centralized ombudsman that conducts meetings and communicates public housing resident concerns. Mechanisms for renters (of all income categories) and owners to participate in governance and decision-making in mixed-income communities, however, vary by site and

Owners, developers, and management companies must follow through on their word, and when they cannot do that, they must explain why. This transparency is what builds trust, which is key to community building.

many sites have none. Whether and how to create these mechanisms is an important question for mixed-income communities in Chicago.

The panelists described distinct governance and decision-making approaches in Seattle and Toronto.

In Seattle, the SHA chose not to dissolve Yesler Terrace's resident advisory council because it wanted to preserve the longstanding community fabric. After studying governance structures at mixed-income sites in Chicago, as well as research from NIMC, Ben and the Yesler Terrace redevelopment team saw the importance of resident-focused governance structures, and residents from Yesler Terrace advocated for maintaining a resident-led council. Accordingly, the redevelopment plan included a budget for a council of public housing residents to advocate for issues related to the redevelopment and surrounding area – the Yesler Terrace Community Council (YTCC). Although YTCC is not an official resident advisory council akin to Chicago's LACs, the Yesler Promise was shaped by residents and relies on the legacy knowledge of the YTCC. The Council continues to invite neighbors, institutions, and service providers to their monthly meetings to discuss decisions impacting the neighborhood.

In Regent Park, TCHC made multiple efforts to design an effective governance structure. Because Regent Park started as a public housing development, its neighborhood association initially only included public housing residents. As the revitalization plan brought homeowners and tenants with different income types into the community, resident representation at Regent Park shifted to the current structure, where Tenant and Condo Board Executive Councils work together on a neighborhood council. Including

newcomers' voices and views, alongside residents with deep roots in Regent Square, helped set the tone for how people would share power and perspective when making decisions that impacted everyone. Julio applauded TCHC's "both and" approach of combining structures that empower people to meet within their own groups with structures that bring everyone together to advocate jointly for their community. He saw a need to make sure tenants had a council where they could build their own leadership capacity, but he also expressed an obligation, as a developer, to facilitate meetings between people of all income types. It took a lot of listening, learning, and willingness to implement feedback, but Julio says the dual system is an improvement and that the structures complement each other in helpful ways.

Audience Q&A
The Perspectives from Other Cities session ended with Audience Q&A. Participants asked how TREK established its commitment to

understanding and its Hospitality Covenant. Bethany attributed TREK's successes to an operating culture that includes human-centered practices, and she noted the importance of having these values flow from the owners and management team.

Participants also asked about community benefits agreements. Julio shared that the social development plan for Regent Park included provisions for community investments. Benefits like physical community structures, scholarships, funding for leadership development, and employment opportunities were negotiated with tenants at an early stage of the redevelopment process. He emphasized the importance of developers and housing providers working together and attributed Regent Park's successes to a mutual commitment to community building from the start. Ben and the SHA tie discussions of community benefits to the Yesler Promise and reflect that Promise in materials like brochures and move-in documents.

Session 2
# Panel 2: Chicago Community Building Staff Panel

Moderator Amy Khare, Research Director at the National Initiative on Mixed-Income Communities, introduced the panel. She emphasized that community building efforts need to include mutual respect for the residents and the staff who support them. Rose Mabwa (Community Life Director at The Community Builders), Libby Juliá-Vázquez (Director of Communications & Engagement at Bickerdike Redevelopment Corporation), and Vorricia Harvey (Director of Resident and Community Services at The Michaels Organization) gave brief presentations about their work in their respective CHA mixed-income communities, and they participated in a moderated discussion. The following information reflects what panelists shared in their presentations and during the moderated discussion.

THE COMMUNITY BUILDERS (CHICAGO REGION)

The Community Builders (TCB) is a national nonprofit real estate developer that owns and manages several sites within Chicago and the surrounding suburbs. TCB uses a place-based community building model called Community Life and employs regional and national teams dedicated to its implementation.

TCB Community Life model

Panelist Rose Mabwa highlighted two of TCB's mixed-income sites: Oakwood Shores and Southbridge. These two sites are currently home to over 1,100 households, and upcoming construction will bring hundreds more. Oakwood Shores features an on-site grocery store, a bank, two parks and a community center. Southbridge has 200 new units with important community amenities, including a demonstration kitchen for cooking classes.

Rose's presentation introduced TCB's Community Life model and emphasized the importance of residents building connections among each other and with their community. Community building at Oakwood Shores and Southbridge includes sharing power and "activating" residents because TCB believes that centering residents and prioritizing healthy, stable housing will lead to positive impacts.

Oakwood Center
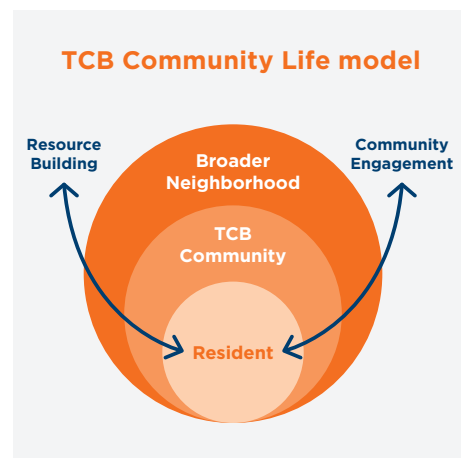
Several things that are going well in Oakwood Shores and Southbridge include:

- A sense that residents have co-created community as partners;

- Resident-led, monthly meetings (attended by property managers and residents);

- Connecting residents to rental assistance resources; and

- A Health Champions program that helps seniors eat well and take care of themselves.

Intentional partnerships with local law enforcement and local credit unions are helping residents to feel safer and to build equity through entrepreneurship and homeownership. Challenges affecting residents at Oakwood Shores and Southbridge have included safety issues, pandemic and ongoing health concerns, and a lack of broadband connectivity.

TCB has used several forms of resident organizations at Oakwood Shores. Rose explained that the key to success, regardless of a resident group's purpose, is for it to meet regularly, and she emphasized the importance of intentionally sharing power with resident leaders—doing programs with residents, not to

them. TCB makes a point to hire, train, and pay resident leaders to work with families because doing so recognizes—and invests in—the skills and experiences community members have to offer. Rose identified building trust as crucial for community building and urged developers and management companies trying to build this trust to approach their work with self-awareness and authenticity. Establishing a culture of caring for one another is an essential component of building trust between residents, developers, and management companies.

BICKERDIKE REDEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Bickerdike is one of three developers that comprise Lathrop Community Partners, the team developing Lathrop, a mixed-income site that includes both historic rehabilitation and new buildings. It has over 400 completed apartments, with another 300 under construction or in development. Upon completion, Lathrop will have over 1,000 rental apartments.

Bickerdike incorporates community organizing in all of its developments

and brought this focus to Lathrop Community Partners. Community engagement at Lathrop began prior to redevelopment and includes channels of communication for residents to continue to shape their community. During planning phases, Lathrop's development team had numerous meetings with current residents and community partners to discuss their priorities. Lathrop residents participate in working groups and can connect with on-site community engagement staff.

Panelist Libby Juliá-Vázquez presented on many of Lathrop's community engagement strategies and practices which include:

- meeting people where they are;

- organizing events and activities focused on play and socialization, health and wellness, public safety awareness, and community beautification;

- establishing a Resident Ambassador program;

- hosting regular resident meetings;

- building bridges between residents, property managers and owners; and

- engaging with external community members.

Bickerdike's community engagement team sees events and activities as important because they provide opportunities for communication and help people connect over shared interests. Some activities they use to help people get to know each other as individuals, rather than by their income types, include:

- back to school, graduation, and holiday events;

- art projects;

- "Coffee with a Cop";

- BBQs, Sip & Paint, and movie nights;

- woodworking classes at Lathrop's on-site wood shop;

- volunteer opportunities for community beautification; and

- yoga and nutrition classes, vaccine clinics, and COVID testing.

Because Bickerdike believes community engagement is key to building a successful mixed-income community, it identifies engaging ownership and property management teams, as well as external stakeholders, as essential. This approach helps infuse community building throughout all the teams and helps build more connections between groups. Working group meetings and the Resident Ambassador program also open channels of communication between residents and staff.

THE MICHAELS ORGANIZATION

Panelist Vorricia Harvey works for The Michaels Organization (TMO). TMO and Brinshore Development together formed Brinshore-Michaels, a joint venture that has developed several CHA mixed-income sites. Some of their sites are mixed-use, some include a community center for mixed-income residents, and others have been developed alongside popular retail spots.

TMO manages Brinshore-Michaels' mixed-income developments, and Vorricia and her team work in each one. Vorricia believes collective accountability and inclusivity are both very important for community building. Property managers play an important role in community building, and managers need to hold each other accountable. Based on her experience, property managers should use a "customer service" mindset rather than trying to "fix" residents. People should be able to discuss community decisions together, but it is also important to consider everyone's perspective, the role they play in the community, and the impact a decision may have on them. To balance competing interests and goals at play in mixed-income communities, Vorricia recommended that developers and property managers speak with different interest groups and make sure residents have a space or platform to connect and share ideas. Competing values do not have to be a problem, so long as people find ways to disagree without being disagreeable and approach interactions with authenticity and a culture of care.

Vorricia noted that community building efforts have evolved over several decades, and she identified some key lessons that inform her approach today. For example, punishing disruptive community members is not always helpful, and sometimes bringing in an outside organization can lead to more productive changes. Sometimes community builders, both individual and organizational, need to realize their own limitations and look outside their organization for help.

Panel 3: Chicago Mixed-Income Residents Panel

Moderator Crystal Palmer led the final panel. Crystal is the CHA Ombudsman for mixed-income communities. Mixed-income communities in Chicago do not have local advisory councils (LACs), the tenant councils present in public housing developments, so Crystal and her team serve as liaisons between CHA residents, property management, and community stakeholders. In her Ombudsman role, Crystal said she tries to take care of residents' needs when they have no one else to turn to. However, she wants to see people work within their own communities to resolve issues and build solutions.

Crystal was joined on the panel by CHA and non-CHA residents from four mixed-income sites: Annette Murphy (Westhaven Park), Elaine Scott (Roosevelt Square), Maner Wiley (Hilliard), and Sandra Franklin (Oakwood Shores). They discussed what it looks like for residents to intentionally build community within their developments. Despite seeing different challenges, everyone agreed it was important for residents to feel a sense of belonging and connection and a shared purpose in looking out for each other.

During the discussion, one panelist reflected on her initial confusion about what "mixed-income community" means. She felt the community she grew up in had many people who were focused on protecting their block, but that in her new community she was alone in her focus on safety. She said she was committed to promoting safety and willing to lead by example for her neighbors.

Another panelist said she does not know the income status of people in her building and prefers to look out for all neighbors. However, she sometimes feels the difference in income status in her community because public housing residents still have channels of communication with the CHA, who can step in on behalf of public housing residents, whereas market rate renters do not have a way to amplify their voices.

Panelists called for a stronger focus on the "we" in a mixed-income community instead of the "me." They want more collaboration and communication between residents – even when it is difficult – because once residents are working together, they can make their voices heard. The panelists agreed that healthy relationships between residents, developers, and property managers are essential. One raised a need for better responsiveness from management. Another echoed this view, explaining that people are less likely to invest their time and energy into the places they live if they feel that their property managers are not invested in them. Like the prior panel, the residents agreed that conflict and disagreement are not necessarily bad, so long as everyone understands the importance of communicating. They felt that some developers and property managers describe interactions with residents as full of "complaints." The panelists shared the view that residents are not "complaining," they are communicating. By listening to residents and keeping channels of

communication open, residents, property managers, and developers can build relationships that can lead to positive change.

When looking to the future, the panelists all shared visions of more collaboration and inclusion. One panelist called for building owners and leaders in development companies to listen to and work with the communities they build in. Another panelist called for more interaction between building owners and the CHA, because mixed-income communities are a joint venture between the CHA and developers. One panelist reflected on the struggles she has had finding connection in her community, saying she had been ready to give up and move out, but as she saw other panelists sharing their visions and successes with community building at the Convening, she started to feel a deeper purpose and renewed commitment to becoming more involved in her community.

Crystal concluded the panel with an acknowledgment that everyone has learned a lot over the relatively short history of the mixed-income communities. Perhaps the most important lesson of all, however, is the need for "community" to be part of the plan from the start. She called on developers to think about how to intentionally create community as part of their developments and for everyone connected to a mixed-income community to drop the stigma around public housing. At the end of the day, people belong to a community, not an income category.

Engagement Should Begin in the Planning Phase
During their presentations, the representatives from TREK, Seattle Housing Authority and Toronto Community Housing each discussed the ways their organizations worked with residents and community members throughout the development process, especially during the planning phases. Including residents in decision making, especially before construction begins, can foster deeper connections to a place and between diverse groups of people. Similarly, Crystal Palmer (CHA) and the Chicago resident panelists called for creating community as part of the plan from the start. In the breakout and working group discussions, participants strongly endorsed intentional, co-led design and planning.

"It's not 'complaining' — it's communicating."

Participants agreed that conversations across mixed-income sites and community roles needed to happen more often.

Breakout Groups

After the Chicago panels ended, participants joined breakout groups designed to foster dialogue among participants from different sites and with different roles (resident, manager, owner, community building staff.) Participants discussed points of agreement and disagreement and shared reflections on information that was new, interesting, or could be applied in their communities.

The day had been planned to have an open "networking" lunch for people to take a break or initiate new discussions, but participants were so hungry for the breakout group conversations that most opted to bring their lunches back to their breakout tables and continue their conversations until the afternoon session. At one table, one non-Chicagoan noted the group's excitement and asked when similar conversations took place in Chicago. Participants chorused "today!" and agreed that conversations across mixed-income sites and community roles needed to happen more often.

Session 3: Site-based Working groups

After the breakout discussions and lunch, participants assembled as "teams" in working groups organized by mixed-income site. Participants got to know the people who work and live in their own mixed-income communities by showing what community means to them through words and drawings. Participants added their individual ideas to a shared poster, and groups discussed the connections between everyone's contributions.

The working groups then discussed what they had heard at the morning sessions and envisioned community building at their sites. Participants were asked to consider existing practices and activities that they would like to continue, new ideas they would like to bring to their site, and the next steps needed to implement strategies they would like to try. They concluded their discussions by identifying community building steps for their teams to take following the Convening.

A representative from each team presented the posters to the full Convening and reported the key ideas discussed in each group. The many ideas and practices the teams discussed included:

- Top-down relationship building can be beneficial if it means people in corporate roles are driving connections between themselves, staff, and residents.

- The attention a surrounding community, developers, and staff invest into residents will be reflected through residents' outputs.

- Accountability, professionalism, and sensitivity from property management are important.

KEY IDEAS:
- Residents, property managers, and developers have both distinct and shared priorities, and community should always be seen as a shared priority.

- Community is caring about where you work and live.

- Community can mean communicating and taking risks, but it can feel like togetherness, having a place to share and talk, inclusion, and being grounded.

- Everyone—owners, development teams, property managers, and maintenance staff—can connect more closely with residents, and everyone should be accountable to each other.

SPECIFIC PRACTICES AND OUTCOMES DISCUSSED*:

- Building and using community spaces for activities such as events, performances, meetings, parenting classes, group meals, and technology training

- Events and activities, such as programming for youth, community fests, farmers markets, block parties, and Paint and Sip activities

- Investments in infrastructure like schools, pharmacies, transportation, and grocery stores

- Regular resident meetings

- Support and safe spaces to talk about mental health

- Repairs and enhancements to security equipment

- Lists or resident manuals with useful information, such as points of contact for development staff, community organizations, and community leaders and processes for elevating unresolved issues

- Visibility and participation from developers, homeowners, and market rate renters

*The items in this list reflect both existing and desired practices and outcomes.

Themes from the Day

Several themes, summarized here, arose throughout the day.

A. INTENTIONAL PRACTICES

Panelists and participants said community building needs to be an intentional practice—it does not just "happen" or emerge from the "goodness of people's hearts." Even though some relationships or practices grow organically, participants agreed that successful outcomes arise from conditions that are built or shaped with intention.

One important intentional practice is to begin community building in the planning stage of development. When community building is part of the planning process, residents and developers work together to envision the community they want. This not only empowers community members and helps build their capacity, but also helps build trust and a shared culture of respect and care. Residents said that when they feel their voices are heard and valued, they feel deeper connections to the place they live and the people they share it with.

Developers and community builders at TREK, Yesler Terrace, and Regent Park thought carefully about structures for governance and resident voice. Yesler Terrace and Regent Park have formalized structures, but they look very different. TREK did not develop resident councils, but this was an intentional decision that reflects their non-hierarchical philosophy of community building. While making decisions about these structures, all three panelists said their teams considered how past, present, and future conditions would advance community building.

Everyone agreed that community building takes work. Panelists and participants discussed the need for ownership and management entities to adopt a community building mindset and intentionally build it into job descriptions and organizational structures. Notably, many of the participants at the Convening live or work at sites with dedicated community building staff, but some sites lack any formal support for community building. Residents universally appreciated their experiences with community building staff, but also identified several aspects of community building that need more work. Some of the staff participants said they love their work but feel they could be more effective if colleagues on development and property management teams valued the importance of community building and saw themselves as also playing a role in community building.

Participants spoke favorably about other intentional practices like ensuring everyone is invited to (and can attend) meetings, seeking input from residents before and after important decisions, expecting developers and property managers to take time to get to know residents, and training staff to treat residents with the same respect given to people in leadership

Intentional
Practices

Trust,
Transparency, and
Accountability

Communication
and
Connection

Mindset

Maintenance
and
Management

Safety

roles. Additionally, breakout group discussions addressed creating ways to communicate with ownership, wanting to see ownership at meetings and in the neighborhood, and wanting opportunities for residents, development teams, and management teams to share their perspectives and talk through competing interests.

B. TRUST, TRANSPARENCY, AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Throughout the day trust, transparency, and accountability were identified as crucial for community building and were linked to other key issues. Generally, when participants described problems, they identified one or all of these factors as a missing piece. When participants discussed the improvements they wanted to see and support, they named trust, transparency, and accountability as both vehicles and goals for community building.

For example, residents said challenges with safety issues make it harder for them to connect with and trust their neighbors. In breakout groups, residents said they want to be able to trust their neighbors to help watch out for each other, especially children, and they want to be part of a community where people can be more open about differences and challenges.

Many resident participants said they want to trust developers and managers, and management can build that trust by getting to know people and learning what they want and care about. Some residents expressed a sense that they do not trust developers and property managers to listen to their ideas and concerns. To residents who feel that their voices are not heard, participating in meetings and activities can feel like a waste of time. In addition to owners and management, some residents also

called upon surrounding businesses to (re)build trust with residents.

Participants said accountability and transparency can help build trust, and these concepts are important to all members of mixed-income communities. Residents and staff alike want residents to be accountable for their behavior and contributions to their community. Residents want property managers and developers to be transparent about the decisions they make—and how they make them—as well as to follow through on their commitments. Participants mostly agreed it would be fair to ask residents to be understanding and patient when development and management teams encounter delays and barriers, but they stressed the importance of making sure residents receive realistic and timely updates. Community building staff described the importance of making sure all members of mixed-income development teams listen to the perspective of people who are in resident-facing roles, and many participants said they wanted to see the promises and the stated philosophies of developers and property managers honored by the staff who directly interact with residents.

C. COMMUNICATION AND CONNECTION

Most of the success stories in panelists' presentations emphasized good communication and strong connection with and among residents. In breakout discussions and working groups, participants frequently returned to these two components of community building.

Participants attributed many of their challenges, in part, to gaps in opportunities for communication and connection. Participants compared the cultures of communication and connection the panelists had described with their own experiences, and they discussed many examples of how they thought their sites were falling short, including a lack of regular meetings, low participation at meetings, and barriers to attending meetings. In breakout groups, participants discussed meetings focused on communication and collaboration, not top-down direction. Participants also discussed how having dedicated community spaces can facilitate connection through meetings, events, and activities. Residents from mixed-income developments that lacked community spaces expressed a strong desire to find or build one.

Throughout the day, participants and panelists highlighted the need for human-centered values and practices to flow from people in leadership roles. Many participants described feeling that ownership and management teams were too far removed, which posed barriers to hearing the voices of residents and staff in resident-facing roles and to sharing responsibility for everyone's wellbeing. Participants voiced a clear desire for the people who work in mixed-income developments to see themselves as being connected to the community, thus having a role to play in community building. Several participants noted that market rate renters and homeowners are frequently absent from community-focused activities, which is often interpreted as a sign that they are not invested in the places they live.

Participants also explored ways that gaps in connection contribute to negative interpersonal experiences. The word "stigma" arose in many discussions. Sometimes participants framed stigma as an individual's problem and described how another person's attitude led to negative outcomes. Some public housing residents said they felt stigmatized by market rate residents. Conversely, some market rate residents said they felt rejected by public housing residents and that they had to fend for themselves, whereas public housing residents can ask the CHA for representation and support. Some residents, regardless of income category, said they felt stigmatized in larger community settings, like nearby retail and restaurants, and described their negative experiences as the unfair consequences of other residents and problematic mindsets. In these instances, the stigma and rejection that mixed-income community members described seemed to reveal a challenge larger than an individual's mindset: gaps in communication, connection, and understanding among their neighbors, both within and outside the mixed-income development.

At a foundational level, residents of all income types expressed a deeply felt view that their voices are not heard or taken seriously. Not only does this affect their trust with other parties, as described above, but it also affects how they build and maintain connections. They said this leads to disengagement from community building and an inability for people with differing levels of power and influence to work collaboratively. Participants linked multiple types of lack of connection (residents to their site, residents to their neighbors, and staff to residents) to their descriptions of challenges with mindsets, believing that people inherently take better care of the places and people they feel connected to. Residents also expressed a desire for help finding information about important points of contact and resources in their developments and surrounding communities. Participants agreed that the information they needed, such as how to elevate a maintenance issue, contact their Alderperson, or learn about community resources, was not easily accessible and they felt they always carried the burden of finding it.

Participants also discussed how a lack of connection impacts them in a more specific, acute manner. For example, one group reflected on mental health challenges. They felt that until recently, although mental health was rarely explicitly discussed, they had neighbors they trusted and could lean on, even if they were not explicitly talking about anxiety, depression, PTSD, and trauma. The group said that now, not only are their challenges greater, but they are also feeling incredibly lonely and isolated. They would like to connect with compassionate people and support each other through challenges, but they do not feel that they know their neighbors well enough to open up. This lack of connection makes people less likely to trust others to accept them and their vulnerability with sensitivity, kindness, and privacy.

D. MINDSET

Many participants communicated a belief that "mindset" is a key factor for community building. During breakout and working group sessions, participants discussed mindsets they considered to be barriers to improvement. Residents attributed differences in mindset as an explanation for experiences like being the only one to speak up about community-wide concerns, feeling conflicted about correcting a child's behavior, and seeing valuable community resources go unused. They used phrases like "no pride," "people just don't care," "no interest in knowing each other" and "lack of participation and engagement" to describe what it looked and felt like to be around the mindsets they found unhelpful. Panelists and residents agreed the "right" mindset was grounded in mutual respect, care for each other, and a shared sense of responsibility.

Although many participants agreed they wanted to see a shift in mindset, they had many different views on how to bring this change. Some thought there should be more support for and investment in residents. Others expressed concerns that some community residents were the source of many problems. Some participants wanted to try ideas from the panels and predicted that providing more opportunities for connection and support for basic needs would lead to a stronger sense of community. Others thought the next steps should include a stronger focus on screening requirements, work requirements, and consequences for falling short of community expectations. Some expressed a view that certain categories of residents were less invested in the community than others.

Although discussions about mindset mostly focused on community residents, many participants also felt that staff who work in the development were part of their community and wanted to see a different mindset from them as well. In these discussions, participants conveyed a sense of urgency around addressing mindset problems before trying to build stronger relationships. Residents also expressed frustration that developers and owners seem to see mixed-income communities as a source of revenue, whereas residents see these communities as their homes.

E. CHALLENGES WITH MAINTENANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Friction between residents, maintenance teams, and management teams was addressed during all the panel presentations, breakout discussions, and working group discussions. Many residents described day-to-day frustrations with the physical conditions of their buildings, such as outdated units and broken security features. In addition to physical issues, friction arises when high staff turnover creates confusion over the status of work orders and ongoing repairs issues. Many residents hold management teams to high standards and stressed the need for improvements to the speed and frequency of repairs and maintenance work.

Communication was a key point in these discussions. Residents expressed unhappiness about having to make the same repairs request several times in a row and a lack of transparency from their management teams about the status of their requests. Additionally, many residents felt they did not know how to direct their communication or felt they carried the burden of tracking down contact information, requesting updates, or ensuring follow through. Moreover, participants in different roles noted that when processes and channels for communication are not clear enough, residents are more likely to seek unofficial or multiple approaches to resolve their issues. This can create confusion, redundancy, and frustration, which weakens trust between residents and staff. Some residents agreed that they could be understanding and patient when management teams ran into challenges, as well as follow requested processes for reporting concerns, but it would require better communication from

Different Roles, Different Perspectives

Many people talked about the variety of roles—resident, property manager, maintenance staff, developer/owner, service provider, and more—present in a mixed-income community. They recommended considering as many perspectives as possible, while understanding that people's perspectives are often shaped by the role they play.

For example, some residents said they felt disrespected because despite rent increases, they never saw improvements to their units, while units with high turnover received upgrades. From this perspective, property managers benefitted from these residents' continued occupancy without prioritizing their needs. Property management staff said their job requires them to follow a tight budget and fill vacant units. From their perspective, the managers value long-term residents but must address major issues and repairs first, which reduces the budget for non-essential requests. Conversations like these may not align competing perspectives, but they create opportunities for people to explain their objectives and limitations, address misunderstandings, and identify opportunities for compromise.

management. Both panelists and residents called upon property management companies to be more open, realistic, and transparent about processes for repairs and construction, as well as any delays or challenges they were encountering.

Many residents said they felt disrespected by property management staff and want better opportunities to communicate their needs and concerns. They also want to see a shift in the way residents and management understand their interdependent relationships. In their vision for a more cohesive community, residents identified professionalism, responsiveness, and respect as important qualities for management teams at their sites.

Because many of the breakout groups and working groups included members of property management teams, the Convening presented an opportunity for them to discuss some of these challenges with residents. Some property management staff said this type of forum allowed them to hear from residents in a way

they never had before, despite spending lots of time on site. They said they gained a much clearer picture of challenges they needed to work with residents to address. In their discussions, residents and members of property management teams also encountered points of disagreement, such as tensions between financial goals of property management companies and requests from residents. Although the issues were not resolved on the spot, they were able to share their perspectives in a way that may not have been available before.

F. SAFETY

Safety arose in almost every discussion of the day, but especially in the breakout and site-specific working group discussions. Panelists and participants identified many tangible mechanisms for safety, like repairing broken locks, installing security gates, and improving security cameras. They also addressed abstract factors that influence feelings of safety in mixed-income communities, including lack of knowledge about emergency protocols, inadequate information during emergencies, and how cultures of violence impact communities. Panelists and

participants saw clear connections between safety and community building: not feeling safe is a barrier to community engagement and makes promoting many factors that lead to a thriving neighborhood even more challenging. In the same vein, participants also described instances when a community felt more engaged and the feeling of safety that flowed as a result.

Policy Recommendations

The following five policy recommendations for intentionally establishing a culture of belonging for everyone who lives and works in mixed-income communities are based on the presentations and discussions at the Convening. These recommendations are followed by a list of concrete strategies and practices that are useful for implementation.

1. Create a task force to develop a community building framework for the CHA mixed-income communities in Chicago

Over the nearly 30 years that the CHA has been developing mixed-income communities, policy makers and practitioners have learned a great deal about the importance of community building. However, the public and private actors affiliated with CHA mixed-income communities do not have a shared understanding of what community building means or what it looks like in practice. As a result, the developments range along a spectrum of creating welcoming, inclusive communities. A shared understanding of the goals of community building and its best practices would benefit everyone who lives and works in these communities. A task force comprised of residents, practitioners and stakeholders could lead the development of a community building framework for the CHA mixed-income communities in Chicago. The task force could be hosted by the CHA, the Mayor's Office, the mixed-income developers, or others. This task force could develop and promote a framework that incorporates resident voice and results in shared definitions and goals related to community building.

2. Recognize community building as an institutional value and make it a specific priority

Developers and property managers should adopt inclusion and belonging as an institutional value by infusing community building throughout ownership and management structures. Similarly, the CHA should embed community building in its organizational structure. Incorporating community building strategies and practices into training and job functions will signal that everyone who lives and works in a mixed-income development can and should contribute to community building. Additionally, developers, property managers, and the CHA should promote meaningful engagement and relationship building by dedicating staff to support activities and resources for spaces focused on community building. This kind of support can also increase opportunities for resident-led initiatives. Treating community building as an important value and practice—for all people involved in a mixed-income development—supports positive, constructive relationships among residents and between residents, property managers, and owners.

3. Create opportunities to encourage social connection

During the Convening, residents and staff expressed strong interest in more communication and engagement from everyone involved in a mixed-income development—among residents and between residents, property managers, and owners. Events and activities offered should include opportunities for interaction, connection, and the sharing of ideas while leaving space for residents to engage and lead in ways that feel organic and authentic. Events and activities that focus on the goal of bringing people together to get to know each other should be prioritized. As described above, developers and property managers can facilitate this by dedicating staff, training, and resources to community building and actively participating in meetings, events, and discussions with residents and with their colleagues.

4. Incorporate resident voice and build capacity for leadership

Presenters and participants at the Convening emphasized the value of incorporating resident input throughout every stage and aspect of a mixed-income development. Including resident voice builds stronger connections among people, creates a shared sense of responsibility for the mixed-income development's physical space, and helps build capacity for resident leadership. Conversely, ignoring it undermines trust and a sense of belonging. Development, property management, and site-based teams, as well as the CHA, can incorporate resident voice during planning processes and after construction has ended. Strategies to do so can include using surveys to collect feedback, facilitating regular opportunities to discuss trending issues, and fostering opportunities for residents to identify and fill leadership roles. Staff should facilitate regular meetings between residents, property managers, and owners, but they should also seek input from residents about other ways to create clear channels of communication. For some topics, it may be useful to start with groups meeting separately to speak in a safe space, preview frameworks for upcoming meetings, and build momentum towards shared goals.

5. Develop effective modes of communication and information sharing

During the Convening, residents reflected on the isolation they felt. They suggested that materials like welcome manuals and resource guides can create a sense of belonging and connection to the development and broader community, which in turn fosters the potential to have a voice on issues within the development and in the broader community. Residents and site-based staff will have valuable insights and can suggest the content and format that would be most useful. Additionally, staff and residents should ensure that information about community building initiatives, upcoming events and meetings, and updates during and after emergencies is easily accessible and widely communicated across their mixed-income community.

Concrete Strategies and Practices

The following list presents some of the concrete strategies and practices that Convening panelists and participants shared for furthering community building in mixed-income developments.

BRINGING COMMUNITY BUILDING INTO THE PLANNING PROCESS

Hold meetings between developers and community stakeholders to gather input and begin to establish new connections when planning a new development or new phase of existing development

Create surveys, focus groups, or advisory committees for current residents to share feedback to shape future planning and cyclical processes

Examples: residents have weighed in on issues like in-unit storage, adding bike racks to property, and timing of phased, cyclical relocation to address school calendars

Create marketing materials that publicize the intentional economic, racial, and social diversity of mixed-income developments and establish expectations for inclusive and welcoming environments

Negotiate beneficial arrangements, which might differ from traditional community benefits agreements, for residents during planning phases

Examples: commitments to build or reserve physical space for specific purposes, funding for leadership development, and lease provisions that require commercial and retail tenants to hire staff from the mixed-income community

DEVELOPING PRODUCTS THAT SUPPORT COMMUNITY BUILDING

Design physical community spaces that feel welcoming, accessible, and suitable for events and activities

Create a resident manual with information that will be useful both within the development and in the context of a surrounding neighborhood

Create a transparent and accessible system for submitting maintenance requests that provides status, timeline, and options for elevating the request if left unresolved

Develop contingency plans that promptly share site-wide updates during active emergencies, provide information about what happened, and address any outstanding issues or next steps

PROVIDING INTENTIONAL, INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT FOR COMMUNITY BUILDING

Develop a vision and shared understanding that community building is a distinct and important role and responsibility, not something interchangeable with property management or resident services

Ensure that leaders of ownership and property management teams communicate the importance of community building to all staff connected to a site

Hire and support staff whose sole responsibility is dedicated to community building

Example: The Seattle Housing Authority has a staff of ten community builders that work in its developments

Example: Lathrop Community Partners has an on-site community organizer dedicated to community building at Lathrop

Provide team-wide trainings about how to plan community building activities or incorporate community building strategies into existing activities

Include community building in operating budgets used before, during, and after development

Example: The Seattle Housing Authority's decision to include support for the Yesler Terrace Community Council in its redevelopment budget

Compensate residents who contribute time and expertise to community building and invest in their development as leaders

Train property management and maintenance staff on customer service and trauma-informed communication

Develop intentional partnerships that reflect residents' priorities, such as health and wellness, financial management, safety, recreational facilities, job training, and youth programs

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR COMMUNICATION AND CONNECTION

Host regular meetings, events, and activities for people to get to know each other, such as:

- casual, informal meetings that take place frequently
  Examples: coffees, monthly networking nights, and discussion groups

- seasonal and celebratory gatherings
  Examples: BBQs, back to school and graduation events, holiday celebrations, food festivals, and block parties

- activities that reflect resident input about their needs and interests
  Examples: health clinics, youth activities, activities focused on learning, hobbies, recreation, and community service

Include icebreakers and "getting to know you" activities in events as often as possible and appropriate

Example: TREK's Network Night rituals, which create easy entry points, consistency, and predictability for participants

Use surveys to get input on residents' interests and feedback on meetings and activities

Use programs and events to build resident capacity to run their own events, develop their own programs, and get involved with their community

Example: ask people if they can support, lead, or host new or upcoming events and programs; ask people to identify skills and experiences they can share with others

Facilitate the creation of peer support groups

Hold regular meetings with management to discuss issues in the development and include mechanisms to:

- report progress towards shared goals
- publicize upcoming meetings
- provide opportunities for feedback and input
- share outcomes from meetings, including with those who did not attend, to provide information and promote transparency

Example: newsletters, shared meeting minutes, and web portals

Hold meetings that include both developers/ owners and residents to build relationships and connection to the community

Hold meetings with surrounding businesses to establish rapport and discuss inclusive practices that promote positive interactions with residents

Conclusion

Fostering a sense of community and inclusion in mixed-income developments creates resilient and vibrant environments for everyone who lives or works in a mixed-income community. When people from diverse backgrounds develop relationships, they form connections over a shared sense of belonging, trust, and commitment to each other. These connections can also lead to opportunities for collaboration, mutual support, and economic mobility, as well as collective efforts to shape local communities for the better.

To realize these benefits, teams within mixed-income sites and across the city must approach this work with intentionality and dedication to creating a sense of belonging and connection. Civic leaders, developers, property managers, staff, and residents throughout Chicago should adopt the strategies and recommendations in this Report because by fostering a sense of community and inclusion, mixed-income communities can create environments where people feel empowered, connected, and able to thrive.

Appendix

Community Building Resources

A. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION RELATED TO THE "PERSPECTIVES FROM OTHER CITIES" PANEL

These resources provide deeper discussion of the strategies, policies, and practices that support community building at TREK Development, Seattle Housing Authority, and Toronto Community Housing's mixed-income developments. The resources also include lessons learned as these entities adopted their unique approaches and examples of community building in action.

TREK Development
What Works Essay: Frankie Blackburn and Bill Traynor, A Call for Property Management to Meet the Challenges of Mixed-Income Communities, in WHAT WORKS TO PROMOTE INCLUSIVE, EQUITABLE MIXED-INCOME COMMUNITIES (Mark L. Joseph and Amy T. Khare, eds., 2020). [https://tinyurl.com/nrjjcucr]

- This essay showcases property management policies and practices that TREK Development Group designed with Trusted Space Partners and NIMC. It describes how TREK's "Triple Aim" approach uses intentional spaces, intentional practices, and community networks to create an organizational and community operating culture rooted in connection.

Seattle Housing Authority
What Works Essay: Stephanie Van Dyke and Ellen Kissman, Community Building and Neighborhood Associations: Strategies for Greater Mixed-Income Inclusion in Seattle's HOPE VI Neighborhoods, in WHAT WORKS TO PROMOTE INCLUSIVE, EQUITABLE MIXED-INCOME COMMUNITIES (Mark L. Joseph and Amy T. Khare, eds., 2020). [https://tinyurl.com/34nxd3dc]

- This essay discusses SHA's efforts to develop mixed-income communities that feel resilient, safe, and welcoming. It explores SHA's approaches and lessons learned in three large public housing communities in Seattle and focuses on the role of neighborhood associations and dedicated staff community builders.

Website: Batik Apartments, https://www.batikseattle.com/neighborhood-community

- This website shows an example of inclusive, community building-centered marketing. Batik is a development located within the Yesler Terrace community and offers market rate and affordable units. Batik's "Neighborhood" page honors Yesler's history as the nation's first racially diverse, publicly subsidized housing and signals to potential renters that it is part of a welcoming, inclusive community.

Toronto Community Housing
Case Study: Vincent Tong, Revitalization in Regent Park 12 Years Later, in CITIES AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING: PLANNING, DESIGN, AND POLICY NEXUS (Sasha Tsenkova, ed. 2021). [https://tinyurl.com/9x9hhyvb]

- This case study looks at Toronto Community Housing's program to revitalize public housing and shares lessons learned from planning and implementing a redevelopment plan at Regent Park.

B. BRIEFS, REPORTS, AND ARTICLES, AVAILABLE THROUGH THE NATIONAL INITIATIVE ON MIXED-INCOME COMMUNITIES (NIMC)

NIMC offers resources related to mixed-income communities and social policy at https://case.edu/socialwork/nimc/resources. In 2020, NIMC published What Works to Promote Inclusive, Equitable Mixed-Income Communities, a collection of essays focused on urban equity and inclusion. Some of the essays are included in this list and all are available through the What Works Volume section of NIMC's resources page. NIMC has made additional articles available through their "Must-Reads" page, some of which are also included here.

Academic Article: Morgan Bulger, Mark Joseph, Sherise McKinney & Diana Bilimoria, Social inclusion through mixed-income development: Design and practice in the Choice Neighborhoods Initiative, Journal of Urban Affairs, 45(2), 168–90 (2021). [https://tinyurl.com/bdz754w7]

- This article summarizes a study seeking to understand how mixed-income development practitioners design and practice social inclusion. It provides a framework for how practitioners can express and generate social inclusion and identifies over 50 specific structures, processes, and programs that can support social inclusion.

What Works Essay: Joni Hirsch and Mark L. Joseph, Promising Practices to Promote Inclusive Social Dynamics in Mixed-Income Communities, in What Works to Promote Inclusive, Equitable Mixed-Income Communities (Mark L. Joseph and Amy T. Khare, eds., 2020). [https://tinyurl.com/2w3hnnf8]

- This essay describes the existing context of social isolation in mixed-income communities, highlights four promising models, and provides ideas for next steps.

Article: Trusted Space Partners and Community Development and Preservation Corporation, The Power of Intentional Networks in Mixed-Income Housing (Jan. 2015). [https://tinyurl.com/yfkbuwa4]

- This article describes Trusted Space Partners' step-by-step approach and lessons learned in a campaign to shift a mixed-income community's "challenging culture" to one of "aspiration, connection and co-investment." It describes several successful practices, initial results of the campaign, and two sample frameworks.

Report: National Initiative on Mixed-Income Communities, State of the Field Scan #1: Social Dynamics in Mixed-Income Developments (Nov. 2013). [https://tinyurl.com/2ffj87z5]

- This NIMC report shares results from a nationwide study of social dynamics (social interaction, community building, social control, and governance) in mixed-income developments and explores issues important for social relations and strategies for managing them.

Research Brief #7: University of Chicago School of Social Service Administration and Case Western Reserve University Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences, Participation and Decision-Making in Mixed-Income Developments: Who Has a Say? (Mar. 2013). [https://tinyurl.com/33a476n9]

- This research brief summarizes formal and "associational" mechanisms for low-income residents' participation in mixed-income developments in Chicago, explores how stakeholders view participation, and examines how various factors influence inclusion and exclusion in mixed-income contexts.

Research Brief #1: University of Chicago School of Social Service Administration and Case Western Reserve University Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences, Building Community in Mixed-Income Developments (Jan. 2009). [https://tinyurl.com/mrxhjeu3]

- This research brief summarizes expectations, strategies, resident perspectives, and policy implications related to community building in three of Chicago's mixed-income developments (Oakwood Shores, Westhaven Park, and Park Boulevard).

C. ADDITIONAL ARTICLES

The following articles provide further exploration, discussion, and support for community building. They include research on social capital and mobility, concrete ways to define and employ intentional practices, and interdependent relationships between groups connected to mixed-income communities.

Research Summary: Raj Chetty et al., Social Capital and Economic Mobility, Opportunity Insights (Aug. 2022). [https://tinyurl.com/3jxz9f4b]

- This summary provides key findings from a study that measured three types of social capital in communities across America to see if they influence economic mobility.

Blog post: Richard Reeves and Coura Fall, Seven key takeaways from Chetty's new research on friendship and economic mobility, The Brookings Institution (Aug. 2, 2022). [https://tinyurl.com/2ap8hjn4]

- This blog post reviews Raj Chetty's study and provides a complementary interpretation of the key findings.

Article: Frankie Blackburn, Bill Traynor, and Yerodin Avent, Practical Ideas for Addressing Micro-Segregation in Mixed Income Communities, Shelterforce (July 6, 2018). [https://tinyurl.com/2s3nzwt9]

- This article summarizes several lessons Trusted Space Partners learned after years of community building work, including defining and employing "intentional" practices.

Policy Guide: Elsa Falkenburger, Olivia Arena & Jessica Wolin, Trauma-Informed Community Building and Engagement, The Urban Institute (Apr. 2018). [https://tinyurl.com/5bjdnpy7]

- This article defines "community trauma" and its effect on public housing and other low-income and marginalized communities and explains how a trauma-informed approach to community building can help communities heal and how to develop trauma-informed programming.

Article: Frankie Blackburn, Let's Get Rid of the Words "Property" and "Manager", Shelterforce (Sept. 12, 2016). [https://tinyurl.com/mry88ezr]

- This article explains the importance of property managers and suggests ways to reposition and support them to promote connected, supportive communities.

Article: Bill Traynor, 4 Groups That Need to Change to Make Mixed-Income Communities Work, Shelterforce (May 6, 2016). [https://tinyurl.com/5ambvc3c]

- This article explores the meaning of "interconnectedness" and "community" in mixed-income communities and how publicly assisted residents, market rate residents, ownership, property management and supportive service staff can build new, inclusive networks.

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