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Engage!

Change is Possible - *Neighbourhood Planning as Hopeful Action*

The signs of massive economic distress in a neighbourhood are usually pretty obvious to the outside visitor – houses in poor repair, public areas neglected, uninviting, poorly maintained playgrounds, peeling facades, and abandoned stores.

While the signs of economic distress may be easy to recognize, coming to an understanding of why things are as they are, and what can be done to improve or prevent them, is more challenging.

Change requires the mobilization of human and other resources that are already available in the community, but the enormous challenge is that each neighbourhood has a unique set of interlocking institutions and self-reinforcing processes that maintain it in its impoverishment. Any attempt to change one part of the net is opposed by other forces that neutralize the attempted improvement.

But change *is* possible! A new planning resource provides a step-by-step guide to hopeful action for neighbourhood renewal.

 [A Guide for Neighbourhood Planning](#)

Related Links:

- [Community Capacity Building Planning Resources for Neighbourhood Renewal](#)
- [Convening a Multisectoral, Comprehensive Effort to Reduce Poverty: A Primer](#)
- [Community engagement strategies](#)

By: Susan Taylor

Manage Process, Mobilize People - *Lessons for a Collaborative Leader*

Management has both scared and scarred me. Both the thought and the act of managing people with all their needs and frailties have exhausted me. It took a few years and a few failures, but when I finally learned to manage process and mobilize people my fear of management turned to exhilaration.

The collaborative leader embraces process and is a skilled facilitator. He or she understands that the journey can be as important as the destination. Good process is not difficult to learn. The stages of collaboration, techniques for planning, models of governance, research to facilitate norms, project planning, and fundraising are all processes that can be skillfully managed.

Some describe process management as the “science” of leadership and the mobilization of people as an “art.” Collaborative leaders know that both the art and science of leadership are critical skills in supporting communities collaborating.

 [Read the full article!](#)

Related Links:

- [Read the full *Collaborative Community Leader* series!](#)
- [Apply to Tamarack's Communities Collaborating Institute!](#)
- [Collaboration: The New Leadership](#)
- [How is your leadership changing?](#) and other articles by Margaret Wheatley

By: Paul Born

Revitalization via Participation

Poverty, the members of Montreal's Le Chantier believe, deprives individuals of the power to shape their own affairs. Resident engagement and participation, therefore, are fundamental to the group's theory of change and is the largest part of the Saint-Michel neighbourhood's community action plan.

To date, nearly 1,000 residents have been involved in Le Chantier's work to tackle poverty and social exclusion. Residents are being trained to meet the needs of local businesses and industries, thus increasing individual and family incomes. Affordable housing is being developed in order to encourage newcomers and youth to live in the community and provide an incentive for existing residents to stay, thus increasing community diversity. Increased cultural, sports, and recreational opportunities are expected to strengthen individual self-esteem and teamwork and dialogue within the community.

Involvement in these initiatives has helped create a sense of optimism about the future among Saint-Michel's residents. Revitalization through participation – it's working in Saint-Michel.

 [Le Chantier in Saint-Michel – Tackling Poverty and Social Exclusion](#)

Related Links:

- [More information on Montreal's Vibrant Communities initiative](#)
- [Saint-Michel's Community Action Plan](#)

By: Susan Curwood

Vibrant Communities Update

Waterloo Region, ON – On March 28, Opportunities Waterloo Region will host another installation in its Community Conversations series. Theresa Schumilas from the Region of Waterloo Public Health Department will discuss the most recent poverty data for the region. Learn more about this event [here](#).

Saint John, NB – First Steps Housing Project, Inc. has released a literature review on poverty, homelessness, and teenage pregnancy. Access the document [here](#).

BC's Capital Region – On March 28, the Quality of Life CHALLENGE will hold a “fishbowl” session to allow employers, employment agencies, and government agencies to learn more about the challenges faced by the working poor. Learn more [here](#).

Communities on the Way

I just finished re-reading, for the sixth time in the last 12 years, Stewart Perry's 1987 book, *Communities on the Way: Rebuilding Local Economies in the United States and Canada*. In my opinion, it's the best introduction around to local efforts to renew struggling communities or, as Perry describes it, community economic development (CED).

Perry describes the history of well intended but ultimately failed top down efforts to shock struggling communities back into health, explores different community organizational formats to coordinate community building efforts and includes an instructive section on the evaluation record of CED.

The chapter, “Re-thinking the Basic Problem”, really stands out. Perry frames the challenge of renewing forgotten communities as reversing the downward spiral of interlocking problems. This task, he argues, is not a quick one and will require a sustained, ever more sophisticated, locally driven revitalization program that will possibly last decades.

Jane Jacobs has the dual gift of great insight into the way that communities actually work and an ability to communicate that complexity in an engaging and accessible way to readers. Perry demonstrates the same attributes with *Communities on the Way*.

 [Read more about *Communities on the Way*!](#)

Related Links:

- [Order Information for Stewart Perry books](#)
- [Tools & Techniques for Community Recovery & Renewal](#)

By: Mark Cabaj

Soup, again?!

I just love soup. Unfortunately, my reputation as the soup advocate precedes me. Nieces and nephews, typically happy to stay and continue playing, politely hesitate when the invitation includes dinner. "What are we having for dinner?" they ask, fearful that I may not just order pizza but try to convert them to the 'soup cause'. Every spoonful is like a donation and each empty bowl is one step closer to membership in the soup lovers' faction.

I am not really that fanatical but I do feel a nice warm bowl of soup is good for the heart and the soul. Because soup can only be eaten by the spoonful, there is more time enjoying undistracted conversation among us.

Here's a recipe that my family and I enjoy immensely. We enjoy this flavourful soup when we don't want to sit down to a full meal. It's a must try! Pass it on.



[Cream of Cauliflower & Red Lentil Soup](#)

Related Links:

- [More Tamarack recipes!](#)

By: Susan Damiao