



# An Introduction to Community Development

Edited by  
Rhonda Phillips and  
Robert H. Pittman

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# AN INTRODUCTION TO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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# Acknowledgments

Like community development itself, creating a book on the subject is a team effort. We are thankful first of all to the chapter authors who have graciously consented to share their professional knowledge and experience with the readers. While the editors' and authors' names appear in the book, so many other community and economic development scholars and practitioners have played important roles in bringing this book to fruition. One of the most rewarding aspects of studying and practicing the discipline is learning from others along the way. This volume reflects the collective input over decades of countless community developers who may not be cited by name in the book but who have nonetheless had a profound impact on it.

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Rhonda Phillips and Robert Pittman

# Editors' introduction

Community development is a complex and interdisciplinary field of study – one that is boundary spanning in its scope and multidimensional in its applications. Why is this? It's because community development not only concerns the physical realm of community, but also the social, cultural, economic, political and environmental aspects as well. Evolving from an original needs-based emphasis to one that is more inclusive and asset-based, community development is now a distinct and recognized field of study. Today, scholars and practitioners of community development are better equipped to respond to the challenges facing communities and regions. Because its applications are wide-ranging yet always aimed at improving quality of life, it is important to understand the underlying foundations and theory of community development as well as the variety of strategies and tools used to achieve desired outcomes.

This text seeks to address the challenging and exciting facets of community development by presenting a variety of essential and important topics to help students understand its complexities. The chapter authors represent perspectives from both academe and practice, reflecting the applied nature of the discipline. Importantly, this book emphasizes the strong link between community development and economic development which is all too often overlooked in the literature. We believe a discussion of one is incomplete without a discussion of the other. Hopefully, this book will serve to more closely align the study and practice of these two inextricably related disciplines.

This text is presented in the spirit of community development as planned efforts to improve quality of

life. With this goal in mind, 24 chapters covering a range of issues have been selected and organized into four major categories: (1) foundations; (2) preparation and planning; (3) programming techniques and strategies, and (4) issues impacting community development.

Part I: Foundations, provides an introduction and overview of the discipline as well as its underlying premises. In Chapter 1 we present the basic concepts and definitions of community development and how it relates to economic development, a central theme of this book. Chapter 2 distills a variety of ideas from different fields into a theoretical underpinning for community development. Hustedde offers seven contextual perspectives that provide this theoretical core: organizations, power relationships, shared meanings, relationship building, choice making, conflicts, and integration of paradoxes. Chapter 3 focuses on the concept of capacity building, both inside and outside the community. Haines explains the value of adopting an asset-based approach, and how it is dramatically different from the needs-based approaches of the past. Mattessich explains in Chapter 4 how social capital (or capacity) lies at the heart of community development. Analogous to other forms of capital, social capital constitutes a resource that may be used by communities to guide outcomes. The fifth and final chapter in this section outlines the foundation of processes and applications introducing students to community development as a practice. Echoing Chapter 1, Vincent explains that community development is closely linked to economic development in practice.

Part II: Preparation and planning, covers the variety of ways in which communities organize,

assess, and plan for community development. In Chapter 6, Okubo takes the reader through the process of establishing goals and a vision for the future – essential activities for success in community development. Without this foundation, it is difficult to accomplish the desired outcomes. Chapter 7 addresses the all-important question, “How should we be organized?” West outlines different types of community-based organizations and their structures, and shows examples in practice. Chapter 8, by Kolzow, discusses the need for communities to effectively integrate skill development into their activities. The premise is that great leadership leads to the most desirable community development outcomes. Vincent’s second contribution, Chapter 9, provides a broad perspective on the total community assessment process. It discusses comprehensive assessments and the areas that should be considered, including a community’s physical, social and human infrastructure and capital. Chapter 10 by Green provides information on techniques such as asset inventories, identifying potential partners and collaborators, various survey instruments and data collection methods. The final chapter in this section, Chapter 11, by Hearn and Tanner, discusses how to assess the underlying strengths and weaknesses of the local economy. It provides an overview of economic impact analysis and how it may be used to allocate scarce community financial resources.

Part III: Programming techniques and strategies, gives several specific application areas for community development and how these areas may be approached. West’s second contribution, Chapter 12, addresses the vital question of how to develop a quality workforce in the community. It provides examples of initiatives that communities have used to address this need. Pittman’s Chapter 13 provides an overview of how to attract new businesses into a community and expand and retain businesses already there in order to strengthen the local economy. Creating recognition for the community, identifying the appropriate target audience, and the most effective marketing message are discussed. In Chapter 14, Pittman and Roberts explain the importance of focusing on businesses already present in communi-

ties. An existing business program can help communities in many direct and indirect ways and is often more effective in job creation than other approaches. Gruidl and Markley present entrepreneurship as a community development strategy in Chapter 15 as a vital component driving economic growth and job creation. The fundamentals for implementing a strategy of supporting entrepreneurs and creating a nurturing environment are outlined. Chhabra and Phillips’ Chapter 16 explores ways in which communities can tap into the lucrative and growing tourism industry. A variety of models and approaches are reviewed. Chapter 17 by Macedo provides a basic understanding of how the housing typology, density and affordability affect housing and community development. Reardon’s Chapter 18 discusses the model of participatory neighborhood planning. This model seeks to improve quality of life with comprehensive revitalization strategies grounded in an asset-based approach. Our final contribution to this part, Chapter 19, by Phillips and Pittman begins with the premise that progress evaluation is not only challenging but vital, and organizations must be able to assess and demonstrate the value and outcome of their activities. Specific types of evaluation are introduced in the context of practical application.

Part IV: Issues impacting community development, focuses on a few of the many and diverse issues relevant to community development theory and practice. Chapter 20 by Hamer and Farr gives an overview and explanation of the different types of community development financing from public and private sources. It includes definitions of key terms as well as ideas on structuring funding partnerships. Browning’s Chapter 21 gives information on how to research and write grant proposals. Grants are a major component of funding for many community development organizations and this chapter provides specific ideas for improving the chances of garnering successful funding. Kolzow and Pittman’s Chapter 22 begins with an overview of the increasing interconnectedness of the global economy. It continues with a discussion of the impacts of globalization on community development and strategies on how to



respond. Chapter 23 by Wheeler provides a basic background on the concept of sustainability and how it applies to both the theory and practice of community development. It also gives examples of strategies that may be implemented to help increase sustainable approaches. The final chapter offers some concluding observations on issues covered in the book, and discusses the important role of community development in helping shape the future of our society.

As stated at the outset, community development is indeed a complex and interdisciplinary field, as

evidenced by the breadth and scope of the chapters presented. We encourage students of community development to embrace the “ethos” of the community development discipline as one that focuses on creating better places to live and work and increasing quality of life for all.

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