

TRAUMA INFORMED COMMUNITY BUILDING:

The Evolution of a Community Engagement Model
in a Trauma Impacted Neighborhood



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BRIDGE Housing Corporation

BRIDGE Housing Corporation, a leader in the field of affordable housing, has 35 years of real estate development, property management, and asset/portfolio management experience. BRIDGE's mission is to strengthen communities by developing, owning, and managing high quality, affordable homes for working families and seniors. Since inception, BRIDGE has believed that an apartment with an affordable rent should be a stepping stone for advancement. Ranked among the most successful nonprofit developers in the nation, BRIDGE has participated in the development of over 17,000 homes, with 7,000 additional homes under construction and in its pipeline. Visit www.bridgehousing.com and follow [@bridgehousing](https://twitter.com/bridgehousing) on Twitter.

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All the neighborhood and community organizations that serve Potrero residents and care deeply about their future. We are partners in this work.

And finally, to the residents of Potrero Terrace and Annex for pushing us to do more and do better by the community. This work is way overdue.

INTRODUCTION

Across the country, large-scale community development efforts have focused on improving the built environment.ⁱ Walkable streets, transit-oriented developments, and mixed-income communities hold the promise of safer neighborhoods and a better quality of life for low-income residents and the surrounding community. Programs and social services, alongside quality mixed-income housing, property management and asset-based community building,ⁱⁱ are intended to deconcentrate poverty and create cohesive, racially diverse communities where people feel safe, are economically self-sufficient, and able to pursue their own goals. However, over the years, we have seen many community development initiatives fall short of the community building and long-term social impacts they aim to achieve. Often, residents are weary of participating in community building efforts, social services are not accessed, relationships across income levels are not achieved, and low-income families struggle to escape the challenges of intergenerational poverty. So, why do many efforts to revitalize low-income communities fall short?

Many of these efforts are challenged by pervasive community trauma experienced by residents living in low-income communities. Trauma resulting from historic and structural racism, exclusion, and isolation,ⁱⁱⁱ as well as the chronic, daily stressors of concentrated poverty and exposure to community violence, all pose barriers to participation in community building efforts and limit the impact of community development initiatives.

The Trauma Informed Community Building (TICB) model was developed as a holistic approach to community engagement that recognizes the impacts of community trauma on residents' lives. The TICB model recognizes that community trauma hampers participation in traditional community building and limits the impacts of broader community development efforts. TICB is a proactive model that serves as a precursor to traditional community development: it assumes that communities require a set of common experiences and conditions to participate fully in community building and benefit from sustained community development. Specifically, TICB strategies help de-escalate chaos and stress, build social cohesion, and foster community resiliency, all of which create the foundation necessary to maintain community development efforts. The outcomes of TICB go beyond traditional community building; they support the long-term health and well-being of a community by influencing the institutions that can support community improvements and meet community needs into the future.

Built on our experience redeveloping the Potrero Terrace and Annex public housing development in San Francisco, TICB has emerged as a promising practice to help community developers and other community stakeholders achieve their goals of strengthening existing communities and creating thriving, healthy places for low-income families to live. Over the years, as we have shared the model and have been challenged by our peers, two questions have persistently emerged—how do you know when TICB is working; how do you define success? In this white paper, we answer these questions by offering an evaluation framework that both assesses the need for and measures the impact of TICB. Additionally, we propose an updated model to more accurately reflect the strategies on the ground and share illustrations of TICB in action in Potrero Hill, San Francisco (see text boxes featured throughout the brief).

OUR EXPERIENCE

In 2008, BRIDGE Housing was selected by the City and County of San Francisco's Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development to redevelop Potrero Terrace and Annex (PTA) as part of the City's HOPE SF initiative. HOPE SF (<http://hope-sf.org/>) is a partnership between the Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development and the San Francisco Housing Authority to redevelop the most distressed public housing in the city into mixed-income communities while minimizing displacement for existing residents and providing comprehensive services. Through "Rebuild Potrero," BRIDGE seeks to rebuild the existing 619 public housing units and create 1,000 new mixed-income homes, open spaces, new infrastructure, community facilities, and supportive services to improve the lives of residents. The project is expected to take ten years to complete. As of Spring 2017, the first phase of construction is underway.

Potrero Terrace and Annex (Potrero) were built in 1941 and 1955, respectively, and are two of the oldest public housing developments in San Francisco. Over decades of underfunding and neglect, Potrero Terrace and Annex have incubated generations of poverty, violence, and isolation amid growing prosperity in the rest of the city. The Potrero public housing site serves approximately 1,300 extremely low-income residents, whose average household income in 2012 was approximately \$14,000.^{iv} Approximately one-third of PTA residents are severely disabled, nearly half are children, and in 2013 only about 30% were employed, half of which were part time.^v Additionally, in 2012, the rate of violent crime for the PTA census tract was 30% higher than the rest of the city^{vi} and had almost double the property crime rate.^{vii}

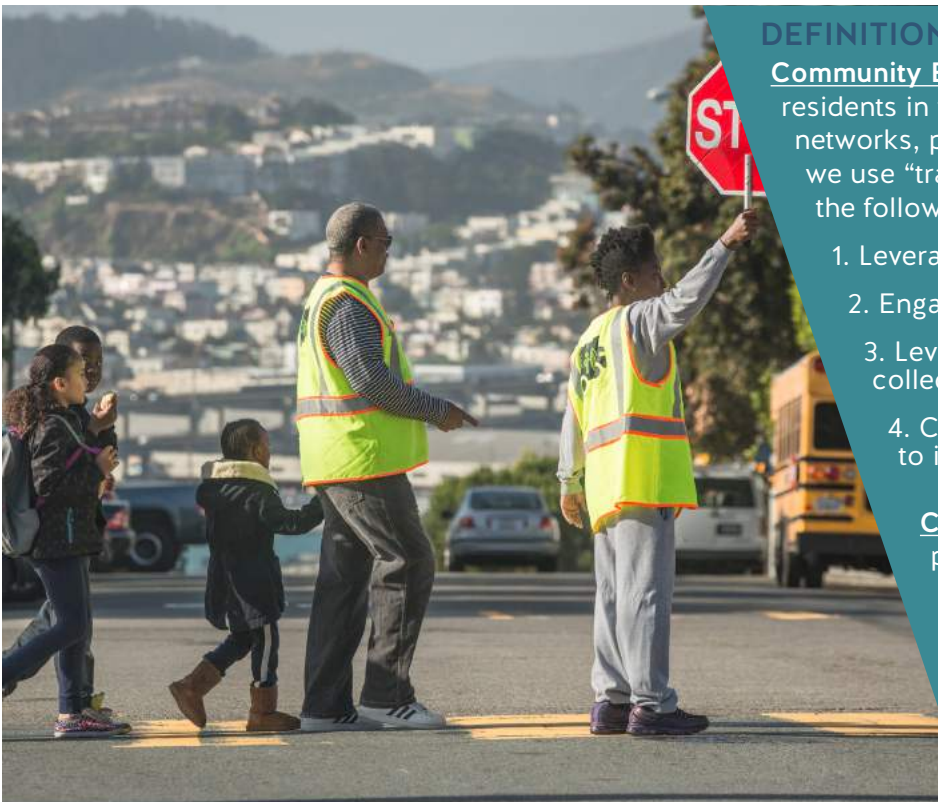
Because residents were experiencing a level of community trauma that posed challenges to implementing BRIDGE's traditional community building strategies^{viii}, an alternative community building approach that acknowledges community-level trauma began to evolve. In 2014, BRIDGE Housing and the Health Equity Institute at San Francisco State University formalized this approach and developed the Trauma Informed Community Building model.

DEFINITIONS

Community Building: The active participation of residents in the process of strengthening community networks, programs and institutions.^{ix} In this paper we use "traditional community building" to describe the following strategies:

1. Leverage and strengthen social networks
2. Engage residents in planning and vision setting
3. Leverage community capacity to solve collective problems
4. Collaborate with systems and organizations to improve social and community outcomes.

Community Development: A continuous process of identifying community needs and developing the assets to meet those needs.^x In this paper, community development is a holistic approach that includes developing affordable housing, community building and providing programs and social services.



UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITY TRAUMA

The practice and research of trauma informed approaches have become ubiquitous since they first appeared in the literature; and they can be found in the practice of behavioral and physical health care, treatment of substance abuse, social work, and education.^{xi} Individual trauma is a set of normal human responses to stressful and threatening experiences, such as an accident or death of a close family member.^{xii} In contrast, community trauma is chronic, pervasive, and cumulative. The Family-Informed Trauma Treatment Center (2010) found that families living in urban poverty—like families living in Potrero Terrace and Annex—often encounter multiple traumas over many years. The stress of limited and ineffective services, chronic poverty, crime, and untreated physical and mental health issues reduces resiliency, hinders community cohesion, and leaves residents in “survival mode.”

The distinction between individual and community trauma is an important one, because TICB is designed to address the impacts of community trauma; it is not designed to address individual traumas. Both individual and community traumas are significant; however, given their origin and time horizon, the two types of trauma warrant different approaches to mitigating their impact. In the context of community building, community trauma disrupts the foundational relationships and systems required for community change. Moreover, trauma manifests at the community level by altering social networks and reducing the community’s capacity to collectively address its problems and plan for its future. This can doom even the most robust community building and community development efforts to long-term failure.

So, what does community trauma look like and how does it manifest in the community? The following table describes the community conditions that characterize the effects of community trauma and gives examples of how they impact traditional community building strategies in the field.

TICB IN ACTION: ZUMBA

The music starts up and Santa, the elves, and reindeer begin to dance. No, we are not at the North Pole. We are at Zumba class at the Potrero Hill Neighborhood House, a community center located in a neutral part of Potrero Hill in between the public housing’s “south side” and the much wealthier “north side.” It’s 6 pm on Monday December 18, and everyone is in the holiday spirit, donning costumes, Santa hats, and reindeer antlers as they shake and shimmy to international beats from Latin America, India, and the Middle East as well as hip hop and Christmas classics. Jennifer, the instructor, is standing on the stage wearing an elf outfit as she leads the Zumba workshop this chilly evening. Everyone is here to have fun and unlike most interactions on the Hill nobody knows or cares who’s a public housing resident and who’s not. As one resident remarks, “What I like about the class is that there’s a real mix of people who come. There’s all different ethnicities and socioeconomic backgrounds and groups. That’s what I tell people about the class. It’s the people’s Zumba.”

After a few minutes, Zumba-goers are warmed up with sweat dripping from their brows and smiles on their faces. Children join their mothers, jumping and jiving together, not always at the same time or in the same direction. That doesn’t matter here. The important thing is that everyone is having a great time, being joyful and carefree. No judgement, just dance.

Then like Moses parting the Red Sea, Jennifer steps off the stage onto the main floor and the class knows what to do. They split, with one group moving to the left and the other half to the right. Jennifer walks up the clear wide aisle that has been created, positioning herself in the center of the room. She calls out directions and everyone follows. As each group crisscrosses the room again and again, they grin with delight, cheering and waving as their fellow classmates pass by. Soon the music slows and the cool down period begins with stretches and deep breathing. Bodies of all shapes and sizes, genders, ages and hues from all over Potrero Hill are sharing in this moment of relaxation and calm. Jennifer thanks the group for their time together and everyone claps, ready and excited to repeat this happy ritual on Wednesday.

“I always leave Zumba happier. I feel as though work problems are no longer on my shoulders. I feel like I’ve let them go, and I’m starting over at the end of the day.”



How Community Trauma Impacts Traditional Community Building Strategies

TABLE 1

CONDITIONS OF COMMUNITY TRAUMA	IMPACT ON COMMUNITY BUILDING STRATEGIES
<p>Breadth and depth of personal and community needs</p> <p>Residents who live in trauma affected neighborhoods deal with the instability and isolation of poverty on a daily basis. The stresses and demands they face in their daily lives impact their ability to engage in community building activities because they face a myriad of challenges caused by poverty and institutionalized racism including poor overall health, substance abuse and other barriers. Residents living in trauma affected neighborhoods require a breadth and depth of resources and services to facilitate their participation in community building efforts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community organizations are unable to meet the needs of residents due to insufficient funding and lack of capacity. • Community organizations are stretched thin and the quality of social services suffers. • Substance abuse impairs community members' abilities to participate fully in community building activities and impairs community interactions.
<p>Historical community disinvestment</p> <p>Further complicating residents' high level of needs, many trauma affected neighborhoods lack adequate resources and services due to structural racism and historical disinvestment in their communities. Often this disinvestment results in public systems that are of poor quality and dysfunctional such as inadequate schools, and inaccessible healthcare, transportation and food options, further exacerbating the impact of community trauma.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community organizations and other stakeholders are protective of their scarce resources and unwilling to work collaboratively. • Residents do not take advantage of resources because they have been exposed to dysfunctional service systems that have not met their needs.
<p>Disempowerment and lack of community ownership</p> <p>The experience of historical disinvestment, trauma, and concentrated poverty can result in disempowerment and diminish a community's sense of ownership.^{xiii} Furthermore, in many public housing developments like Potrero, residents have had negative relationships and experiences with housing management, service providers or public agencies. They may carry resentment or feel disinterested in investing in their community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents are depressed and do not want to leave their homes. • Residents do not have the confidence or have not had the opportunity to develop skills to serve in leadership roles. • Residents do not feel that their voices will be heard or opinions will make a difference.
<p>Distrust and disconnection</p> <p>Community relationships and cohesion are critical to community building. Trauma often disrupts these connections and damages healthy and trusting relationships among community members.^{xiv, xv} In communities with high rates of violence, residents harbor real or perceived safety concerns and may hesitate to interact with neighbors because of negative relationships or past drama. Residents harbor real or perceived safety concerns and may hesitate to interact with neighbors because of negative relationships or past drama.^{xvi}</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents will not open their doors to those conducting outreach. • Poor attendance at community meetings and events. • Skepticism about the community development process and a belief that it "will never happen."

(CONTINUED)

CONDITIONS OF COMMUNITY TRAUMA	IMPACT ON COMMUNITY BUILDING STRATEGIES
<p>Instability, unreliability and inconsistency</p> <p>When residents have faced years of disinvestment and negative experiences with agencies and institutions, they are more hesitant to rely on institutions and don't believe that community building efforts will result in tangible changes. They also don't believe, based on their history with "false promises," that the institutions leading change efforts will be there over time.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents express a desire to participate in community building activities but do not show up. • Light-touch outreach efforts are not sufficient to resonate. • Trauma symptoms are exhibited, including lack of focus, short attention span, short tempers impaired cognitive decision making, etc. • Residents do not take advantage of resources because they do not believe the resources will be sustained over time.
<p>Residents are treated as service consumers rather than partners in creating change</p> <p>Residents don't trust that institutions will meet their needs because they are not involved in defining their priorities or informing the institutions that serve them, and historically never have been. Many residents don't seek help from systems or institutions because based on their experiences, they don't see the institutions as adaptable or accommodating their needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community based institutions don't consider the conditions of trauma in designing and implementing programs and services • Residents do not engage in programs and services because they don't have input in guiding the program design or social service outcomes.
<p>Difficulty envisioning the future and positive change</p> <p>Residents are often overwhelmed by the realities of their day-to-day lives and cannot imagine how things could be different or trust that change will happen. Research shows that that everyday concerns of surviving poverty create such a mental burden that there is little cognitive capacity left to plan and excel in other aspects of life.^{xvii}</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low turnout in the community development vision and goal setting process. • Difficult to generate community based ideas. • Residents do not engage in programs and services because based on their past experiences, they do not believe their circumstances will change.

HOW TICB READIES COMMUNITIES FOR CHANGE

The TICB model is a holistic community engagement approach that evolves with the needs of a community, knowing that the historical community trauma cannot be undone. Through underlying principles and intentional strategies, TICB honors residents' past experiences, prepares residents and other stakeholders for change, and shapes the institutional infrastructure (such as community organizations, social service providers, schools, etc.) that is necessary to sustain long-term community improvements in neighborhoods that are impacted by community trauma.

Figure 1 illustrates how TICB works to address the challenges experienced by trauma impacted communities so that they are prepared to engage in traditional community building and benefit from sustained community development efforts. Researchers and evaluators call this a theory of change. A theory of change explicitly lays out the relationships between conditions in the environment, activities, and their intended outcomes.^{xviii} The theory of change illustrates how the short-term impacts of the TICB principles and strategies provide the fertilizer to grow a healthy community development tree, including the delivery of programs and services, traditional community building, and quality affordable housing. As shown, TICB is a necessary step to reach the long-term impacts of community development. **Figure 2** shows the TICB model in more detail, laying out the underlying principles and intentional strategies, their outcomes, and the ultimate impact.

TICB Underlying Principles

The TICB model applies to efforts across different types of low-income communities facing structural racism, historical community disinvestment, ongoing violence, isolation, and limited resources. Four key TICB principles^{xix} guide all community building activities and strategies. These principles also inform broader community development decisions and processes.

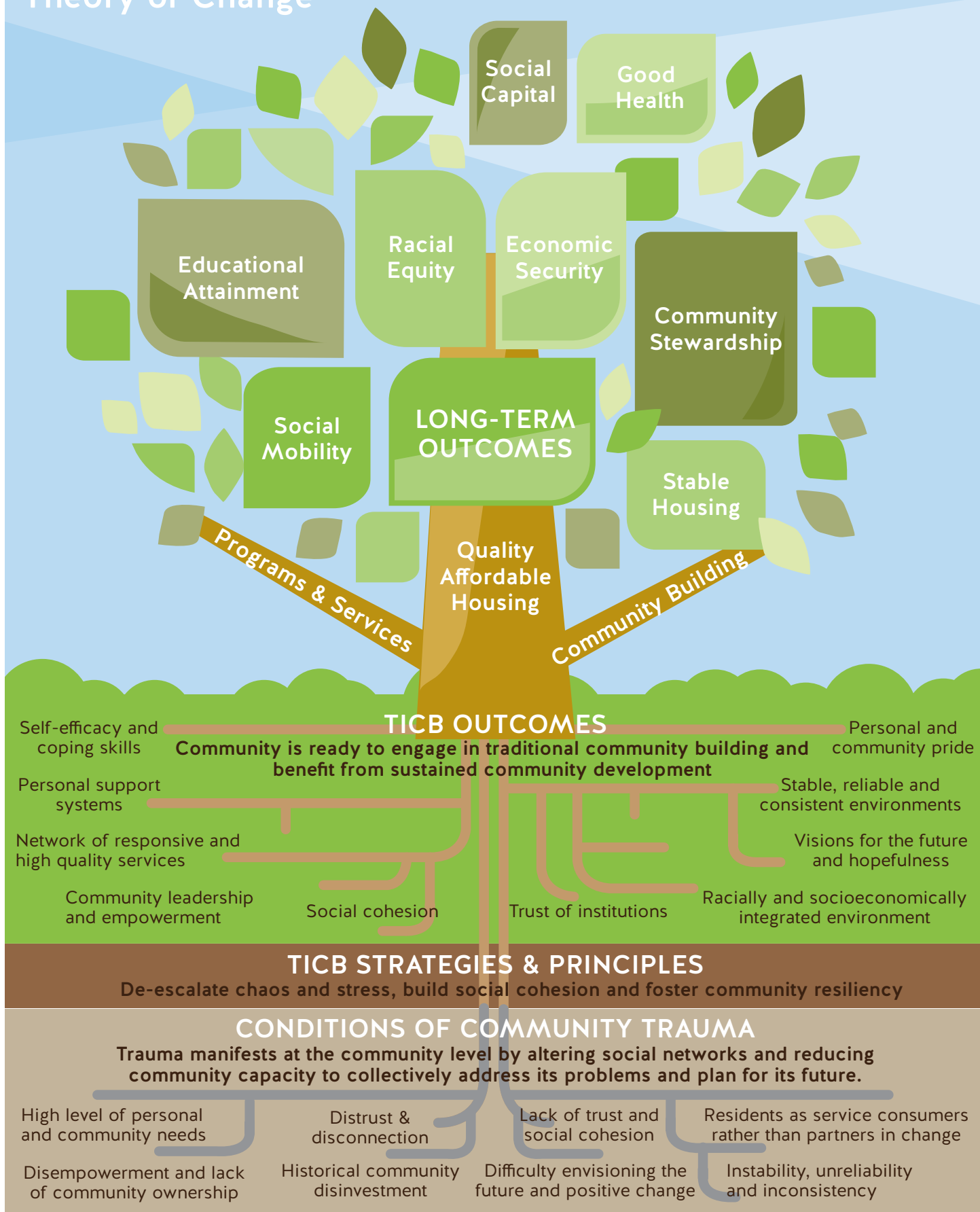
Do no harm. Be aware of past and ongoing trauma and avoid re-traumatizing individuals. This requires ongoing transparency, consistent communications, and the creation of environments that de-escalate stress. It also requires self-awareness about how different racial, gender, and socioeconomic groups experience decisions, actions, and impacts.

Acceptance. Meet residents where they are, accept the realities of the community conditions, and set expectations accordingly. Everyone is welcome to participate.

Community empowerment. Recognize the importance of self-determination to encourage long-term community stewardship. Inclusiveness is core to community building in trauma affected neighborhoods, where generations have been marginalized from community development processes and excluded from reaping the benefits. It is critical to ensure that the community building efforts can be sustained by the community and not dependent on outsiders.

Reflective process. Engage in an ongoing reflective practice that responds to new developments and knowledge and constantly adjusts to meet the needs of the community and overall vision for the neighborhood. It will take a sustained approach over multiple generations to improve outcomes in a trauma impacted community.

Trauma Informed Community Building Theory of Change





TRAUMA INFORMED COMMUNITY BUILDING

A Model For Strengthening Community In Trauma Affected Neighborhoods

IMPACT

Community is ready to engage in traditional community building and benefit from sustained community development

TICB OUTCOMES:

- Self-efficacy and coping skills
- Personal support systems
- Network of responsive and high quality services
- Community leadership and empowerment
- Social cohesion
- Trust of institutions
- Personal and community pride
- Stable, reliable and consistent environments
- Vision for the future
- Racially and socioeconomically integrated environment

STRATEGIES



INDIVIDUAL

- Provide opportunities for joy, physical activity and fun.
- Provide opportunities for consistent, frequent interactions and trust-building to build authentic relationships.
- Provide opportunities for self-determination, planning and a sense of accomplishment.
- Meet residents where they are with a low barrier to entry.
- Set realistic expectations and never over-promise.



INTERPERSONAL

- Model healthy behaviors.
- Create safe spaces for interactions and sharing.
- Cultivate opportunities for shared experiences.
- Integrate relaxation and mindfulness exercises and conflict management skills.
- Build mutual accountability and reliance on each other.



COMMUNITY

- Communicate often, in a consistent and inclusive way.
- Cultivate formal and informal leadership opportunities.
- Continuously encourage greater participation (breadth and depth).
- Create opportunities for mixed-income culture building.
- Provide visible activities that reflect community change.
- Expand incrementally, based on successes.



SYSTEMS

- Ensure a high capacity backbone institution to coordinate partners and promote long-term vision and goals.
- Build strategic service partnerships with trauma informed partners and patient funders.
- Ensure clear partnership roles, responsibilities and expectations.
- Hold service partners accountable for results.
- Provide platform for outside entities to engage residents in an authentic way.
- Elevate resident voices and needs throughout the process.

PRINCIPLES: Do No Harm • Acceptance • Community Empowerment • Reflective Process

TICB Intentional Strategies

The TICB approach recognizes the impacts of sustained stress and trauma in all aspects of a community's health and well-being and proposes a set of intentional strategies in the context of an ecological framework to show the interrelationship between people's individual experiences, relationships, and community context.^{xx} It is important to note that TICB does not impose specific activities or tactics, rather it suggests a set of comprehensive strategies to address the conditions of trauma that pose challenges to traditional community building efforts and long-term community development outcomes. The TICB intentional strategies are described below and summarized above in Figure 2.

Individual Strategies

TICB activities need to provide an antidote to the daily stresses of poverty that often overwhelm residents in trauma impacted communities. These activities are best if they are consistently scheduled opportunities for joy, physical activity, and fun with their friends, family, and neighbors and are facilitated by community leaders. As mentioned, activities need to be consistent (e.g., every Monday at 6pm) to provide predictability and serve as a reliable way to build trust and relationships with residents, other community members, and community development staff. To encourage and maintain participation in the community building process, activities need to provide a sense of reward. Allowing residents to track their participation, meet goals (whether through physical incentives, such as gift cards or other symbolic rewards), and plan their level of engagement teaches them goal-setting and gives them a sense of self-determination and accomplishment. Also, activities should not be intimidating; they should be open, inclusive, and accessible so that any community member can feel they can participate whenever they can and to whatever extent. Moreover, because residents are accustomed to being let down, whether through empty promises or fleeting opportunities, activities need to be planned realistically; and staff should be transparent with clear expectations and by paying significant attention to ensure that communications never over-promise.

Interpersonal Strategies

TICB activities aim to build interpersonal relationships, create channels of communication, build a sense of social cohesion, and help create social supports. Social cohesiveness is a resilience factor that can protect residents from the impact of trauma, as well as contribute to the prevention of future triggers.^{xxi} Activities at the interpersonal level provide low-intensity opportunities for interaction, relationship development, and mutual sharing. The activities give residents shared positive, healthy experiences, which in turn help connect them and give them a sense of shared pride. To help promote this sense of interconnectedness, activities should foster shared and mutual accountability. For example, community-wide goals and rewards can help residents work together and build a sense of interdependence. Perhaps most importantly, TICB activities provide a platform for social interactions to combat the everyday personal conflicts and triggers between residents that are often caused by outside factors. Integrating mindfulness and gratitude exercises, as well as explicit conflict management skills into the activities, is essential to maintaining a sense of calm and joy.

Community Strategies

Community-level TICB strategies are aimed at setting community-level norms and addressing the community conditions of trauma. Communicating in a culturally competent, consistent manner on a regular basis helps address community rumors and the misinformation that is often generated out of distrust. It also builds a sense of inclusivity and awareness about the community building process. Activities that demonstrate tangible evidence of community change are also important for helping residents trust that positive change is possible. To generate enthusiasm for the activities, they should grow incrementally from successes so residents feel as though they are part of something larger than themselves; and though activities should be executed in a consistent manner, they should evolve over time to generate new participants and increase duplicated participation. To help cultivate community ownership and create the infrastructure for sustainability, activities should be designed with opportunities for both formal and informal community leadership and feedback, supported by skill building, and reinforced through ongoing recognition. Setting mixed socioeconomic cultural norms is an intentional strategy to help lay the foundation for successful socioeconomic and racial integration. The TICB activities serve as a platform for social interaction across socioeconomic levels and racial groups; and they should be designed to appeal to different populations, providing opportunities to set new, shared community norms.

Systemic & Institutional Strategies

TICB builds the capacity of the community to inform the way community development efforts are designed, funded, and sustained over time. A key strategy—perhaps the hardest to implement—is the incubation and promotion of a backbone entity to manage and guide all community building and community development efforts towards a long-term vision in which residents are at the center. The backbone entity builds strategic partnerships and ensures that program and social service partners are coordinated, trauma informed, capable of meeting the community’s needs, and accountable for results. Another important strategy to help transform the systems and institutions that impact the community is to provide activities and opportunities for outside stakeholders (e.g., funders, city agencies, and new program and service partners) to engage with residents in an authentic way and on residents’ terms. For example, activities such as the walking club, which is attended and led by residents, provide a means for foundations to interact with residents, see the neighborhood, and better understand the community context without putting residents on display. This change in dynamics between the community and outside stakeholders changes the power dynamic and elevates the community’s experiences, voices, and needs.

TICB IN ACTION: POTRERO WALKING CLUB

“Mama,” as she is called by residents, showed up at 1:50 pm to sign in, get her attendance stamp on her neatly folded community calendar, and attend the Potrero Walking Club as she does every Monday. Going seven years strong, the Monday Potrero Walking Club is now one of three weekly walking clubs that brings together residents from the Potrero public housing site and other stakeholders to exercise, catch up, and get to know each other. However, today Mama is not allowed to participate in the walking club. Mama, who is 73 years old, has swollen ankles; and though she insists that she is okay to participate, Ana, a volunteer community leader who often heads the walking club, persuades Mama that she cannot join today and promptly walks her home. A teenager across the street shouts out at the group, “Why aren’t you letting Mama join?” Another resident shouts back, “Mama’s ankles are too swollen today.” The teenager, satisfied, walks off.

As they begin their walk, Ana explains why Mama was so insistent on joining the walking club. Ana smiles broadly and says, “Mama participates in all the community building activities. This is like her family and she hates being left out.” As the walk continues, other residents begin to talk as if they’d known each other for years. One is complaining about her hips, the other tells her she’s lost another five pounds. The walking club walks up and down the steep Potrero hills, in and out of the barrack style public housing buildings, passing through several groups of teenagers playing loud music. The teenagers all pause to say “hi” to the walking club participants as though greeting a respected elder of the community. One teenager joins the walk for a bit to talk to another resident leader, Malik, who offers him some fatherly advice. The group of about 15 walkers slows down waiting for Malik to finish. The teenager gives Malik a fist bump and waves goodbye. The walking club members nod their heads in appreciation and walk on determined to conquer the hills and spread a sense of community to everyone they pass.



“Since BRIDGE started the activities, I can say ‘hi’ to my neighbors. Even though there’s a language barrier, we can still communicate in other ways.”



HOW DO WE KNOW IF TICB IS WORKING?

TICB requires community development staff to deploy intentional strategies and make decisions that are consistent with underlying principles in a way that will meet the ongoing needs of a community. Knowing where to begin depends on knowing what the community’s greatest needs are and where you can have the greatest impact. Here, we propose a set of community indicators that can be used to assess the need for TICB and measure community changes over time via stakeholder conversations.^{xxii} The indicators of a community’s strengths are based on understanding the conditions of trauma and reversing the conditions that pose the greatest challenges to traditional community building. This information is summarized below.

Stakeholder Conversations

We recognize that many people and organizations are already deeply embedded in and know a great deal about the community conditions where they work. However, we recommend conducting key informant conversations with a variety of community residents and stakeholders to develop a full understanding of each community indicator. Ideally, key informant conversations should be conducted by individuals with some familiarity with the community. They are likely to ask the most meaningful follow-up questions and obtain the most useful information. It is important to engage with both managers and site staff of service organizations, local leaders and residents to get a full picture of the community. The Appendix includes questions that can be used, along with a rubric for identifying areas of community strength and areas where TICB is required.

Indicators of Community Strengths

TABLE 2

INDICATORS OF COMMUNITY STRENGTHS	HOW TO IDENTIFY
<p>Community leadership and empowerment</p> <p>There are formal and informal leaders in the community that take initiative to accomplish goals or address problems.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A variety of community-led events, activities or meetings occur. • Community members speak up about unsatisfactory community conditions. • Community members from different socio economic groups are represented in decision making bodies • Community members can organize and mobilize support for change
<p>Network of responsive and high quality services</p> <p>A comprehensive network of high quality services that meets the needs of the community, is accessible and understands the conditions of trauma.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social service providers/agencies operate from a trauma informed perspective. • Organizations are responsive to community needs. • Residents are satisfied with the services. • Community members trust and feel respected by service providers. • Service providers collaborate to better meet the needs of residents.

(CONTINUED)

INDICATORS OF COMMUNITY STRENGTHS	HOW TO IDENTIFY
<p>Self-efficacy and coping skills</p> <p>Community members continue to be resilient in the face of daily stresses and adversity. They leverage their abilities to solve problems and actively solve difficult tasks.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community members feel in control of their lives. • Community members believe they have a say in how to improve their community. • Community members believe they can achieve most of the goals they have set for themselves. • Community members stand up for what they believe. • Community members feel good about the future. • Community members avoid things that are dangerous or unhealthy.
<p>Personal support systems</p> <p>Community members have friends, family members, and institutions they can rely on.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community members report having friends or family members they can rely on in times of stress or adversity. • Community members can access concrete support and services to meet their needs.
<p>Social cohesion</p> <p>Community members feel a sense of belonging to their community; they trust one another and express commitment to their community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community members are very willing to help each other out. • Community members would be sorry if they had to move away from the community. • Community members have a lot in common with one another. • Community members generally trust their neighbors to look out for their property. • Community members like living in the community. • Community members are good friends with many people in the community. • Community members treat one another with respect.
<p>Vision for the future and hopefulness</p> <p>The community holds a shared consistent vision for their future that includes realistic and tangible goals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community members can articulate a vision for the community in their own words. • There is a sense of hopefulness and optimism about the future. • There are concrete goals for the future that are realistic and tangible and are shared by residents, service providers, and other stakeholders.

(CONTINUED)

INDICATORS OF COMMUNITY STRENGTHS	HOW TO IDENTIFY
<p>Stable and reliable environments</p> <p>Community members can trust and rely on one another, organizations, and institutions in the community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community members can trust organizations to meet their needs.• Community members feel that organizations and systems (such as schools, school districts, health care, and social services) are reliable and consistently meet their needs.• Community organizations and institutions are familiar with conditions of trauma and the needs of the community.
<p>Racially and socioeconomically integrated environment</p> <p>All community members feel welcome in the community activities, events, and spaces and interact with individuals of different racial and socioeconomic backgrounds.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community events and community building activities are attended by all community members, and data are gathered and disaggregated by race and socioeconomic level.• Community members have relationships with other community members of different races and socioeconomic backgrounds.• Community spaces are used by all community members and usage data is gathered and disaggregated by race and socioeconomic level.
<p>Trust of institutions</p> <p>Community members trust that institutions have their best interest at heart, that systems are capable of meeting their needs, and that they have influence on the outcomes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community members seek out assistance from community institutions and service providers.• Community institutions are adaptable and accommodating to the community's needs.
<p>Personal and community pride</p> <p>Community members are proud to belong to the community, and there are positive and shared community norms that people can point to across socioeconomic and racial groups.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community members from all socioeconomic and racial groups express pride when asked about their community.• Community members from all socioeconomic and racial groups can identify strengths of the community.



“The garden makes me feel relaxed and happy. You see everybody here together, all united.”

TICB IN ACTION: POTRERO GARDENING

Texas Street Farm and the Family Resource Center Garden, what was once a rocky and trash-filled hillside, is now a pocket of peace and tranquility in the middle of Potrero public housing. On a windy but sunny Saturday, about 20 gardeners sit underneath the shade of the gazebo and listen intently as Steve, the garden manager, teaches a class on mulch. “Who knows the difference between straw and hay?” he asks. A few people shout out responses. He replies, “Hay is used to feed animals because it has nutrients contained in the seeds. Straw is stripped of seeds. You do not want to use hay in your mulch because you want to avoid having those seeds grow in your garden.” Heads nod with understanding and agreement. To the side, translators interpret Steve’s lessons so that all participants can follow. Steve wraps up the lesson and puts people to work. Each person grabs a bucket, goes to the five-foot tall pile of mulch, and fills their bucket. They walk over to the hillside filled with fruit trees (apple and fig), herbs such as lemon verbena, and collard greens. They carefully spread the mulch, which will enrich and insulate the soil. Gary, who was a farmer back in China, enjoys seeing all the plants; it makes him happy. When he passes by the garden, he says he feels pleased because he has a part in planting the garden and beautifying the neighborhood.

The garden is a beloved place for many. Angelica, mother of three, says, “I like to help out. I like to have fresh vegetables and fruits. When we have the kids’ class, my son loves to come plant. My niece comes too.” Another gardener, Rosa, is watering the planter boxes as she gazes out at the breathtaking view of the bay. “When I’m in the garden, I don’t have stress. I don’t think about my problems,” she reflects.



Common Misunderstandings, Lessons Learned & Ongoing Challenges

Working in a community that has experienced and continues to experience trauma poses a variety of challenges to traditional community building efforts. The TICB model attempts to address these challenges; however, we know that the work is never easy and the model is not perfect. Below are some of the common misunderstandings of the model, lessons learned from the field, and ongoing challenges that community building staff faces on the ground:

Common Misunderstandings:

- TICB is not a series of trauma informed programs and services. It sets the foundation so that residents are prepared to engage in programs and services and ensures the program and services are prepared to meet residents' needs.
- TICB does not prescribe specific activities. The overall approach—the underlying principles and the intentional strategies—are more important.
- Trauma is not static. Because residents continue to experience individual and community trauma, community building efforts must accept this as part of the conditions of working in the community.

Lessons Learned

- Activities should include mindfulness exercises: Community trauma impacts relationships between and among residents; and interpersonal conflicts can escalate, impacting the ability for community building and positive social cohesion. Integrating mindfulness exercises into the activities can help de-escalate some of the conflicts.
- Avoid centralizing leadership: The perception of concentrated power and authority can trigger interpersonal conflicts among residents, so casting a wide leadership net is important.
- Keep things fresh: Residents get tired of the activities over time if there is not sufficient variety, and activity fatigue can distort the intention of the incentives (they become extrinsic rewards vs. a validation of intrinsic rewards). Balance the predictability and consistency of the activities with keeping things fresh and new.

Ongoing Challenges

- Carving out the space and building community trust to serve as a recognized community backbone are the hardest strategies to accomplish and are ongoing processes.
- Creating program and service partnerships requires a spirit of collaboration; yet, given scarce resources and historical “turf”, some community stakeholders resist working with others.
- Funding for community building is a struggle. Most foundations are excited by the framework and approach, but it doesn't fit into a traditional service/funding model.
- Both sustaining community leadership and growing new leaders are difficult and require ongoing staff time and investment.
- Staff burn-out and vicarious trauma can significantly impact staff's capacity to continue the work.

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

When BRIDGE began its Trauma Informed Community Building work, we set out to engage residents who had previously not been involved in the Rebuild Potrero community development process. Through simple, consistent, and easily accessible activities, we created predictable ways for residents to have fun, model healthy behaviors, and engage with each other and outside stakeholders. These activities, including walking clubs, Zumba, garden workdays, cooking workshops, and a monthly Community Building Group, are examples of activities that model TICB's underlying principles and intentional strategies. As a result of participating in TICB activities, Potrero public housing residents have shared anecdotes of improved health outcomes, greater feelings of happiness and relaxation, and a greater sense of safety, all of which help promote social cohesion and connectedness among residents.^{xxiii} Additionally, community building fosters relationships and meaningful connections.^{xxiv}

By engaging more than 650 Potrero residents over 8,000 times through TICB activities in 2016 alone, BRIDGE has helped ensure that more residents are ready to engage in traditional community building activities and are inspired to become active community members in the community development process. The TICB model also ensures that the community is better equipped to sustain the holistic community development initiative that is under way by coordinating high-quality service providers that are trauma informed and resident-centered and creating a means for outside institutions and funders to better understand the needs of the community.

Another major outcome has included breaking down the barriers between public housing residents and the wealthier neighbors from the surrounding neighborhood.^{xxv} As one resident put it, "It's relaxing and therapeutic to meet and be around people of different cultures. It's now a rainbow of people." Creating an environment that fosters racial and socioeconomic integration is critical for the long-term success of a truly mixed income community. And finally, building a foundation for social cohesion, community pride, and community empowerment combats the impacts of community trauma by leveraging resiliency and coping skills and further developing the community's ability to drive and sustain community change.

BRIDGE understands that the TICB model will continue to evolve over time based on experiences on the ground, new information in the community development field, and the changing needs of the community. It is particularly important that we consider how the model will adjust over the course of the Rebuild Potrero project from the predevelopment stage through construction, and ultimately, in operations. TICB's underlying principles and holistic set of intentional strategies are designed to put the community at the center of all decisions, processes, and actions. We hope that elevating the community's voices and needs throughout the community development process will ensure a successful transformation of the built environment which will also lead to a sense of belonging, ownership, and sustained improvements to social and economic outcomes for current public housing residents.

APPENDIX

TICB Community Assessment Framework

In our experience, community conditions are best identified via a combination of key informant conversations and on-the-ground observations of the community development team. It is very important that you adapt the questions to your community, this framework is intended as a guide rather than a standardized battery. This tool is evolving, and we encourage you to expand on questions in ways that are meaningful to your community and welcome your suggestions and feedback to strengthen the framework.

Choosing key informants

Key informants are people who are knowledgeable about the community. You should strive for a mix of people who have lived and worked in the community for varied amounts of time. We generally find that between eight and twelve conversations are required to get a good sense of the community, but this can vary depending on the community's history and current context.

Keep in mind that not all informants will have the same depth of experience and comfort with each TICB domain; it is more important to capture depth of experience and knowledge within any one conversation than to try to cover all domains. The full complement of conversations will help you get the breadth you need. You may want to start with a short list of people and ask them who else you should talk to at the end of your conversation, an approach researchers call “snowball sampling.”

INDICATORS OF COMMUNITY STRENGTHS	HOW TO IDENTIFY	WHAT TO LOOK FOR/ ASK ABOUT
<p>Community leadership and empowerment There are formal and informal leaders in the community that take initiative to accomplish goals or address problems.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A variety of community-led events, activities, or meetings occur. • Community members speak up about unsatisfactory community conditions. • Community members from different socioeconomic groups are represented in decision-making bodies. • Community members can organize and mobilize support for change. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell me about the types of events, activities, and meetings that happen here. Who plans/leads them? Who joins in? Who doesn't? Why do you think that is the case? • Share a time that people in the community spoke up about something that they wanted to change here. What happened as a result? • Share a time when people in this community worked together to make something change. Is this how things usually are in the community? Why or why not?
<p>Network of responsive and high-quality services A comprehensive network of high-quality services that meets the needs of the community, is accessible, and addresses the conditions of trauma.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social service providers/agencies operate from a trauma informed perspective. • Organizations are responsive to community needs. • Residents are satisfied with the services. • Community members trust and feel respected by service providers. • Service providers collaborate to better meet the needs of residents. • Services are clear and efficient and meet the needs of residents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What agencies and organizations do people in this community trust to provide them with support when they need it? Why are they trustworthy? Are there any organizations that people don't trust? Why do you think that is the case? • What keeps people from asking for help when they need it and want it? How do organizations show the community they understand their struggles and dreams? Can the organizations in this community meet the community's needs? How so? Why not?

INDICATORS OF COMMUNITY STRENGTHS	HOW TO IDENTIFY	WHAT TO LOOK FOR/ ASK ABOUT
<p>Network of responsive and high-quality services (cont'd)</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How well do different agencies and organizations work together to meet this community' needs? Can you think of a time when you saw two or more organizations work together to get something done? What did that look like?
<p>Self-efficacy and coping skills Community members continue to be resilient in the face of daily stresses and adversity. They leverage their abilities to solve problems and actively solve difficult tasks.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community members feel in control of their lives. • Community members believe they have a say in how to improve their community. • Community members believe they are able to achieve most of the goals they have set for myself. • Community members stand up for what they believe. • Community members feel good about the future. • Community members avoid things that are dangerous or unhealthy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are your hopes and dreams? What goals do you have for yourself? Do you believe you have what you need in the community to achieve them? Why or why not? • What are some of the hopes, dreams, and goals people in the community have for themselves? Do they believe they can achieve them? Why or why not? • Tell me about a time that someone in this community stood up for something they believed in. Did others support them? How so or how not? Why do you think that happened? • How well do most people in this community take care of themselves? Do they avoid things that can harm them or considered risky/unhealthy/dangerous? Why or why not?
<p>Personal support systems Community members have friends, family members, and institutions they can rely on.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community members report having friends or family members they can rely on in times of stress or adversity. • Community members can access concrete support and services to meet their needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share a time when someone was going through a tough time in this community. How did their friends, family, and the community support them? • Is this experience typical? What are ways that members of the community show support? What are ways that they don't?
<p>Social cohesion Community members feel a sense of belonging to their community; they trust one another and express commitment to their community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community members are very willing to help each other out. • Community members would be sorry if they had to move away from the community. • Community members have a lot in common with one another. • Community members generally trust their neighbors to look out for their property. • Community members like living in the community. • Community members have good friends with many people in the community. • Community members treat one another with respect. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share a time when someone was going through a tough time in this community. How did their friends, family, and the community support them? • Is this experience typical? What are ways that members of the community show support? What are ways that they don't?

INDICATORS OF COMMUNITY STRENGTHS	HOW TO IDENTIFY	WHAT TO LOOK FOR/ ASK ABOUT
<p>Vision for the future and hopefulness The community holds a shared consistent vision for their future that includes realistic and tangible goals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community members can articulate a vision for the community in their own words. • There is a sense of hopefulness and optimism about the future. • There are concrete goals for the future that are realistic and tangible and shared by residents, service providers, and other stakeholders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are your hopes and dreams for this community? Do you think the community can achieve them and if so, how? • How can the community achieve their goals? • What hopes and dreams do others have for this community? Does this community believe it can achieve them? Why or why not?
<p>Stable and reliable environments Community members can trust and rely on one another, organizations, and institutions in the community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community members can trust organizations to meet their needs. • Community members feel that organizations and systems (such as schools, school districts, health care, and social services) are reliable and consistently meet their needs. • Community organizations and institutions are familiar with conditions of trauma and the needs of the community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communities are made up of many people and organizations. Tell me about the organizations that people in this community go to when they need something. What organizations can people in this community really count on? Why do people trust these organizations more than others? • What do organizations serving this community need to understand about this community? Do most of them know and understand these things? Why or why not? • What does it mean for an organization to serve this community?
<p>Racially and socioeconomically integrated environment All community members feel welcome in the community activities, events, and spaces and interact with individuals of different racial and socioeconomic backgrounds.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community events and community building activities are attended by all community members and data are gathered and disaggregated by race and socioeconomic level. • Community members have relationships with other community members of different races and socioeconomic backgrounds. • Community spaces are used by all community members and usage data are gathered and disaggregated by race and socioeconomic level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell me about the last community event that was held here. What was it like? Who organized it and planned it? Was it open to everyone? Who showed up and who didn't? Why do you think some people showed up and others didn't? • Can you tell me more about the people in your community? Who would you consider to be part of your community? Who is not part of your community? Why? • What traditions or events are important to your community? Who attends these traditions/events? Who participates? Who leads? • How would you describe your relationships with community members of different races and socioeconomic backgrounds? How do others in your community get along with people of different racial and socioeconomic backgrounds? • Given this is a diverse, mixed-income community, you may have noticed differences or similarities

INDICATORS OF COMMUNITY STRENGTHS	HOW TO IDENTIFY	WHAT TO LOOK FOR/ ASK ABOUT
Racially and socioeconomically integrated environment (cont'd)		among people here. For example, there are people with higher or lower incomes, people of different races, people who are renting and those who are owners, people with kids and without—and there may be other differences you’ve noticed. Do differences seem to matter when it comes to who you interact with? Why? Of the residents that are different from you, who do you interact with? ^{xxi}
Trust of Institutions Community members trust that institutions have their best interest at heart, that systems are capable of meeting their needs, and that they have influence on the outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community members seek out assistance from community institutions and service providers. • Community institutions are adaptable and accommodating to the community’s needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imagine someone in this community needed something. Who would they go to first? Why? Who wouldn’t they go to? Why? • How much do organizations ask the community what they need? Can you think of a time that happened? How did services or programs change as a result?
Personal and community pride Community members are proud to belong to the community, and there are positive and shared community norms that people can point to across socioeconomic and racial groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community members from all socioeconomic and racial groups express pride when asked about their community. • Community members from all socioeconomic and racial groups can identify strengths of the community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What name or words do people use to describe their community? Are people proud to be “from here”? If not proud, why? How do you know? • What are ways that people show that they are proud to be from here? • What is this community known for? What are you most proud of? Why? What are other things that people are proud of about this community?

Synthesizing Information

It is important to come together to synthesize what you are learning about the community through conversations and observation. Talk through what you’re seeing and hearing and identify themes. You may find it useful to determine where the community “is” on each of the TICB dimensions to help you prioritize areas of readiness. We offer one scale that you could adapt to meet the needs of your community. Keep in mind that the “score” is not an outcome, but rather a tool to help the community identify areas of strength and areas to prioritize during TICB activities.

Assessment Rubric

RATING	DESCRIPTION
4. Community strength	This dimension is uniformly strong; we see evidence when in the community and there is nearly unanimous agreement about this among informants.
3. Developing	This dimension shows up in many contexts but not all. There is lack of consensus among different information sources
2. Emerging	This dimension shows up in some limited contexts and/or from the perspective of some (but not many) informants. Observations of the dimension are rare.
1. Clear need	This dimension is uniformly in need of strengthening; we see evidence when in the community and there is nearly unanimous agreement about this among informants.
0. Unable to rate	Based on current information, the team is unable to rate the community in this dimension.

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- vi. Note: In 2015, the average income was \$16,557, demonstrating an 18% increase since 2012 (Source: SFHA). Also since 2012, the employment rate has increased to approximately 45% in 2016 (Source: BRIDGE 2016 Household Survey).
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- xxii. Note: We prefer calling these "conversations" rather than "interviews" which connotes a more rigid adherence to a standard protocol or questions
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NOTES:

