

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEFINITIONS – CONSENSUS DEFINITION

What is a Detroit Community Development Organization?

Community Development Organizations are known as CDOs in Detroit, to distinguish them from “Citizens District Councils” (CDCs) which are HUD-enabled and city-appointed councils that were set up in HUD-funded urban renewal neighborhoods. A Community Development Organization (CDO) is a professional not-for-profit tax exempt organization, and the key facilitator of community development work in any given neighborhood. A CDO is a professional place-based organization accountable to local stakeholders who comprise the majority of the Board of Directors. A CDO is not focused on the entire City of Detroit, nor on direct human service delivery. A CDO is not a volunteer grass-roots organization nor a real estate development organization. Rather, a ***CDO is distinguished from other organizations by its role as the “glue” in a neighborhood***, a trusted neighborhood institution that creates strong relationships with residents and other stakeholders and knows their priorities and needs. This assures that the CDOs work can be impactful, and that economic development and services within the neighborhood are provided in an equitable way that responds to resident’s priorities.

At a minimum a CDO can be recognized as such by one unique baseline role that its plays within its targeted neighborhood:

Facilitator/Convener/Collaboration Agent - to bring cross-sector stakeholders - especially residents and including other neighborhood partners - together in the CDOs defined community for problem-solving, education on issues affecting the neighborhood, planning and to influence human service provision; and to act as an intermediary between residents and various philanthropic/government/institutional/corporate investors.

In addition to these roles, a CDO is vigilant in assuring – either directly or indirectly – that ***four key community development functions*** are in play in every neighborhood:

1. Resident Engagement and Empowerment

such that the priorities, plans and activities in the neighborhood reflect the priorities of neighborhood residents; that grass organizations within the target community have a decision-making voice in the neighborhood; that resident’s priorities are advocated to the public and private sectors; that residents are being fully educated and informed on relevant issues; and local organizations are actively developing resident leadership

2. Economic Development

based on needs and demand, and using an equitable development approach, including housing development/repair/rehab; commercial corridor development; business and/or entrepreneur development; vacant land reclamation and open space development; blight remediation and clean-up; recreational space development or other physical revitalization

3. Resident Support

to nurture and develop the capabilities - employment, education and human service needs - of residents within the target community so that residents can realize their full potential

4. Community Planning and Advocacy

in partnership with residents and local stakeholders, using an analysis that looks at all aspects of community life in the target area, with residents making key planning decisions and staying engaged to help carry out and advocate the plan

What is Community Development in Detroit?

In Detroit, Community Development involves a comprehensive set of resident support and economic development strategies chosen by leaders within the neighborhood and derived from locally-driven planning that is created by residents and other local stakeholders including local businesses, human service providers and other institutions. Equally important, Community Development embraces a philosophy of resident empowerment and striving for economic/social/racial and environmental equity and sustainability. Therefore community development also supports residents in their advocacy for systemic change. Residents may choose to focus on a range of issues: influencing change in city government practices, bringing more services in a neighborhood, reduction in crime, equitable development, environmental equity, school reform or other related issues that affect the life of a neighborhood.

In any given neighborhood, Community Development can be ***recognized primarily by the five Community Development functions described above (Facilitation/Collaboration among Residents and other Stakeholders, Resident Engagement and Empowerment, Economic Development, Resident Support and Community Planning/Advocacy).***

Other community development strategies can include:

- Youth and/or Senior Programming and Engagement
- Community Health initiatives including food access and exercise, primary care access, or other health-related work
- Local business support, business development and business organizing and the integration of local entrepreneurs into the community
- Workforce development including job training and job placement services
- Education – through advocacy for quality public education, early childhood education or other education strategies
- Programs that celebrate local culture, including public art

In addition to CDOs, Grass Roots Organizations (GROs) and Other Neighborhood Improvement Organizations (ONIOs) are equally important to successful community development. These are often (but not always) volunteer organizations – typically block clubs, neighborhood associations, business association or school organizations, but also youth-focused programs, art organizations and others – that focus on small geographic areas or services within a CDO target area. GROs and ONIOs serve as the voice of the community.

In short, community development is the work of building neighborhoods. Community development brings opportunity and services to bear on behalf of residents in a target neighborhood; it is facilitated through community development organizations partnering with residents and other neighborhood, business and institutional stakeholders; embraces resident empowerment and social-economic- racial-environmental equity and sustainability; and focuses on the holistic integration of planning, community education, advocacy, resident development and economic development in a defined neighborhood.