CRACKING THE CODE:
Meaningful Communication and Engagement for Strategic Code Enforcement
CITIES RISE OVERVIEW

Community Input + Data Analysis + Leadership + Innovation = Efficient, Effective, Tangible Solutions for Cities
ENGAGING RESIDENTS AROUND CODE ENFORCEMENT

Hester Street
CODE ENFORCEMENT HAS THE POWER TO:

- Restore distressed properties
- Strengthen community power
- Protect low-income tenants & homeowners
- Slow gentrification and displacement
- Increase paths to home ownership
- Preserve neighborhoods
- Address historic injustice
- Increase neighborhood resiliency

And therefore create more equitable cities!!!
CURRENTLY, CODE ENFORCEMENT DISPROPORTIONATELY IMPACTS LOW-INCOME COMMUNITIES OF COLOR

- Vacancy reduces property values and increases crime
- Fear of eviction and immigration detention prevents contact with city enforcement
- People of color receive more violations in gentrifying neighborhoods
- Housing voucher recipients are placed in low quality housing
- Low income homeowners cannot afford to address code violations increasing foreclosure rates
REFRAME CODE ENFORCEMENT:

FROM REACTIVE AND PUNITIVE TO PROACTIVE AND COMMUNITY CENTRIC:

- CODE ENFORCEMENT WITHIN CITY GOVERNMENT
- CODE ENFORCEMENT AND COMMUNITY
- INSTITUTIONALIZING EQUITABLE OPERATING PROCEDURES
ANALYZING EXISTING CITY & COMMUNITY INTERACTIONS

EQUITY CHOICE POINTS, PERSISTENT PROBLEMS & PRIORITY POPULATIONS
# The Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stance Toward Community</th>
<th>Ignore</th>
<th>Inform</th>
<th>Consult</th>
<th>Involve</th>
<th>Collaborate</th>
<th>Defer To</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Impact</td>
<td>Marginalization</td>
<td>Placation</td>
<td>Tokenization</td>
<td>Voice</td>
<td>Delegated Power</td>
<td>Community Ownership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Message to Community</td>
<td>Your voice, needs &amp; interest do not matter</td>
<td>We will keep you informed</td>
<td>We care what you think</td>
<td>You are making as think (and therefore act) differently about the issue</td>
<td>Your leadership and expertise are critical to how we address the issue</td>
<td>It is time to unlock collective power and capacity for transformative solutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>Closes door meetings, Misinformation</td>
<td>Fact Sheets, Open Houses, Presentations</td>
<td>Public Comment, Focus Groups, Surveys</td>
<td>Community &amp; organizing advocacy, Interactive Workshops</td>
<td>MOUs with Community based organizations, Citizen advisory Committees</td>
<td>Community-driven planning, Consensus building, Participatory Actions Research, Participatory budgeting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The Movement Center
WHAT WE DID

SUPPORTED 10 CITIES IN DESIGNING THEIR OWN ENGAGEMENT PROCESSES:

65+ Local Partners

100+ Community Events

85% Community Re-Grants

8 Languages

TO INFORM INNOVATIVE & EQUITABLE PROGRAMS & PROCESSES
BUILD CAPACITY FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

INCREASE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT, GATHER MEANINGFUL DATA, AND INFORM MORE EQUITABLE AND EFFECTIVE POLICY AND PRACTICE

Community Engagement Guide

Public education brochure

Engagement tools
TOOLS & TACTICS TO REACH VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES

• CREATE USER FRIENDLY MATERIALS
• PARTNER WITH TRUSTED LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS
• GO TO WHERE PEOPLE ARE AT
• LEVERAGE EVENTS TO PROVIDE INFORMATION & RESOURCES
• CREATE INCLUSIVE SPACES: TRANSLATION, FOOD, CHILDCARE & TRUSTED LEADERS
• ESTABLISH A FEEDBACK LOOP TO BUILD TRUST & COMMUNICATION
SPOTLIGHT: ROCHESTER, NY

- Partnership with 3 local refugee organizations
- Small meetings with trusted local interpreters (5 languages)
- Sensitive to cultural norms
- Connect residents to city resources
- Established ongoing dialogue
SPOTLIGHT: ELMIRA, NY

- SMALL CITY, SMALL TEAM, BIG IDEAS

- BUILDING TRUST WITH COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

- LEVERAGE UNTAPPED PARTNERSHIPS TO REACH VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

- BROAD & DEEP ENGAGEMENT:
  - TABLING AT COMMUNITY EVENTS
  - FOCUS GROUPS
  - HOME REPAIR AND CLEAN UP DAYS
SPOTLIGHT: ALBANY, NY

• REACHING DIFFERENT RESIDENTS THROUGH SURVEYS, TABLING AND FOCUS GROUPS

• SALIENT ISSUES:
  • VACANT LOTS
  • LANDLORD - TENANT RELATIONSHIPS

• OPPORTUNITIES:
  • VACANTS TO OWNERSHIP
  • EDUCATION + TRAINING FOR PROPERTY OWNERS
STRATEGIES YOU CAN IMPLEMENT TOMORROW

• MAKE CODE ENFORCEMENT MATERIALS ACCESSIBLE & USER FRIENDLY

• IDENTIFY EXISTING OPPORTUNITIES TO ENGAGE VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES

• BUILD OR DEEPEN PARTNERSHIPS WITH LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS

• CREATE A MICRO-GRANTS PROGRAM TO DEEPEN COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

TO DOWNLOAD OUR TOOLS AND TACTICS FOR ENGAGING COMMUNITIES:
HESTERSTREET.ORG/PUBLICATIONS
USING DATA TO PROMOTE EQUITY AND EFFECTIVENESS

Tolemi
WHAT CHALLENGES CAN DATA HELP SOLVE?
WHAT CHALLENGES CAN DATA HELP SOLVE?

- Assumptions & anecdotes
- Lack of resources
- Reactive
- Siloed
ANECDOTES & ASSUMPTIONS

“Our vacant lots are a hot spot for crime”
“Most of the landlords in our worst neighborhoods are out-of-town”
48 eligible vacant lots for mow-to-own program
- Owner occupied
- Residential
- No back taxes owed
- No code violations in last three years
- Within 50 feet of eligible lots

64 validated owners for mow-to-own pilot
“We don’t have enough people to take on any more inspections”

“Sometimes it feels like we’re playing whack-a-mole”
10,816 residential rental properties
1,556
with at least one
code violation in
last 36 months
with at least two criminal offenses in last 36 months
“If we could get to some of these properties before they reach critical condition, we might actually be able to prevent issues”
REACTIVE & RESPONSIVE - PROACTIVE & STRATEGIC

119 recorded vacant properties
REACTIVE & RESPONSIVE  PROACTIVE & STRATEGIC

Police    Fire    Codes    Utilities    Tax    Assessor
Police

“squatters, pried open boarded window”
Fire

“hot plate fire, electrical ran from neighbor”
REACTIVE & RESPONSIVE — PROACTIVE & STRATEGIC

"no utility payment for 14 months"
119 recorded vacant properties
204,771 properties scored
REACTIVE & RESPONSIVE - PROACTIVE & STRATEGIC
“I just wish we could be better coordinated with the County Health and Social Services”
290 properties with high lead tests
26 in areas with high concentrations of children
594 residential properties in those areas built before 1978
129 within 50 feet of an existing lead case
HOW CITIES CAN LEVERAGE COMMUNITY INPUT AND DATA

Ash Center
HOW CITIES CAN LEVERAGE COMMUNITY INPUT AND DATA
The goal of any code enforcement program is to encourage private owners to maintain their properties.

Being strategic means understanding the city’s housing market, setting achievable goals, and using data and community perspectives to focus resources that generate the greatest impact.
1. Engage with residents
2. Tell your data story
3. Articulate a theory of change
4. Build a coalition
5. Operationalize
6. Repeat

STRATEGIC CODE ENFORCEMENT IN SIX EASY STEPS
ALBANY, NEW YORK
DATA AND COMMUNITY INSIGHTS INTO ACTION
ELMIRA, NEW YORK
DATA AND COMMUNITY INSIGHTS INTO ACTION
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