

## Community Engagement Chat: Building Support for Neighborhood Initiatives

As the conversation took its usual twists and turns, it was clear that building support for neighborhood initiatives is closely linked to neighborhood dynamics such as crime and safety, repurposing spaces, gathering public support, and funding. Here are a few takeaways and GREAT IDEAS from our January Engagement Chat:

**Connecting with Neighbors:** Participants agreed that when a neighborhood initiative begins, we have to start with residents. Best practices include canvassing the neighborhood, joining local community meetings, and conducting resident surveys to get input and buy-in. Generally speaking, if residents care about the goal, they will support the initiative.

**Connecting with Funders:** One difficult reality can be that funders do not want to support an initiative unless there is a solid neighborhood group and structure already in place. If a neighborhood group does not exist, you might have to start by offering small, low- or no-cost events to build cohesion and momentum; then focus on connecting with public and private funding sources.

**Connecting with Nonprofits:** Speaking of building cohesion, reach out to local nonprofits to see what sort of work they are currently doing in the neighborhood. Interests often overlap and opportunities to collaborate may already exist. Take that first step to make contact and identify ways to work together.

**GREAT IDEAS:** Here are a few interesting ideas that caused some eureka moments – check the links!

- **Gifting Doorbell Cameras as a Crime and Safety Strategy:** In Milwaukee, the 5 Points Neighborhood Association participated in the [Alert Neighbor Program](#) which provided surveillance cameras, lighting, and signage to help residents combat crime and increase safety. Here's a [news story](#) too.
- **Using Apps to Report Neighborhood Concerns:** Making it easy for community members to share information on zoning or code issues can prompt greater participation and subsequently increased probability that an issue will be corrected. Check out the options for reporting an issue through the [Action Center in Oklahoma City](#) (they have an app!).
- **Building Pollinator Gardens:** If you are looking for small pocket park ideas, [how about a pollinator garden?](#) Not the least on the list of benefits is that pollinator gardens can be almost any size and are easier to maintain than most types of gardens. Plus, they bring butterflies!
- **Providing a Path to Beautification, and Work:** Oklahoma City's program, [A Better Way](#), offers paid, daily work for those in need. The program achieves multiple goals: beautification and community cleanup, quick income, and connections to other programs and services for longer-term results. Click on the link to learn more.