



Lessons From Nine Cities on Cultivating a Strong Local Middle Neighborhoods Network

Moderator: Marcia Nedland

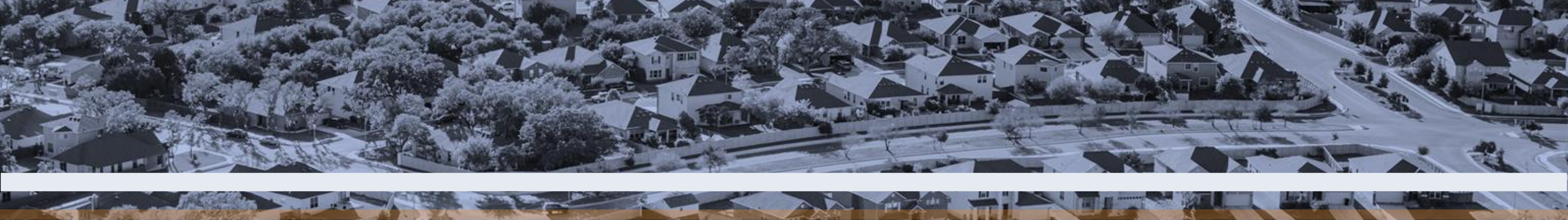
Organizer, Middle Neighborhoods Community of Practice

Middle Neighborhoods Initiative

A National Initiative focused on mobilizing attention to reverse the disappearance of middle neighborhoods through decline or gentrification. The initiative does this through:

- Community of Practice: practitioners, policy, researchers
- Research: topics relevant to middle neighborhoods
- Policy Analysis and Advocacy: housing, lending, community dev
- Communications strategies: advancing awareness

Coordinated by National Community Stabilization Trust and NeighborWorks America and advised by a Steering Committee of 20 prominent researchers, practitioners and policy makers



Characteristics of Middle Neighborhoods

- Mostly single-family homes built for families with children.
- Still well more than 50% owner-occupied, but slowly eroding.
- Housing stock is aging, still in generally acceptable condition, but often lacks features and updates to compete well for today's homebuyers.
- More racially, ethnically and economically diverse.



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Our Panelists & Agenda

Marcia Nedland

- Organizer, Middle Neighborhoods Community of Practice
- Fall Creek Consultants
- Tucson, AZ

Ann DiPetta

- Organizer, Middle Neighborhoods Community of Practice
- ADR Consulting
- Ithaca, NY



Agenda / 12:00-1:30

- Welcome and Introductions
- Themes and Possible Action Items
- Audience Discussion



What is a “Local Middle Neighborhoods Network?”



- Local leaders who share, communicate, and advocate for policy and program improvements to help stabilize and grow middle neighborhoods in their city.
- These leaders could include residents, local and state government, philanthropy, institutions, developers, real estate professionals, major employers, small businesses, and more.



Why Did We Interview These Leaders?



We observed:

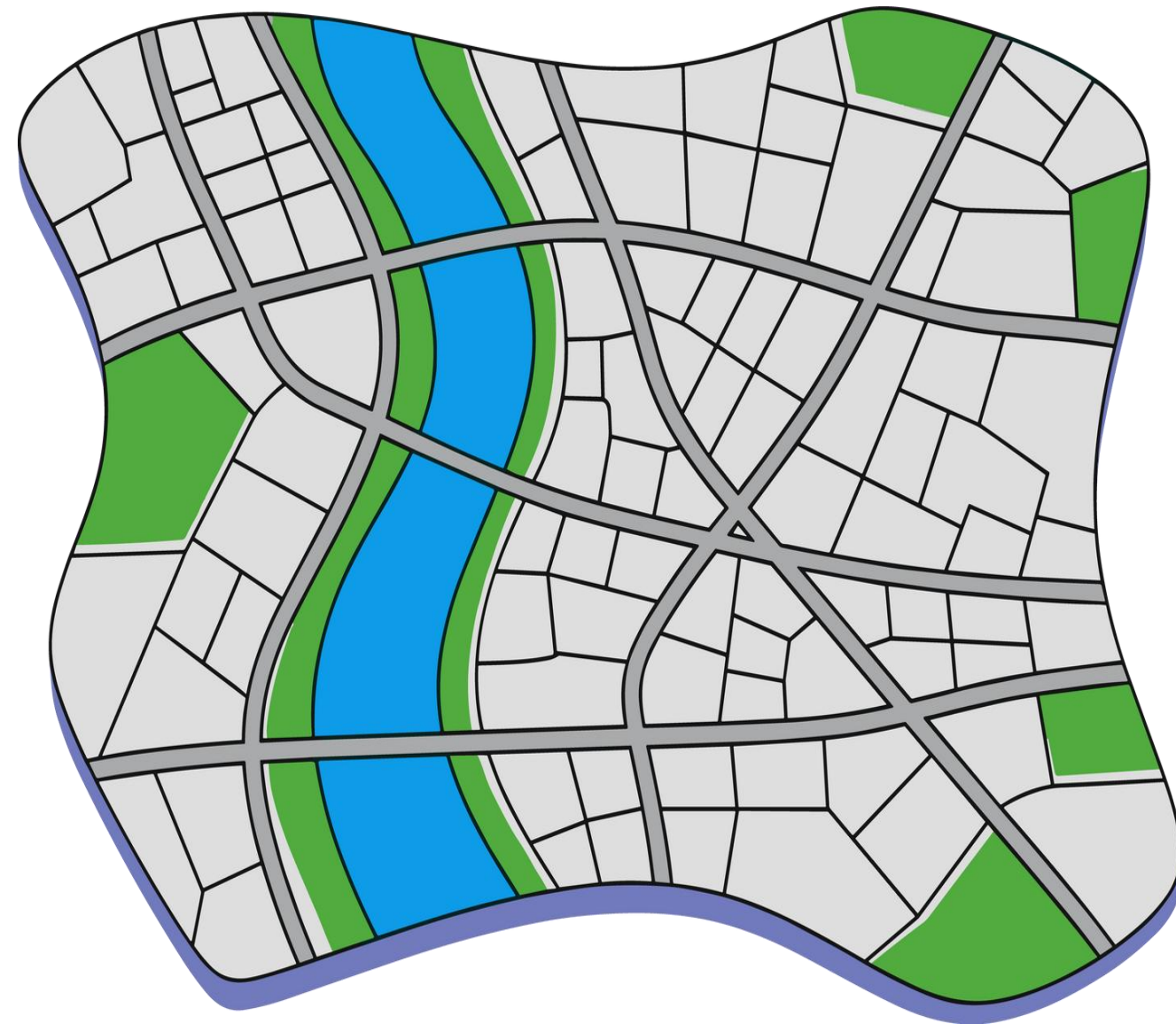
- Some cities have stronger networks – often more diverse, more organized, with a greater sense of urgency about correcting the trajectory of middle neighborhoods.
- These places tend to be better resourced to assist middle neighborhoods with supportive policies, practices, and funding.

What do those places have in common?



Where Did We Interview?

- Baltimore
- Chicago
- Cleveland
- Chattanooga
- Danville
- Des Moines
- Plano and Suburban Dallas
- Syracuse



Today

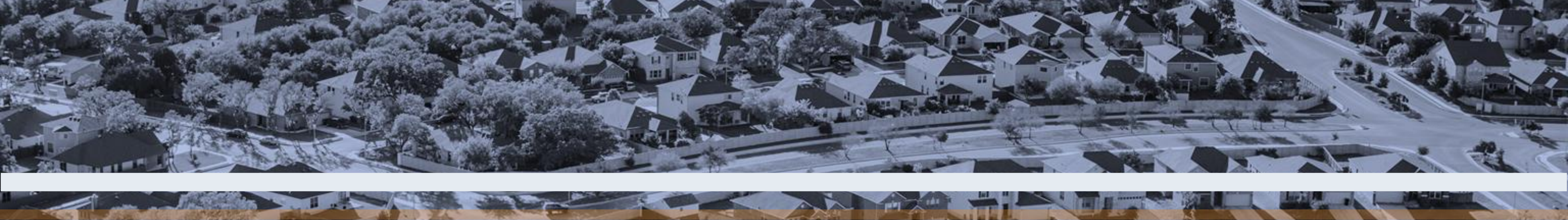


Goals for today:

- Assist local members in strengthening their middle neighborhoods – part of that is strengthening formal or informal “LMNNs”.
- Share the themes and ideas that came out of the interviews.
- Consider how themes and potential action items might inform the work that you do.

We have a space to share ideas for each theme





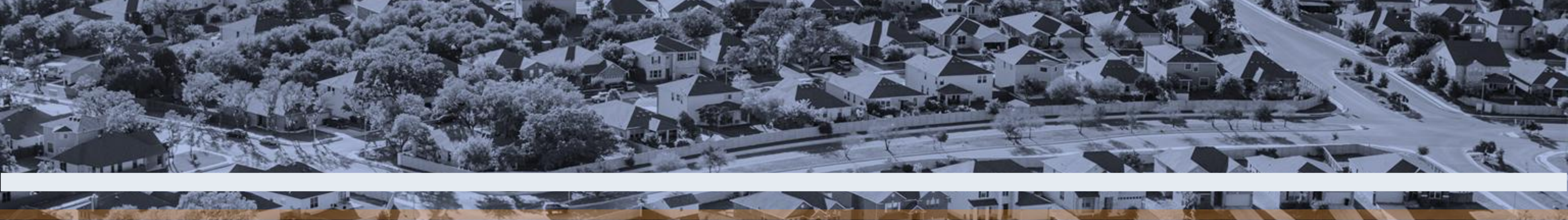
Theme 1

CHAT: What are these neighborhoods called in your community?

Local Middle Neighborhood Networks Have A Variety Of Identifiers For These Neighborhoods

- Middle Neighborhoods
- Middle Class and Near-Middle Class Neighborhoods
- Local Initiative Names – “Special Investment Districts”
- Middle Housing
- “Missing Middle” is a common conflation





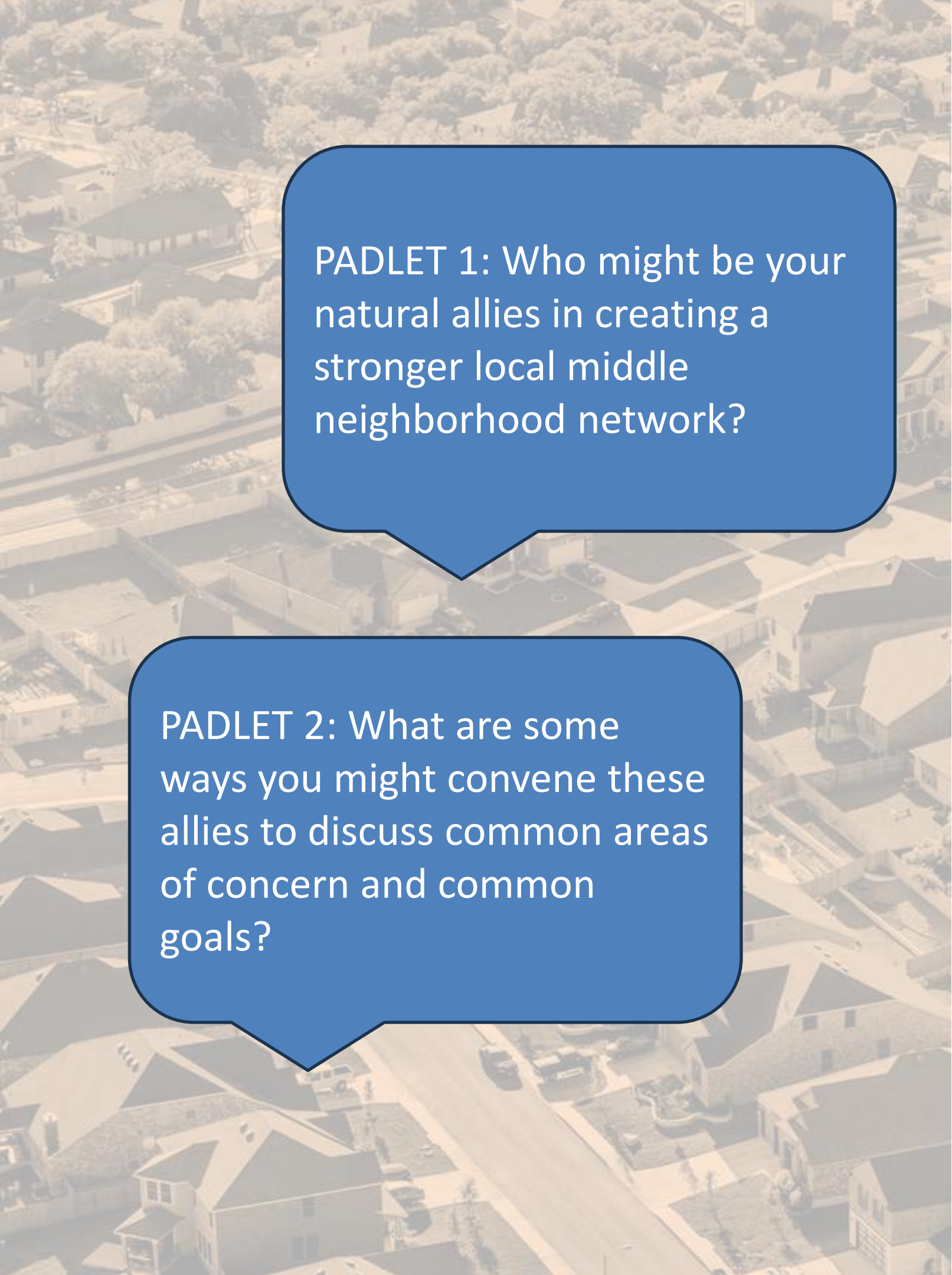
Theme 2

CHAT: What benefits do you think you could have if you had a stronger local middle neighborhood network?

Strong, Multi-Partner Local Networks Create Benefits For Middle Neighborhoods

- New and larger funding sources: Sales tax, bonds, general revenue, casinos, oil leases.
- Policy changes that benefit middles: income limits, geographies, acceptable goals (housing as econ dev).
- New partners (Realtors, developers).
- Creative ideas (fresh problem-solving vs standard HUD programs).
- Better resources from pooled demand (NERA resident training).



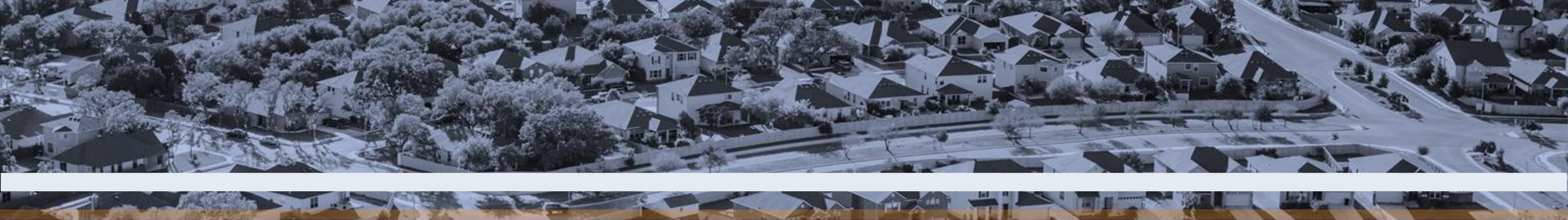


PADLET 1: Who might be your natural allies in creating a stronger local middle neighborhood network?

PADLET 2: What are some ways you might convene these allies to discuss common areas of concern and common goals?

Possible Local Action Items

- Identify natural allies.
- 1:1 conversations to surface common priorities.
- Work toward convening allies.
- Develop group goals for policy, practice, research, funding.
- Consider inviting Middle Neighborhoods to do a custom “Middle Neighborhoods 101” webinar for your local group. Follow up with a discussion about similarities between national and local characteristics and goals.



Theme 3

PADLET 3: What market trends in your community are reasons for local leaders to prioritize middle neighborhoods in strategy, policy, and funding?

Market Trends and Market Analyses Often Drew Attention to Middle Neighborhoods in These Communities

- Catastrophic downward economic trends shook complacency (collapse of industry, foreclosure crisis).
- High-profile crime revealed vulnerabilities and created urgency.
- In stronger markets, soaring housing prices and investor growth raised alarms.



An aerial photograph of a residential neighborhood with a green callout box overlaid on the left side. The callout box contains the text: "CHAT: Do you have a recent market analysis that reports on trends in middle neighborhood housing markets?".

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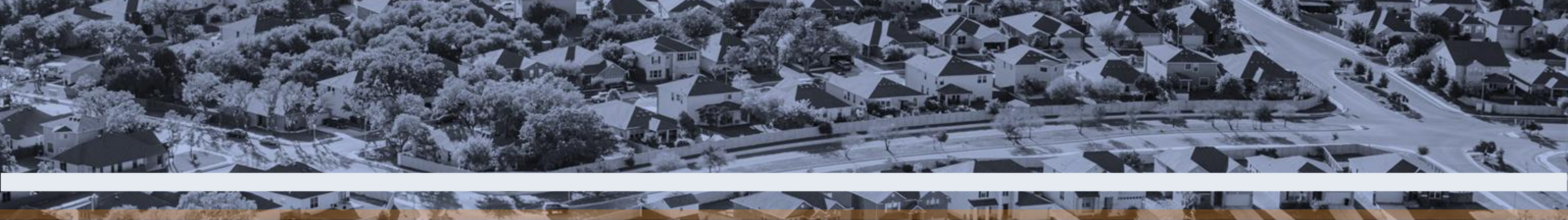
Possible Local Action Items

Surface existing concerns:

- Interview allies about perceptions of changes in the health of their city and middle neighborhoods.
- Pull together themes.
- Convene a roundtable event for discussion, research priorities, and next steps to understand the big picture.

Find or initiate a market analysis to reveal trends:

- Meet with City or County/Regional planning agencies to find existing market analyses.
- Look for connections to middle neighborhood concerns, draw them out in conversations with other stakeholders.
- Advocate for/commission market analysis update where needed.
- Become involved in policy and funding discussions on these topics, and build partnerships with others.



Theme 4

PADLET 4: How could practitioners in middle neighborhoods gain greater support from their Mayor, City Manager and/or Council?

Strong Local Government Support *and* Non-Federal Funding Sources Are Key Factors In The Highest-Capacity Networks

- Mayors, City Managers, and Council leadership make a big difference in policy and funding priorities for middle neighborhoods.
- In these cases, there appears to be an attitude of investing in middle neighborhoods as an economic development strategy for the city.
- Many of the high-capacity organizations that anchor Local Middle Neighborhood Networks are supported by non-federal funding sources that are more flexible and in greater amounts than a typical CDBG block grant.

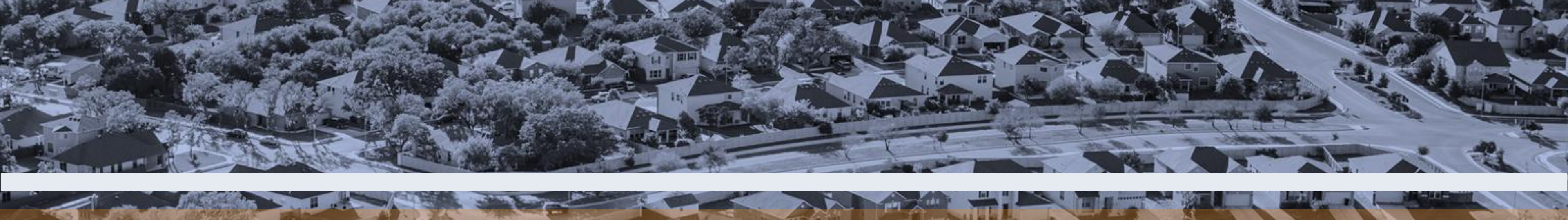
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Local Action Items

- Develop a plan for getting middle neighborhoods in front of City leadership as an economic development opportunity.
- Document the loss of middle households and the related impact on housing values and tax revenues.
- Share commitments by peer mayors and city managers to middle neighborhoods, with their economic development rationale.



Theme 5

**POLL: A. Is there currently a place-based multi-neighborhood revitalization initiative at work in your community?
B. What is it called?**

Local Place-Based Initiatives Often Choose Middle Neighborhoods As Their Focus

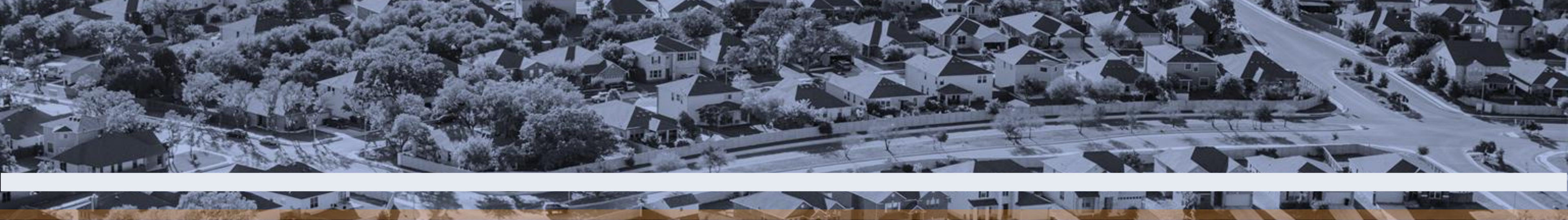
- When local government or foundations create place-based initiatives, middle neighborhoods are often selected to work from strength and have a greater chance of change with resources available.
- Detroit: Mayor's Strategic Neighborhood Fund; Chattanooga: Various foundation initiatives; Des Moines: Strategic Investment Districts; Syracuse: Asset Clusters





Local Action Items

- If you have a local place-based initiative that includes middle neighborhoods, alert its stakeholders to CoP resources.
- Request a custom Middle Neighborhoods 101 webinar for stakeholders in local place-based initiatives.
- If there are unconnected place-based initiatives in your community, try convening those working in middle neighborhoods through a roundtable event or a Middle Neighborhoods CoP webinar.



Theme 6

Regular Convening Of Partners Provides Opportunities to Identify and Advance Middle Neighborhood Priorities, Solve Problems

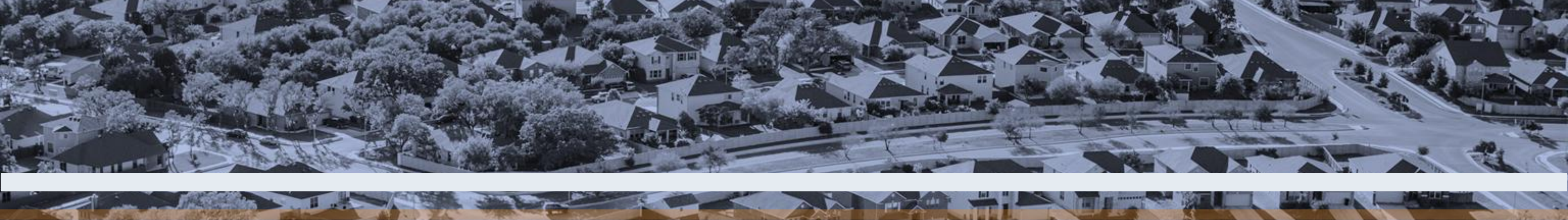
- A regular meeting schedule of partners and stakeholders is useful infrastructure that can be used to surface and discuss middle neighborhood policy and strategy issues.
- A single determined person can start by holding one-on-one meetings and collecting ideas and shared goals until there is enough to create a group around.





Local Action Items

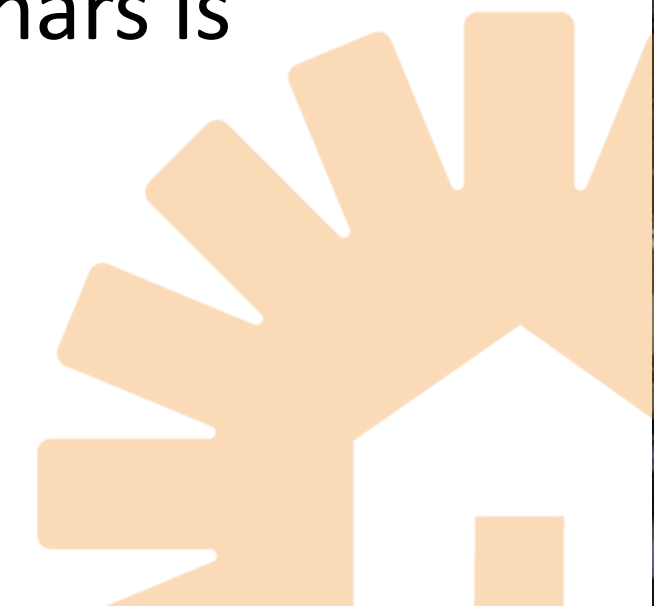
- Identify and join existing networks if they exist. When and where appropriate, introduce some middle neighborhood topics.
- If none exists, begin meeting one-on-one with stakeholders who share interests in middle neighborhoods, housing and community, or economic development in general. Work toward forming a regularly meeting network.

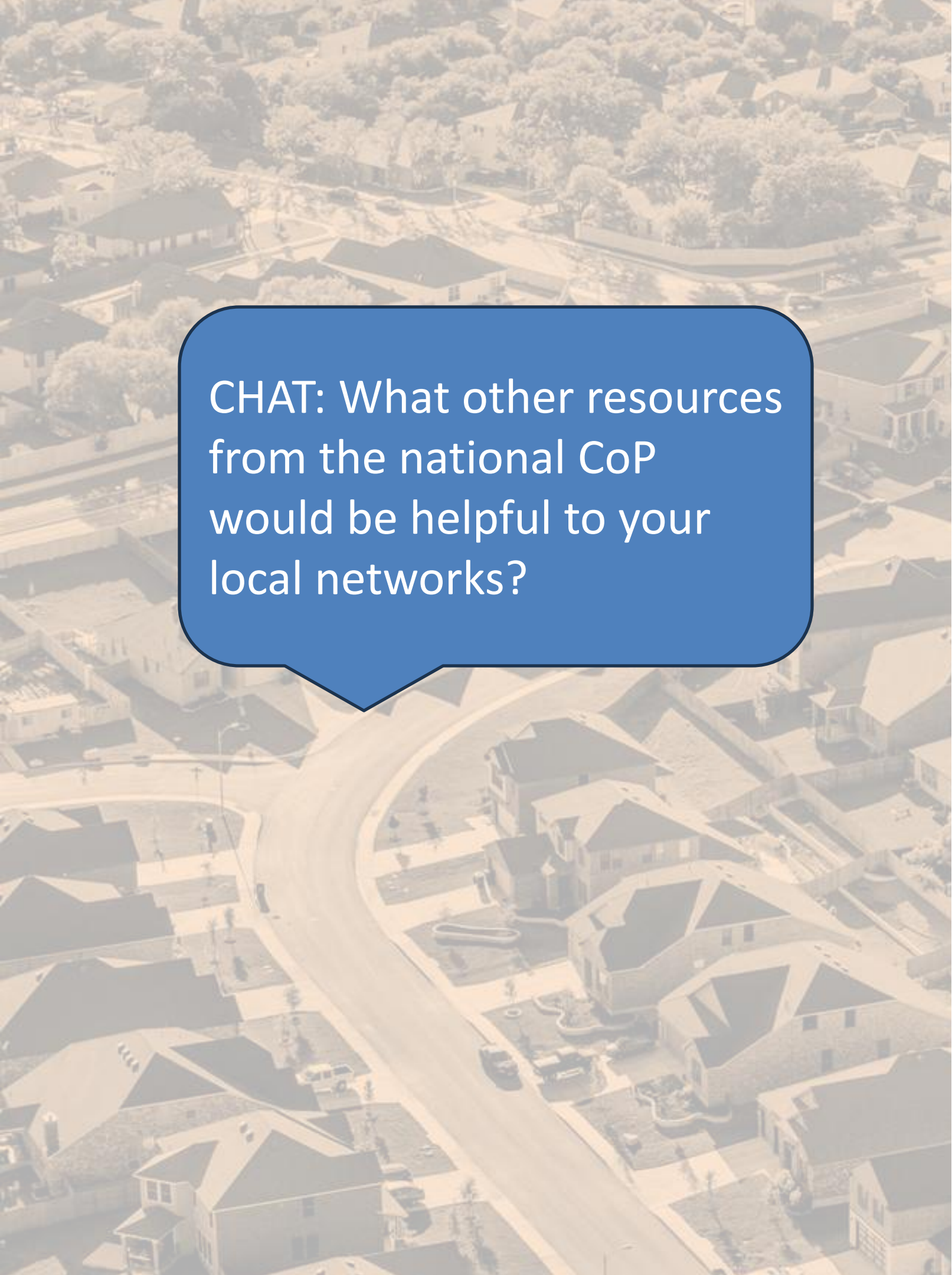


Theme 7

CoP Webinars And Other CoP Resources Are Trusted And Valuable

- Webinar topics are seen as relevant, and the practitioner's focus is appreciated.
- Curating information that is relevant to middle neighborhoods is seen as valuable.
- Exposure to Middle Neighborhoods CoP webinars is useful and impactful to local leaders.

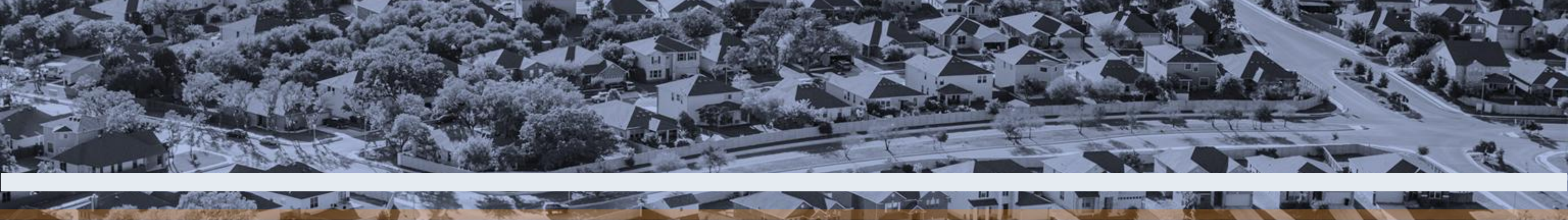




CHAT: What other resources from the national CoP would be helpful to your local networks?

Local Action Items

- Invite your partners and peers to Middle Neighborhood webinars.
- Encourage them to join the CoP to benefit from webinars and other resources.
- Request a custom 'Middle Neighborhoods 101' webinar for your local audience to initiate a conversation about middle neighborhoods.
- Complement a custom webinar with a request for a historic map series of the middle neighborhoods in your MSA.



Theme 8

PADLET 5: How could we all do a better job of raising awareness and cultivating support for middle neighborhoods at the state level?

State Advocacy And Policy Is A Gap Area For Middle Neighborhoods

- Few are engaging much at the state level.
- We have CoP member lists for each state and could potentially do more to encourage and support members in proposing sessions at statewide conferences.





Local Action Items

- Request a list of CoP members for your state and consider connecting with those in cities other than your own.
- Join forces to propose a session on middle neighborhoods at relevant state conferences such as CDCs, state chapters of the APA, National League of Cities, Government Finance Officers Association, Boards of Realtors, etc.
- Watch for national conferences held in your state and try for a session there.

DISCUSSION

1. CHAT: Are there any areas beyond these eight you would like us to assist with at the national level?
2. PADLET 6: What feels like a doable next step for you to implement to strengthen your local network?

Office Hours

We're holding office hours to help you build a strong middle neighborhood network in your community.

- Share ideas, hear ideas
- Get feedback, give feedback!

DATE: Thursday, May 14

TIME: 2:00-3:00 Eastern

REGISTER:

SCAN ME



Upcoming Webinars

Four-Part Series: Understanding the Big Picture with Alan Mallach

Co-Sponsored with Center for Community Progress!

All webinars 12-1:30 Eastern

May 12

1. Demographic Change: What it Means for Our Cities and Neighborhoods

June 9

2. Housing Deterioration and Home Repair: Why America Fails to Maintain Its Housing Stock

July 7

3. Vacancy and Reuse of Commercial Properties:

August 4

4. The Housing Affordability Crisis: Who Is Affected and Why It's Happening

In Development

Middle Neighborhoods for Planners (for CEU credit)

Mapping the Trends of Middle Neighborhoods in Your Community



Professional Development Opportunities at NeighborWorks Training Institute

August NTI: NeighborWorks Training Institute (NTI) in Miami

- High Impact Strategies for Comprehensive Community Development in Places (Course NR115) – 1 of 3 required courses for a Micro Credential
- Building Legacies: Property Inheritance and Estate Planning Strategies for Housing Professionals (Course HO233)



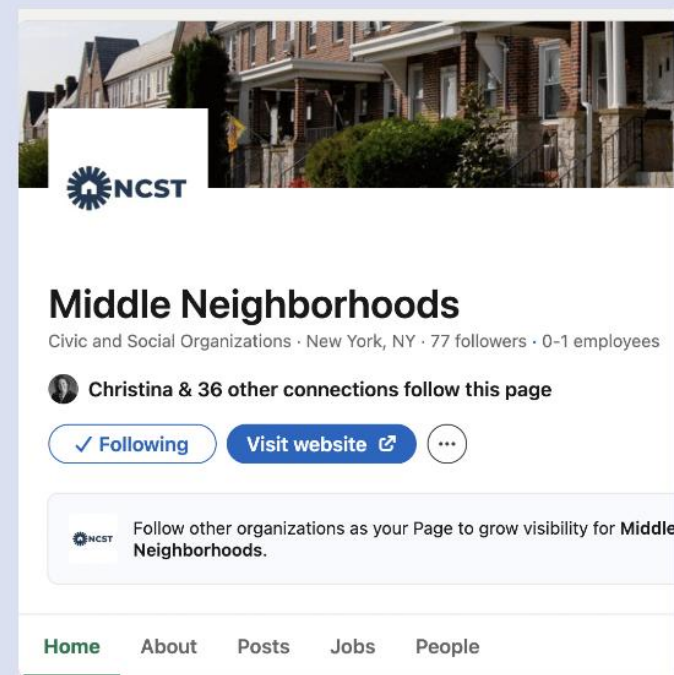
Thank you for joining us!

Follow Us at LinkedIn

We are revving up the Middle Neighborhoods LinkedIn account by recruiting followers and posting webinars, best practices, engagement chats and everything anyone should know about middle neighborhoods.

If you have a LinkedIn account, please take a moment to follow us by [going to our page](#) and clicking the Follow button.

If you don't have a LinkedIn account, please consider it by [signing up here](#). LinkedIn is social media for business networks and you'll likely see many of your colleagues there, as well as referral networks, events and more.

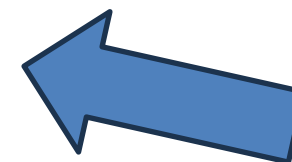


And when you are a LinkedIn account holder, please like and comment on the posts by Middle Neighborhoods. Greater name recognition and awareness of middle neighborhood issues and successes put all practitioners in a better position to garner support. Thank you!

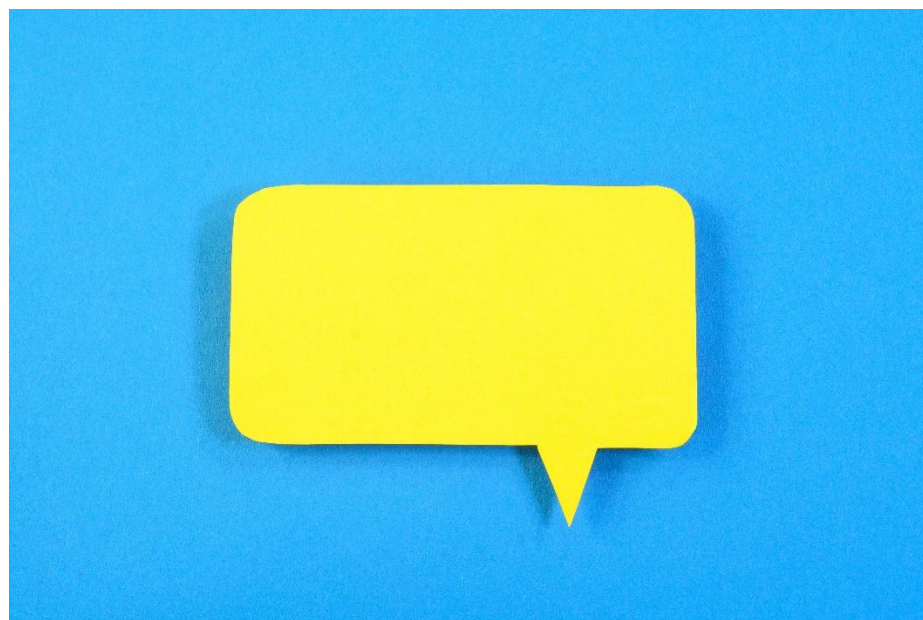
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Thank you for joining us!



- **Please email us** if you have ideas for webinar, case studies, news stories, etc.
- Check out the **Cornerstone Webinar Series: Center for Community Progress**
- **Tell us** about your experience today!



JOIN US!

**The Middle Neighborhoods
Community of Practice
(CoP)**

The Middle Neighborhoods CoP is an informal, facilitated network of practitioners, researchers and policymakers engaged in revitalizing middle neighborhoods. CoP members share learnings through topical webinars, referrals, site visits, phone calls, and occasional larger group events.

Please join us!

<https://ncst.org/middle-neighborhoods/>

