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Useful Community Development... quick notes

Inside: Starting a Neighborhood Association, Economic Development Strategies for Ambitious Neighborhoods, Village-Scale Planning

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HOW TO START A NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

Hints on Creating a Process That Makes Sense
for YOU

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If You're Just Starting Out with a Community Organization

This month's feature story, below, on more advanced ideas for neighborhood associations certainly could leave some readers feeling left out. Some of you would be glad to just have a simple community group that could do a few projects when the need arises. If this thought leaves you feeling unsure or overwhelmed, check out [our inexpensive e-book](#) to give you plenty of ideas, step-by-step directions, and sample documents and procedures for organizing your urban, suburban, or rural area into a temporary or ongoing group.

Feature Story: Resources and Ideas for Taking a Neighborhood Association to the Next Level

Although we write for the beginner or the volunteer in the community development field, sometimes our readers remind us that some of them are looking for pretty sophisticated tools. This month we wanted to point out three possible initiatives for the seasoned, ambitious, and effective neighborhood association. All have to do with economic development in one way or another.

1. Form a cooperative to address wealth-building needs of people of color and women in your neighborhood. Although many people think of a food co-op of upper middle class whites when they think of a co-op, a recent study showed that 60 percent of new co-op employee-owners since 2010 are people of color, and two-thirds of the new employee-owners are women. Cooperatives now engage in many lines of business.

How could a co-op help address neighborhood problems? It could quickly generate business ideas and serve as an umbrella for developing an expanding line of businesses to meet both community shopping and community employment needs. If you haven't considered this before, learn about the Evergreen Cooperatives in Cleveland. This effort has been so successful at starting new worker-owned businesses that it is now being referred to as the [Cleveland Model](#).

Research shows that cooperatives, just like any type of business start-up, tend to thrive when there is a supportive ecosystem in place. So your neighborhood group should look for other co-ops in your city and for national support through the superb resources of The Democracy Collaborative's [Community Wealth initiative](#) before launching an exploratory committee. Organize a field trip to Cleveland too!

2. Start a community development corporation (CDC). Sometimes neighborhood folks think a CDC is somehow redundant with what the neighborhood association

does. In some cases, that might be correct. However, a CDC usually has a very explicit development or redevelopment focus, and this certainly would be the case where both types of organizations exist in the same place.

Other neighborhood associations fear that a CDC might overwhelm the association as the CDC loads its board with developers and build-build-build enthusiasts. We wouldn't want to say this never happens.

But with good division of labor at the outset, a CDC can carry out the physical development ambitions of a neighborhood association while still leaving the neighborhood association free to be and to become the voice of the people in dealing with annoyances such as potholes and parking, or with major perceived issues such as crime.

Learn about starting a CDC on [our website's page](#) about that topic.

3. If one of your goals is attracting some new retail or office employment, you may want to pay the relatively affordable fee to engage with Tapestry, which is an interesting tool showing your market segments based on the demographic data that you provide. Market segmentation means dividing up the population according to their buying habits. Examples might be Soccer Moms or Retirement Communities. This helps businesses visualize the likely habits and preferences of your neighborhood consumers, and by extension, gives some clues about the nearby workforce. Colorful mapping is part of the end product as well.

The catch is that you must partner with some organization that already has a relationship with ESRI, the industry leader in computerized mapping. Try your city government, which most likely subscribes. If that doesn't work, try large utility companies in your area, universities, and engineering or planning consultants. Learn about Tapestry on the [ESRI website](#).

New Resource for Villages and Small Towns

We like the new online [Better Town Toolkit](#) for helping villages figure out how best to preserve nature, build better connectivity, and design land use patterns. This site, like ours, is designed first and foremost for citizens. Citizen planners will find plenty of useful resources here for village-scale planning. This toolkit is written for Orange County, New York, but will apply to many villages, small towns, and rural areas.

New on Our Website This month we added to the series on seasonal HOA or neighborhood association newsletter tips with a page on [summer newsletter ideas](#). We substantially revised and gave somewhat different advice on our page about [existing building codes](#). We also answered a question about [cities funding CDC's](#), [notice to property owner when a building is posted as unsafe](#), and one about [a gas station in a residential area](#).

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