



“Nobody’s free until everybody’s free.” - Fannie Lou Hamer
www.msrising.com

Community Outreach Toolkit

The Mississippi Rising Coalition recognizes and promotes that every person can make a positive difference for the benefit of all. One of our missions is to provide a platform for increasing awareness about how people can be actively engaged in strengthening the social fabric and political power of their community. We provide free tools and resources to assist people who seek pathways for achieving more vibrant, resilient and equitable communities. When everyone is seen as having value, with a role and purpose in community; when they share ownership for what happens within it, a culture of equity can be created.

How to Use this Toolkit

This Community Building Tool Packet is based on Our United Villages’ observations, practices and research engaging with Portland, OR communities since 1997. MRC recognizes that the ways in which to build community are vast and varied, and recommend that each respective community choose an approach in alignment with its neighborhood or community vision.

This Community Building Toolkit is designed to be “given away,” so we encourage you to take from it whatever is useful for achieving your goals. Consider contacting us to schedule a free Idea Development Session if you have questions about this toolkit, or want feedback on how best to implement it into your plan. If you have suggestions or stories to share for the enhancement of this toolkit, please contact us. Your feedback will be welcomed and appreciated.

When we set out to provide a benefit to a community, how should we decide what to do? We ask the community. A survey is just one way to assess the community’s interests and needs. This document is like a tool chest, take from it whatever works best for achieving your own neighborhood or community goals.

Table of Contents:

Purpose..... 3

OUV Philosophy..... 3

Developing Language.....3

Formatting the Survey..... 3

Determining the Area for Distribution..... 4

Identifying Languages..... 4

Distributing Surveys..... 4

Increasing Response Rate..... 5

Organizing Canvassing Events..... 5

Canvassing Tips..... 6

Safety Considerations for Volunteer Canvassers.....6

Signage and Legal Considerations while Canvassing 7

Materials for Volunteer Canvassers..... 7

Categorizing Responses into Themes..... 7

Report Back.....8

Developing a Strategic Plan to Conduct a Neighborhood
Survey..... 9

Appendix A: Boise Neighborhood Survey 10

Appendix B: Humboldt Neighborhood Survey..... 11

Appendix C: Overlook Neighborhood Survey..... 12

Survey and Canvassing Purpose

Community Outreach surveys and canvassing are used as tools to identify common themes of interest and need in a particular neighborhood. You can then sponsor free forums for neighbors based on feedback gained through the survey. Surveys may reveal community assets, as well as neighborhood challenges, providing valuable insight for community-building efforts.

MRC Philosophy

We believe everyone has something positive to contribute to their neighborhood. Further, we believe that neighborhoods that recognize the strengths, talents and resources of each individual create a healthier, more vibrant community. As we go door to door, we suspend judgments and biases about people; we avoid engaging in debate about their shared ideas or concerns. We do not attempt to impose the feedback form on anyone who does not want to accept it. The invitation to participate is extended to everyone; however, the decision to participate is up to the individual. Approach everyone in a respectful manner.

Developing Language

Take time to create drafts of survey questions using clear and compelling language. Community Outreach surveys included an inspirational passage or quote. For example:

- “Getting to know your neighbors can make the difference between merely residing on a street and living in a community of friends that welcome you home.”
- “Imagine a neighborhood where people know each other and work together to benefit the community as a whole. What would it take to get there? Where would you begin?”
- “What are the most challenging issues to you in your neighborhood?”
- “What areas do you feel residents in your neighborhood should focus on to strengthen community? Please list your top three ideas.”

In addition, surveys may feature a list of topics that neighbors could select. It may ask them to:

- “Add/or check any of the topics below” such as neighborhood healthcare, sharing resources, youth activities, local jobs and economy, elder involvement, education, gardening, or community scholarships.
- “What positive activities already happening in your neighborhood would you like to see more of?”
- “What new ideas would you like to see neighbors working together on to benefit the entire neighborhood?”

Formatting the Survey

Community Outreach survey may include:

- A description of our non-profit organization: People will want to know who you are, your affiliations, who’s conducting the survey, and why. State your organization’s mission, contact information, and how community feedback will be used.
- A collage of neighborhood photographs: To help neighbors relate the survey to their own neighborhood – connect with their sense of place – use photographs of significant landmarks such as schools, parks, historic buildings, or large intersections.

- A map of the neighborhood: People new to the area may not be aware of the name of their neighborhood, or its boundaries. Include a map of the neighborhood of survey on some portion of your handout.
- Response Date: Neighbors need to know deadlines for submitting their responses, and where or how to return it. For example: “Please respond no later than December 22, 2021.”
- Readability: In all of our written material, we use the “readability” function in Microsoft Word to check the grade level of the words that we are using. We choose to use words that are at an 8th grade level or below. If canvassing in an area where English is not the first language, get an interpreter or translator to assist you.
- Font: We select fonts that are easy to read; not too ornate or stylized. The standard font size that we use on surveys is 14 points as suggested by ADA. If printing material in color be sure to choose color combinations that make the content easy to read.
- Name and contact information: We provided space on the survey for responders to share their name and contact information, indicating it to be optional. It’s important that people feel encouraged to speak candidly, and remain anonymous if they choose to. On the other hand, it was beneficial to have contact information to follow-up with personal invitations to events associated with particular interests. To see examples of the surveys, see Appendices A-C.

Determining the Area for Distribution

Maps of individual neighborhoods, neighborhood coalition districts, business districts, and city-wide maps should be available through your municipal government. Surveys should be delivered to every address within a neighborhood boundary, including residences, schools, churches, businesses, and municipal services (i.e. police and fire precincts) – every address!

Identifying Languages

The goal should be about engaging with neighbors; knock on doors in hopes of making personal connections; leave a survey under a mat or stuck in a screen should be the last resort. If you are able to make contact with people, you’re more likely to identify the language spoken in that household. Based on that identification, the survey is translated, if needed, and a return visit made to the residence. Volunteers carry in their bag a card that reads in many languages, “Please point to the language that you speak”.

Another tool is to utilize the most recent US Census data; this data may help you to identify which languages are spoken in your survey area (data may vary depending on availability).

Distributing Surveys

Community Outreach Staff or Volunteers should hand-deliver stamped, self-addressed surveys door-to-door. When neighbors come to the door, neighborhood volunteers can introduce themselves by saying: “Hello. I’m your neighbor _____. I live on _____ Street. Today, I’m volunteering with Mississippi Rising Coalition to invite feedback from our neighbors about their ideas for our neighborhood.”

Be prepared to respond to questions such as:

- Why am I being asked to complete this?
- Who wants to know?
- What is going to be done with this information?

The answers to these questions need to be conveyed clearly and concisely on the survey and in your verbal introduction. For example: “Over the next year, MRC will host a series of free events open to everyone in the neighborhood. The topics of these events will be determined by you and your neighbors by filling out the attached card.”

Be mindful of and avoid voicing your personal opinion, as this can influence the way a person responds to survey questions.

Increasing Response Rate

Advertise your project! Let neighbors know that the survey is coming; give them ample time to get excited about you coming to their door. To avoid confusion and apprehension on the part of neighbors, advise the police precinct that you will be in the neighborhood/vicinity.

Visit with neighborhood groups (e.g. Neighborhood Association, schools, Business Associations, faith based community) to explain why the survey is being done; show an example of the survey.

If your budget permits, we recommend your survey be pre-stamped and self-addressed.

If neighbors are home and want to share their ideas or opinions on the spot, take time to listen and document their responses.

Organizing Canvassing Events

Volunteers should be invited to an orientation. This can happen immediately before canvassing such as hosting a breakfast gathering (your organization’s treat) on a Saturday morning in an informal space conveniently located and central to the canvassing location.

Components of canvassing covered in the orientation should include:

- An overview of the organization and the purpose/intent of conducting a survey.
- An acknowledgement and appreciation of volunteer’s contributions.
- Safety, signage, and legal considerations while canvassing.
- A detailed description of the materials available in their bag of supplies.
- A role play of what an exchange with neighbors may look like.
- Allotted time for questions and answers.

In the field, volunteers worked in pairs can be issued a walkie-talkie (if they don’t have a cell phone). Staff members should be available by phone and walkie-talkie to answer questions, deliver additional supplies, or pick up volunteers when they completed their assigned area or needed to rest.

Canvassing Tips

Share your appreciation for the volunteers. Outreach efforts by neighbors connecting with neighbors can make a significant difference in the rate of survey responses.

Help volunteers familiarize themselves with the organization's mission and vision, and goals and purpose for conducting a survey in order for volunteers to be able to respond to some basic questions. Share the organization's values with volunteers.

Prepare a short introduction for volunteers. It should include their name, street they live on (if a neighborhood volunteer), and one brief statement about the sponsoring organization. Bring along additional organizational information (e.g. a handout with the mission and vision, a brochure, and/or a business card).

Based on experience, the best time to canvass is between 6:00pm-8:00 pm on weeknights and 11:00 am-5:00 pm on weekends.

Volunteers should have something to identify themselves as a volunteer (name tag, tee shirt, hat, business card).

Inquire if there is anyone else in the household that would like to share their thoughts, or complete the survey. There may be a spouse/partner, roommate, or child that could also provide feedback.

Contact the local police precinct and let them know you will be canvassing the area.

Safety Considerations for Volunteer Canvassers

Canvassing in pairs is recommended, canvass opposite sides of the street.

Carry emergency numbers of designated contacts within the organization conducting the survey; this is in addition to calling 911.

Encourage volunteers to follow their instincts; if they do not feel safe going to a particular home for whatever reason, skip the address, make a note of it, and advise staff for follow-up.

Beware of entering gates and look out for dogs. If a loose dog is present or a "Beware of Dog" sign is posted, encourage volunteers to skip the address, make a note of it and advise staff for follow-up. Alternatively, rubber band material to the gate, facing inward so that residents will see it upon exiting.

Be mindful of safety. Watch out for unsafe conditions such as cracked sidewalks, loose or rotten wood on porch steps, or busy intersections. Encourage volunteers to take their time and think "safety first".

Signage and Legal Considerations while Canvassing

If a “No trespassing” sign is posted, do not approach the property. Make a note and move on. A “No Solicitors” sign does not apply to delivering a neighborhood survey. The word “solicitor” is defined as one who solicits for trade, contributions, or aid. If a “Leave no Literature or Postings” sign is displayed, do not leave a survey at that location. Make a note of the address and advise staff for follow-up.

It is against Federal Law to place anything in a private mail letterbox receptacle. Place outreach materials on the door handle, in a screen, or on the porch partially exposed under the door mat.

The walkway to the front door is an area where strangers can walk without permission of the resident. All other property is technically trespassing.

Do not open a screen door to knock on the inside door.

Materials for Volunteer Canvassers

- A stack of surveys and a neighborhood map with their assigned area clearly marked
- A cell phone or walkie-talkie and emergency contact numbers
- Organization information (brochures, business cards, and/or handout with the mission and vision)
- Pencil or pen, clipboard, and notepad to capture the dialogue volunteers have with neighbors
- Weather-related supplies (gloves, umbrella, or water)
- A form to track the property address and reason that volunteers were unable to go to or unable to complete the survey (e.g. identified non-English language, dog, no trespassing, refused, other)
- If canvassing after sundown, supply volunteers with safety vests and a flashlight
- Carry dog and/or cat biscuits (optional)
- A First Aid kit and water
- A rolling tote or bag to hold all of your materials

Categorizing Responses into Themes

Once the survey return date expires, give or take a few days, categorize responses into themes. First and foremost, read every single survey. Second, each response should be documented and kept on file. It is important to undertake a process that works for you.

Suggestions for categorizing responses into themes:

- Don't spend time trying to figure out “what they really meant” on the survey responses. As you recognize similar ideas surfacing, begin to group them (e.g. community garden, sharing food, farmer's market).
- Identify major themes bubbling to the top (e.g. elders, youth, schools, jobs, housing, and socialization/recreation). Track potential categories.

- Be patient with the process. It may take multiple times of reviewing all of the surveys. Once you start a list of themes, tally the responses under those themes.
- Work as a team. Bounce ideas off each other.
- Themes with the majority of responses turned into topics of neighborhood events (e.g. Neighborhood Conversations, Idea Development Plan Workshops).

If you are interested in taking a more structured, formal process for qualitative data analysis, these are a few suggestions:

- For tools for completing online surveys, check out Survey Monkey
- Consider partnering with a local community college or university to help you categorize your data

Report Back

Survey results should be shared with the entire neighborhood, regardless of participation in the process. A report can be included in mailers and neighborhood newsletters, with highlighted topics for future events related to survey themes. For an example, see Appendix D.

Developing a Strategic Plan to Conduct a Neighborhood Survey

1. What is the purpose of conducting a survey? How can this purpose clearly and briefly be explained to neighbors?
2. What inspirational passage and survey question(s) will you use to elicit thoughts and ideas from neighbors?
3. What other information or features will you include on your survey?
4. What is your timeline? When will you begin canvassing? What date will you list for a “Return by: _____” date?
5. What is the geographic boundary for conducting your survey?
6. How will the surveys be delivered; by volunteers, staff, or both; on their own time; at an organized canvassing event(s)? If you are using neighborhood volunteers, how will you recruit them?
7. What supplies will be needed for canvassing?
8. How will you categorize the survey responses into themes?
9. How will you let neighbors know the results of the survey?
10. What are your next steps?

Appendix A: Boise Neighborhood Survey

**What are the most
challenging issues
to you
in your neighborhood?**

Please list the top three:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Please respond by August 5, 2003

Our United Villages is asking all Boise residents to voice their concerns or ideas. Based on responses from the neighborhood, we will host a series of conversations, open to everyone, to talk about the issues that are most important to Boise.

Our United Villages is a non-profit community organization based in the Boise Neighborhood. We offer a place where people can work together to identify the root causes of challenges faced in our communities and to explore possibilities for lasting social change.



Here's how you can respond:
4001 -A N. Mississippi, Portland, OR 97227
(entrance on Shaver),
503-546-7499 - info@ourunitedvillages.org



Our United Villages
WORKING FROM THE ROOTS

**Cuales son los asuntos
que nos enfrenta
a usted
en su vecindario?**

Favor de listar los tres mas importante:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Favor de responder antes el dia 5 de agosto, 2003.

Our United Villages (Nuestros Pueblos Unidos) pide que todos los residentes de Boise contribuyan sus preocupaciones e ideas. Segun las respuestas del vecindario, invitaremos a todos a una serie de conversaciones para discutir los asuntos mas importantes en el vecindario de Boise.

Our United Villages es una organizacion comunitaria sin modos de lucro establecida en el vecindario de Boise. Ofrecemos un lugar donde las personas pueden juntarse a trabajar para identificar los motivos raices de los problemas que encontramos en nuestras comunidades y para explorar las posibilidades de lograr cambios sociales perdurables.



Para responder:
4001 -A N. Mississippi, Portland, OR 97227
(la entrada esta en la calle Shaver)
503-546-7499 - info@ourunitedvillages.org



Nuestros Pueblos Unidos
TRABAJANDO DE LAS RAICES

Appendix B: Humboldt Neighborhood Survey

Imagine a neighborhood where people know each other and work together to benefit the community as a whole.

What would it take to get there?
Where would you begin?

What areas do you feel residents in Humboldt neighborhood should focus on to strengthen community?

Please list your top three ideas:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

And/or check any of the topics below:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community scholarships | <input type="checkbox"/> Neighborhood healthcare |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Sharing resources |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Elder involvement | <input type="checkbox"/> Sharing skills & knowledge |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gardening | <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer opportunities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Local jobs and economy | <input type="checkbox"/> Youth activities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> More neighborhood events | |

Please respond no later than December 22, 2004

Based on survey responses from you and your neighbors, Our United Villages will host a free series of conversations over the next year that are open to everyone in the Humboldt neighborhood.

Our United Villages is a local non-profit organization committed to bringing people together to realize their common interests and full potential as a community.

www.ourunitedvillages.org 503.546.7499



Appendix C: Overlook Neighborhood Survey

Appendix D: Overlook Neighborhood Survey

Inside: Survey Language

Imagine a neighborhood where people know each other and work together to benefit the community as a whole

***What would it take to get there?
Where would you begin?***

Over the next two years, Our United Villages will host a series of free events open to everyone in the Overlook neighborhood. The topics of these events will be determined by you and your neighbors by filling out the attached card.

Who is Our United Villages?

Our United Villages is a Portland-based non-profit organization. We believe that everyone can make a positive difference in their community. Our United Villages was started by volunteers in 1997 and is 100% independently funded.

Why get to know my neighbors?

Getting to know your neighbors can make the difference between merely residing on a street and living in a community of friends that welcome you home.

Our United Villages

4001-A North Mississippi Avenue • Portland, OR
97227
503-546-7499 • www.ourunitedvillages.org



What positive activities already happening in the Overlook neighborhood would you like to see more of?

1. _____

2. _____

What new ideas would you like to see neighbors working together on to benefit the entire neighborhood?

1. _____

2. _____

Based on the responses received, Our United Villages will host free events and workshops over the next two years that are open to the entire Overlook neighborhood.

Please mail in by: _____

(Optional) Name and contact information: _____

Appendix D: Survey Report Back and Community Calendar

Appendix E: Overlook Calendar of Events & Survey Results

Overlook Feedback Form Results

Our United Villages (OUV) is a local non-profit organization dedicated to bringing people together to realize their common interests and full potential as a vibrant community. We believe that everyone can make a positive difference in their neighborhood.

Over the next 18 months, OUV will host Neighborhood Conversations, idea development workshops, neighborhood history storytelling, multicultural celebrations, and other special events—all in the spirit of building community.

Topics or themes for Neighborhood Conversations are based on responses from the feedback forms, which were distributed door-to-door by Overlook volunteers during May and June of 2006. Thank you to the 40 neighborhood volunteers for delivering feedback forms to every address in Overlook, and to everyone in the neighborhood who shared their hundreds of ideas and visions.

The 685 ideas received by Overlook neighbors created the following 10 topics for Neighborhood Conversations:

- Community Building
- Farmers Market
- Neighborhood Beautification
- Elder Support
- Schools/Education
- Neighborhood Safety
- Neighborhood Businesses
- Youth Activities
- Art, Culture and Music
- Health and Fitness Activities

Postcard invitations to all events will be mailed to every address in the Overlook neighborhood including residents, schools, businesses, and non-profits. These events will be free and open to everyone.

The OUV website will be updated often with information about the events and activities so be sure to visit us at: www.ourunitedvillages.org or call us for more information at 503-546-7499.

Events and Activities 2006-2007

Look for notices in your mailbox about locations and times for the following upcoming events:

Neighborhood Conversations are facilitated discussions of neighbors coming together around common interests. The conversation format involves getting to know your neighbors, brainstorming on the topic, and identifying next steps. At the end of each conversation, participants will have an opportunity to register for free workshops to further develop their ideas.

Idea Development Workshops will assist neighbors in taking their ideas to the next level—reality! Using an outline similar to that of a business plan, participants will bring their ideas to the table and then identify what neighbors want to achieve and how to achieve it, as well as ways to sustain the impact of projects for generations to come.

Neighborhood History Storytelling is a social exchange of neighbors sharing memories, memorabilia, and knowledge about the history of the Overlook neighborhood. It provides a learning opportunity for neighbors and is a great way to honor elders and long-time residents by inviting them to share their stories.

Multicultural Celebration OUV believes that building community together is linked to having fun together. We will host celebrations in Overlook that showcase local talent in music, art, dance, spoken word, theatre, and more. There will always be free good food!

Other Special Events may include a speakers series on building community, a community involvement fair, and a Swan Island job fair.



Copyright 2012 © Our United Villages, Some Rights Reserved.

All parts of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic methods, without the prior written permission of the publisher. Our United Villages freely provides this content in support of community-based, volunteer or nonprofit organizations whose work provides benefit to community. Our United Villages invites the community to use these online resources for personal, educational and other non-commercial purposes. By using these resources, you accept and agree to abide by these terms.

Please contact us at: Community Legacy Program of Our United Villages 3625 N Mississippi Ave, Portland, OR, 97227 503.542.7499 - communitylegacy@ourunitedvillages.org
www.ouvcommunitylegacy.org www.ouvcommunitylegacy.org