

PART I

The Basic Concepts and Principles of the Holistic Neighborhood Revitalization Model

Part I Basic Concepts & Principles of the HNR Model

The introduction mentioned three basic characteristics of the holistic model of neighborhood revitalization. These characteristics are 1) a holistic orientation, 2) inclusion, and 3) a dynamic, problem solving/asset-based approach. Part I will discuss these characteristics, explain why they are important and consider their advantages for the process of change.

1. A Holistic Orientation toward the Neighborhood

As implied by its name, one of the basic characteristics of the HNR model is that it focuses attention on a neighborhood, a specific identified geographic area, looks broadly at the issues facing it and helps to decide how best to allocate limited resources to resolve these issues. Although neighborhood issues have historically been approached on an issue-by-issue basis, there are many advantages to the holistic, neighborhood process. Some of these are:

- *Addresses issues and causes more completely.*

One such advantage of a holistic orientation toward neighborhood revitalization is that it facilitates looking

at issues and causes more completely. Most of the issues facing neighborhoods are complicated and have an interrelated set of causes. For example, a high crime rate may be an issue that is perceived to have such causes as abandoned property in the neighborhood, a shortage of jobs, and deficiencies in services such as schools, recreation, street lighting and policing. Because of the interrelated nature of these causes of crime, citizens must either address all the causes or be defeated because some of them have been ignored. Furthermore, even if one's efforts have the desired effect, when related factors are not addressed, the improvement will not be easily sustained.

The step-by-step process discussed in Part II of this manual serves as a guide that will help citizens to take into account the interrelated nature of issues and causes in their neighborhood. Although it does not require that all issues facing the neighborhood be addressed simultaneously, this disciplined decision-making and action-taking process facilitates a consideration of the breadth of issues facing the neighborhood. Furthermore, the process evolves in a logical direction through which neighborhoods may

organize the many possible remedies and actions that they intend to pursue into an orderly and manageable sequence.

- *Neighborhoods are relatively small geographic areas that are more manageable when focusing on revitalization initiatives.*

Neighborhoods are more manageable than large political units because its residents live in close proximity and face common issues. Others that have dealings with the neighborhood are likely to be affected by the same issues. For example, dealing with abandoned property on one street not only improves the lives of those living on that street but represents an improvement to adjacent residents and businesses. By making the environment more inviting, it encourages more customers to shop at neighborhood stores and has the probability of increasing property values. Residents and others may not automatically make such an association but the holistic framework helps develop a broader understanding of issues and plan for their resolution.

2. The Broad, Collaborative Involvement of People

The HNR model calls for the participation of a broad range of individuals working collaboratively to revitalize the neighborhood. These individuals include residents, local government officials, teachers, store owners, clergymen and potentially any others that are affected by the conditions in the neighborhood. The model also emphasizes the advantage of involving other groups and individuals that may provide such resources as time, expertise, information, and better access to funding.

- **Broad issue and cause identification**

The broad, collaborative involvement advocated by the HNR model facilitates neighborhood revitalization in several important ways. One way is bringing together a group of individuals that are knowledgeable about the neighborhood and the issues facing it. Furthermore, the broad diversity in the backgrounds of those involved provides different perspectives and points of view. For example, residents, police and social services providers might have different perspectives on issues related to homelessness. Broader collaboration helps individuals explore alternative

points of view, which facilitates problem solving. The participation of residents and others actually living and working in the neighborhood helps assure that the issues and causes are more completely addressed.

- **Identification of existing neighborhood assets**

Bringing together a diverse group of individuals knowledgeable about the neighborhood also helps to identify the neighborhood's existing and potential assets and resources. For example, local government staff responsible for recreation might recognize that a vacant lot, currently trashed and unsightly, is in an ideal location for a playground. A local banker might recognize how his or her bank might play a critical role in rehabilitating substandard housing or in revitalizing a local shopping center.

- **Marshaling resources**

The broad, collaborative initiative called for by the HNR model also helps the neighborhood acquire the services and resources needed for its improvement. In this regard, it is most important that active support for the revitalization effort comes from key leaders of local government because of the many services provided to neighborhoods such as street maintenance,

recreation, police and fire protection. Having said this, it may not be necessary for the city manager or leadership mayor, the superintendent of schools or the chairman of the school board to physically participate in the process. However, such individuals are in a unique position to actively support the project within local and state circles, ensure the participation of public staff, and help deal with the implications of regulations and laws. It is also important to involve local government staff in revitalization efforts. This is because such individuals can help to access the resources of their departments and lend advice in their areas of expertise. *There are many examples of various types of local government support for neighborhood revitalization projects found in the case study in Part IV. In particular, in 1993, the Mayor of St. Petersburg created a Neighborhood Partnership Department directly under his supervision and made it responsible for addressing resident and neighborhood issues. In 1991, "City Teams" were created that brought the neighborhood together with a number of City departments to resolve neighborhood issues (See Part IV, Section 1; See Appendix 3). St. Petersburg also has a small grants program that provides a straightforward access to funds for neighborhood revitalization projects (See Part IV, Section 7).*

- *Developing a sense of ownership, commitment, and empowerment*

The broad, collaborative involvement has other important effects on neighborhood revitalization. Being actively involved in direction setting and decision-making gives residents a sense of ownership and commitment. Such involvement also results in a growing sense of empowerment and confidence as the process helps to bring about early small successes while still pursuing more long-term results. Ownership, commitment and empowerment tend to enhance the quality of the efforts of participants, strengthen the overall process and make it more sustainable.

- *Organizing participation*

The participation of numerous parties is vital to the neighborhood revitalization effort. However, such participation must be effectively organized so that it can help to bring desirable results. The HNR process outlined in Part II provides opportunities for active participation which helps in obtaining long-term, sustainable neighborhood results. The meetings, question and comment periods, workgroups, and the opportunity to perform tasks as the process unfolds provide such opportunities.

3. A Dynamic, Problem-Solving and Asset-Based Approach to Change

The HNR model recognizes the dynamic nature of efforts to revitalize neighborhoods and the need for a systematic process to help make these efforts effective. As Figure 1 suggests, the HNR process as discussed in Part II is a problem solving and asset-based approach that consists of four phases: 1) process start-up and assessment, 2) planning, 3) implementation and monitoring, 4) evaluation and adjustment.

Figure 1.
Phases of the HNR Process

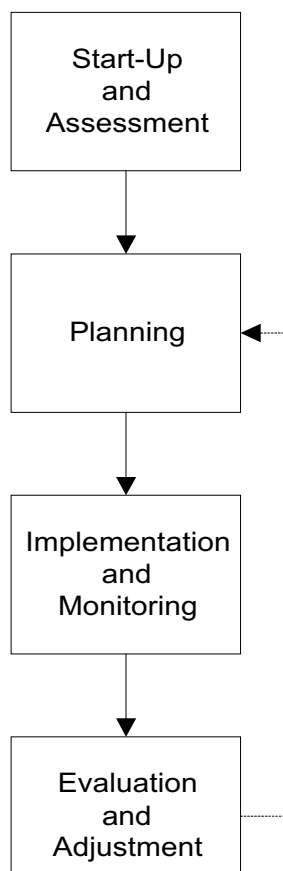


Figure 1 also suggests that each evaluation may bring about new planning and implementation if experience and new information so indicates. This deliberate, methodical process serves as the cornerstone of the HNR model. The advantages of using this process of change are as follows:

- *Tailoring the effort to fit the needs of the neighborhood*

Through the steps that are taken in the process start-up and assessment phase of the revitalization effort, information is gathered that helps residents and other participants to develop a plan that addresses the specific needs of the neighborhood.

- *Using existing neighborhood assets in the revitalization effort*

Through the steps that are taken in the process start-up and assessment phase of the revitalization effort, an inventory of existing neighborhood assets (sometimes called “asset mapping”) is also made which helps those involved in the project to capitalize on such assets during planning and implementation efforts.

- *Pursuing short-term and long-term goals*

The goals pursued by neighborhoods often require changes that are somewhat complicated and may require long periods of time to complete. The steps taken during the planning phase of the process serve to organize the various tasks required to accomplish these long-term goals in a logically organized and sequential manner for desired results. At the same time, the steps taken help to facilitate the inclusion of more easily attained short-term goals that provide the early successes that encourage and sustain participation particularly when using neighborhood assets.

- *Implementing and monitoring neighborhood change efforts*

Sometimes it may be difficult to assess interim success in neighborhood revitalization projects particularly when they involve long-term goals. The steps taken during the implementation and monitoring phase described in Part II is built directly from the goals established during the preceding planning phase. These implementation and monitoring steps help participants of the HNR process to organize necessary tasks and assign responsibility and deadlines for the tasks' completion.

The result is an approach that helps to manage the implementation of plan strategies and assists in monitoring the success of implementation.

- *Steering the process once it is underway*

One of the reasons the HNR process must be dynamic is because revitalization projects exist in a dynamic environment. There are likely to be disappointments and happy surprises along the way as revitalization projects are carried out. For example,

anticipated funding sources may dry up or regulations may present barriers to taking desired actions. On the other hand, new funding might become available or legislation might be enacted that makes an apparent barrier evaporate. The use of existing neighborhood assets may preclude the need of additional funding or decrease the amount necessary. The evaluation phase of the process discussed in Part II is designed to help neighborhoods effectively react to disappointments and to take advantage of new opportunities as they occur.

