

Learning Exchange: Neighborhood democracy: Lessons from the past, possibilities for the future.

Innovations, ideas:

In Michigan, the cooperative extension office that did the training of CBOs in the community because they were a land grant institution.

In San Jose, City Hall supports those on advisory committees by giving them access to databases and holding events so each person can communicate with other members of the public. This helps ensure that members of the advisory committee don't just represent their own points of view.

In Salinas, community organizers formed a good relationship with City Hall by working public approval of an increase in the sales tax.

Everyone deserves a response from government. Involves changing the culture. People's input needs to be relevant. People should not feel that they are alone.

NLC has a database of city practices best examples. Available through its website. Bonnie needs more examples.

Amherst College produced 8 books/guides on community organizing.

Harvard established a conflict negotiation project.

Neighborhood councils need to ensure that their members reflect diversity of the area and are accountable. That cliques don't control the voting.

Need to teach people how to have their voices heard.

NCs can't just be late arrivals into issues – being against things. In Los Angeles, a rarely enforced provision in the City Charter guarantees that NCs receive enough advanced notice so they can discuss and weigh in before a decision is made.

If NC board members are self-selected, need to ask "Who's not here?"

Need to use NCs to do more than getting government to do something. Need to get people doing things for themselves in their neighborhoods.

Tufts University held a week-long institute for elected officials and the public so they could better work together.