



SWOT: Strengthening Ward One Together

Nonprofit organizations, residents & businesses building a Ward that Works.

Neighborhood Leadership Circles

Civic associations, book clubs, Bible study groups, AA, Neighborhood Watch – People working together in small groups to listen, learn, share, reflect and act for themselves and for others. We want to learn from these models to start Neighborhood Leadership Circles to help us better organize our personal lives for ourselves and to help our community—and maybe even the nation.

How They Work

You and 6-10 neighbors commit to meeting over 3 meals – We will buy the pizza & papusas! — over the course of 3 weeks to get to know each other, share how we feel about the community and our own lives, and talk about what we'd like to get out of a group.

If folks like what is happening in the first 3 groups... Commit to 8 more to dig deeper and do more to get involved in the community.

We can help facilitate and provide videos, articles, questions and guides for discussion— but we are all learning as we go and want to learn from you about what is working and what is not.

But we start with the basic:

If you really want to make a friend, go to someone's house and eat with him... the people who give you their food give you their heart..." — Cesar Chavez

20 Questions

We don't have a fixed agenda but here are some of the questions that members will probably tackle:

What matters to you?

- Being part of a community?
- Being financially secure?
- Having a good family life?
- Making a better world?
- Pursuing a passion or my calling?

Most of us would say yes, of course, to all of these questions, yet how do we *balance* these goals in our lives?

How can we better organize our personal lives and our community for the benefit of both?

What are your communities and what are your responsibilities to them or to their members?

What can I do today to make a difference in the world where it's hard to know who to trust and what to believe?

What do I know and what would I like to know about how myself and the world to make a difference?

Who do I think of as models for my own leadership? As *authentic* leaders?

What are my strengths and weaknesses as a leader (or a person)?

What risks am I willing to take? When am I willing to fail at something?

What do I imagine my life will look like in 5, 10 or 20 years if I accomplish my goals?

What are your important questions...?



What Do We Know?

We must work passionately and indefatigably to bridge gulf between our scientific progress and our moral progress...The richer we have become materially, the poorer we have become morally and spiritually.

– **Martin Luther King, Jr.**

We cannot seek achievement for ourselves and forget about progress and prosperity for our community... Our ambitions must be broad enough to include the aspirations and needs of others, for their sakes and for our own.

– **Cesar Chavez**

The future does not belong to those who are content with today...Rather, it will belong to those who can blend passion, reason and courage in a personal commitment to the great enterprises and ideals of American society.

– **Robert F. Kennedy**

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever does.

– **Margaret Mead**

Interested in participating? Would you be willing to volunteer your home for one of the meetings?

Contact Tom Pollak at tpollak2@gmail.com or 301-325-3141. Thank you!

Some Old Ideas for New Reflection & Action

Our challenge: How do we find practical ways to take responsibility for our communities in a world in need of trustworthy leadership, to develop the wisdom we need to do so effectively in a world without simple answers, and to do all this while still keeping balance in our personal lives and making a living? It's not easy, but if we can work together with a shared vision, patience, and determination — and with joy and a sense of humor, too — even the most difficult goals are possible.

I know no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is ... to inform their discretion by education. - *Thomas Jefferson*

Only through the bringing together of head and heart— intelligence and goodness — shall man rise to a fulfillment of his true nature...Rarely do we find men who willingly engage in hard, solid thinking. There is an almost universal quest for easy answers and half-baked solutions. Nothing pains some people more than having to think.

- *Martin Luther King, Jr. Strength to Love*

[W]e need to appreciate that cultivating wisdom is not only good for society but is... a key to our own happiness. Wisdom isn't just something we "ought" to have. It's something we want to have to flourish...Rules and incentives may improve the behavior of those who don't care... But in focusing on the people who don't care...we miss those who do care. We miss those who want to do the right things but lack the practical wisdom to do them well. Even worse, rules can kill skill and incentives can kill will.

- *B. Schwartz & K. Sharpe, Practical Wisdom: The Right Way to Do the Right Thing*

The central conservative truth is that it is culture, not politics, that determines the success of society. The central liberal truth is that politics can change a culture and save it from itself. - *Daniel Patrick Moynihan, U.S. Senator*

Twice in this century, all of Europe has paid a tragic price for the narrow-mindedness and lack of imagination of its democracies. - *Vaclav Havel, Czech dissident & president*

The idea of democracy is a wider and fuller idea than can be exemplified in the state even at its best. To be realized, it must affect all modes of human association, the family, the school, industry, religion. And even as far as political arrangements are concerned, governmental institutions are but a mechanism for securing to an idea channels of effective operation...Regarded as an idea, democracy is not an alternative to other principles of associated life. It is the idea of community life itself. -- *John Dewey*

When an individual is no longer a true participant, when he no longer feels a sense of responsibility to his society, the content of democracy is emptied.

- *Martin Luther King, Jr.*

Large systems imbalance like a sandpile. A single additional grain may be sufficient to cause an avalanche... The things that linger longest often have the most profound impact on the system--yet they tend to be the things we ignore, precisely because they do move and change so slowly. [R]esilience may be the hardest thing to figure out about complex systems. You could run around our world forever, chasing the fast variables, trying to address the surface concerns of security and stability...Unless you were in touch with those underlying slow forces, you would fail... - *Joshua Cooper Ramo*

How do we strengthen the foundations for a strong community and a good life?

We remain a young nation, but in the words of scripture, the time has come to set aside childish things...it has been the risk-takers, the doers, the makers of things - some celebrated but more often men and women obscure in their labour, who have carried us up the long, rugged path towards prosperity and freedom... (We sometimes forget) what this country has already done; what free men and women can achieve when imagination is joined to common purpose, and necessity to courage.

- *Barack Obama, Inauguration Speech, Jan. 20, 2009*

Instead of presuming that optimal institutional solutions can be designed easily and imposed at low cost by external authorities... "getting the institutions [of collective action] right" is a difficult, time-consuming, conflict-invoking process.

- *Elinor Ostrom, Nobel Prize-winner*

You know ultimately, we all have to believe things we haven't seen. Innovation, creativity, development comes not from the ideas in our mind alone. They come from the ideas in our mind that are also fueled by some conviction in our heart. And it's that mind-heart connection that I believe compels us to not just be attentive to all the bright and dazzy things, but also the dark and difficult things. Vaclav Havel said, "When we were in Eastern Europe and dealing with oppression, we wanted all kinds of things, but mostly what we needed was hope, an orientation of the spirit, a willingness to sometimes be in hopeless places and be a witness.

- *Bryan Stevenson, Equal Justice Initiative, TED 2012*