

# BUILDING RESILIENT NEIGHBOURHOODS



## WHY RESILIENCE? WHY TODAY?

Communities today are facing a range of major social, environmental, and economic challenges and threats, including wages not keeping pace with the cost of living, climate change, resource depletion, and instability in the global financial system. Resilient communities proactively prepare for and respond to these challenges, while also improving their overall quality of life and well-being. To build resilience, it's important to start now by working together to strengthen our collective skills and approaches.

## APPROACH TO BUILDING RESILIENT NEIGHBOURHOODS:

[The Building Resilient Neighbourhoods project](#) builds on the many examples of best practices in comprehensive community and neighbourhood development, while bringing a unique focus on resilience capacity-building. Based on our work to date, we have identified four core aspects of a community that are involved in enhancing neighbourhood resilience:



1. **Shifting attitudes and values** towards greater social cohesion and positive, solutions-focused outlooks
2. Identifying and addressing gaps in **human, natural and built infrastructure and resources**
3. **Strengthening local ownership and local control of economies**
4. **Engaging leaders, groups and citizens** in neighbourhood-based planning and action to ensure local needs are met.

## PRINCIPLES FOR NEIGHBOURHOOD RESILIENCE BUILDING:

In addition to fostering the above characteristics, there are several key principles and elements to our resilience-building approach:

- **Working comprehensively, at multiple-scales, and across sectors:** While nurturing specific, small-scale projects that address immediate issues, it is also important to facilitate connections and cross-sector collaborations both within and outside of neighbourhoods. This encourages more comprehensive, community-wide solutions that address common concerns and get to roots of problems.
- **Encouraging both the short and long-term view:** Intentionally fostering quick-action projects at the street/block level, while also supporting the longer-term work of neighbourhood-wide, comprehensive planning and action.
- **Providing inspiring examples of change to create hope and motivate action:** We hear time and again that people are 'burnt out' and feel as though they can't make a difference. This can be counteracted by providing educational community-building opportunities which draw on a myriad of varied examples, big and small, of people successfully working together to create resilience in neighbourhoods and communities locally and around the globe.
- **Assessing local resilience to optimize limited resources:** Using and providing tools to help identify local resilience "strengths and vulnerabilities," and targeting where investments of community energy and resources will have the most positive impacts.
- **Going beyond conventional planning:** Focusing on resilience can help communities to consider a broader range of important issues that are often not included in traditional planning, such as resource usage, local business ownership, and social determinants of health and well-being. We also support citizen action on those planning priorities, which helps local governments and others move from ideas to implementation.
- **Providing opportunities for people to engage in different ways: Engaging all interests and segments of the community, meeting people where they're at, engaging the "head, hands and heart"**
  - For a process of resilience building to be successful, it must engage all interests and segments of the community, including citizens, organizations, businesses and local leaders. This can be facilitated by meeting people "where they are at" through a three-pronged approach of engaging the "head, hands and heart":
    - **Heart...** opening to deeper, stronger social connections with each other and with the places we share.
    - **Hands...** 'doing' through action in small-scale projects.
    - **Head...** learning together and developing the capacities that drive resilience building.

## ACTIVITIES TO FOSTER RESILIENT NEIGHBOURHOODS:

While Building Resilient Neighbourhoods' approach looks different in each community we partner with, we consistently incorporate the following elements into our project design.

1. **Learning events.** These educational sessions form a critical foundation for supporting citizen action. Workshops we have hosted to date include: Introduction to Resilience (an overview of the theory and approach, and critical elements of resilience), Economic Resilience (focus on the role of local businesses, public ownership, and economic innovations in creating resilient neighbourhoods), Engaging Your Neighbours (practical skills to support making connections), and Resilient Streets (strategies for building social cohesion and launching small-scale, group projects).
2. **Resilient Streets.** This program encourages residents on a street or block to come together to undertake small-scale street-level projects together. These may focus on improvements to the physical environment (e.g. planting community gardens), initiatives that strengthen sharing between neighbours (e.g. tool libraries), building social connections (e.g. block parties), or making home and lifestyle changes (e.g. working towards reduced energy use through the Transition Streets learning modules). We support citizens through an introductory workshop with examples and resources, followed by a two-step micro-granting program to help fund group meetings and practical projects.
3. **Resilience assessment.** These survey tools help citizens identify their neighbourhood's current strengths and vulnerabilities based on our Characteristics of Resilience framework. We provide a how-to guide with options for different levels of detail, tailored to the time and resources available.
4. **Neighbourhood-wide planning and priority setting.** We convene residents and leaders to review the findings of the assessment and use that to help identify resilience priorities for the neighbourhood. These priorities can become the basis for a community-wide strategy, or be taken on by discrete groups as projects.
5. **Cross-sector collaboration.** Many communities lack a strong foundation in cross-sector collaboration, but it is critical for building resilience. We support groups and individuals through training and integrated learning to develop a Resilient Neighbourhood Resource Table and build new ways of working together so that "the whole is greater than the parts."

**Get in touch today to find out more about how we can**

**work together to build more resilient communities!**

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