

The Paschalville Partnership 2.0 | Catalyzing a Community-Led Future

KEY PROJECT QUESTIONS

- ① What are the assets in our community?
- ② What does the community care about?

OVERALL PROJECT GOAL

Create an action plan that prioritizes needs identified by the community, builds on community assets, and articulates a supporting role for the partnership.

RESIDENT CONSULTANT TEAM

- ❖ Project Guidance
- ❖ Program & Event Planning
- ❖ Recommendations

NEIGHBORHOOD AMBASSADORS

- ❖ Community Canvassing
- ❖ Program & Event Publicizing

PARTNER RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

- ❖ Business Outreach
- ❖ Community Chats
- ❖ Storytelling Workshops

The Free Library of Philadelphia has partnered with local organizations to support Paschalville neighbors in discovering, connecting and mobilizing the assets, talents and passions within their neighborhood. Funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services Community Catalyst Grant, the project was designed to be resident centered in its execution. It began with the formation of teams of paid Resident Consultants and Neighborhood Ambassadors. The residents' work would be complemented and supported by local organizational partners and the project coordinator and director who were employed by the library. Inspired by the principles of Asset-Based Community Development, the project coordinators also decided to abandon early plans to focus the project on employment and,



instead, to focus on discovering what issues or activities residents in the neighborhood deemed most important.

To see an introduction / overview of the project: [Library Partnership Catalyzing a Community-Led Future](#) (article, SBC Globe Times)

In order to recruit the resident consultants and ambassadors, the staff hosted info sessions which would function like interviews but were done with an informal style aimed at also building community and revealing participants' passions and gifts. Instead of 1-1 interviews, the sessions were held as group



While it sounds academic, ABCD fits libraries and museums. Professional staff are able to hear and understand it. It's a shared language.

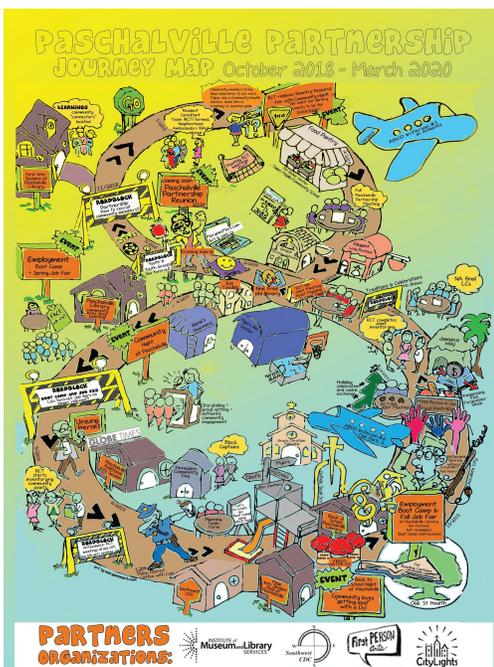
Andrea Lemoins
Community Organizer, SW Cluster
Free Library of Philadelphia

conversations. Flyers were posted and the response was extremely positive -- so much so, that the team decided to continue holding the sessions as a way of building community within the library.

Resident Ambassadors and Consultants began holding Learning Conversations with their fellow community members across the neighborhood. The teams would meet regularly to share what they were discovering and to document the assets they were discovering.

The team then began to celebrate the stories, gifts, talents and contributions they discovered through the contribution of a partner who works in local media and was able to feature local community-rooted businesses in the newspaper: [Fred's Water Ice](#), [Chocolate City Hair Studio](#), [The Best Way is the Jamaica Way](#), [Smiles' Linens – the Anchor of Woodland Avenue](#), [Maryam's Mark](#).

As more individuals and groups surfaced who were contributing to the community through their own talents passions, the team began to host “Story Circles” as a way to experiment with connecting local assets to make them more powerful together. Hosted with the help of partner nonprofit First Person Arts, these sessions proved to be powerful opportunities for on-the-ground actors to meet and delight in kindred spirits but to also exchange valuable stories, tips, techniques and resources. See more on these circles here: [Veterans Story Circle](#), [SW Reading Captains Story Circle](#), [Community Chat with Crossing Guards](#).



About 1.5 years into the project, the team sought to tell the story of their journey uncovering, connecting and celebrating the assets in their neighborhood by creating a [Journey Map](#). The Journey Map is a tool they had learned through the Community Catalyst Initiative which the team sought to use in the most resident-centered, asset-based way possible: by engaging the voices, perspectives and stories of neighbors, library staff, and organizational partners as equals, and bringing the map to life by investing in the illustration gifts of [Maryam Muhammad](#) (an artist they had gotten to know through their community building process). The illustration describes their journey (so far) as they have set out to discover, connect and activate their neighbors' assets and concerns while building collective power and agency.

The community-library team also created an asset map to share back with the community the abundance of neighborhood assets they had uncovered in their journey. The map was featured in the newspaper along with quotes and invitations to community members to become more involved.



The outcomes of the project have been many (and are still surfacing!). Foremost was the increased sense of pride and awareness held by residents as well as library staff of the abundance of assets, resources, care and capacity within a neighborhood that was not seen in such a way previously. This model of resident-centered community listening and asset mobilization has also been adopted as part of a branch rebuild initiative to be implemented within new neighborhoods by new resident teams in Philadelphia. Relationships forged or deepened through the project between residents, library staff, and organizational partners have become conduits for collaboration and resource exchange. The relationships have also been of immense intrinsic value to all involved. Finally, the library staff has grown its capacity to see, respect, invest in and adjust itself in response to what residents can do and care about.

To share their learnings with other libraries and others seeking to spark inside-out local change, the project team has summarized their journey and learnings in this rich [Toolbox for Community Catalyzers](#). This toolbox can and support the work of other libraries and organizations who would seek to uncover, connect and activate local capacities.

This project was unique in that it focused on community assets. Seldom does something make people so proud. We're reminded that this is a neighborhood of people who are working hard to make things better.

Donna Henry
Executive Director, Southwest CDC