

Message from
Jean Ishmon, Executive Director
Northwest Indiana Reinvestment Alliance
and
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Northwest Indiana Continuum of Care

The Northwest Indiana Reinvestment Alliance and the Continuum of Care Network of Northwest Indiana have allied with the Indiana Association for Community Economic Development (IACED) and the Lake County Legacy Foundation to provide perspectives on community development from the local practitioners' point of view. As many of those in this public meeting know the Alliance coordinates the Lake County Housing Task Force and the Northwest Indiana Banker Community Council, where we address all manner of community reinvestment, neighborhood development, and affordable housing goals and strategies. The Continuum of Care meets monthly to provide leadership and guidance on grappling with issues of poverty and homelessness. The Alliance and Continuum appreciate the support of the Legacy Foundation to lift-up the work of community economic development through the Neighborhood Spotlight program.

We believe, the Neighborhood Spotlight process and grant is a unique opportunity for the Northwest Indiana region to work toward achieving regional indicators of success using a localized, place-based, approach that builds on the local assets of our people and institutions to create a better future for families and communities in Lake County. **You will learn more about the process this morning and about the assistance that will be provided to you as you apply to be a pilot neighborhood.**

This approach to community economic development is different than the way we have approached it traditionally. It is not based on serving a particular population or focusing on a specific topic like housing. Rather, it is place-based, rooted in neighborhoods, and the holistic approach, covering the broad range of topics that affect the families and communities in our county. When we have strong neighborhoods, we have strong communities, and when we have strong communities, we have a strong region.

Jean serves on the board of the IACED, Sharron serves on the state-wide COC Board and both the Alliance and Continuum of Care Network are both longtime members of IACED. We believe in the work they do around the state to build resilient families and vibrant communities. We believe their theory of change works in raising-up individuals and communities. Through this process of collective impact planning, neighborhoods are able to grow closer, forming meaningful networks of residents and organizations that plan for their own future and implement that plan together, improving the neighborhood, community, and region.

You will hear more about the process this morning, but generally it begins with community building – old fashioned relationship building and organizing – talking to people in the neighborhood about the neighborhood and developing a collective vision of the future alongside the organizations that work in the neighborhood. While that work is being done, there are early action grants and projects to show that this is about DOING as well as planning. Once there is a shared vision, a plan (or social contract) is developed BY people from the neighborhood, and working in the neighborhood, with external stakeholder on how to achieve that vision. It is a plan that is specific and measurable. The goals are aggressive, but not pie in the sky. They have a time limit. Then the real work of doing, or implementation, begins. The Neighborhood Spotlight grants will support the selected neighborhoods in doing this work with assistance from IACED and with a community builder on the ground in the neighborhood, working on it full time.

We hope you continue to be interested in participating in the Neighborhood Spotlight program and are successful in being selected as one of the pilot neighborhoods. We look forward to working with you.