



Congruence
Partners



PLACES PEOPLE CHANGE

A QUICKSTART GUIDE FOR
NEIGHBORHOOD BELONGING
AND SHARED ACTION



Places People Change is a community engagement methodology that cultivates neighborhood belonging and shared action.

Traditional Community Engagement

To, For

Short-Term, Episodic
Issue-Driven
Rushed, Anxious
Extractive

Places People Change

With

Consistent, Ongoing
Relationship-Driven
Deliberate, Care-filled
Power-Building

If you are looking for an approach to community engagement that places the interests of the neighbors and neighborhood above the self-interests of organizations or leaders—and one that builds a culture of connection, trust, and shared power—this is it. Welcome.



A healthy community engagement system works like a solar system:

the neighborhood and its residents remain at the center, while organizations and institutions play vital roles in supporting, strengthening, and sustaining what happens closest to home. Each role matters, but lasting change occurs only when every part stays in its proper orbit.

STEP ONE: Get Clear on the Center

The core of PPC is that the neighborhood is the center—the sun around which all else orbits. Get this wrong, and the whole system falls apart. This image offers two insights: mind your orbit and don't overfunction, and alignment means partnering across orbits, not collapsing them.

Be honest about who wants to be involved and move competing interests out of the way so neighbor well-being stays central. Identify people who will tell you when the neighborhood has drifted from the center—and how you'll return to it.

STEP TWO: Assemble Your Team and Name the Players

Though the neighborhood is the center, there are other important players in this work. Gather a team of neighbors committed to PPC and discuss the various leaders, networks, and organizations that will need to be involved at different stages of the process. What assets do they offer? What resources do they bring? How and when can you best leverage them for the good of the neighborhood?

Draw the solar system. List them out. And decide what role each will play.

Neighbors & the Neighborhood	The center. Active residents who take ownership of the neighborhood's future. The driving force of all genuine engagement.
Neighborhood Networks	Closest to the center. Civic associations, block clubs, and local business groups—led by residents and focused on specific neighborhood concerns.
Community Quarterback	Nonprofits or foundations that act as catalysts and bridge-builders. They connect residents to systems of power—without speaking for the neighborhood.
Service Providers	Organizations delivering essential services (commerce, health, housing, faith). Valuable partners, but their specific mission should not steer the broader engagement agenda.
City Allies	Elected officials, funders, and institutions with policy leverage. Their role is to follow and resource resident leadership—not to set its direction.

STEP THREE: Practice the Formats

PPC is based on three relational organizing practices: One-on-One Conversations, Small Gatherings, and Community Meetings. These formats are built to move neighbors from isolation to connection, from connection to trust, from trust to belonging, from belonging to shared values, and from shared values to collective action.

Practice them carefully, consistently, and strategically, and you will see the neighborhood develop the alignment and capacity to shape the future it desires.



ONE-ON-ONE CONVERSATIONS / 30–60 min The Foundation of Trust

A structured, purposeful conversation between two neighborhood stakeholders—not a chat, not a recruitment pitch. The goal is to build genuine trust and discover shared values, concerns, and motivations.

- Listen more than you talk. Be curious, not assumptive.
- Share your own story—mutuality is essential.
- End with a commitment: “Who else should I talk to?”
- Always start and continue your engagement with one-on-one’s. Everything is built from this.



SMALL GATHERINGS / 90–180 min Turning Relationships into Belonging

An intimate gathering of 5–12 neighbors in a welcoming space. The goal is to surface shared values and create a sense of common identity—the bridge between individual trust and collective readiness.

- Keep it informal and hospitable: food, warmth, and openness matter.
- Invite everyone to share their story of the neighborhood.
- Close by naming shared values and common hopes.
- This is where isolated residents begin to see themselves as neighbors.



COMMUNITY MEETINGS / 1–2 hrs Turning Alignment into Action

A structured gathering that translates shared relationships and values into visible collective action. Community Meetings are not the starting point—they are what becomes possible once trust and alignment have been built.

- Begin with storytelling: remind neighbors why they gathered.
- Set a clear agenda driven by resident priorities, not organizational agendas.
- Create dialogue space—not just announcements or venting.
- Close with named next steps and clear ownership.

The real magic of these formats is how they work together. At first, they are best practiced in a linear fashion. Host lots of One-on-Ones and build a wide base of connections. Slowly bring individuals into Small Gatherings to discuss common themes and shared values that emerged in those conversations. As energy and momentum build, host and facilitate Community Meetings for learning, planning, and preparation for shared action. Those actions can range from planning a fun event to challenging an unjust policy—whatever the neighborhood prioritizes.

Once these formats become common, consistent, and comfortable, you will notice they are no longer linear. They will begin to flow back and forth, exerting a mutually reinforcing effect. And that is the goal: to create a culture of community engagement, not to lead a short-term, issue-based campaign.

Need more resources or support? Download the full Blueprint or contact our team.”

PPC: Blueprint

More information on how to set up your team and get started from the right mindset

Greater detail on the format with practical guides

Guidance on how to plan your strategy

Our Team

Speaking and Training

Ongoing, personalized coaching

Consulting on strategy development and action planning



Visit DiscoverCongruence.com/Resources to download the full Blueprint, or email us at Hello@DiscoverCongruence.com to inquire about inviting our team to work with you.