

Helping Communities that Want to Help Themselves

New Directions specializes in research, planning and the design of collaborative partnership programs to create new local institutions in school district communities. Over time, our *Discover Your Community* program aims to produce a comprehensive set of local civic organizations, which are needed today to serve the reinvention of democracy in these communities by facilitating informed public deliberation and consensus building based on good information.

We bring diverse perspectives together to resolve differences, develop strategies and address complex issues. Successful school district communities are a direct result of effective research and planning that allows local

businesses, government and non-profit groups to work together with citizens and citizen groups to reach collective goals and meet common challenges.



Committed individuals help develop a community's capacity to solve problems

Education is the Key

New Directions has designed and demonstrated an educational program to support grassroots community building. It builds local capacity by creating new institutions, and by conducting an adult civic education program that adds to a growing store of knowledge about the community from which new programs flow and old ones can be redesigned.

The current components of *Discover Your Community* are: (1) a representative community **forum**, solidly connected to the residents of all neighborhoods, (2) a community **learning center** from which the program will operate, (3) a **networking and dialogue** campaign to engage residents in the program, (4) a **community foundation** to raise funds in support of civic activities, (5) a **community land**

trust, (6) a collection of **baseline community information**, (7) an **adult civic education** program in cooperation with the public schools, and (8) a development program to produce a **community & family support center**.

A year-long community self study is a part of the adult civic education curriculum, which also includes a pilot community circles project, and a community land trusts introductory course. A course on working with local government, businesses and nonprofit organizations is also recommended.

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Taking Charge: Discovery and Management

Besides their many amenities and attractions, Long Island's suburban communities outside of the incorporated villages generally have at least four shortcomings.

First, there is a lack of civic institutions for cooperative problem solving. There are organizations such as the public school systems and volunteer fire departments that provide specific services, but none that are able to handle a wide variety of problems as they arise.

Second, there is a lack of shared knowledge about each community, no body of information that citizens could look at together in order to come to a shared understanding of what is right or wrong and what might be done to make it a better place to live and work.

Third, even if there were institutions that could take action on behalf of the community, and some basis of knowledge to go on, there would be no way, under present conditions, to find out what the residents want to be done.

Fourth, as a result of the above, there is no local bottom-up planning and control of what goes on within the local territory. Much of what happens locally is the result of decisions by the different layers of government, corporations and absentee owners. Government and the market have their place, but their actions, initiated from elsewhere, can be insensitive to local conditions and disruptive to the local quality of life.

New Directions' aim is to find ways to answer the above needs and equip citizens with effective tools for grassroots planning and action toward community goals.

The Four Stages of Community Discovery

Through its *Discover Your Community* program, New Directions prepares school district communities to set up local arrangements to deal with local problems in their own way. These initiatives develop in a cycle of four stages, (1) building civic capacity by setting up new institutions, (2) community studies, (3) community-wide facilitated dialogues to find common ground, identify needs and set goals, (4) local design of improved services with existing government and nonprofit agencies and local businesses. This cycle can be repeated year after year, forming an upward spiral of growing local knowledge and capabilities.

As an example of how action flows from one stage to the next, consider the community land trust (CLT). Experience has shown that the CLT is an essential tool for local planning and control of affordable housing. Incorporation of the CLT and certain other components of civic organization should begin without delay. Meanwhile, in stage 2 there will be studies of available houses and land that might be suitable for use by the CLT. These will be discussed in community circles in stage 3, and then negotiations can begin for acquisition of properties in stage 4. By then the CLT will be ready to enter into partnerships and sign contracts.

1. Building Civic Capacity. Where existing agencies are unable to meet needs, such as the need for permanently affordable housing under local control, the community sets up its own organizations to do the job. There are many possible local initiatives that can be undertaken. New Directions recommends that the following

be started right away:

- A **community forum**, solidly connected to the residents of all neighborhoods.
- A **community learning center** from which the program will operate.
- A **community foundation** to raise funds in support of civic activities.
- An **adult civic education** program in cooperation with the public schools. A community land trusts introductory course would be offered (5 monthly sessions).
- A **community land trust**.



2. Community Studies bring out the basic information that will be needed in the search for answers to housing and other needs that make sense locally. New Directions builds connections between the local school district and area universities for help with the research. Community-based research lets students learn while serving the community, and lets the community grow in self-awareness. The following are designed to occur during the first year.

• Collection of **baseline community information**,

• A development program to produce a **community & family support center**.

• A year-long community study is a part of the adult civic education curriculum

3. Marketing and dialogue. This stage begins with an advertising or marketing campaign to engage

residents in the program. In adult civic education, a pilot community circles project (5 sessions within 3 months) will acquaint a number of residents with the circles method and prepare them to be circles facilitators. Later on, citizens from all geographic areas of the community will get together in circles of about 10 people each for four two-hour facilitated sessions on topics of local concern, find common ground and decide what actions need to be taken. Circles are conducted in a unique way, for which New Directions provides facilitation and training. In summary, this stage involves the following:

- Publicity campaign
- Civic education circles course
- Community circles program for communitywide action planning dialogues

4. Partnering with Existing Agencies. Can existing government agencies, nonprofits or businesses take care of a problem that has been identified? If so, in the partnering stage, citizens learn enough about the workings of agencies to be able to sit down with them in a cooperative way to work out agreements for better services. A civic education class on working with local government, business and nonprofits would help prepare leadership for this critical stage of community formation. Stage four has two components:

• Training in how to deal with other groups as partners.

• Actual negotiations for needed improvements in services that were identified in the community studies and dialogue circles.

The New Directions Team (August 2006)

New Directions is configured to help design, organize and then support the community discovery process.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

We have a diverse and dedicated Board.

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Sibyl O'Reilly Mizzi, Ph.D. Adjunct Assoc. Prof. of Social Anthropology, Dowling College. Former Housing Director, Town of Babylon.

David Sprintzen, Ph.D. Professor Emeritus of Philosophy, Long Island University. Secretary & Founder, L.I. Progressive Coalition.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT AND CIVIC EDUCATION TEAM (STAFF)

Robert J. Mulvey, Esq., Executive Director. Former Acting City Manager, Yonkers, NY, and Professor of Planning, Law and Finance, C.W. Post College, LIU.

O. Andrew Collver, Ph.D., Research Director. Professor Emeritus of Sociology, Stony Brook University, SUNY.

Sibyl O'Reilly Mizzi, Ph.D., Community-Government Relations Advisor. Adjunct Professor of Anthropology, Dowling College. Former Housing Director, Town of Babylon.

AFFILIATES, PARTNERS, NATIONAL RESOURCES

We have a growing network of affiliates interested in contributing to the development of a strong civic sector on Long Island

1. Building Civic Capacity.

For community land trust:

Neighborhood Realty Services, Paul D'Ascoli, CEO and President. Burlington Associates in Community Development.

For family support center:

Intergenerational Strategies, Paul Arfin, President and CEO. Stony Brook University School of Social Welfare.

Area providers of services.

For civic education program:

David Flatley, Asst. Supt., Carle Place Union Free School District.

Area universities.

Fordham National Center for Schools and Community.

2. Community Studies.

Community Insight, O. Andrew Collver, Ph.D., Director.

NYIT School of Architecture.

LIU Dept. of Environ. Science.

SBU School of Social Welfare.

3. Marketing and Dialogue.

Community Networking and Circles Associates, Jack Dumas, Ph. D., and Linda McCabe-Oristano, Co-Directors.

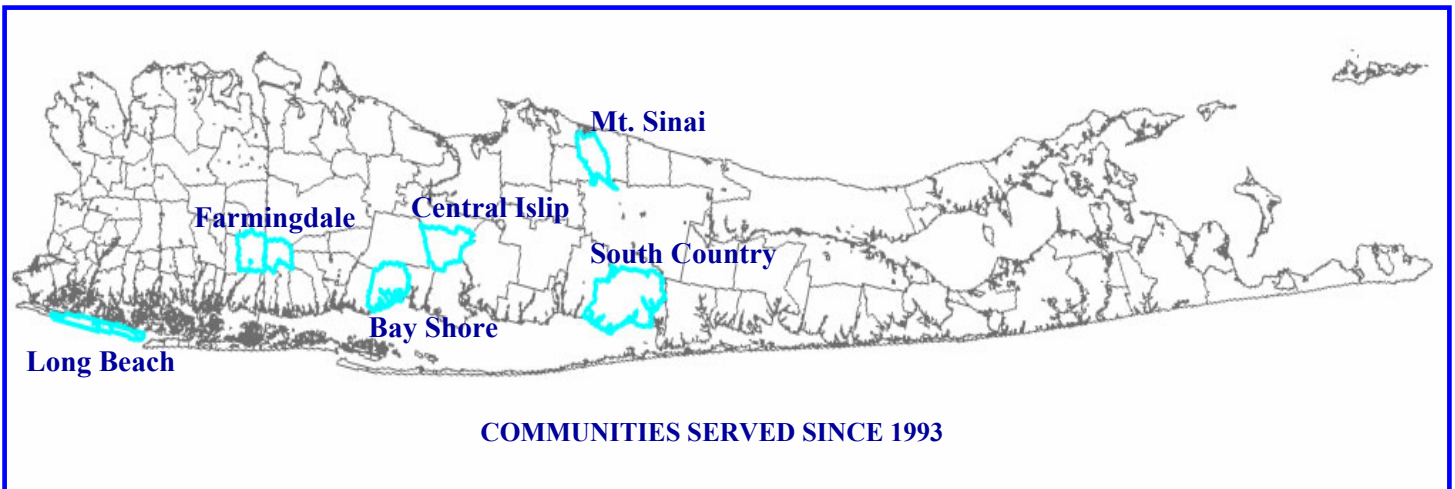
Study Circles Resource Center.

FINANCIAL SUPPORTERS

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"If the twentieth century was about the neglect, and even the systematic destruction of civil society through statist ideologies and destructive cultural influences, the twenty-first century may represent the era of its restoration."

—Don Eberly, *The Coming Social Renaissance*,
www.civilsocietyproject.org.



*New Directions Community-Based Research Institute and its predecessor,
New Directions Community Services, have been conducting research and education
by, with and for Long Island communities since 1993.*

1993-94 **Training program** in forming a local development corporation, funded by Nassau County's Office of Housing and Intergovernmental Affairs for groups from Elmont, Roosevelt, New Cassel, Long Beach and the Village of Hempstead, at Hofstra University.

1995-96 **Neighborhood design** project funded by Nassau County for North Park Neighborhood of Long Beach, with NYIT architecture faculty and students and Long Beach High School.

1997-98 **Neighborhood profile** funded by Citibank for Lowell Avenue Neighborhood of Central Islip, with architecture faculty and students from NYIT and sociology faculty and students from SUNY Stony Brook.

Grassroots action planning, sponsored by Citibank, for the Bay Shore-Brightwaters Summit Council and eleven local civic associations, involved NYIT architecture faculty and students.

1999-2000 **Participatory program planning** and implementation, funded by Citibank with Lowell Avenue Civic Association in cooperation with NYIT, Town of Islip Planning Department, LIRR.

Design of Neighborhood Realty Services, a business model to be proposed in Central Islip and North Bellport.

Forming a community land trust, funded by Citigroup Foundation and a challenge grant to Mt. Sinai Civic Association. Enlisted NYIT architecture faculty and students to help design a park for Mt. Sinai.

2001-02 **Learn by Doing** community self-study and grassroots planning project initiated in North Bellport. Concluded with publication of Bellport Station.

2003- 04 **Discover South Country**. Expanded Learn by Doing to include work at the level of the entire community served by the South Country Central School District--the South Country Area. Developed concept of Discover Your Community and introduced it as Discover South Country. Set new precedents by **collaborating with the School Board** and Supt. of Schools and with the **Family Support Center**, an institution that was newly introduced to Long Island. Conducted preliminary study circles, (here called **community circles**) and facilitator training. Completed a "**Hamlet Study**" of South Country, accepted by the Brookhaven Town Board as an addition to its master plan documents. Incorporated the **South Country Community Land Trust**, to support affordable housing under local citizens' control.

2005 **Promotion of Community Land Trusts on Long Island**. New Directions now offers to provide education and technical assistance for local CLT's in Nassau and Suffolk Counties. This service was introduced by a conference, Community Land Trusts in Action, workshop at Milleridge Inn, Jericho.

2006 **Discover Farmingdale**. Beginning full-scale application of the NYC model developed in South Country, plus important additions and enlargement of the scope. First steps have been to form the community forum and to begin to incorporate the Farmingdale Community Land Trust