



2017 Network Report



Note from the Executive Director

Dear Friends and Supporters:

For nearly a decade, IMPACT has been working to build neighborhood-based networks that support residents in expanding and strengthening their connections and relationships, and accessing opportunities that lead to quality of life improvements. The Network Spaces framework that we developed in FY16 continues to guide our work today (see illustration on adjoining page).

In this year's report, we are excited to share stories of several powerful actions that were generated through our Network Spaces framework — including the creation of a financial co-operative by a growing network of micro-entrepreneurs; a neighborhood-based Spanish immersion summer camp led by a group of moms; and our network response to the Flower Branch fire tragedy.

Another significant milestone achieved this year was the evolution of our strategic framework to focus more explicitly on revealing and dismantling racial inequity and lack of economic opportunity. Through our Truth, Trust and Transformation initiative (T3), IMPACT's goal is to break down barriers, and create networks of connection and action—across lines of difference—at the individual, neighborhood and systems level. In working at all 3 levels, we seek to build a more racially and economically equitable Montgomery County where everyone can have a full and quality life. We look forward to sharing about our progress on the T3 initiative throughout the next year. In the meantime, we hope you will be inspired by the stories of community courage and resilience included in the pages of this year's report.

With gratitude,



Jayne Park



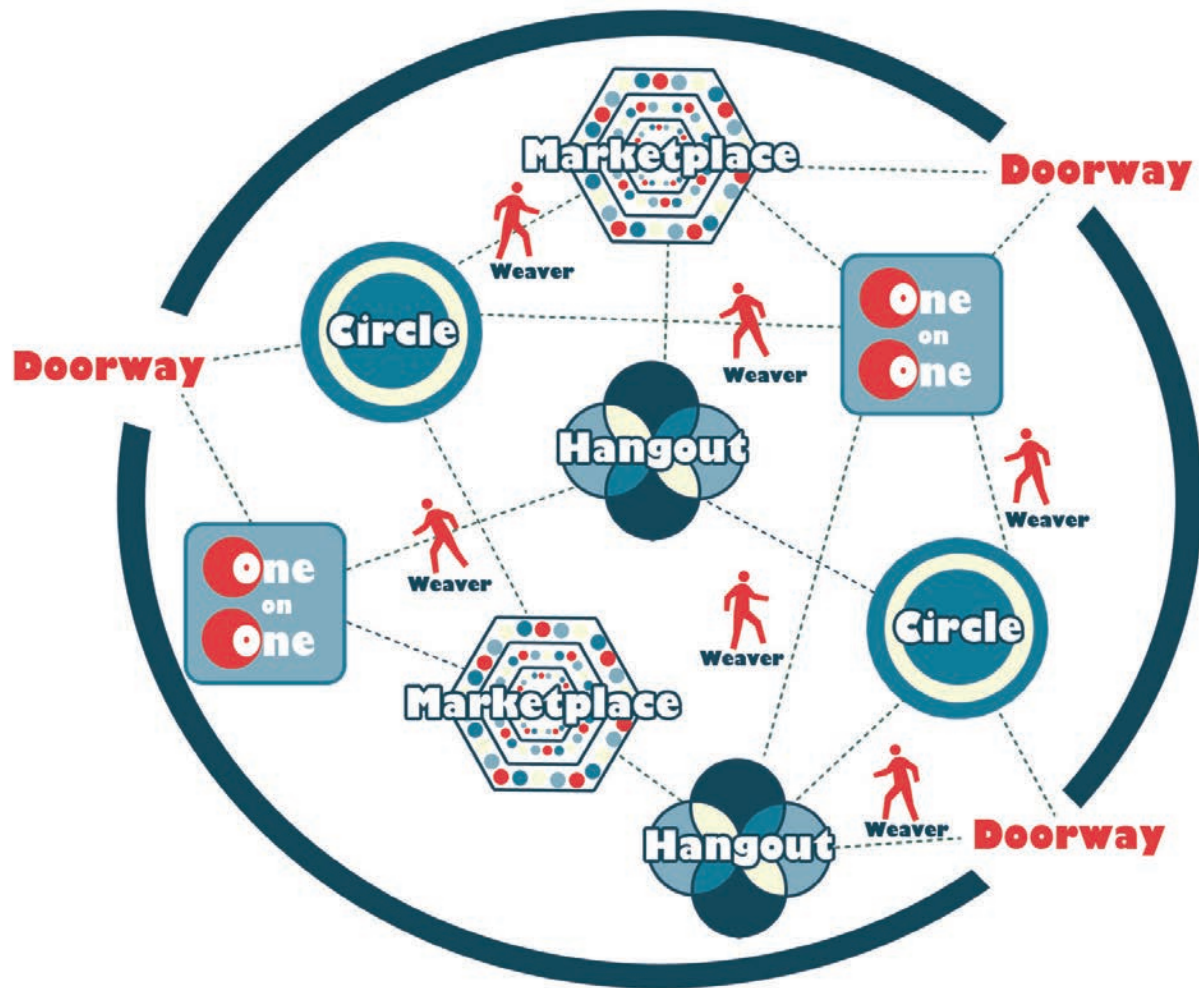
IMPACT's Vision

Every resident leads a full and quality life in a racially and economically equitable Montgomery County.

IMPACT's Values

- **We are human beings first.** Our professional positions and identity are secondary.
- **We take time to build relationships,** and relate to each other from a place of trust.
- **We commit to revealing, understanding, and disrupting racism, hatred, and other forms of oppression.**
- **We build relationships that are mutual and reciprocal.** We believe that everyone has something to offer others, and something they need from others.
- **We focus on strengths and opportunities,** and actively bring forward everyone's gifts and talents.
- **We support a local economy,** placing the highest value on local capacities, resources, and talent.

IMPACT's Approach: The Spaces Framework



In each of the neighborhoods where we work, we build networks by:

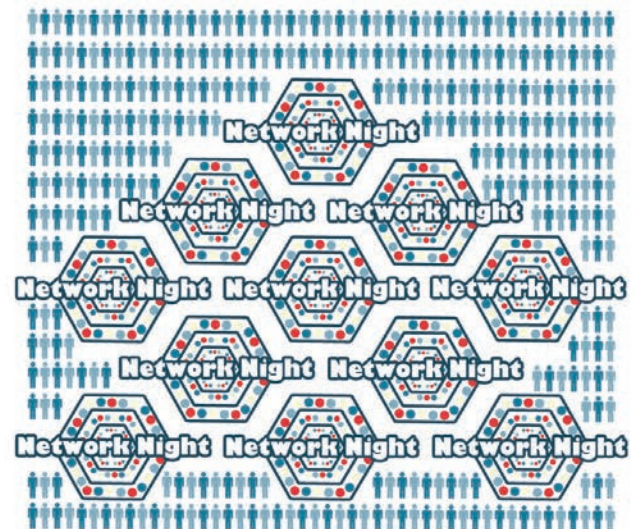
- Creating **DOORWAYS** for people to enter the Network – like block parties, neighborhood clean-up days, and coffee chats at social service sites.
- Hosting **HANGOUT** spaces that address concrete issues of interest to residents, while providing relationship-building opportunities – like English classes, training for micro-entrepreneurs, and healthy nutrition practices. Issues are identified through our deep listening process.
- Supporting **ACTION CIRCLES** of residents who come together in small groups to take action around a shared goal that leads to positive change in their lives and community.
- Intentionally connecting people in different rooms to each other and to new people and resources through **MARKETPLACE** moments, enabling people to cross lines of difference, exchange information and favors, spark and support circles, and have fun together. Network Nights are an example of this strategy.
- Engaging in purposeful **ONE-ON-ONE** conversations to build relationships, make connections, extend invitations, and/or spark actions.
- Network **WEAVERS** draw on the natural leadership capacity that exists in every person. They help others identify their interests and challenges, connect people strategically where there is potential for mutual benefit, and serve as a catalyst for self-organizing groups.

IMPACT Spaces by the Numbers

6396 low-income residents connected to needed food, health, English language acquisition, legal, and financial services.



353 community members at **11** Network Nights grew their social networks--leading to increased sense of belonging, civic engagement, and economic and educational opportunities.



938 residents, in total, gained new skills, information, and awareness through immigration, storytelling, town hall, housing, nutrition, mutual support, and empowerment Hangouts.



8 Action Circles generated **9** action projects that impacted more than **750** residents, leading to improved English language skills, extracurricular activities for teens, a new neighborhood park, support for fire victims, summer enrichment for children, cleaner communities, and increased micro-entrepreneurship opportunities.



Highland Mothers Action Circle

Schools have long been effective doorways into the IMPACT network. So it's not surprising that the Highland Mothers Action Circle was born at Highland Elementary School in Wheaton's Connecticut Avenue Estates neighborhood. What began as an IMPACT hangout space morphed into a circle of moms taking action together to offer a summer camp in their neighborhood.

The Highland Mothers Action Circle is comprised of 21 Latina mothers. The mothers are all part of Linkages to Learning at Highland, a program supporting students and their families in overcoming non-academic barriers to learning. Partnering with both Linkages to Learning and Councilmember Nancy Navarro's office, IMPACT began meeting weekly with this cohort of mothers to promote relationship-building, mutual support, empowerment, information sharing, and resident-led action. During one session, when asked what they would like to see in their neighborhood, an immediate response was: Something for our kids to do over the summer.



The idea for a summer camp was born. With the help of IMPACT Network-builder Carmen Hernandez, a long-time scout leader in her native El Salvador, the mothers developed a plan for a month-long summer camp for neighborhood children. The camp would meet Monday and Thursday evenings for two hours in the green space along Valleywood Drive, and include crafts, games, and cooking.

The first day of camp was on June 26th, and as of the writing of this piece, has had an average of 40 children participating in each day of camp. Most of the members of the Highland Mothers action circle, as well as mothers not in the circle (yet), are there for two hours leading games and crafts, providing snacks, and teaching Spanish vocabulary. The camp has been a win-win for this neighborhood. As mother Roxana Monterrosa put it, "This camp is called Making New Friends. That goes for the children and the mothers."

The IMPACT of a Network Approach: Flower Branch Apartments

On August 10th a deadly fire and explosion stunned residents of Flower Branch apartments, a rental community in Silver Spring's Long Branch neighborhood. IMPACT has long been rooted in the community, nurturing a supportive network of residents connected to each other through IMPACT spaces such as Network Nights, English language classes, a workers cooperative, and collaborative action circles. The Flower Branch tragedy has been a proving ground for the effectiveness of networks to quickly move into action—because of existing relationships—to address emergency needs, and also do the deeper work of igniting long-term transformation.

The day after the fire, IMPACT Network-builders swiftly tapped the existing network to mobilize volunteers who went door-to-door linking affected Flower Branch residents to available social services. All the while, door-knockers listened deeply to residents as they shared their issues and concerns.

It quickly became apparent that this apartment community, so in need of immediate aid, was also suffering from the effects of long-standing tensions between residents and the property management, as well as simmering distrust between residents and County departments and agencies. Additionally, there were few meaningful bonds between Flower Branch renters and their home-owning neighbors. Comments from Flower Branch residents made at community meetings held soon after the fire reflect the feelings of disconnection and distrust:

"We are trying to organize ourselves, but it is hard to come against the wall that is Kay Management."

"They need to hire more bilingual people in the fire department."

"We feel intimidated and scared by police."

"We are trying to get more neighbors to unite with us. We need the support of all the neighbors."

(Continued on next page.)

In the months following the tragedy, IMPACT's work with Flower Branch residents has been grounded in a long-term goal of transforming the culture at the apartment complex from one of distrust, fear, and division, to one of aspiration, trust, and connection. We did not embark on this work alone, but alongside dedicated organizational partners—CASA de Maryland, Clifton Park Baptist Church, Takoma Park Mobilization, the Long Branch Library, and the TESS Center—and a committed group of resident network members.

Phase one of this work focused on creating spaces for empowerment, support, trust-building, and the weaving of connections among neighbors and with other community stakeholders.



The IMPACT SPACES Framework at work in Flower Branch (August 2016 – June 2017):



Network-builders and volunteers organized much-needed fun activities for Flower Branch families. Additionally, hosted Coffee Chats where residents talked with each other about issues of interest. Activities were hosted in the complex parking lot.



Hosted a Network Night in Long Branch focused on immigration that connected residents to County Council members, Congressman Raskin's office, the Police Department, CASA de Maryland, and TP Mobilization. 100 residents attended.



Organized 5 forums with County Executive Ike Leggett, members of the County Council, fire chief, police chief, and Kay Management.



A Circle of 6 Long Branch/Takoma Park residents self-organized to support those injured during the fire.



Intentional weaving to connect homeowners residing in the Sligo-Branview community to their neighbors living at Flower Branch apartments.



A Network-builder meets Flower Branch resident Felicia. Listening to Felicia, the Network-BUILDER thinks she may be interested in engaging her neighbors in building a supportive community network, and invites her to volunteer as a door-knocker and to participate in an upcoming hangout space.

Outcomes

We know that lasting community transformation happens not only through big sweeping changes, but also small personal shifts. Here are a few outcomes from IMPACT's network-building efforts in Flower Branch:

- There is a new property manager on site at Flower Branch who residents describe as “open and friendly.” One of the new manager's first actions was to host a community meeting with residents.
- Felicia, a Flower Branch resident, is now a member of the Sligo-Branview Civic Association board. She is the first Flower Branch renter to hold a position on the board.
- Thirty eight Flower Branch residents are now enrolled in IMPACT's English Language Circle.
- Three Flower Branch residents—Sofia, Rosali, and William—are now members of IMPACT's Micro-Entrepreneurs Circle, and are growing their small businesses as part of this supportive cooperative.
- Members of the Micro-Entrepreneurs Circle organized and are running a youth chess program benefitting Flower Branch families.
- Fire victims with extensive injuries received ongoing help with transportation to and from medical appointments, and with needs such as groceries and clothing from a self-organized group of neighbors.
- Flower Branch residents are actively working with their neighbors who are members of Clifton Park Baptist Church and Takoma Park Mobilization to host regular community potluck dinners. These are diverse neighbors who live in close proximity, but had little interaction before.

Network Approach in Action: Micro-Entrepreneurs

"We have to share what we've learned with others. The money is important, but it's the new way of being that is most significant."

–Vicky, Montgomery Community Investment Coop (MCIC) Member

1 Residents Ask for Help in Pursuing Micro-Enterprise. IMPACT Listens.



Through DOORWAYS like door-knocking, IMPACT meets residents seeking support in pursuing micro-enterprise.

2 Micro-Enterprise Circles Organize



IMPACT helps organize CIRCLES of residents around various enterprises resulting in El Rosal (a sewing circle), the Cooking Circle, and the Home Improvement Circle.

3 Training to Support Micro-Entrepreneurs



To further support aspiring entrepreneurs IMPACT hosts a HANGOUT called "Activating Micro-Entrepreneurs" to help build networks and access to technical assistance.

4 Moving Beyond Traditional Trainings



Through ONE-ON-ONE conversations, IMPACT learns that micro-entrepreneurs want support in creating a new space, one that is more innovative, empowering, and practical than traditional small business cohorts and trainings.

5 A Coop is Born



July 2016, 6 micro-entrepreneurs organize as a CIRCLE, coming together to form a workers cooperative called the Montgomery Community Investment Coop (MCIC). They decide to fund MCIC themselves.

6 What Support Looks Like for the Cooperative



IMPACT supports the coop through WEAVING, helping members connect to coop developers and pro bono legal help. By encouraging members to contribute their gifts and skills to the coop a board of directors and committees are formed.

7 The Micro-Entrepreneurs Circle Today



The WEAVING continues. Today, MCIC has 34 members, and a collective savings of almost \$40,000. MCIC connects to other coops and the larger movement when 9 members attend the 2017 Eastern Conference for Workplace Democracy.

8 What the Future Holds



June 2017, MCIC members help organize a MARKET-PLACE Local Economy Network Night in Long Branch to share what they've learned with others. MCIC hopes to be a leader for the coop movement in Montgomery County.



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