Chavis Park
COMMUNITY CONVERSATION

DEFINITIONS

The following definitions are adapted and/or quoted from U.S. EPA's *Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem Solving Model* report and the City of Raleigh's *Public Participation Guidelines for Parks Planning*.[i, ii]

Collaborative problem solving is a process through which a group of stakeholders agree to work together to create a collective vision that represents mutually beneficial solutions for all parties. Often, stakeholders represent a variety of community interests and backgrounds, and the problems facing the group may be deeply rooted in a complex community history. Therefore, developing strong, lasting solutions requires active participation and respectful dialogue from all group members.[i]

Building consensus means "seeking agreement among different and, often times, competing interests. In the collaborative problem-solving process, consensus building meets the needs and interests of each member of the group and requires members to work together to seek creative solutions. While building consensus is important to reaching agreements, it also serves to create and strengthen the relationships that form the basis for current and future collaborations."[i]

A **consensus decision process** is **"the decision rule that allows collaborative problem solving to work.** It is a way for more than two people to reach agreement. Consensus can build trust in order to share information and generate potential solutions to resolve an issue, especially under conditions of conflict. Consensus does not mean that everyone will be equally happy with the decision, rather that there is general or widespread agreement among the members of a group that they have made the best recommendations or decisions, at the time and with the people involved."[ii] The consensus decision making process that will be used in the Chavis Community Conversation is described in the Public Leadership Group Charter.

POSITIONS VS. INTERESTS

Understanding the difference between positions and interests is key to collaborative problem solving. The following definitions are adapted and/or quoted from the University of Texas at Austin's *Problem Solving Information and Tips* webpage:[iii]

- **Positions** are "predetermined results or demands that people use to express needs."[iii]

  For example: "I want a new playground."

- **Interests** may be intangible and define what the problem is. They are the reasons for the needs – the motivation that resulted in a position.[iii]

  For example: "I want a safe play space for children and a comfortable seating area for parents to socialize while watching their kids."

Remember, identifying your own interests is just as important as identifying the interests of others. Being able to clearly communicate your own interests and listen with understanding to the interests of others can lead to unexpected breakthroughs and new common ground in the problem-solving process.

How to Identify Interests[1]

Ask open ended questions that encourage a person to share their needs, fears, hopes or desires:

- What's your basic concern about …?
- Tell me about …
- What do you think about …?
- How could we fix …?
- What would happen if …?
- How else could you do …?
- What could you tell me about …?
- Then what?
- Could you help me understand …?
- What do you think you will lose if you …?
- What have you tried before?
- What do you want to do next?
- How can I be of help?

Questions should focus on creating better understanding, rather than asking for justification of the person's position.

[1] This list is from the University of Texas at Austin's *Problem Solving Information and Tips* webpage.

TYPES OF CONFLICT

Identifying what type of conflict is occurring can help us understand the root causes and design strategies that will be more likely to successfully resolve the issue. The conflict type descriptions in the following table were adapted from the *Oregon Mediation Center Training Manual*. [iv]

Type	May occur when …	Tips for resolution
Relationship Conflicts	Relationships are impacted by: • Strong negative emotions, • Misperceptions or stereotypes, and • Negative behavior patterns. Strained relationships are exacerbated by new or existing conflicts in one of the other categories.	Create a safe environment where people's perspectives and emotions can be expressed and acknowledged.
Interest Conflicts	People feel competitive over needs that may be perceived as incompatible, including: • *Substantive issues* (e.g., money, physical resources, time), • *Procedural issues* (e.g., the way the dispute is to be resolved), and • *Psychological issues* (e.g., perceptions of trust, fairness, respect)	Identify the interests and intentions behind the positional statements people may be expressing. Find mutually beneficial ways to address individual interests. Maximize integration of the parties' interests, positive intentions and desired outcomes.
Data Conflicts	People: • Lack the data needed for an informed decision, • Do not agree on what information is pertinent to the issue at hand, • Understand or interpret information differently, or • Disagree over data collection, interpretation, assessment or communication methods.	Clearly communicate the limits of available data. Be transparent regarding data interpretation or assessment methodologies and choices. Find data-based solutions where possible.
Structural Conflicts	External limitations are perceived as constraining the process. These limitations may include: • Physical resources, • Authority, • Geographic constraints • Time constraints, and • Changes to the organization.	Acknowledge these "real world" limitations. Look for opportunities to find structural solutions where possible.
Value Conflicts	Parties have belief systems that are (or are perceived to be) incompatible. People try to impose an exclusive value system on others, instead of allowing for differences in beliefs and values.	Attempts to change a person's value system or beliefs can be counterproductive. Instead, people can be encouraged to express their own values and beliefs and to acknowledge the values and beliefs of other participants.

CONFLICT STYLES

People have different styles of handling conflict, and it can be helpful to identify what style is most common for you. Keep in mind that your style may change depending on context. For instance, you may find yourself using one conflict style at work and another at home.

Once you understand the types of approaches to conflict, you can be intentional about choosing what approach best fits the situation. The Chavis Park Community Conversation will emphasize a collaborative approach.

The chart below outlines the five different styles of conflict. The descriptions of each style below are adapted from the University of Texas at Austin's *Problem Solving Information and Tips* webpage, which uses the five conflict styles identified by behavioral scientists Kenneth Thomas and Ralph Kilmann.[iii]

Style	Value of Own Interest	Value of Relationship	Goal
Competition	High	Low	I win, you lose
Accommodation	Low	High	You lose, I win
Avoidance	Low	Low	I lose, you lose
Compromise	Medium	Medium	I win some, you win some
Collaboration	High	High	I win, you win

CONFLICT STYLE DESCRIPTIONS

1. Competition

Value of own issue/goal: High
Value of relationship: Low
Goal: I win, you lose

Style Description: This style emphasizes the ability to gain power or pressure a change at another party's expense.

Personality Description: People who use this style may appear aggressive, confrontational or intimidating to others.

Advantages: This style can be appropriate in the following instances:

- implementing an unpopular decision,
- making a quick, crisis-mode decision, or
- communicating the importance of an issue.

Disadvantages: Relationships can be damaged or even harmed beyond repair. Other participants may start using covert methods to meet their needs because the conflict leaves no room for dialogue.

2. Accommodation

Value of own issue/goal: Low
Value relationship: High
Goal: I lose, you win

Style Description: This style emphasizes keeping the peace at the expense of your own personal needs.

Personality Description: People who use this style may appear unassertive and cooperative. At times, they may act out by behaving like martyr or complainer or by sabotaging the process.

Advantages: Accommodation can be useful when one is wrong or in a situation where you are going to lose anyway and want to preserve the relationship.

Disadvantages: Accommodation can result in inadequate solutions, reduce creative problem solving, and increase power disparities. It can also foster suppressed anger or resentment on the part of the accommodator.

3. Avoidance

Value of own issue/goal: Low
Value of relationship: Low
Goal: I lose, you lose

Style Description: This style emphasizes minimizing conflict by ignoring or withdrawing from it.

Personality Description: Avoiders tend to hope the problem will resolve on its own or wait for others to take responsibility for solving it.

Advantages: This style can be appropriate when:

- you need more time to decide on an appropriate response,
- other time constraints require an extended timeframe,
- conflict will damage a relationship, or
- there is little chance of satisfying your needs.

Disadvantages: This style can be destructive when it allows conflict to simmer unnecessarily. Other participants may get the impression that the avoider doesn't care enough to participate in problem solving.

4. Compromise

Value of own issue/goal: Medium
Value of relationship: Medium
Goal: I win some, you win some

Style Description: This style emphasizes meeting other parties in the middle, with each party giving a little and getting a little.

Personality Description: People who use this style are willing to engage in dialogue while looking for middle ground with others.

Advantages: Compromising preserves and even strengthens relationships in some instances. It can be quicker than collaboration.

Disadvantages: Compromising may discourage creative problem solving and can sometimes result in the parties trying to "out game" each other.

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5. Collaboration

Value of own issue/goal: High
Value of relationship: High
Goal: I win, you win

Style Description: This style emphasizes addressing conflict directly and developing creative solutions that meet everyone's needs.

Personality Description: Collaborators are able to communicate their own self-interests and identify the interests and concerns of others.

Advantages: Collaboration develops respect and trust between the parties and can strengthen relationships.

Disadvantages: Collaboration requires adequate time to be effective.

ENDNOTES

[i] U.S. EPA. 2008. *EPA's Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving Model*. Online: http://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/resources/publications/grants/cps-manual-12-27-06.pdf. Retrieved October 9, 2012.
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[iii] University of Texas at Austin, Human Resources Department. September 2011. Problem Solving Information and Tips Webpage. Online: http://www.utexas.edu/hr/current/services/dispute/problem.html. Retrieved October 9, 2012.
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