

# *Organizing*





## **“Dictionary” Definition:**

Community organizing is a process by which disenfranchised people come together to act in their common self-interest. Organized people use power to directly influence decision-makers, eliminate oppression, and advance justice.

The goal of organizing in manufactured home parks is to create a movement of powerful resident leaders who advance a common vision of justice in their communities.

**Disenfranchised** = denied access to the rights of citizenship; not included in decision making; overlooked; silent; often feel powerless.

**Self-interest** = what people value, need, and want for themselves and their community; not selfish; not selfless. See “Identifying Self Interest” for a full definition.

## **Key goals:**

- To win issues that improve people’s lives
- To unite people
- To build power
- To engage people in collective action to directly influence decision-makers
- To advance social justice values and systems that promote equality, democracy, and human rights

## **Distinguishing features:**

- Members and leaders shape the agenda and make decisions
- There is democratic participation from a clearly defined constituency or membership
- There are clear demands and specific targets (decision makers)
- Members and leaders are aware of all potential opponents and allies
- Leaders are intentional about creating relationships around common self-interest to recruit more members and allies
- Tactics vary but are intentional and strategic
- Leaders engage in direct confrontation with the target
- Members and leaders focus on changing the government policies, corporate policies, media norms, and other systems that create injustice

## Organizing Versus Other Approaches to Social Problems

People use many different strategies to respond to the challenges faced by communities. Although every approach has value, it is important to recognize the differences among various approaches. The table below shows the different strategies people could use to respond to the same issue.

**Problem:** Lone Tree Manufactured Home Park is going to close in 9 months because the highway department is building a road through the park.

<b>Approach to Social Change</b>	<b>Solutions</b>
Direct Service	A local charity decides to open its space to families who become homeless when the park closes.
Advocacy	The highway department holds meetings for residents of Lone Tree to provide information about how to get the compensation they are guaranteed under federal law. They want to make sure everyone understands the complicated process.
Community Economic Development	A housing developer lobbies to keep part of the park open but only allows newer homes to stay. The project developer gets the highway department to open up two jobs to residents of Lone Tree. The residents will help build the road in exchange for a good paying job that will provide them with enough money to buy a stick-built home.
Electoral	The Political Action Committee works with residents to elect a new mayor who promises to do everything she can to stop the road from being built.
Organizing	Your homeowners association holds a neighborhood meeting to find out what the people of Lone Tree want. The homeowners decide to fight to keep the park open. Neighbors work together to build a movement against the road. A core group of neighbors become leaders, they do some research and decide to take legal action against the transportation department. They also recruit allies, stage a protest and delay the construction of the road. After a long fight, they win the lawsuit and the park stays open. Two Lone Tree leaders are elected to city council.

## Questions

### 1. How do each of these approaches understand the problem?

The root cause of the problem is understood differently, depending on the approach:

- **Direct Service:** The families of Lone Tree will soon have no place to live.
- **Advocacy:** Lone Tree residents don't understand complicated laws; they might not get equal protection under the law unless they follow the right process.
- **Community Economic Development:** Older manufactured housing is not decent housing; Lone Tree residents should live in "real" homes.
- **Electoral:** The current elected officials are not responsive to the needs of the Lone Tree Residents.
- **Organizing:** The social and/or government system(s) support(s) the values of the commuters who want the new road. It does not support the interests of the people who live at Lone Tree.

### 2. What role do the Lone Tree residents play in each of the solutions?

The role of Lone Tree residents is different depending on the approach:

- **Direct Service:** Homeowners are clients or recipients of services.
- **Advocacy:** Homeowners are clients or recipients of service.
- **Community Economic Development:** Some residents are pitted against other residents
- **Electoral:** Homeowners are engaged voters, some of whom were activists in an electoral effort.
- **Organizing:** Homeowners are leaders and agenda setters.

### 3. Is there a change in power relationship in any of the solutions?

A shift in power is different depending on the approach:

- **Direct Service:** no change
- **Advocacy:** no change
- **Community Economic Development:** There is a lateral shift from park lord to developers.
- **Electoral:** Changes primarily for the person who is elected into office.
- **Organizing:** The Lone Tree residents become powerful leaders. They set the agenda, held people accountable, and used whatever means they could to protect their homes.



Is there a war of values going on right now? Absolutely. In your world, in your country, your state, your city, and your community there is a war of values that is being played out. This is not necessarily a war that is being fought through violence; it is a battle of ideas. Understanding the war of values is essential to building your power to influence change. Park closings, rent increases, park prejudice, and lack of homeowner rights are all casualties of the war of values. These are examples of the very real consequences when another set of values wins against yours.

## **Know Your Values**

A first step to building power is to know your own values. It's easy to think of what you are against, but what are you for? Think of a broad set of values that resonate with you and the larger community. Don't be afraid to think big!

## **Know Their Values**

Remember this is a "war." There is another side that you are up against with another set of values. We have some powerful adversaries on this side including park owners, managers, developers and some elected officials. This may be difficult, but try to think of what values they represent. When they speak publicly, what values are they appealing to? Greed is not a value. No park owner will say, "I'm closing the park because I'm greedy." So what are they saying? What is it that attracts sympathy from the media and public officials?

## **Compare Values**

Once you know your values and their values, take some time to see how they compare. How are they different? Are there any values that you are both appealing to? If so, how can you win that debate?

Usually when you compare the two sets of values, you will find that your values have a much broader appeal in society as a whole. The values that the other side holds generally appeal to a much narrower audience.

## **Who Wins?**

Even though our adversaries have a narrower set of values, in many cases they are winning. Every time a park closes, residents' rights are trampled or someone uses the term "trailer trash," it is a victory for their values. So why are they winning?

The reality is that it's not just the values you hold that matter. It's how to use them. The other side is very smart in the way they appeal to values and they also have a lot of power to promote those values. We have to be equally intentional about tying our work to our values, and building power to promote our values so that we can win.



## **Introduction to Power**

What is the first word you think of when you hear the word power? For many of us these words are often negative because we are told that “power corrupts.” In fact, most of our examples of power come from situations in which power has been abused by park lords and managers.

In reality, to change the community around us we need power. But we must first overcome our misconceptions of power if we truly intend to become powerful people and organizations.

## **Rethinking Our Understanding of Power**

Becoming a powerful leader is a choice that every individual has to make. Power is not found in other people, nor is it something that can be given. Anyone who wants to be a powerful person can be.

### ***Round Robin Exercise***

In a group setting, go around to each person and ask him or her to give you an example of where an individual has used power for bad. Write down each example. Go around one more time and ask each person to give an example of where an individual has used power for good.

## **Here are two models for understanding power:**

- 1. Power As It Is** — In the world that we live in, we have been taught the following things about power:
  - Power is limited—the more power that I have, the less you have.
  - Power is controlling
  - Power is all or nothing—a person is either powerful or powerless
  - Power is corrupting or immoral
  - Power is sourced in money, force, law, or status
  - Power is what can be done NOW
- 2. Power As It Could Be** — Here is how power can be in the world that we want to live:
  - Power can be relational—I have power when you have power. Together, we have more power
  - Power can be freeing to new possibilities
  - Power can be varied—a person is never completely powerless, since one person’s action always affects others
  - Power can be used for the good of all, not just the individual.
  - Power can be sourced in respect, relationships, creativity, and organization.
  - Power can be built over time and achieved in the long term

## **Where Does Power Come From?**

Power comes from four major areas. Combining all of these major sources of power is important in developing power both as an individual but also for your organization. Each source of power must be continually developed and used strategically. Always make sure there is a purpose behind everything you do.

### **Organized People**

There is strength in numbers. Organizing people is crucial to your work and is your most important form of power. Examples of organized people include: homeowners associations, unions, church congregations, cooperatives, APAC, etc. The key is to organize people around a shared vision.

### **Organized Resources**

Money and resources can give you the power to change your community. Organized money can take many forms. One example is a group of residents withholding their rent from a park owner due to bad conditions in their park. The more people involved in this action the more money the park-lord will lose.

An organized resource means utilizing allies and groups around you. Recruiting allies is important because they offer new opportunities and options. An example is recruiting an attorney familiar with your issue to provide you advice on your legal options. Another example is recruiting a church to be an ally because their congregation has a lot of influence over the person or group you are targeting (e.g. a park owner, public official, etc.).

### **Organized Ideas**

Imagine being in a room full of people. If everyone were asked to shout one thing they wanted to change about their community, you'd have trouble hearing what everyone said. It's important to craft a unified message that everyone can agree to. Examples of simple unified messages include: "Save Our Homes," "Mobile Justice," "It's Not A Trailer, It's My Home," "Family Home Community."

### **Organized Actions**

United we stand, divided we fall. Organized actions are your means to an end. Every action must be strategic and carry a purpose. An organized action utilizes the power of your organized people, resources, and ideas. Examples of organized actions include: boycotts, lawsuits, lobbying, marches, protests, rallies, walk outs, strikes, surveys, candidate forums, etc. These actions are utilized as tactics to achieve your goal and must be planned out ahead of time.

## **How To Influence Powerful Institutions**

Know where to direct your energy. Understanding where power comes from is not enough to create change in your community. Institutions have the power to influence the decisions that affect you. Power operates on three different levels. You need to understand how to wield power on each of these three levels.

### **Decision Makers**

These are people who have the power to make decisions on issues that affect you. This includes elected officials, park owners, city councils, and people in leadership positions. They are able to make decisions on an immediate concern or issue that your park or community is dealing with. In terms of creating change for your community, their ability to do this is limited.

### **Agenda Setters**

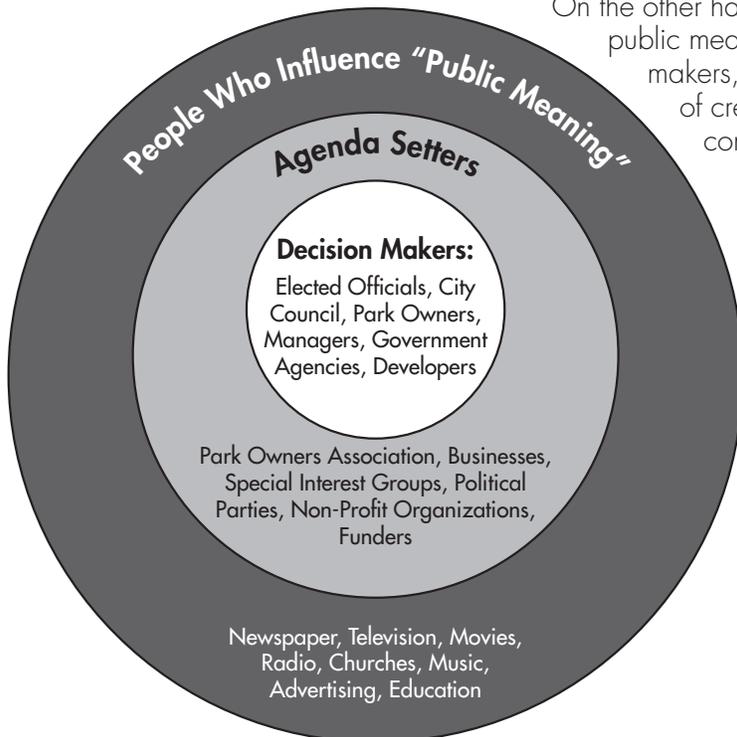
These are the people who are telling the decision makers what's important. They set the agenda. Examples of agenda setters include businesses, special interest groups, non-profit organizations, funders, and park owners' associations. Being able to influence agenda setters or becoming an agenda setter can have a long-term effect of creating change in your community.

### **People Who Influence "Public Meaning"**

"Public Meaning" influences not only what we talk about but more importantly how. People who influence public meaning are largely part of the media. Where does the word "trailer trash" come from? Where do the stereotypes come from? Media has influenced the way the general public perceives people who live in manufactured home parks. Images of alcoholics, domestic abuse, and drugs come to mind. Given the choice between "trailer" and "manufactured home," news media will usually go with trailer, again reinforcing stereotypes and misconceptions.

There is a trickle-effect with powerful institutions. "Public Meaning" and all its negative stereotypes influence the way agenda setters talk about manufactured home parks. For example, if "Public Meaning" is saying that manufactured homes are mostly broken down "trailers" and the people that live in them are "transients," then agenda setters will make the case that manufactured home parks need to close because the homes are old and there's a better use for the land. The decision makers listen to the agenda setters and soon enough a park-lord is selling her or his land for redevelopment, or a city council will look for options on how to close down the park.

On the other hand when you are able to influence public meaning, agenda setters, and decision makers, you will have a greater chance of creating positive change in your community.





## A Tool for Winning Issue Campaigns

Issue Campaign	mobilizes people, resources, ideas, and actions to resolve a problem.
Tactic	any activity planned towards achieving a goal.
Strategy	the plan; an intentional series of tactics designed to achieve a goal.

### Introduction: What is a community power analysis?

A community power analysis is a tool for planning out your strategy and tactics for a given issue. It helps to identify the key players involved as well as concrete steps you can take to reach your goals. Plotting out a power analysis before any issue campaign takes off ensures that your approach is both strategic and intentional. In this section we have outlined the various planning elements to a community power analysis.

### Goals

Goals are what you want to win. Consider the following criteria when choosing a goal:

1. It should be specific. No vague goals.
2. It should be achievable. Make sure it's reasonable.
3. It should be measurable. A result people can notice.

When identifying goals, be sure to do a power analysis for each goal. You can also set short-term, intermediate, and long-term goals. Always consider how these goals will build the power of your organization.

### Target

A target is a person who has the power to give you what you want. Targets are people in positions of power that you have some leverage over and whom you can hold accountable. (Examples: elected officials, city council members, and park-lords.) Brainstorm as many targets as possible and then identify whom you need to prioritize. For example, if your target includes a governing body, like a city council, focus in on people who may be potential swing votes.

### Allies

Allies are people or groups who support your work on some level. It's important to involve long terms allies that you could work with in the future and short-term supporters that can help you achieve your goal. An example of a long-term ally could be a church that has a lot influence in your community. An example of a short term ally could be your park owner which on a specific issue you may agree but not on other. When brainstorming allies it's important to be creative. Recruit allies that have influence over your targets, but who may not be directly tied to your issue. Make sure to identify concrete, useful things that your allies can do to be active. Examples of things your allies can do are write letters of support, show up at a meeting you are hosting, speak out publicly in your favor, and get media coverage.

## **Opponents**

Opponents are your detractors: people who you know will oppose what you do. It's important to know and understand who your opponents are and what their likely tactics may be. Opponents are not necessarily the same as your targets. Some opponents who are "on the fence" can sometimes be neutralized and your tactics can be helpful in achieving that.

## **Research Strategy**

Research strategies are things that you need to learn, know, or prove. Identify what you need to research, analyze, discuss, etc. The more information and ideas you have, if used strategically, can add to your power. Find out as much as you can about your targets. If they are elected officials, when are they up for election? Before meeting with any targets it's important to have your research strategy figured out.

## **Tactics**

A tactic is a purposeful action step. Your tactics should either directly or indirectly engage your targets. It's important to use a variety of tactics that are creative and surprise your targets and opponents. Your tactics can be both offensive and defensive (proactive and reactive). In considering tactics, it's important to utilize tactics that involve a lot of people, that are visible, and that can escalate your issue campaign so that you are constantly building momentum. An example of an indirect tactic is to utilize the media. Get an article published about your issue. Examples of direct tactics include: rallies, marches, accountability meetings, and sit-ins. It's important to note that a series of tactics is necessary to reach your goals. One tactic is simply one step on a staircase; each tactic brings you closer to the top.

## Why are you involved?

**Exercise 1:** Think of when you first became involved in manufactured home park issues. What was it that got you involved? This is important, because many others may be interested in becoming involved for the same reason. Have everyone in your group give a brief summary of how they got involved. Record all the reasons people chose to become involved.

## How to get other people involved

**Exercise 2:** In a small group, think of events or actions in which you have seen success in getting people involved. Examples can come from either work with a resident association or another activity (church group, school event, community gathering, activist experience). In round robin style, ask everyone to give at least one example.

Now go around again and give an example of a time when you were unsuccessful in getting people involved in an event or action. Compare and contrast the two lists. How were these events different from each other? What tactics did you use to get people involved for the successful events? How is this different from what you did with the unsuccessful events?

## Lessons

After doing these exercises you will see that people almost are a lot more likely to get involved in an issue that they have a direct interest in. For a lot people to get involved the event has to be of importance to the community or it has to be fun. The event also has to offer a solution to address the situation. People aren't likely to participate if there is no hope. Participation of the community must also be necessary for the resolution of the problems.

*Examples of tactics organizations use to get people involved:*

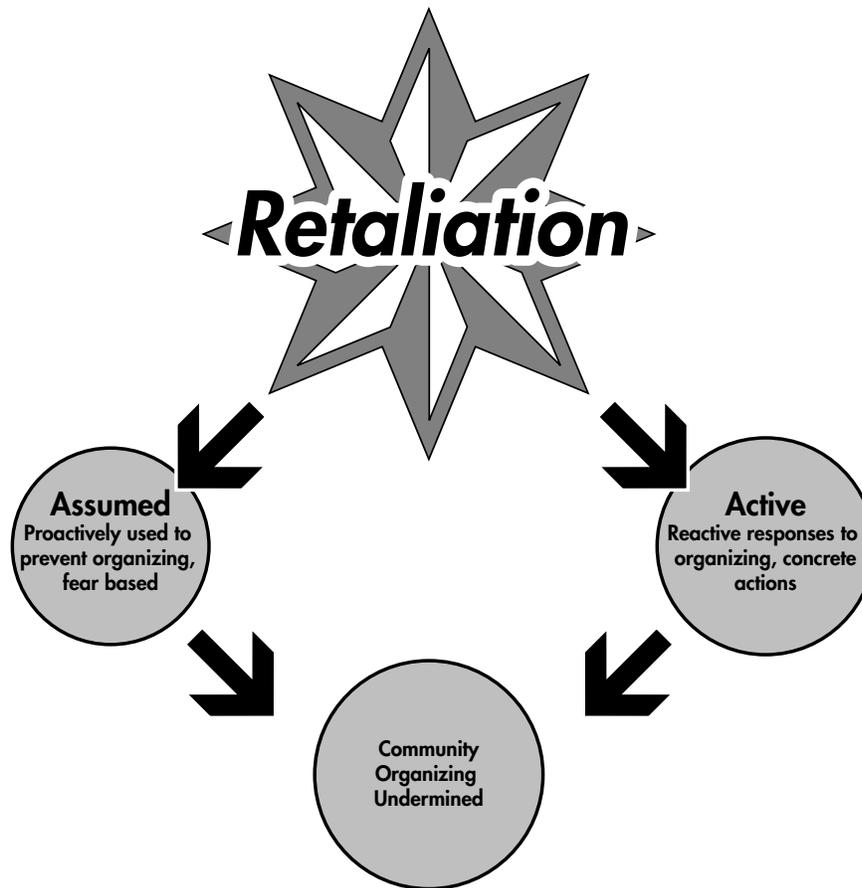
- Park wide meetings
- Door knocking
- Petition drives
- Rallies or protests
- Membership drives
- Newsletters
- Voter registration
- Flyering
- One-on-ones
- Letter writing campaigns
- Community events (pot lucks, block parties)
- Recruiting board or committee members
- Surveys
- Accountability session (with owner, politicians)



## What is Retaliation?

Retaliation is a strategy used by powerful institutions to prevent homeowners from organizing and/or asserting their rights. It is a two-pronged strategy involving both active and assumed retaliation. "Active retaliation" is carried out in the form of specific actions that punish leaders and their base for their efforts to pursue change.

An effective and far more insidious form of retaliation is "assumed retaliation," meaning that people automatically assume that organizing or asserting ones rights will lead to retaliation, even in the absence of specific past examples. Assumed retaliation operates so that powerful institutions rarely have to use active retaliation. The very existence of assumed retaliation prevents people from organizing and standing up for their rights due to a perceived sense of powerlessness and internalized fears.



## Retaliation is Real

There are countless examples of active retaliation. The case of Tammy Hoth, a homeowner and leader from Montana, shined a national spotlight on the issue of retaliation. She was arrested and jailed for exercising her free speech rights in a manufactured home community by flyering and attending resident association meetings. Tammy Hoth was threatened with 6 months in jail for her actions, but the charges were later dropped following a national campaign for her freedom.

In Minnesota, APAC brought a case to the state Supreme Court after a park lord (Uniprop) refused to allow organizers into the community to educate residents about their rights. The Supreme Court upheld APAC's right to freedom of expression. In a manufactured home community called Jackson Heights, immigration police raided the community after residents rallied against a road project that would demolish their homes. The leader of the residents association and many of its members were deported.

Park lords have a variety of tools at their disposal to carry out other forms of retaliation, such as eviction, rent increases, denial of services, discriminatory enforcement of park rules, harassment, and damage to reputation.

## ***Retaliation is an Excuse for People not to get Involved***

The assumption that getting involved will lead to retaliation prevents many people from getting involved. Yet for every example of real retaliation there are many, many more examples where residents organize and retaliation is either not used or ineffective. We need to be sympathetic towards people who fear retaliation out of a feeling of powerlessness or vulnerability, but we also want to challenge their assumptions and embolden them to become leaders rather than victims. If you are involved in organizing your community for Mobile Justice, then you are taking a risk. You need to let people know that if they want to see change, then they have to assume some of the risk as well.

## ***Why Does Retaliation Exist?***

Retaliation is a tool that park lords, government agencies, and others use to maintain control and to retain power. Many see retaliation as an act of power, but it really isn't. Retaliation would not be necessary if community organizing had no potential for success. Retaliation happens because institutional power fears this success. Therefore retaliation is not a demonstration of power, but rather an act of fear and powerlessness. They are scared of you!

Although retaliation comes from a place of powerlessness, it is also a strategy that has proven to be successful. Retaliation works. That is why it is so important that we understand how to confront it.

## ***How to Overcome Retaliation***

### ***Find out what Protections Exist in Your State.***

Many states already have laws that make retaliation illegal. For example Minnesota state law says:

*“A park owner may not increase rent, decrease services, alter an existing rental agreement or seek to recover possession or threaten such action in whole or in part as a penalty for a resident's: (a) good faith complaint to the park owner or to a government agency or official; (b) good faith attempt to exercise rights or remedies pursuant to state or federal law; or (c) joining and participating in the activities of a resident association as defined under section ”*

When looking at the laws in your state, pay close attention to how those laws are enforced and what loopholes (if any) may exist.

### ***Educate Residents About Their Rights***

Once you have done the analysis, educate your base about these rights and your commitment to ensure they are protected. This will often decrease a lot of people's fear about retaliation.

## ***If No Protections Exist, Change the Law!***

Freedom is supposed to be one of the core values of this country. There is no reason why people should be denied basic human rights due to their choice of housing. Protections for retaliation are essential because, without them any effort to organize bears the risk of catastrophic consequences.

## **Conduct a Risk Assessment for Your Organizing Campaign**

People worry a lot about the risks of becoming involved, but rarely think of the risks of not becoming involved. In a group setting, ask people to come up with a list of the risks of getting involved (after educating them about the law!). Then ask them to come up with a list of what will happen if no one gets involved (park closings, rent increases, unfair rules, bad laws, etc). If you are choosing issues that people care about, the risks of doing nothing are often greater than the risks of doing something.

<b>Risks of Getting Involved</b>	<b>Risks of Doing Nothing</b>
Losing your home	Losing your home
Rent Increases	Rent Increases
Damage to reputation, harassment	Damage to reputation, harassment
Arrest and/or deportation	Accept victim role, powerlessness
Loss of anonymity	Loss of self-respect, dignity
Public disapproval	Public ignorance
Park lords become more hostile	Park lords think they can get away with anything
Possibility of failure	Setting precedent of weakness

## **Strength in numbers**

By acting as a group, it is more difficult for institutions to retaliate against you. The old saying, "united we stand, divided we fall," holds true when it comes to retaliation. The stronger the base, the broader the network of support will be in response to any real retaliation.

## **Surround yourself with allies**

You are less likely to face retaliation if you surround yourself with powerful allies (organizations, elected officials, faith community leaders). Institutions will retaliate against people they perceive to be weak, but if they have powerful people on their side it serves as a buffer. Have your allies send a message "you mess with them, you mess with me!"

## **Be Public**

Retaliators are like cockroaches; they scatter and run when you turn on the lights. The more outspoken and public you are in your work, the less isolated you are and the more people will sympathize with your cause. It also creates an opportunity to hold institutions accountable on a higher level for retaliation, compared with fighting it out in the darkness.

### ***Act Professionally***

Don't provide park lords with easy excuses to retaliate against you by not paying rent or disobeying reasonable park rules. Make sure that you are credible in what you do and say, thus maintaining the moral high ground. People sympathize with community leaders, but not with public nuisances. Whenever possible, try to appeal to your target's self-interest rather than demonizing them right off the bat. Angering a target should be a deliberate and strategic decision, not an accident. Remember there is nothing wrong with making someone angry as long as it is strategic. But recognize that with that anger comes a heightened risk of retaliation.

### ***Have a Plan***

Don't wait until you or someone else is attacked to come up with a plan. Rather than scrambling to do damage control, you want to be in a strong position to respond immediately and effectively if your opponents use retaliation aggressively.

### ***Respond to Acts of Retaliation Aggressively***

Acts of retaliation have the potential to obliterate your campaign. People will look to your organization to see what your response will be, as they weigh their decision to stay involved. This is not a time to put your tail between your legs and hope everything will blow over. Now is the time to be vocal and aggressive like never before. Your base will be looking to see if your commitment to stand up to them is real, and your opponents are already looking at whom to target next. Put a stop to retaliation now!

"If you've come to help me, you're wasting your time. But if you've come because your liberation is bound to mine, then let us work together" Australian Aboriginal Leader

There are many ways to get park residents involved in an issue campaign. Many times, park owners use fear mongering, threats and misinformation to get residents on their side. Campaign contributions and kickbacks have been effective in buying votes from politicians to block residents' rights. Some people give handouts and charity to feel good about themselves without addressing the real problem. None of these are good approaches for us to use to push for change.

We need to be consistent with our values. We need to talk to appeal to a mutual and enlightened sense of self-interest as a means to get them involved. The concept of self-interest, like the concept of power, is necessary to understand in order to create change. We need to know our own personal motivations, what motivates our base (constituency), and what motivates our adversaries. It is only then that a strategic conversation to move forward can begin.

When many people hear the term "self-interest" they immediately think of selfishness. This is incorrect. Self-interest is a relational concept. Its very definition implies a self and an other. The word "self" we understand. The word "interest" comes from two Latin words "inter" and "esse." These words mean: "to be among". Self-interest therefore means "self among others," or one's interest in the context of a community. A person's self-interest is influenced by their values, their vision and their relationships.

Self-interest is very different than either selfishness or selflessness. The chart below describes the difference.

<b>Selfishness</b>	<b>Selflessness</b>	<b>Self- Interest</b>
Denies others	Denies self	Self in relation to others
Defined by self	Defined by self	Defined by relationships
Creates victims	Creates victims	Builds leadership
"me, me, me"	"you, you, you"	We!

## The Problem with Selfishness

It's obvious why we don't want to be in relationships with selfish people. Selfish people show no consideration for others and will do most anything to further their own individual needs. Many of the injustices that we organize around are the result of selfish actions (rent increases, selling land for redevelopment, etc.).

### Examples of Selfishness:

- Greed
- Stealing
- Corruption
- Self-centeredness
- A lack of regard for others
- Selling people out for personal gain

Selfish people are ineffective at getting people involved, because people will not spend all their time and energy to benefit just one person. Selfish people aren't always up front about their intentions (see selflessness) but in the end their true motives are always found out. People feel betrayed and choose no longer to be involved.

## **The Problem with Selflessness**

Saying that we shouldn't be selfless may sound strange, because many of us are taught that this is exactly how we should be. The problem with selfless people is that they have unclear motivations at best and often times tend towards corruption. Think about people you know who have claimed to be selfless. Politicians are a good example. Most politicians claim to be selfless, that is why they often refer to themselves as "public servants." The reality is that they all have an agenda whether they communicate it or not.

Selfless people wrap themselves up with good intentions, but the impact of their actions can be harmful. Victims often look to selfless people for help. The ironic thing is that selfless people are often victims themselves. Rather than empowering people to help themselves, selfless people solve problems in a way that perpetuates victim status. When a selfless person has no vested interest in an issue they will likely run at the first sign of trouble.

### **Examples of Selflessness:**

- False modesty
- "Do gooders"
- Passive aggressiveness
- Claiming only to think of others
- People with a "Martyr Complex"
- Denying personal benefits of ones involvement
- People who "help" other people

Selfless people are ineffective at getting people involved, because people either don't trust them or look to them as saviors who will do all the work for them. If someone invites you to a meeting to tell you about all the good things they are going to do in your community, why should you go? Just do nothing and wait for them to deliver on their promises. Worst-case scenario, things stay the same.

## **The Key is Self-Interest**

Self-interest is the best way to relate to someone else because it respects both sides of the relationship. By discovering someone's self-interest you are able to identify ways of collaborating with them towards a goal in which you will mutually benefit. It is by discovering shared self-interest that a group of people can begin to articulate a set of shared values and build power to affect change.

Appealing to self-interest is an effective way of getting people involved, because people will usually step forward to fight for something when it benefits them. Self-interest allows for people to trust each other moving forward if people are up front and open about what they expect to get out of their involvement.

A one-on-one is a face-to-face conversation between you and another person to determine their self-interest. The conversation should motivate the person to talk about important aspects of their lives. If you know where someone's passions lie, you will better be able to understand their motivations.

In a one-on-one we want to get to know the other person: their history, their family, their ambitions, what inspires them, and what makes them angry. It is important that a one-on-one be intentional. It is a strategy to recruit and develop new leaders and allies.

In conducting a grass roots organizing campaign, regular sit downs or "one-on-ones" with your leaders are an effective tool to move the campaign forward and keep people involved. The meeting should last no longer than an hour, and the other person should do most of the talking.

### **What to do in a One-on-One**

- Recruit new leaders and allies
- Determine self-interest
- Build trust
- Form a relationship
- Educate
- Create clarity
- Get information
- Proposition, get commitments
- Agitate, push leaders to the next level
- Strategize and discuss next steps
- Hold people accountable and be accountable

### **Tactics**

- Ask open ended questions
- Ask follow up questions
- Take risks
- Listen!
- Watch the time, stay on task

### **Who do we have One-on-Ones With?**

- Park leaders
- Members
- Community leaders
- Potential allies
- Leaders of faith communities

### **Evaluating One-on-Ones**

In order to get the most out of a one-on-one, evaluation and reflection is necessary. A good starting point is to identify a skill, a feeling, and an experience that this person has.

Public speaking, note taking, fund raising, and petitioning, are just a few examples of skills that people may have that can aid the work that you are doing. Identifying these skills creates a potential means for them to become involved. People are more likely to participate if there is an opportunity to do something they are already good at.

Anger, fear, burnout, hope, excitement, and apathy are all examples of feelings. We need to understand how people are feeling to successfully motivate them. Your proposition or "pitch" to get someone involved will differ if they are feeling apathetic or angry or hopeful.

People's feelings are usually based on their experience. By experience we don't mean qualifications, but rather one's personal history. Has this person been involved in something like this before? How have they been treated in the past? How are they being treated now? What brought them to this community? How do they feel others perceive them? How do they perceive themselves in relation to others (park owners, public officials, developers)?

### **Questions for Reflection**

- What does this person care most about? Why?
- What motivates them?
- What do they get excited talking about?
- What talents and skills does this person have?
- What relationships does this person have and value? Why?
- What values does this person have?
- What issues is this person concerned about?
- What ideas do they have?
- What is their story?
- Questions for Self-Reflection
- Did I establish a relationship?
- Did I uncover their self-interest?
- How courageous was I? What risks did I take?
- Did I step out of my comfort zone?
- What did I do well?
- What should I have done better?

Unless you intend to do everything it takes to achieve Mobile Justice by yourself (impossible!), you will need to delegate responsibilities. Organizing requires a lot of work (flyering, door knocking, phone calls, letter writing, meetings, one-on-ones). Getting people in your community to commit to doing things not only makes life easier for you, it is also a first step in leadership development.

Some leaders tend to take charge of everything themselves, often for “selfless” reasons, such as not wanting to have to bother people with doing things or worrying that people are too busy. This is counter-productive. What happens if they move out of the park or get hit by a bus? Everything they have done goes with them. Instead of a powerful community losing one of its leaders, you end up in a community with a power vacuum.

In order to get people involved in taking on this work, we need to know how to ask them to be involved: a proposition. Here are some things to consider when making the pitch:

### ***Be Strategic***

Before asking anyone to do anything, make sure you have a plan of action for the work that you are doing. A community power analysis is a great tool for doing this. Don't just ask people to do things at random. Figure out what needs to be done, and who is the best person to do it.

### ***Be Personal***

Sometimes it's not enough to just say at the end of an all park meeting, “we need someone to do X, Y, and Z.” You need to ask specific people to do specific things and follow up with them one-on-one.

### ***Align Your Self-Interest With Theirs***

We aren't guilting people or begging them to become involved. We are offering them a proposition based on mutual self-interest. There should always be a benefit to their involvement. People will likely act on their own self-interest, and are unlikely to act on something that is not in their self-interest.

### ***Be Specific***

Don't be too open-ended in what you are asking someone to do. Vague and open-ended commitments tend to scare people off. You are more likely to get a positive response if you have a specific time-line with clearly drawn out duties.

### ***Be Realistic***

Be respectful of people's time and comfort level with what you are asking of them. That doesn't mean that you should accept every excuse they give you. You can push back if they acknowledge something is in their self-interest, but refuse to do anything about it.

### ***Acknowledge Their Level of Experience***

Different tasks require different levels of experience. You probably don't want to ask someone with a lot of experience, such as an ally at the state legislature or city council, to help you flier your park. That is not the best use of their time. You also don't want to ask someone with little experience, such as someone who just moved into the park or is new to the issue, to do an interview with the media for example.

