



WHERE WE THRIVE

PROSPERITY STARTS WITH PLACE

Creating Meaningful Change at the Neighborhood Level: The Purpose Built Communities Theory of Impact

With deep collaboration, strong investments, and a mission to center residents, every neighborhood can become a pathway to prosperity for the people who live there.

Purpose Built Communities Foundation (Purpose Built) is an incubator, convener, and catalyst for social change. Our organization functions as a nonprofit consulting group that partners with local leaders to design, direct, and accelerate neighborhood transformation initiatives across the United States so residents can achieve greater racial equity, improved health outcomes, and increased upward mobility. Purpose Built provides pro-bono guidance, coaching, and support to these local leaders, their staff, and stakeholders in implementing and growing a holistic model of revitalization in their neighborhoods.



Connect Community, Houston, TX



WHAT DOES PURPOSE BUILT DO?

Purpose Built combines practice, research, and a network of high-capacity leaders to help achieve greater outcomes for residents living in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty. Purpose Built works both one-on-one as a strategic adviser and as a hub of expertise and knowledge for our Network Members by providing them with a model framework complete with metrics and milestones to guide their revitalization journey.

We also serve as the convener of a robust, interconnected community of practice comprised of our Network Members and strategic partners, such as communications strategists, fundraising experts, and policymakers. Through the community of practice, Network Members share lessons, strategies, and resources across neighborhood sites.



Community planning meeting for Amplify GR in Grand Rapids, MI

WHAT DO WE BELIEVE?

We believe what surrounds us, shapes us. We believe neighborhoods can be a pathway to prosperity and that they lay the foundation for our future. We also believe neighborhoods are more than houses, buildings, roads, or places where we live. They are interconnected systems of people, infrastructure, institutions, and environments. Neighborhoods are where we find and build community. However, for those attributes to be fully realized a neighborhood must be healthy.

At Purpose Built, we believe neighborhoods matter and so do the people who live there. And we demonstrate that by working with Network Members and stakeholders to ensure every neighborhood within our footprint has steadfast resources like engaging and effective schools, safe and affordable housing, and diverse economic opportunities. This speaks to our holistic approach, centered on family, to make sure people have access to preventative solutions as well as the specific support they need in moments of crisis.

WHAT CHALLENGES DO WE ADDRESS?

Every neighborhood means something to the people who live there. Rich cultural histories, family legacies, childhood memories, and strong relationships among neighbors exist, no matter the place or its residents. However, not all neighborhoods are thriving. One powerful challenge that some neighborhoods struggle with, that others do not, is poverty.

In neighborhoods of concentrated poverty—where at least 30 percent of households live in poverty—fundamental conditions become barriers to children and families being able to fulfill their potential. In neighborhoods of concentrated poverty, safe and affordable housing is scarce, school systems are underfunded, and ongoing population loss weakens social cohesion. These conditions prevent children and families from accessing the resources necessary for a person to succeed in the United States. And that can have lifelong consequences. Research confirms what we have learned in our work: the neighborhood where you are born and grow up in largely determines your outcomes as an adult, influencing your educational trajectory, lifetime earnings, and long-term health.¹

¹ "Neighborhoods Matter: Children's lives are shaped by the neighborhood they grow up in." Raj Chetty (2018) <https://opportunityinsights.org/neighborhoods/>



HOW DID WE ARRIVE HERE?

The pathway to prosperity is often determined by race.

Every neighborhood—whether financially rich or poor, lacking, or abundant in opportunities—became that way purposely. Policies set at the federal, state, and local levels, and the practices and actions of private individuals and businesses created the conditions we witness and experience today. Throughout history, these policies and practices have often been discriminatory and racist, intentionally isolating communities of color from publicly subsidized opportunities that enabled wealth and prosperity to grow for white communities. The legacy of these actions still exists in both Black and Brown neighborhoods and White neighborhoods, but how that legacy is seen and felt among these groups is radically, detrimentally different.

For example, the initial **Social Security Act of 1935**, which created a social insurance program designed to pay retired workers aged 65 or older a continuing income after retirement in addition to other provisions for general welfare, excluded domestic and agricultural workers, most of whom were Black. Congress and the President did not enact Amendments for another 20 years, forcing many Black Americans, individually and generationally, deeper into poverty. **The 1944 GI Bill**, which provided World War II veterans with funds for college education, unemployment insurance, and housing, was designed to reinvigorate the economy and support American families. However, the implementation of the GI Bill among the federal government, local banks, and local institutions continued to deny Black veterans these wealth-generating opportunities. As Black soldiers returned home from war, they were denied home loans and college admission, affecting them and their families for generations to come. In cases where Black neighborhoods were still able to prosper despite **redlining**—the decades-long practice of housing loan obstruction in Black neighborhoods—were eventually decimated by **interstate highway development in the 1950s**.

The policies of the past and many of the present deeply affect residents' material conditions, creating poor road and sidewalk maintenance, unreliable and unsafe water systems, school buildings in disrepair, and abandoned or poorly maintained housing. And while the implications of past practices are not always visible and are often misunderstood as a byproduct of people and culture, these systemic and historical disinvestments affect a neighborhood's ability to attract businesses. That lack of investment affects local property taxes, which affects school funding, which affects the quality of education children receive. There are health and environmental implications, too.



Systemic and historical disinvestments in particular neighborhoods have shaped racial disparities in access to housing, credit and wealth accumulation in America.

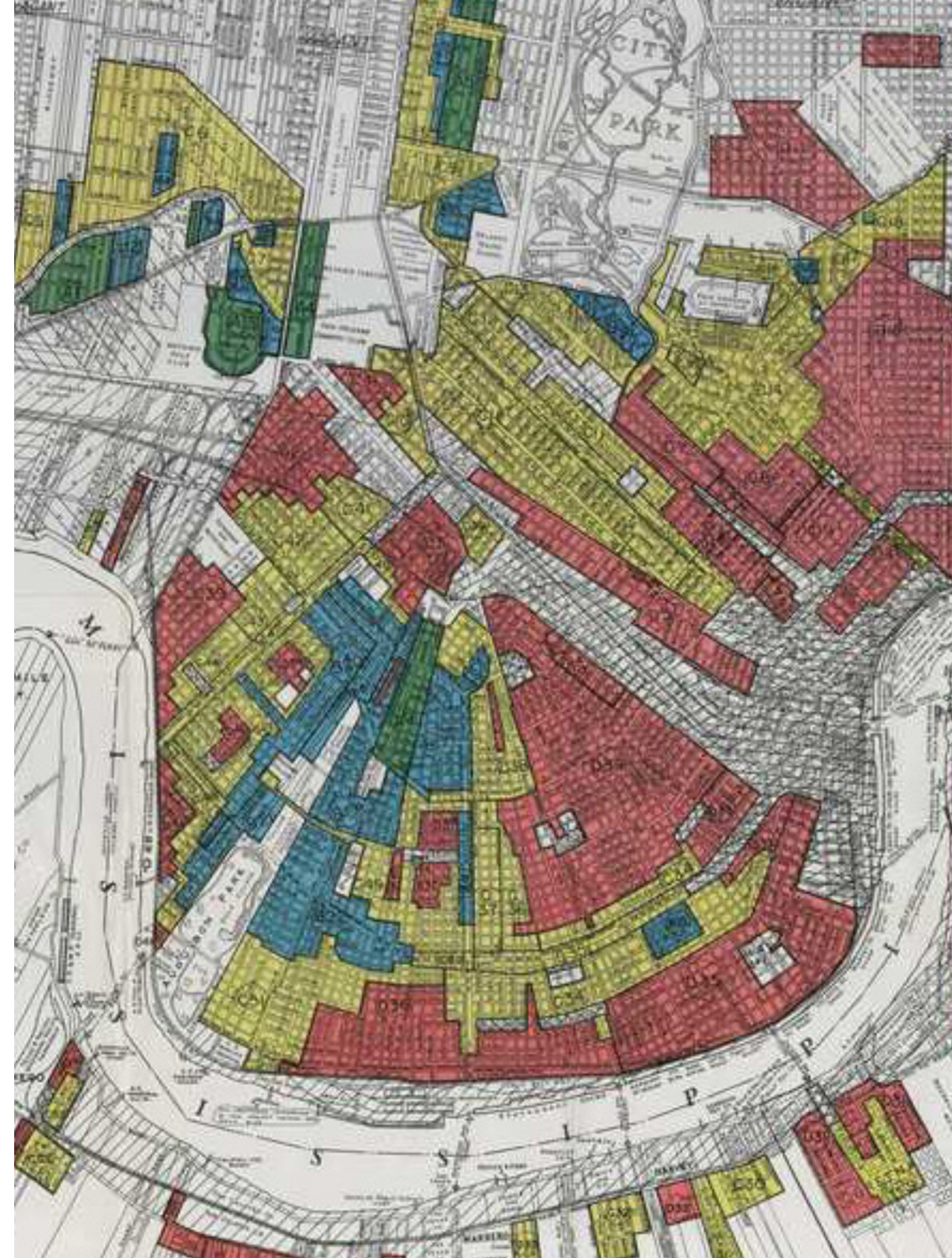
Research has found that neighborhoods that were once redlined face higher rates of asthma² and are now several degrees hotter³ than neighborhoods once favored by housing loans.

Across social issues, whether we look at housing, education,⁴ health, or neighborhood design, the story is similar. Racism shapes systems and the outcomes of people's lives.

Over time, there have been well-intentioned initiatives to address urban poverty and racial disparities. The Johnson Administration's War on Poverty policies as part of the Great Society, which represented the largest expansion of the social safety net since Roosevelt's New Deal,⁵ is one such example. The Fair Housing Act of 1968, which prevented housing discrimination based on race, sex, national origin, and religion, was the last piece of legislation enacted during the Civil Rights-era. Later, the Community Reinvestment Act, which ended redlining and encourages investment in all communities, followed. However, these policies often lacked sustained support or the knowledge, capacity, and resources to adapt into a successful, effective practice.

These policies legislated equality but did not foster equity or redress centuries of racial antagonism and financial harm distinctly experienced by Black people and other people of color. Building healthy neighborhoods with a focus on racial equity gets us closer.

²"Historically redlined communities face higher asthma rates." (2019). UC Berkeley. <https://news.berkeley.edu/2019/05/22/historically-redlined-communities-face-higher-asthma-rates/>
³Studies are showing connection between health and environment." How Decades of Racist Housing Policy Left Neighborhoods Sweltering." (2020). The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/08/24/climate/racism-redlining-cities-global-warming.html>
⁴In "Confronting the Education Debt." (2018), Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools documents that between 2005 and 2017, public schools serving mostly low-income students in predominantly communities of color were underfunded by \$580 billion in federal dollars. This undistributed funding has led to overcrowded classrooms, outdated textbooks, and few guidance counselors and school librarians for Black and Brown children. http://educationdebt.reclaimourschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Confronting-the-Education-Debt_FullReport.pdf
⁵Poverty and Place white paper



1930s "Residential Security Map" (redlining map) of New Orleans, LA created by the government-sponsored Home Owners' Loan Corporation



State Highway 1-75 in Dallas, TX, which caused the demolition of more than 1,300 homes, bifurcated neighborhoods, and sparked white flight (the large-scale migration of White people moving from racially diverse urban centers to white, suburban enclaves)

WHY DOES THE PAST MATTER TO THE PRESENT?

Many efforts at the national and local level have been designed for families of color experiencing poverty without their voice and guidance about what works best or what is needed. Black and Brown leaders with both lived experience and expertise are consistently marginalized because of overt racism or systemic biases such as lacking “traditional” education from predominantly white institutions⁶ and a lack political or financial backing from “mainstream” institutions.

Purpose Built has learned that without incorporating the first-hand knowledge gained from actual participation in programs, systems, and lived experience in the design of neighborhood transformation initiatives, current systems will continue to fall short of reaching equitable outcomes.⁷ Simply, children and families today are affected by current barriers to prosperity and experience the consequences of failed policies and practices across generations. To transform neighborhoods into platforms for opportunity, we must address both the symptoms and the root causes of concentrated urban poverty. These challenges did not start overnight, and it will take coordinated, informed, and holistic efforts over time to reach our aspirations.

⁶“Smart Enough to Know Better: Intelligence is Not a Remedy for Racism.” (2013) <https://news.umich.edu/smart-enough-to-know-better-intelligence-is-not-a-remedy-for-racism/>

⁷“Lived Experience: The Practice of Engagement in Policy” (2020) Nemours Children’s Health System. <http://www.movinghealthcareupstream.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Nemours-Lived-Experience-Brief-Final.pdf>

WHAT APPROACH DO WE TAKE TO ADDRESS THESE CHALLENGES?

What we have learned, both from research and in practice, is that, to ensure the health and prosperity of neighborhoods experiencing concentrated poverty and the people who live there, we must strategically prioritize and strive for: 1) greater racial equity, 2) improved health outcomes, and 3) increased upward mobility. Programs designed to eliminate poverty cannot succeed at scale unless and until all fundamental needs of children and families are addressed—a safe place to live; access to quality jobs; fresh, healthy food; recreation; and high-quality education. Siloed approaches to poverty do not strengthen the collective neighborhood environment. Systemic racism creates a depravity of resources—education, healthcare access, quality housing, economic opportunity, and so much more – making it practically impossible for whole generations of families to fulfill basic human needs. These same resources are plentiful in predominantly White neighborhoods. That reality is not a matter of differences in people, culture, or drive but of policy designed to create an economic system that prioritizes one group over another. Our approach to neighborhood revitalization aims to level the playing field.

Our understanding of the challenge—and a clear-eyed view of how previous efforts have failed—shapes our model for success. We believe that locally driven asset-building strategies that center racial equity can reverse the harmful impacts of decades of disinvestment which built barriers to good health, opportunity, and prosperity for Black Americans and other people of color. We believe that healthy, thriving neighborhoods can serve as platforms to support children's development and their families' future prosperity.

How does this happen? Local leaders committed to disrupting an inequitable status quo work with their neighbors; reach out to partners across the public and private sectors, including corporate and civic leaders, and establish what we call a Community Quarterback organization. A Community Quarterback organization is a nonprofit that partners with key stakeholders—and, most importantly, residents—to facilitate and implement the community's vision for comprehensive neighborhood revitalization. Community Quarterback organizations may be invited to become Purpose Built Network Members when they meet specific parameters based on our years of practice and research. With our help, they create an actionable, financeable plan to improve the neighborhood conditions in which families live, work, play and learn.

As a Purpose Built Network Member, the Community Quarterback organization, alongside community partners, centers the needs and priorities of legacy and new residents while keeping in mind the needs of future generations. Legacy residents are those residents that have resided and invested in the neighborhood prior to revitalization. Their voice and perspective in developing the revitalization plan is vital. Together, they make progress towards the goals of greater racial equity, better health outcomes, and upward mobility by focusing on four strategic priorities in housing, education, health and wellness, and economic vitality.



Purpose Built's model provides an impact framework to help Network Members measure progress. The Purpose Built model helps foster a culturally rich, generationally-inclusive, and economically diverse neighborhood for children and families. Social connection across socioeconomic and racial demographics become commonplace. Legacy residents feel valued and are part of the fabric of the growing community with newer residents. The built environment and investments in physical infrastructure support the ability for community to thrive. All residents feel welcomed, valued, and integral to the composition of their neighborhood.

MIXED-INCOME HOUSING

The strategy starts by strengthening the residential fabric of a community. New, mixed-income multi-family rental housing replaces aging and substandard rental housing, preserving affordability for years to come while opening the neighborhood to economic diversity. Additionally, new single-family housing at a variety of price points creates pathways for current residents to remain in their neighborhood. The combination of these strategies also attracts potential new residents interested in building a life in the same community. Mindful of the need to mitigate displacement, the Network Member strives to maintain a balance between supporting legacy residents who want to remain within the neighborhood and attracting new residents who choose to become a part of its future.

CRADLE-TO-COLLEGE EDUCATION

Coordinating strong education partners, the Network Member assembles an early learning through grade 12 education pipeline, establishing a high-quality, neighborhood-serving school as a valued community asset. At the beginning of the pipeline, a high-quality early childhood education (starting at age 0) prepares the neighborhood's children to be competitive. At the end of the pipeline, as students progress through high school, the Network Member and its partners support their aspirations to succeed in college and career. The focus is to assure the education pipeline allows students to have choice in determining their future pursuits post-high school graduation.

COMMUNITY WELLNESS

In a healthy, thriving neighborhood, wellness takes on many forms. Ensuring a neighborhood nurtures and enriches residents' physical and mental health as well as fosters a sense of belonging are key features of this strategy. To achieve this, Network Members bring together a diverse set of partners and solutions to facilitate the development of access to medical care, mental health supports, and healthy food. Residents and Network Members work with local partners to envision and develop community gathering spaces such as arts and cultural centers; and physical environments such as parks, paths, and other green spaces.

ECONOMIC VITALITY

Assuring that the neighborhood can attract investments to create and maintain a thriving commercial core is critical to paving the way for residents to have access to opportunities for meaningful work that paves the way for economic advancement, wealth building, and upward mobility. Identifying ways to support opportunities across the income spectrum is part of the two-pronged strategy to assure the neighborhood is fertile with local resources and residents can partake in the burgeoning local economy. Neighborhoods exist within larger communities and cities so, when economic vitality is restored in the neighborhoods our Network Members work in, surrounding neighborhoods also benefit. Economic interdependence leads to economic growth for all.

COMMUNITY QUARTERBACK ORGANIZATION

These components collectively form the Purpose Built Communities model of holistic neighborhood revitalization. The Community Quarterback organization serves as the backbone organization in implementing this model, working with stakeholders to tie together all the elements that will support neighborhood health. It is only together that the possibility exists to cultivate and nourish an ecosystem of high-capacity, collaborative partners who demonstrate commitment to and accountability for advancing a shared vision of successful, holistic, transformational efforts.



PURPOSE
BUILT
COMMUNITIES

A NEIGHBORHOOD MODEL FOR PEOPLE AND PLACE

CRADLE-TO-COLLEGE
EDUCATION

MIXED-INCOME
HOUSING



COMMUNITY
WELLNESS



— Greater Racial Equity — Improved Health Outcomes —
— Increased Upward Mobility —



NEIGHBORHOOD
RESIDENTS

SCHOOL



COMMUNITY
QUARTERBACK
ORG

ECONOMIC
VITALITY



COMMUNITY
CENTER

MOBILE HEALTH

BANK

CAFÉ

HOW THE MODEL IS IMPLEMENTED

Purpose Built and Network Members operate in collaboration and partnership with one another—we learn together and are accountable to each other, creating space for all of us to move toward sustained levels of excellence and equity.

ONE-ON-ONE CONSULTING

High-quality leadership with the right people, the right structure, and the right skills are core to the success of a Network Member. Purpose Built Communities helps ensure effective leadership exists to guide and advance local revitalization efforts in the following ways: we coach leaders on specific policies and practices necessary to implement a place-based, people-centered revitalization model; and we advise local leaders throughout their efforts as they explore opportunities, determine strategies, and develop partnerships. We understand, respect, and value leaders with different philosophies of leadership in various public and private sector entities that collaborate in these efforts and serve as thought partners to encourage innovation for the benefit of local neighborhood residents.

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Strategic partnerships help build and strengthen the local capacity to achieve purposeful revitalization goals in the long term. Partnerships with high-capacity organizations, whether public, private, or nonprofit, are key to implementing our holistic vision. Purpose Built provides access to potential partners and resources to help accelerate and deepen neighborhood recovery and stabilization. We develop tools and knowledge products capturing successful strategies and lessons learned, including strategies to mitigate risk of future displacement that can happen as neighborhoods become healthier.

COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

We facilitate opportunities for Network Members to learn from each other through a national network of practitioners who participate in the Community of Practice (CoP) model. Our CoP bring together professionals who solve problems collaboratively and learn from each other on an ongoing basis. This model accelerates replication of best practices and innovation opportunities taking place across our network and deepens the level of knowledge and expertise at Purpose Built.



Amplify GR in Grand Rapids, MI is staffed by residents, former residents, and stakeholders in the neighborhood.

METRICS AND IMPACT

Working collectively, Purpose Built and Network Members measure impact at both the performance and population levels. Together the data, capacity, processes, and partnerships will be used to understand the impact of our efforts and the underlying story behind the data. We value qualitative data and first-hand perspectives of change alongside quantitative data from public sources. Our theory is that by committing to the following practices Purpose Built and Network Members will be better able to know, show and grow our impact. We will:

- Build shared language and a shared framework that connects performance to public/neighborhood level results
- Learn from the field and a cross-section of initiatives to adopt an agreed upon set of metrics that “roll up” for a collective story
- Include a range of metrics/measures of neighborhood transformation that reflect changes across place, people, and race: improvements in the built environment; improvements in quality and delivery of services; changing in individual, family, and other people-centered outcomes; and improvements in overall community cohesion and residents’ sense of belonging
- Garner agreement across the Network to use, collect, and report impact using the same metrics. All these efforts are part of a continuous improvement process towards the end of deepening shared understanding of what works and telling a collective story of our contributions to the long-term outcomes: improving racial equity, economic mobility, and health outcomes.

MOVING THE FIELD

We leverage the progress of our Network through external communications, partnerships, and policy to move the entire place-based field forward. We partner with other like-minded organizations and networks to learn together, impact policy, and improve outcomes. The growing understanding of how systemic racism has and continues to prevent Black, Latinx and other communities of color from living fully, safely, and prosperously calls for new models to emerge. Interdependence is at the root of ours.

Neighborhoods matter. By reinvesting and restoring resources in a neighborhood and making racial equity central to the approach, we build a healthy environment for everyone for generations to come.



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THE IMPACT WE SEEK TO CREATE

With deep collaboration, strong investments, and a mission to center residents, every neighborhood can become a pathway to prosperity for the people who live there.



THE ROLE PURPOSE BUILT PLAYS

Our team provides local leaders with the Purpose Built model for impact, and strategies and insights for implementation to support them in creating greater racial equity, economic mobility, and improved health outcomes for people in neighborhoods.

A COMMUNITY OF STAKEHOLDERS

Neighborhood transformation is a collective effort. Siloed approaches to poverty relief do not strengthen the neighborhood environment in full. And historically, local leaders have not had enough supports or resources to be fully effective in their efforts.



To be impactful, we need the insights and influence of longtime and new residents, well-resourced and supported local leaders, and a committed set of partners who share the goals of greater racial equity, economic mobility, and improved health outcomes.



WHY THIS WORK IS ESSENTIAL

There are policies and practices in our country's history that enabled different neighborhoods to become pathways to prosperity or pathways to poverty for residents. The distinction often falls along the lines of race. And the result has left many Black and Brown neighborhoods with underfunded schools, inadequate and unaffordable housing, and population loss, weakening social cohesion. Neighborhood revitalization is not only a moral cause, it's also a matter of economic and racial justice.

Our shared work is ultimately about affecting positive change and having a lasting impact on people and place. We acknowledge that many systems and policies have been driven by race. We accept that these truths have a ripple effect that has continued into the present. And we act to create new realities and unlock pathways to prosperity for generations to come.