



# Panel 1 Meeting 1 Summary

## 10.23.2014

**Panel Members (in attendance):** Wendy Baldinger, Zalman Bendet, Frances Fischer, Ellen Konstan, Eric Levinson, Shelley Robbins, Ben Savin, Margie Solomon, Maureen Davidson, Ben Savin

**Panel Members (not in attendance):** Gail Gendler Barbie Levine

**Staff:** Nora Murphy, David Milavetz

### **Background of Community Planning Process**

After a quick introduction to the staff and each other, Wendy reviewed the background of the community planning process. Information on how the process began and its methodology was shared with the panelists as well as a review of the benefits and concerns that were heard from over 350 individuals in the St. Paul Jewish community. Wendy also spent time discussing how the process might ultimately impact allocations.

### **Activity**

The discussion portion of the panel meeting focused around a mapping exercise. The panel mapped areas, locations or communities that had the largest impact on their feeling welcomed in the Twin Cities. This allowed for a broader discussion and resulted in an understanding of the areas that really impacted and connected with the panelists.

### **Themes that emerged**

#### *Types of community*

There are a variety of communities people belong to that are important to their daily lives:

- **Location/Proximity.** A lot of panel members identified communities they belong to that are in close proximity to their home
- **Synagogue.** The synagogue was an important community. People had different stories about how they came to be a member of their synagogue.
- **Community Centers.** For some, places like the JCC that are intentional about building community, are in fact important communities in people's lives.
- **Child-oriented community.** Kids are a point of entrance into communities such as schools, little league, and the JCC.
- **Affinity groups.** People belong to community groups that gather around an affinity such as a volunteer idea, a book club, or a mahjong group.
- **Virtual Community.** Some panel members are part of virtual communities that are important to them such as What'sApp as a way to connect with family members around the globe and a virtual community for people with cancer.

These types of communities are not mutually exclusive. For example, a virtual community may also be an affinity group.



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### *Phases of life*

Which communities one actively engages in changes as people move through phases of life.

For example:

- As one's child gets older the family may attend JCC less.
- As parents age Shalom may become an important new community for a family.
- When people move they often connect with a different community of proximity even if they are not moving in or out of the Twin Cities.

### *Aspects of welcoming communities*

Across the panel members' maps there were aspects of community that emerged as important.

- **Building welcoming connections is active, not passive.** It's not a welcoming banner or event that helps people feel welcomed and connected, it's very personal, it's repeated invitations and attempts to include people in community life.
- **Doing something of purpose together-** Community was often built around a purpose, such as learning or volunteering.
- **Family-like-** For some, community filled roles that we might typically relegate to families or relatives.
- **Remembering one's story-** Remembering one's story helps people feel welcome and included.

### *Who build community well*

Panelists had specific examples of people who build community well. Examples included:

- **Large businesses such as 3M.** "3M has to make a thousand new employees each year feel like they belong."
- **Colleges and universities.** "Colleges and universities start on day one making families feel like they belong. They want to develop lifelong relationships with these students and their families."
- **Non-profits.** Particularly non-profits, such as the neighborhood house, that work with immigrant or highly mobile populations.

### **Literature Review**

Next, David presented a brief summary of literature on the topic. This focused on methods and effective practices in guiding organizational welcoming. The panel agreed that additional research was necessary. Areas that were suggested for future research following the presentation include focusing on specific community's approaches to welcoming. The example of the Rose Foundation in Colorado was an example of a specific community focused on welcoming.



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### **Big decisions and Action Items:**

The committee made several big decisions and next steps:

1. Keep meeting schedule the same as originally proposed panel timeline
2. Conduct research on similar sized community's approaches to welcoming
3. Table discussion about define success for panel
4. Outline welcoming themes
5. Identify 10 similar Jewish communities and research what they've done