How to Involve Your Neighbors in Identifying and Addressing Racial Equity Issues:
Form a Racial Equity Committee and Conduct a Power Analysis

In the Spring of 2019, Neighbors of Belknap Lookout established a Racial Equity Committee. In addition to acquiring Census Tract-specific data from www.blackdemographics.com to describe the neighborhood, its primary assignment was to conduct a localized power analysis.

What is a Localized Power Analysis?

A localized power analysis examines the systems which govern daily life - housing, health, education, criminal justice, environment, social services, economics, culture/religion and communication. In its simplest form, it asks three key questions within each system:

- What entities in and around the neighborhood affect residents in relation to the system being examined?
- How does that particular system oppress, exploit, exclude or underserve poor communities?
- How does the system being examined interact with the other systems?

Here are a couple of examples from our Housing Power Analysis discussion:
How Does a Localized Power Analysis Position You to Take Action?

Neighbors of Belknap Lookout was lucky enough to secure a macro-level BSW social work intern from GVSU for academic year 2019-2020 (with official supervision provided by West Grand Neighborhood Organization). She dove a little deeper into general literature and local data sources for housing and health, and is currently doing the same for education. Her findings are showcased in the enclosed brochures. Most notably, the Black Demographics profile for the neighborhood (census tracts 13-14; 2013-7 ACS) shows racial disparities in homeownership:

Research revealed a possible cause: while all groups receive government-funded mortgages equally, private mortgages are more often denied to people of color. This combination suggests an action: working with the real estate and lending fields to remove bias from their processes.

How Can Neighbors of Belknap Lookout Help You Get Started?

Executive Director Elianna Bootzin can help you determine an organization-specific scope of work and providing framing language for your board around committee formation.

Members of the Community Relations and Racial Equity Committee can provide more detailed training for your committee or ad-hoc group in how to conduct a localized power analysis.

How Can You Help Neighbors of Belknap Lookout Grow the Movement?

Identify, articulate and engage in joint advocacy efforts based on the results of both organizations’ power analyses.

Seek collaborative funding for projects like

- a People’s Institute training (www.pisab.org/, $15k) to analyze the structures of power and privilege that hinder social equity and prepare to be effective organizers for justice;
- a replicable, neighborhood specific digital equity dashboard that can serve as a national model; or
- other something else yet to be identified.

Contact Information to Follow Up

Robin Benton, NOBL Board Member & CRRE Chair, undoingracismgr@gmail.com, 646-431-1168
Elianna Bootzin, NOBL Executive Director, noblgr@gmail.com, 616-454-8413 (office)