

2024



Barrio Alegria
Where Change Happens

NEIGHBOR PLANNING MEETING NOTES

An example of resident empowerment
and community-led programming.

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Barrio Alegria
Where Change Happens

Not another Community Meeting

Barrio Alegría is committed to bringing to life the dreams of our people. Because of this, we cannot just come up with programming and think we know what is best for our folks. No, to truly do community engagement, we have to **engage the community**. The following notes will inform our decision making for public Barrio programs



At Barrio, We keep our promises

Dear reader

On the days leading up to January 31, Barrio staff were busy inviting 25 neighbors of the South of Penn neighborhood to an idea collection meeting. The meeting held at Tec Centro Berks was exceptional in that our invitation was based on a simple yet rare premise: tell us what you want to experience this year and we will try our best to make it happen! In preparation for this meeting, we had also intentionally left a quarter of our calendar open for neighbors' suggestions.

It was a cold Wednesday evening, but neighbors trickled in. Many people knew each other, most of them had walked there, and everyone was ready to add on to the deluge of inspiration during this "lluvia de ideas" (which translates to "rain of ideas").

At Barrio, we use a participatory meeting model which we call "moving conversations." We use this model to go beyond collecting ideas and arrange them into domains. We democratize participation and create a launch pad for voices hesitant to speak out.

Trusting that Barrio will give life to their ideas, neighbors moved along the room and answered follow up questions.

We learned a thing or two during the conversation, where and when people would like to gather for events, the needs of parents and children, and that our format works for most neighbors who want to express their aspirations and desires for the city. We should also own that we did not prepare adequately for folks with special sensory or movement needs even though we try our best to be inclusive and flexible in our programs.

One of our three values is that at Barrio we keep our promises. But we did not come up with this. It was passed down by this wonderful community that continues to answer our call. When we say, we are here to listen, they come to speak.

Sincerely,

Daniel Egusquiza
Executive Director

Who, what, when, where, and why

Who: up to 25 neighbors and Barrio staff

What: showing our planning for the year and receiving input for plans.

Where: Berks Latino Workforce Development Center

When: Jan. 31 at 6pm

Why: to engage neighbors in our planning, so programming springs from the community.



Opening the meeting

Daniel Egusquiza starts the meeting at 6:18pm, presenting the reason and agenda for the night. He also lets attendees know that there will be follow up from the meeting.

Creative Placekeeping Lead Fellow Kathy Rodriguez presents what their pillar does in Barrio, emphasizes the importance of people's ideas and tells them this coming year as better than last year's.

Community Development Lead Fellow Ashley Hernandez presents their pillar to the group, inviting attendees to take advantage of micro-lending and timebanking.

Daniel returns to tell people that we are collecting people's ideas, then we will figure out a way to make 10 events out of their suggestions. Daniel tells them about the use of sticky notes and notebooks available to them during the meeting. Daniel also tells them that he is timing people's comments so that he can get to everyone.

General Ideas collection Spoken / Written

Barrio provided the group with an opportunity to vocalize the programs and events they would like to see and also allowed them to utilize notebooks and sticky notes to write out any other ideas they had throughout the night.



1. Spoken aloud at meeting:

- a. Block party
- b. Beer Garden
- c. Self-esteem for mothers
- d. Mexican Independence Day Parade
- e. Creative writing class.
- f. Fiesta for the youth
- g. chess club
- h. After school activities for kids
- i. something that has to do with mental health for all types of people
- j. An open-mic situation
- k. Networking event for newly arrived immigrants
- l. Financial literacy for families and a platform to bring awareness to local artists.
- m. Magic workshop.
- n. Musical workshops for all
- o. Mental health events sound like a good idea, especially if geared toward gifted or people with disabilities.
- p. Parental classes for people with kids with special needs, Mental disability. Cooking classes sowing.
- q. Would love a Spanish class, language exchange.
- r. Innovative music events, battles, costume contests, go beyond just music. Re-spin and rebrand music events into something more for the community.





2. Written Responses

- a. Healthy relationship workshops for adults
- b. Sex-ed workshops for parents and youth
- c. Window garden workshop
- d. Artist premier and YouTube performances of different types
- e. Out-of-the-box music events
- f. Language exchanges between two different language speakers (Spanish/Eng)
- g. Spanish/English language classes
- h. Music lessons / learning instruments
- i. Studio sessions activities for any music, art, etc.
- j. Gaming club
- k. Networking events for immigrants
- l. Contacts for immigrants in the community
- m. "Self-love" parties for people to care and appreciate themselves
- n. Healthy cooking classes
- o. Charm school for girls and boys
- p. Exercise
- q. A "fashion school"
- r. Choir
- s. Community clean-ups
- t. Shredding service (destroying sensitive documents)
- u. Special needs and mental disability classes for parents
- v. Donation initiative to get basic essentials to children
- w. Events that celebrate recent graduates
- x. Classes to prepare children for college
- y. Credit classes
- z. Debate teams
- aa. Fishing
- ab. Camping
- ac. Pony riding
- ad. Skating and skateboarding classes
- ae. Bicycling contests
- af. Sculpture classes
- ag. Show and tell for community members
- ah. Safety/ CPR classes



Daniel lets the group know that there are some ideas that Barrio will not be able to do because of the organization’s capacity and expertise. He acknowledges that some ideas sound simple but they take a lot of effort and coordination to see them through.

He tells participants that Barrio’s commitment is to try to bring the best ideas to life, but we have experience that showed us that even simple ideas can be too big of lifts for a small group.

Daniel identifies the dominions that the spoken ideas fall into and he asks people to group themselves into a corner of the space that represents their ideas.

Daniel asks the group to picture themselves “in the middle of their idea.” He prompted them to “think about where it is, how did you get there, when is it at night or morning, weekend? We want to hear all of the details that you can create.” Daniel gave them time to discuss.

Daniel transitions into a moving conversation, where attendees physically place themselves based on their responses to a prompt.

Domain identification

Types of activities neighbors want



The four Dominions

**AFTER
SCHOOL
ACTIVITIES**

ART

WORKSHOPS

**MENTAL
HEALTH**

Moving conversation

In a moving conversation, a question is posed and two sides of the room act as binary polar opposite answers to that question. Participants are instructed to move toward one side of the other based on their opinions. Their level of agreement with each side is indicated by the proximity to each pole. So, for a “yes-no” question, moving to middle would act as a “maybe” response.

Question #1

Where is your idea happening?

If your idea happens indoors: **13 responded**

- a. School
- b. Anywhere with a stage
- c. in Barrio
- d. Barrio
- e. Barrio
- f. Barrio
- g. Tec Centro
- h. Tec Centro
- i. Tec Centro
- j. Tec Centro
- k. Tec Centro

If you idea happens outdoors: **8 responded**

- a. Blue march
- b. The street
- c. community space

Middle-ish: **6 responded**

- a. virtual
- b. anywhere
- c. anywhere with a courtyard
- d. somewhere open
- e. Park or community pillar building
- f. a place where people feel safe

Question #2

DO YOU WANT THIS TO BE FREE OR PAID FOR BY COMMUNITY MEMBERS?

***Due to the nature of the quick moving conversations we began estimating the amount of people on each group rather than individually counting each group.

1. Free: **Almost everyone responded**
2. Fee: **No one responded totally committed to only charging for events**
3. Middle: **A few people responded**
 - a. pay what you can
 - b. “If people want something of value then they should be compensated well”
 - c. “Pay what you can is a great idea”

Question #3

DO WE WANT THE ARTISTS TO BE PAID?

(Daniel notes to the group that Barrio believes in paying our artists, however there may be times when Barrio doesn't have the budget to pay, so we may ask if people are open to timebank hours.)

1. Free: **very few responded**

- a. A participant said that he is willing to do it for free because it is his passion and he already has a fulltime job, so he does not need to make money with his skillset.

2. Paid: **Most people responded**

3. Middle-ish: **a few people responded.**

- a. "I'm in the middle because of my personal story. I was a volunteer when I started at Barrio. I believe that as capable as possible, orgs should try to pay artists but I gained something of value when I was volunteering."
- b. "In the pay what you can because if it is only about payment, it's going to be about the money. I want that the person who is teaching me is doing it because they want to teach me, not just for a check. They should receive something."
- c. "You can pay someone in other ways other than money."
- d. We can fundraise to pay artists.
- e. Reading has a very vulnerable population, so if we can give we should—but sometimes we cannot.
- f. If you don't have money you can pay with pastelillos, food or something else.

Question #4

When should they happen?

1. During the week: **little more than a third of participants responded**
 - a. because women are busy during the weekend doing housework
 - b. This person wants the activities to happen afterschool
 - c. As a way to form habits with people, need it during the week.
 - d. To create habits after school for kids.
 - e. The weekends are very busy so the afternoons during the week.
 - f. Check their phone and on the internet more during the week
2. Weekend: **around a third of people responded.**
 - a. People do not have availability during the week due to work.
 - b. Weekend is when people are available and if there are no people, there's no event.
3. Middle: **a little less than a third responded.**
 - a. Usually people work during the week and usually just want to go home. Depends on the demographic. Think that teenagers and younger adults would prefer the week.
 - b. I don't know what would be better. People are free on the weekends but then they have plans on the weekend so for me it depends on the demographic.
 - c. There should be options for both sides.
 - d. See what works better for people. Most people plan for their weekends, but I also have availability after work and can get things done because I'm not planning to go out.
 - e. Doing stuff during the week may interfere with work schedules. Even if I have availability, I may be tired.
 - f. More about ensuring knowing what your event is because it depends what the activity is and the population. You win some, you lose some.
 - g. Shows should be weekends and workshops should be during the week

Question #5

SHOULD BARRIO FOCUS ON EVENTS MOSTLY FOR CHILDREN, ADULTS OR SPECIFICALLY TO HELP ARTISTS?

1. Adults: **Less than a third responded**
2. Families: **Less than a third responded**
 - a. "When children see their parents there they behave better."
3. Children: **Less than about a third responded**
 - a. "If you focus on kids young then when they are adults they are prepared."
4. Artists to help them professionally: **a few sprinkled near that area**
5. Middle: **a few people responded**
 - a. "I think Barrio should make events for everybody, would not be good to focus to just one demographic. Should be very diverse."
 - b. Think it should be fairly even, some sort of equality for each demo
 - c. Think it should be for children and adults, I know there are biracial kids who would benefit from classes.
 - d. Would like to see a diversity between kids and adults.
 - e. I know barrio was focusing more in recent years to be more for adults, think that we could do more for kids.
 - f. If we are calling teens kids, I think they need some attention most likely to need saving.



Thankful, and humbled **In closing**

Daniel asks that participants give us their contact information so we can contact them about how our planning has developed. He again reminds them that Barrio can't do every idea, but we will try our best to meet your needs and desire for your community.

Daniel encourages participants to use post-it notes or notebook paper to write down any ideas they could not share or to extrapolate on ideas they did share.

Daniel promises that Barrio will be in communication with participants about the 10 events created from their ideas in mid-February.

He thanks the group for their participation and closes the session.



**BARRIO
ALEGRÍA**

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