

Warwick Square Apartments



Igniting social change through
sustainable practices and programs

What type of social change do you hope to bring about in the Warwick Square Apartments community?

Social change at the community level is the process of building relationships that help to cohere community members around common purpose, identity, and a sense of belonging which may lead to social or community capital. It is a process of improving the quality of life in a neighborhood or community by strengthening the capacity of residents, associations, and organizations to identify priorities and opportunities and to work, individually and collectively, to foster and sustain positive neighborhood or community change.

Before answering the question of what type of social change I'd hope to bring to the community I would first need to answer the question: What type of social change do the tenants hope to see?

I would find out these answers by conducting a tenant audit at a community event. The audit would consist of several questions such as:

- How do you define community?
- Do you have need for childcare?
- Do you have need for elderly care?
- Do you have need for a healthier diet?
- Do you have need for more exercise?
- Do you enjoy social gatherings?
- Do you enjoy cooking?
- Would you be open to sharing your resources with your neighbors?
- Do you like to garden?
- Do you enjoy childcare?
- Do you have need for language education?
- Do you have need for job placement?
- Do you have need for education or skills training?
- On an average night what do you eat for dinner?
- Do you know your neighbors' names?
- Do you feel empowered in your life?
- What's your strongest skill?
- Do you have legal needs?



To ensure community participation in the audit I would make it available both in online and hardcopy formats. I'd introduce neighbors to the audit via a social gathering potluck. At this community potluck there will be tables where neighbors will engage with myself and other volunteers to ask for help about the audit. My multi-lingual team will encourage all neighbors to fill the audit out at the party. Meanwhile I'd make a record of who came to the potluck, what they brought to share and how they answered the audit. I would record who did not attend and reach out to them separately by email and by going door-to-door. I would use this initial information to begin building my community map to assess WHO is the Warwick Square Apartments community and WHAT are their needs.

My assumption is that there will be need for childcare, language labs, job placement, exercise, nutrition and personal empowerment. That being said I would want to collaborate with the existing program manager, local city programs, local nonprofits and local corporations to see what resources are available that are not being accessed. Meanwhile I would identify the needs that the neighbors have the resources for (if only they were sharing both resources and responsibilities). I would then engage the neighbors to participate in various resource/responsibility sharing programs such as: **on site childcare, community meals, community gardens, community physical fitness, community book clubs, community art and community skillsharing.**

In one year I think it will be plausible to create multiple weekly and monthly programs that offer neighbors more community engagement, resources, services and activities that will alter their quality of life for the better as both neighbors and individuals.

My assumptions aside, the most important thing I will do is listen to the tenants. From there I will create a thorough map of who the tenants are, what their needs are, what their skills are and what resources they are willing to share. This information will guide my organization of programs and activities - bespoke to their needs and style. Towards the end of the year I will conduct another audit to see if their original needs have been met, what the strongest programs are, who will be the leaders going forward and what needs are still missing.

How do you plan to go about at engaging the community to foster their interest and participation?


If I were chosen to execute the Warwick Apartment community-building project the first way that I would engage with the tenants would be to host a potluck/BBQ party. Everyone would be asked to bring a dish to share. I've found, that the best way to get to know people (their heritage, culture, personalities and idea of community) is over food. In this space we can be proud of our traditions, enjoy our differences and learn about each other without conflict or stress. Breaking bread with people is the first step towards friendship and bonding and would be an excellent first step to acquaint myself with the tenants and vice versa.

As well as sharing food, barbecuing and listening to music I'd set up tables where tenants could answer a questionnaire (in multiple applicable languages) along with an art table where folks could draw, with crayons on big pieces of paper, what the word "community" means to them. At past events that I've produced I've learned that activity tables can be really helpful at breaking the ice. Beyond being a great way to relax guests socially, creative activities also allow the right brain to communicate. The two activity tables will offer me amazing insight into who the tenants really are from both sides of their brains.

The questionnaires and community drawings would be gathered at the end (after I document the information on them) to be displayed in a communal space for a month. This would highlight the current conversations around "community" among the tenants and allow for the conversation to live and grow beyond the initial gathering.

From the questionnaire I'd learn valuable information about what the reoccurring needs of the community are. I'd turn their answers into graphs that listed all the needs and resources that the community referenced. For instance, if 50% or more listed affordable childcare needs on the questionnaire, then that would be my first lead on a possible community project. I'd find out if anyone in the community is a resource for affordable childcare and then I'd engage with those people to organize a solution for those tenants in need of childcare.

Soon after the initial gathering I'd engage on a personal level frequently and routinely with the tenants. Reaching out by email, in person and through social media platforms. I would start building committees to work on various projects. I'd act transparently, posting all my actions daily, weekly and monthly for all tenants to see. I'd be available multiple days a week to talk and brainstorm.



If you really want to make a friend, go to someone's house and eat with him... the people who give you their food give you their heart.

-- Cesar Chavez

Goals:

- Connect the tenants together at the community level
- Hear the needs of the community
- Empower community leaders
- Organize with tenants to create solutions for their community needs
- Facilitate experiences that create communication and bonding between tenants
- Create projects that can be sustained by the community after my year is complete
- Set in motion a structure that the tenants can use to decide on future projects
- Create projects that fulfill various needs of the community and enhance the community's over-all quality of life

How do you plan to measure your impact on the community during your residency and what tools might you suggest post-residency?

Progress will be measured monthly by:

- tenant participation
- community programming and events
 - active committees
- local leaders rising from the community
 - productivity
 - tenant feedback

I'll record everyone who's present at each event. I'll create graphs that track the entire year for every tenant, showing which events they frequented and/or offered leadership to. This way I'll know by the end of the year which events were most successful and sustainable. I will share my data and visual tools with the leaders who'll be moving forward after my year is complete.

Being at the actual events and watching how programs and/or events are making people feel and interact with each other - that will be one of the most important measurements. Are people getting along? Are they having fun? Did they learn something new? Did they meet someone new? Could they resolve a problem? Are they inspired? I'll keep a journal of all these notes per event.

Participation, follow-through and responsibility from the committee members will showcase a lot about the community and where they are at with being their word and having a stake in their community. I'll make sure to not set them up for failure and will have each committee design how to communicate powerfully and get things accomplished within their group.

Creating an environment for community leaders to rise from will be imperative for the community to continue to blossom after my residency. I will assess my monthly engagement success by the number and value of leaders that rise or show interest in rising. I'll make sure that time and efforts are designated to help inspired tenants grow into their own community leaders.

I will measure monthly our actual productivity against what we said we wanted to accomplish. This will lend insight on where we might be getting bogged down or to what's not working at committee meetings etc. Monthly tweaks and adjustments will be made so as to produce higher monthly impact.

Every event or program will end with an opportunity to give feedback. Every tenant will have a feedback file so I'll be able to see if requests have been fulfilled-on for that tenant. Using software programs like Wild Apricot and Mind Meister will help me keep track of tenant feedback, participation and ideas.

What makes you qualified and the right person to be selected to initiate social change in this community?

Describe some of your past work engaging community and/or leading social change.

My academic focus has been on sociology and community design. I hold a Bachelors of Sociology and a Masters of Fine Arts in Media Design. My masters thesis topic was on building a regenerative home in the suburbs. During my bachelors degree I worked and lived in the intentional community, Green Plan. Later I co-created the queer-friendly, bi-monthly brunch cafe, East Gay Cafe, that raised funds for the local non-profit, Queeruption. In 2007 I traveled to the Jabulani Village in Zimbabwe with the nonprofit group, Ndebele Art Project Africa, to help conduct a social audit to determine future programs and how to best serve the community in sustainable development. I've produced many successful fundraising events and community art and music shows. My work since the mid 90's have all been community driven and focused.

Beyond academia and life experience I also have extensive training in group dynamics and personal transformation. I am a Landmark Education Wisdom Course graduate and have practiced Kundalini and Bikram yoga for over a decade. My local community in Orange County has a collective knowledge (which I have access to) in transformation via energy work, network chiropractic, homeopathy, nutrition, yoga, therapy, body work, Tantric dance, natural childbirth, art and music.

The foundation I received from my family also makes me a unique qualifier for the position. My parents are both back-to-the-landers and have created there very own Orange County homestead complete with solar power, a vineyard, many gardens and a bio diesel production facility. My father makes his own wine, cures olives, dries tomatoes and makes the family fuel using used vegetable oil from restaurants like Memphis Cafe. Meanwhile my mother, who is a female health advocate, has just released her film, The Milky Way, which is about transforming the conversation around breastfeeding in America.

Though I myself am not a Spanish speaker I have received confirmation from Alicia Rojas, of Santa Ana Community Artist Coalition, that if I receive this grant she would aid me as a translator and also as someone who deeply understands the local politics and conversations around Santa Ana gentrification. As a team, I believe, we could bring together the Warwick Square Apartments community in a fulfilling and lasting way.

The following are examples of community or social change projects I've played a leadership role in:



East Gay Cafe



In 2001 I helped create and run the community cafe, East Gay Cafe in Oakland California. It was the first of its kind to come to the Bay Area and the model has since been replicated. We featured different vegan chefs and DJ's every week. The staff was all volunteer and everything on the menu was priced reasonably; no one was turned away for lack of funds.

The cafe was a queer positive place and we encouraged all folks from all walks of life to come and feel at home in a safe, fun environment. We raised money for the local organization Queeruption who was working to educate the community on LGBT issues and to build community alliances.

Community Music



In the late 90's and early 00's I produced many community music events. Folk Off was an open mic style event that invited friends and neighbors the opportunity to perform their campfire/folk hits for each other. The Panthalassa Project was a series of shows that blended a few crossover scenes together in a post-Indie scene environment - holding the social values of the mid 90's Indie movement in-tact.

**Ndebele Art Project Africa
Mission**

**Ndebele Art Project Africa
Eco Fundraiser**



In 2007 I traveled to the Jabulani Village in northern Zimbabwe to discover the most critical needs of the community and to develop a greater bond and communication on the ground with the nonprofit efforts stateside. We lived with the villagers for a week and visited often during the other 2 weeks we were there. We ate what they ate, worked the daily chores with them, went to their church, celebrated with them, asked A LOT of questions, learned bits of their language and listened to their concerns and needs. We brought home important suggestions and data that helped focus the nonprofit's programming, fundraising efforts and direction for the year to follow. While we were on the ground we helped facilitate the repair of the broken windmill and water tanks - a vital source of water for the village.



In 2009 I produced the Ndebele Art Project yearly fundraiser party. This was a green event - fueled by bio diesel generators, using all recycled furniture, local biodynamic wine, organic meats and cheeses and all food and paper waste was composted. The entertainment for the night was brought to us by 2 local DJ's and a fire dancer. The food was from Old Vine Cafe and the wine was donated by Frey Vineyards. With a budget of \$5000 we were able to raise \$17,000 leaving the nonprofit with \$12,000 for village projects for the next year.

Working with the Warwick apartments community would be a huge learning experience and an opportunity to bring my passions and studies to life in a real-world and meaningful way. It's exciting to think about the difference that could be made for the Warwick tenants by transforming their apartment complex into an intentional community and I'd love to be a part of this social project. I grew up in Santa Ana and Orange and an opportunity to participate in a local social change program that builds community is a dream of mine. Please feel free to look at my professional work at my website: www.miremolnar.com.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.



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