



HOPE, AGENCY & TRUST

Community Discussion Guide





DEDICATION:

This project is dedicated to the late Dr. Margaret Dechman who was instrumental to this work & to changing the perspectives of everyone she worked with.

She was awarded a Nova Scotia Human Rights Award posthumously in recognition of her life's work as an advocate, researcher, and champion for the rights of individuals impacted by poverty, mental health, and addictions throughout Cape Breton.

We miss her greatly.



HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE:

- This Community Discussion Guide has been created to support community conversations around positive change on the Northside.
- There are 3 major sections containing research findings from the Invictus project, and excerpts from relevant literature, chosen to get people thinking about the factors contributing to the 'way things are' and the change we want to see in our community.
- After each of these sections, there is a set of questions designed to guide discussions. Pause after each section to discuss what you are learning and how it might be used to contribute to positive change in the community.

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HOPE IN ACTION



HOPE IN ACTION

Why Explore Hope?

*In Order for Positive
Change to Happen,
People Need to
Believe That a Better
Future is Possible...*

Northside Rising was founded on a belief that community should play an active role in shaping local affairs. However, when a community has experienced long-term adversity, it can become difficult to believe that a better future is possible, or that we have the power to bring about positive change.

As a result, hope emerged as a central ingredient for change on the Northside; not hope as wishful thinking, but hope as the active force that keeps us moving toward the change we want to see for our community.

What gives people hope? What takes it away? How do we strengthen it in our community?



HOPE IN ACTION

What is it? What isn't it?

1



*HOPE is the
ability to
see light in
the darkness*

"Hope is the acknowledgment that the potential for multiple outcomes exists, and that among those outcomes are positive futures."

"When we embrace the potential of a positive future we can become spokesmen and spokeswoman for that voice of potential."

- *Spreading Hope, Community Toolbox*

3



*HOPE is
Realistic*

"Hope is not just a feel-good emotion, but a dynamic cognitive motivational system."

- *Scott Kauffman, "The Will and Way of Hope"*

"To hope is to have both the will (agency) and the ways (pathways) to pursue desired goals."

"Hope is the sum of the mental willpower and waypower that we have for our goals"

- *Rich Snyder, Hope Theory*

"It's important to say what hope is not: it is not the belief that everything was, is or will be fine..."

"We don't know what is going to happen, how or when, and that very uncertainty is the space of hope."

"When you recognize uncertainty, you recognize that you may be able to influence the outcomes - you alone or you in concert with a few dozen or several million others."

- *Rebecca Solnit, Hope in the Dark*

2

*HOPE is
Knowing That a
Better Future is
Possible*



"Hopeful individuals and communities certainly see things 'as they are' - but 'as they are' also includes the potential for things as they could be."

"Hope recognizes the dark but turns it to light."

"Hope is believing in spite of the evidence, then watching the evidence change."

- *Spreading Hope, Community Toolbox*

4

*HOPE is Like
a Muscle*



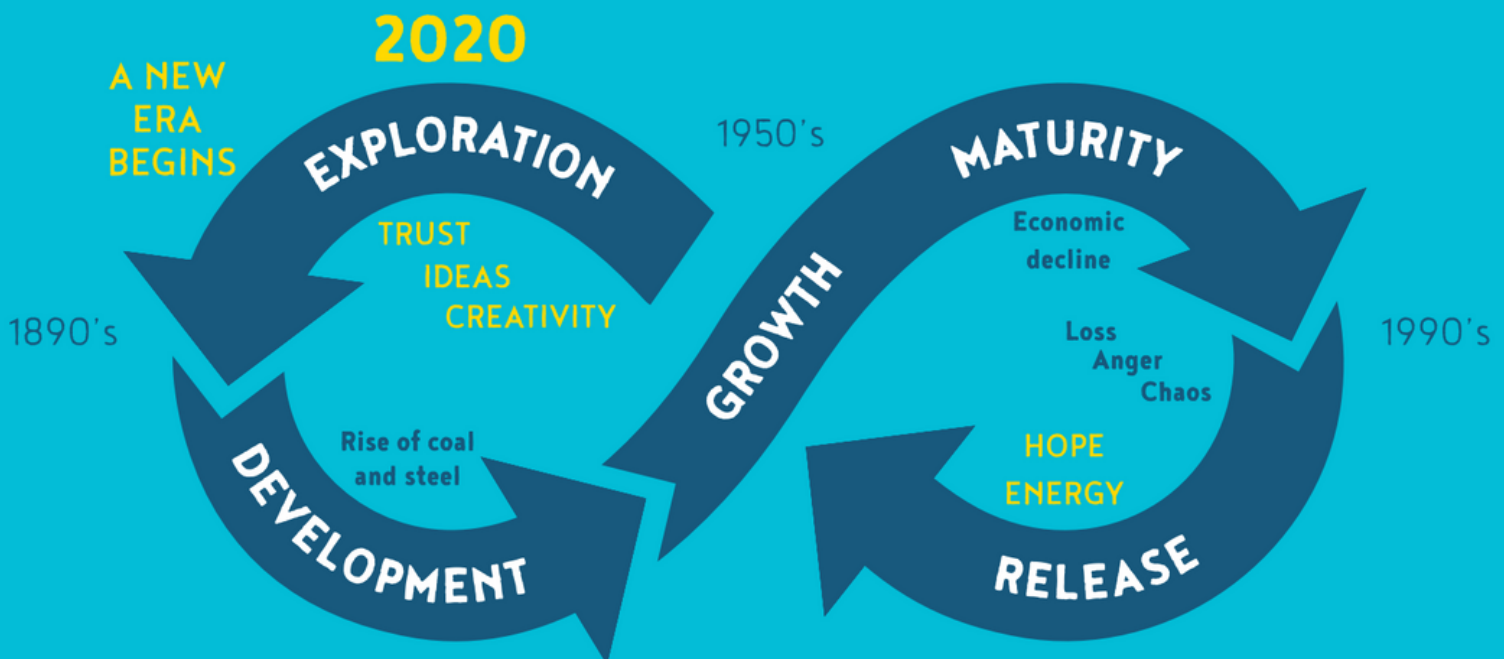
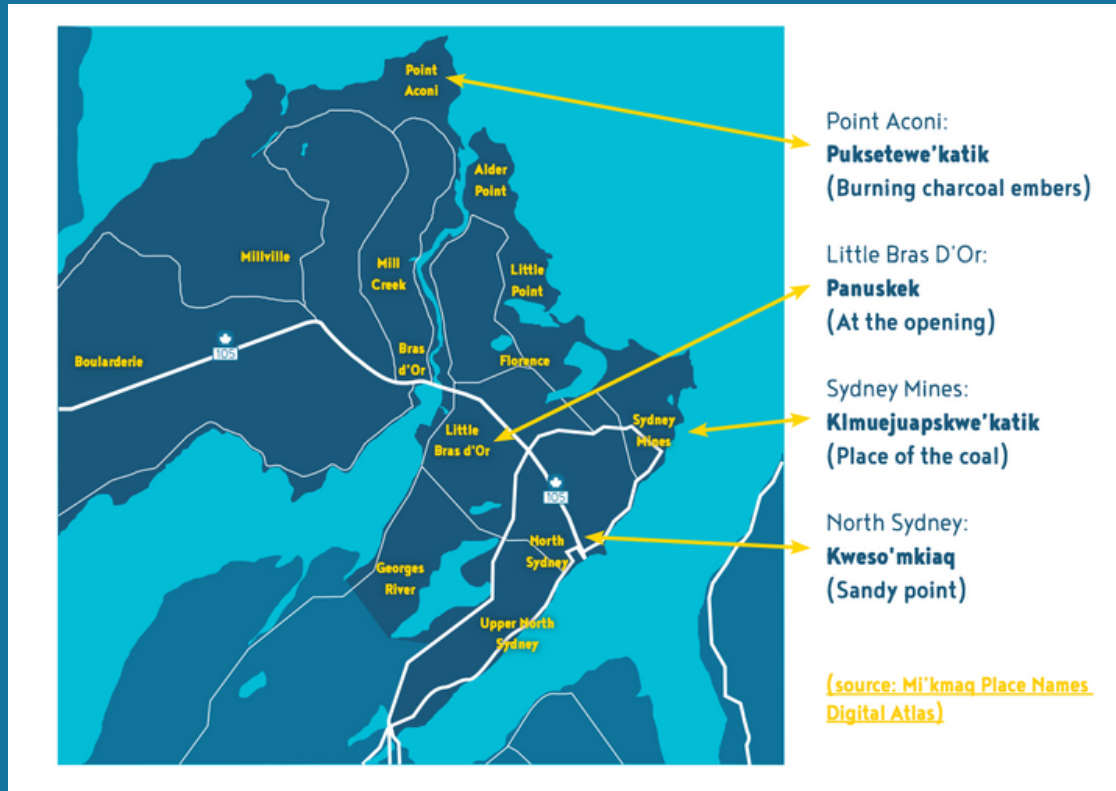


THE NORTHSIDE CONTEXT



THE NORTHSIDE

Our Community

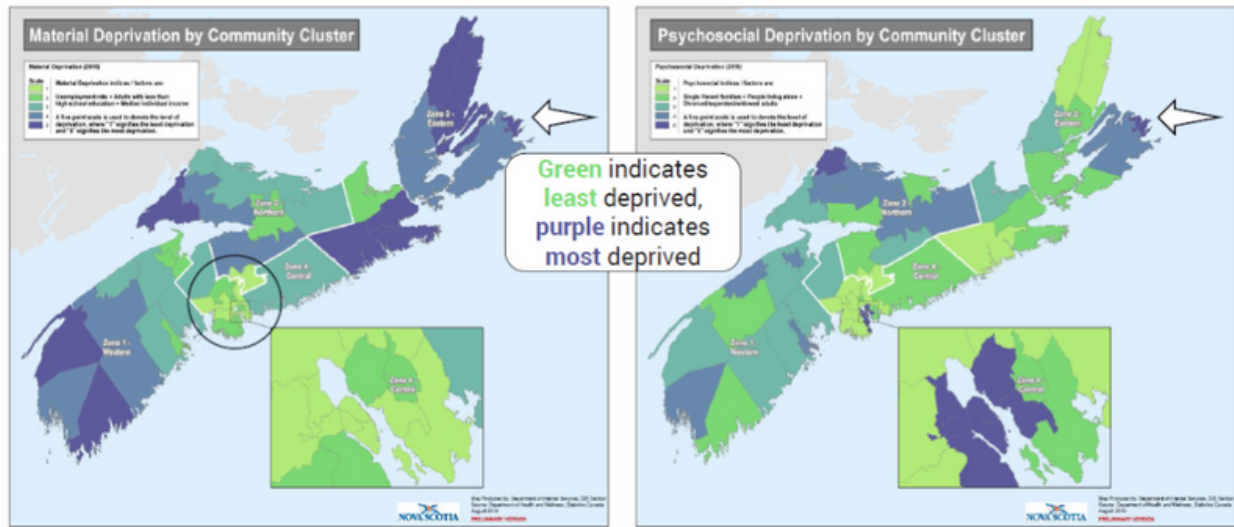


The 'Ecocycle' is a tool used to map the natural rise, fall, and renewal of dynamic systems, like communities. The Northside is emerging from a long period of decline. There are signs of a new era beginning, fueled by hope and a desire to try new things.



THE NORTHSIDE

The Story in the Data



Community clusters with low material and psychosocial deprivation*

EAST HANTS CORRIDOR
TANTALLON/TIMBERLEA/SMB
BEDFORD/HAMMONDS PLAINS
FALL RIVER AND AREA

Community clusters with high material and psychosocial deprivation**

FLORENCE/SYDNEY MINES/NORTH SYDNEY
DOMINION/GLACE BAY
NEW WATERFORD
SYDNEY AND AREA
SPRINGHILL
YARMOUTH

Data from the 2016 Census shows that the Northside is one of a handful of communities in Nova Scotia that suffers from high levels of both: material deprivation (low levels of employment, education and incomes) and social deprivation (high numbers of single parent families, people living alone and adults who are divorced, separated or widowed).

	NORTHSIDE	NOVA SCOTIA
Incidence of Low Income (After Tax LIM) (2015)		
<i>Total Population</i>	27%	17.2%
<i>0-17 year olds</i>	33.2%	22.2%
<i>0-5 year olds</i>	39.9%	25.7%
Unemployment Rate (2015)	18.5%	10%
Lone-Parent Families (2015)	29%	17%
Less Than Grade 12 Education	31%	22%
Living in Unaffordable Housing	25%	12%
Increased Use of Food Banks Since 2016	23%	-
Number of Syringes Distributed on the Northside by Ally Centre Needle Exchange (2016)	92,700 (approx. 7/resident)	-

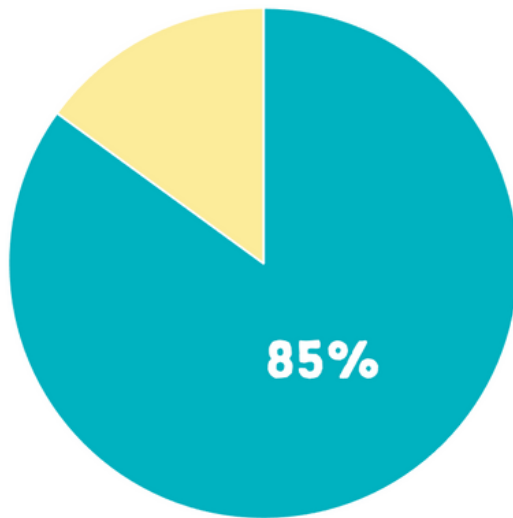
Data shows the extent of the economic and social problems facing the Northside (Published 2018)



THE NORTHSIDE

A Priority Community Concern: Substance Use

Points of Contact with Problem Drug and Alcohol Use



■ At Least 1 Point of Contact ■ No Points of Contact

Results from the Invictus community survey show that **85% of respondents had at least one close contact** ("myself", "my spouse or partner", or "someone in my family") **experiencing problems with drugs or alcohol.**

From the Invictus Community Survey ...

Younger people reported having serious or very serious drug or alcohol problems more often than older people, especially people between the ages of 25 to 34 (10%) and 35 to 44 (15%)

Males reported having serious or very serious drug or alcohol problems more often than women (18% Males to 7% Females)

People without enough to get by were more often than others to report having serious or very serious drug or alcohol problems: "sometimes enough" (15%); "never enough" (21%)





INVICTUS:

Exploring HOPE,
AGENCY & TRUST on
the Northside



INVICTUS

Exploring Hope, Agency and Trust on the Northside

The Invictus research project took place between September, 2019 and October, 2021. Our purpose was to explore the state of hope, agency and trust on the Northside and deepen understanding of the role they play in building a vibrant, healthy community. There was particular attention placed on the key issue of substance use. Drawing on the research findings, this discussion guide is meant to encourage reflection and conversation about these themes and how we can strengthen them as drivers of positive change on the Northside.

For more on Invictus, see the [Research Overview](#).

What is the overall state of hope, agency and trust on the Northside?

502
Survey
Respondents

We conducted community surveys online and on foot. Responses were subjected to rigorous quantitative analysis.

Who in the community has high levels of hope, agency and trust?

41
Semi-
Structured
Interviews

We interviewed 29 mostly randomly selected Northsiders and a group of 12 people who use drugs from the area. We did linguistic and thematic analysis of those sessions.

Who has lower levels?





INVICTUS

Exploring Hope, Agency and Trust on the Northside



Goals + Agency + Pathways = HOPE

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Definitely False	Mostly False	Somewhat False	Slightly False	Slightly True	Somewhat True	Mostly True	Definitely True

1. If I should find myself in a jam, I could think of many ways to get out of it
2. At the present time, I am energetically pursuing my goals
3. There are lots of ways around any problem I am facing now
4. Right now, I see myself as being pretty successful
5. I can think of many ways to reach my current goals
6. At this time, I am meeting the goals I have set for myself

Our basic definition of hope was drawn from Hope Theory in positive psychology.

Hope is the sum of:

1. Our ability to set goals
2. The motivation and confidence to work toward those goals (agency)
3. Our capacity to determine how to get from where we are to where we want to be (pathways).

The tool we used for measuring hope on the Northside was the State Hope Scale developed by Hope Theory founder Dr. Rick Snyder.



For a helpful overview of Hope Theory view [this animated video](#) or for a fuller discussion see [this article](#) by Dr. Rick Snyder.



HOPE & AGENCY

What We Learned





We Learned That...

THERE IS A BRIGHT SIDE

Despite the challenges facing the Northside, local people express pride in their community and identify significant strengths

Surveyed residents said:

"Someone Would Help You if You Needed it"

89%

"People Recognize You or Know Who You Are"

90%

92%

"the Northside is a Good Place to Live"

"People are Friendly to You on the Northside"

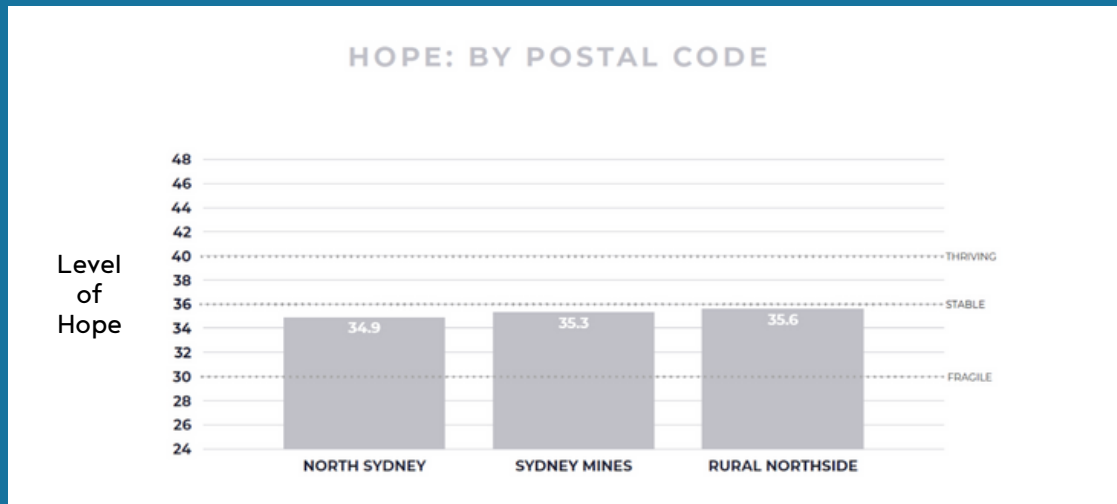


NORTHSIDE
rising



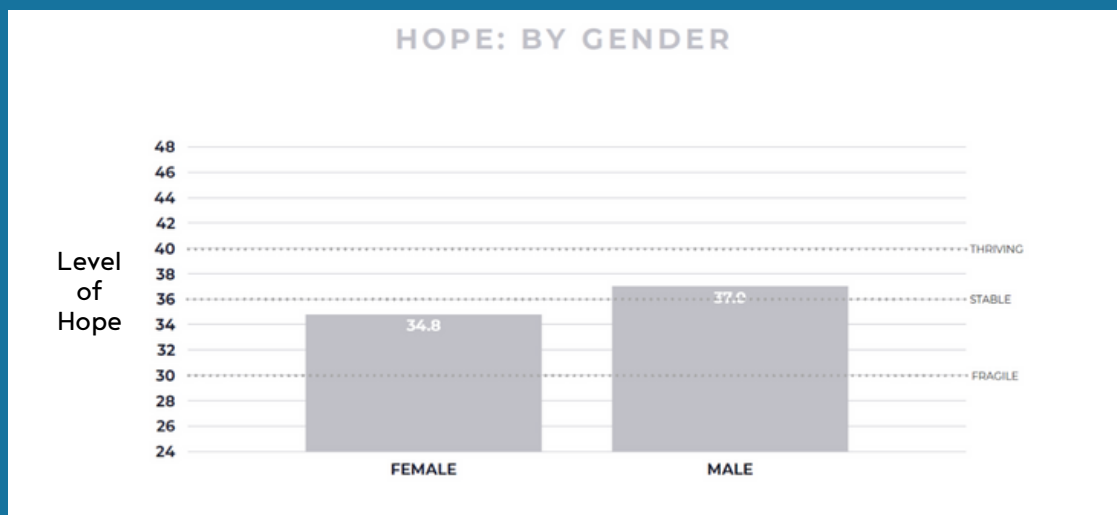
We Learned That...

LEVELS OF HOPE ACROSS THE NORTHSIDE ARE LOW TO MODERATE



Although rural parts of the Northside fair slightly better than urban areas, overall levels of hope are consistent across the community. Compared with benchmarks based on a large scale study of hope in the United Kingdom, hope on the [Northside falls in the low to moderate range](#). Overall, hope is measured on a 48-point scale with scores of 40 or better being strong, 36 being moderate and 30 being low.

WOMEN ARE LESS HOPEFUL THAN MEN



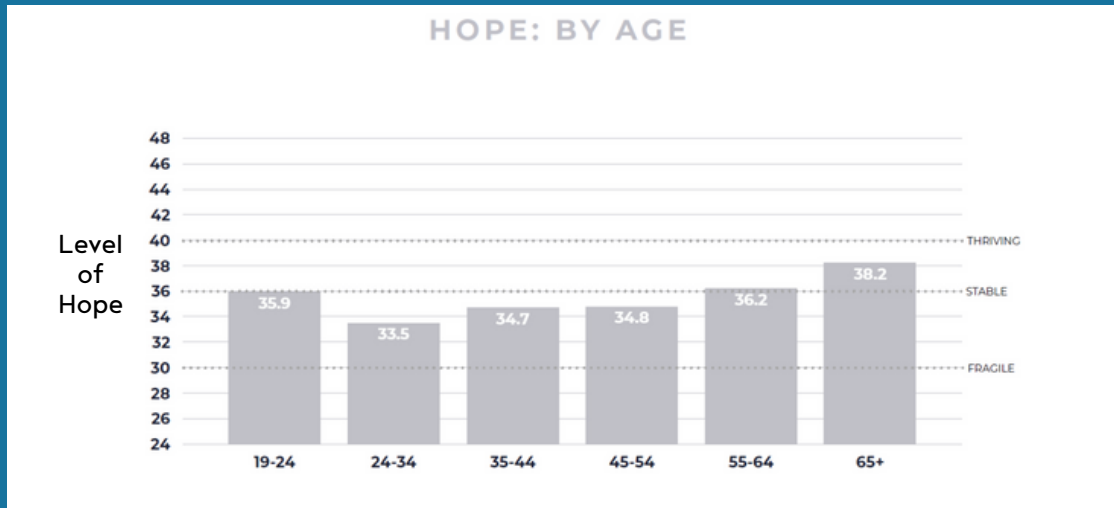
Hope is not shared equally by all members of the community. For example, women on the Northside experience significantly lower levels of hope than do men. This may be related to social inequalities that place additional stress on women than on men.





We Learned That...

OLDER PEOPLE ARE MORE HOPEFUL THAN YOUNGER PEOPLE



Senior citizens over the age of 65 possess very high levels of hope while young people 25 to 34 years of age hold notably less hope.

This may be a reflection of the eras in which people lived and the life opportunities available to people at those times. It may also reflect people's life cycle - younger people striving to secure the basics they need to make their lives and older people having some level of security based on earlier work and social support available to seniors.

YOUNGER PEOPLE EXPERIENCE SIGNIFICANT SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHALLENGES

Two related concerns stand out about younger people on the Northside. 29 percent of 25-34 year olds lack a strong sense of connection to others and one third of 25-44 year olds face significant levels of economic insecurity.

29%

...of Northsiders ages 25-34 rarely or never feel close to other people. They are lonely.

33%

of Northsiders ages 25-44 sometimes or never have enough to get by.

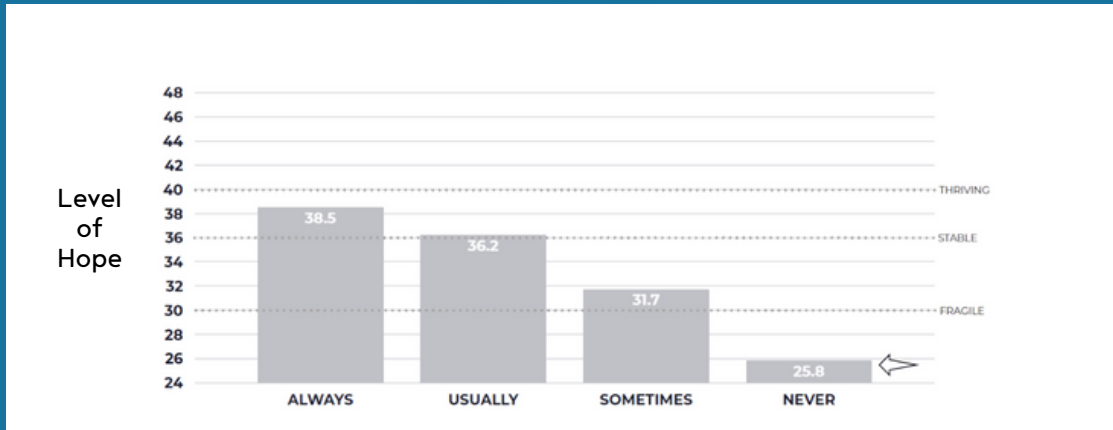


NORTHSIDE
rising



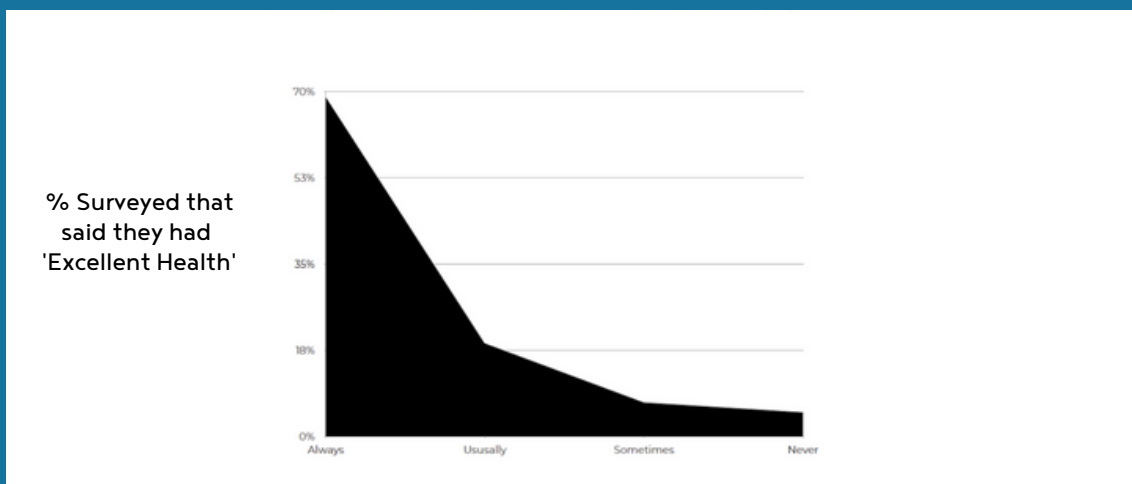
We Learned That...

ECONOMIC (\$) INSECURITY HAS A MAJOR IMPACT ON HOPEFULNESS



Perhaps the most dramatic finding of the research was the great divide that exists between those who are economically well off and those who are not when it comes to hope. Survey participants who indicated that they sometimes or never have enough to get by (financially) reported much lower levels of hope, agency and trust than those who usually or always have enough to get by.

ECONOMIC INSECURITY IMPACTS MANY ASPECTS OF LIFE ON THE NORTHSIDE



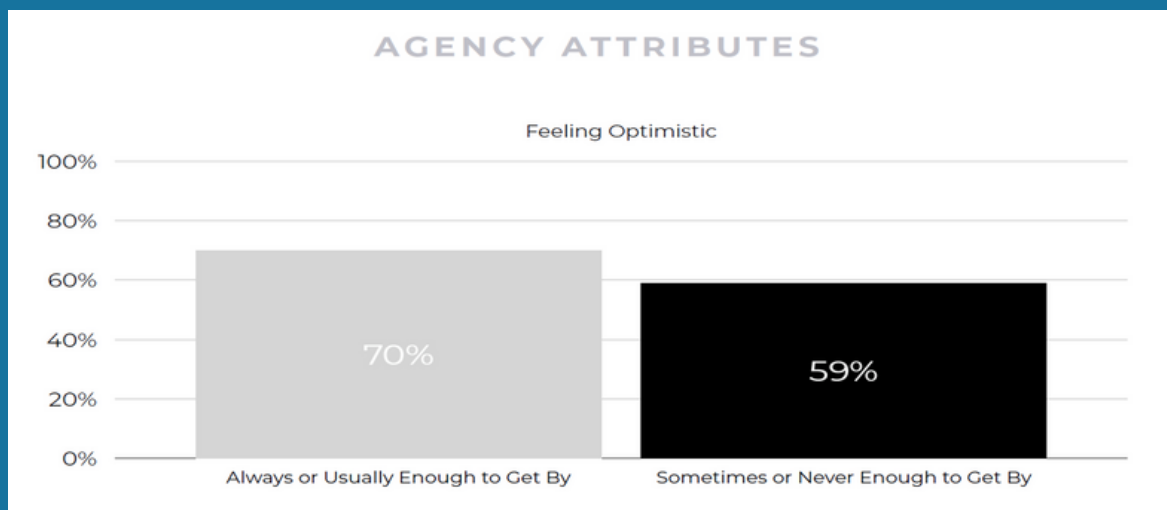
How often people said they 'had enough \$ to get by'

Less than 3% of those who never have enough to get by report excellent health vs. 69% of those who always have enough to get by.



We Learned That...

ECONOMIC INSECURITY CAN MAKE IT HARDER TO BELIEVE THAT CHANGE IS POSSIBLE



Optimism – the sense that a better future is possible – is one of the factors that gives people the energy to work for change. For a significant number of people on the Northside, the struggle to get by makes it harder to believe that change is possible.

LOSS OF HOPE MAY CONTRIBUTE TO SUBSTANCE USE

In 2007, a study of youth substance use in the Cape Breton Regional Municipality identified research indicating that an **important predictor of substance use was whether young people anticipate a positive future**. Quoting from the research it said, “For prevention programs to be effective, they must support those most at risk to be able to see a future when they close their eyes and dream.”

--ABCs Summary Report (Cape Breton Partnership on Drug Abuse)



NORTHSIDE
rising



COMMUNITY DISCUSSION ON HOPE & AGENCY

Pause to consider...

Based on your experience of life on the Northside, how would you describe the state of hope and agency in our community?

Who in the community might have high levels of hope and agency? Low levels?



What does hope mean to you?
What gives you hope?
What takes it away?

What stands out to you from the research findings?
Any surprises?
What questions are you holding?





COMMUNITY TRUST





COMMUNITY TRUST

Why Explore Trust?

*"Hope cannot be achieved alone.
It must in some way be an act of
community, whether the community be a
church, or a nation, or just two people
struggling together."*

-William Lynch, Images of Hope (1974)

While some goals can be achieved by individuals acting alone, many of our most significant aspirations require collective action. **Trust** is the glue that enables us to work together to realize goals we could not accomplish acting on our own.

Invictus explored TRUST as the 'glue' that holds communities together, and helps individual hope connect up at the collective level.

**Goals+Agency+Pathways
= INDIVIDUAL HOPE**

**Shared Aspirations + Collective
Agency + Combined Pathways
= COLLECTIVE HOPE**



COMMUNITY TRUST

What is it? What isn't it?



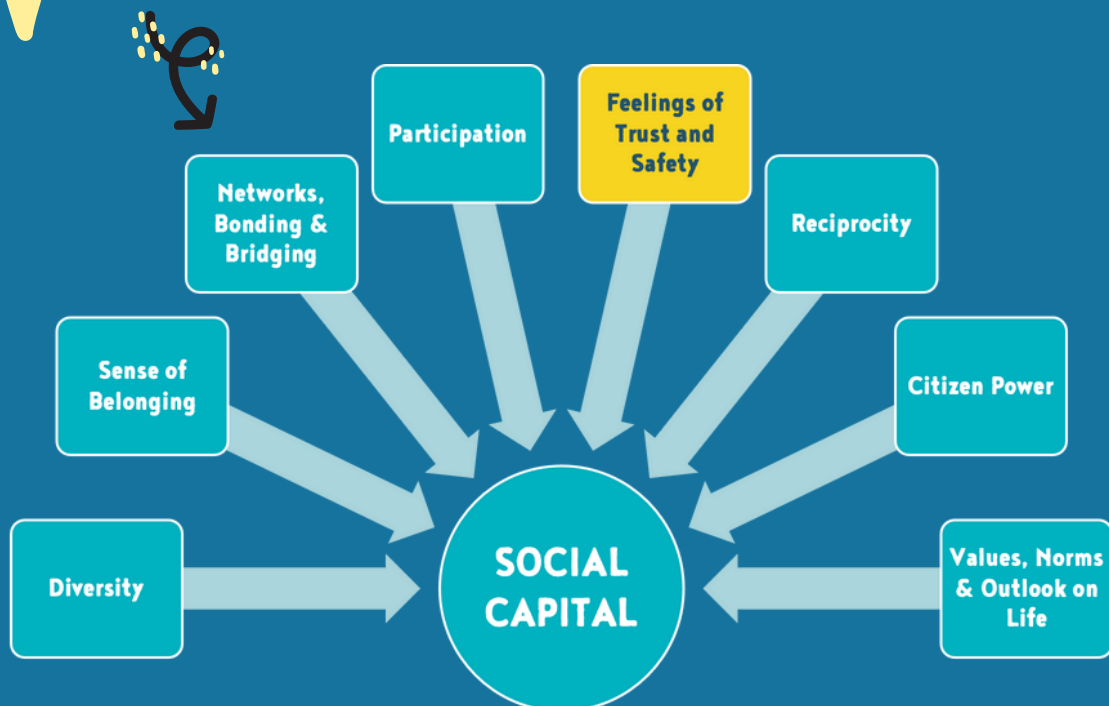
TRUST and Social Capital

"Social Capital is an...informal norm that promotes cooperation between two or more individuals."

-Francis Fukuyama

"We can think of social capital as the links, shared values and understandings in society that enable individuals and groups to trust each other and so work together."

-Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development



Trust is one of several factors contributing to social capital. For example, social capital (and trust) in action: when your neighbour informally keeps an eye on your house while you are away. [Market Business News](#)

"Trust is choosing to make yourself vulnerable to another person's actions."

-Charles Feldman

"Distrust is when what I have shared with you is not safe with you."

-Brene Brown

TRUST and Vulnerability





COMMUNITY TRUST

A focus on trust emerged as the Invictus project was being designed. As a sociologist by training, research team member Dr. Margaret Dechman brought attention to the ways that our individual lives, including our sense of hope, are shaped by the social relationships and structures in which we live.

From her previous research she was aware of the negative impact that social isolation and stigmatization can have on people living in vulnerable circumstances. Lack of supportive relationships – or worse – make it all the more difficult to pursue needs and goals.

When you have to 'keep your guard up' all the time it becomes hard to think about your concerns and aspirations, much less determine pathways for addressing them. Margaret's insights directed the team's attention to the question of trust: *To what extent do people on the Northside have the trusting relationships that make hope possible?*

INVICTUS Trust Metric

To measure trust on the Northside, the Invictus research team devised the Invictus Trust Metric, a series of questions exploring people's perception of others in their community.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Definitely False	Mostly False	Somewhat False	Slightly False	Slightly True	Somewhat True	Mostly True	Definitely True

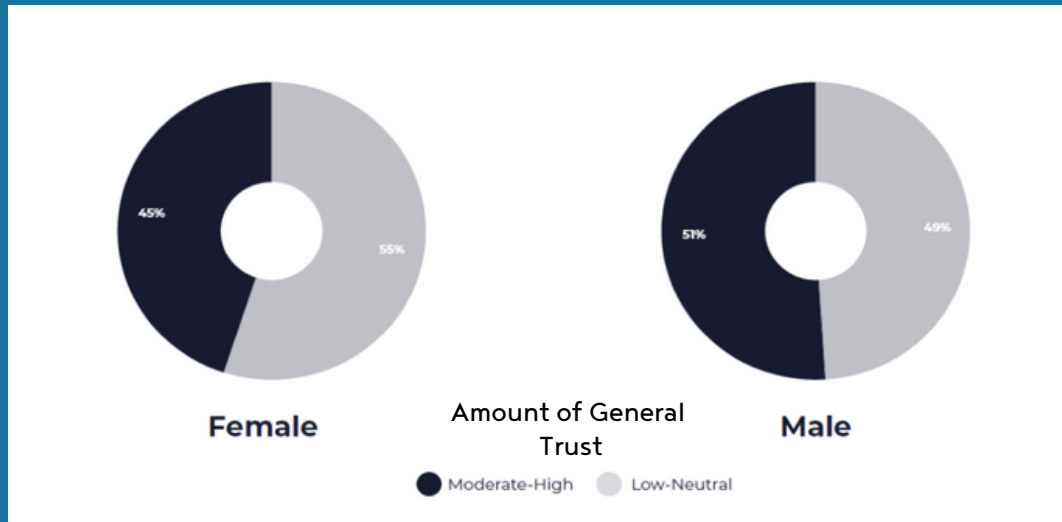
1. Most people are basically honest
2. Most people can be trusted
3. Most people are basically good and kind
4. When I meet someone new, I usually trust them.
5. If you treat someone like they are honest, they mostly will be honest.
6. If a person trusts me, I will usually trust them back.



COMMUNITY TRUST

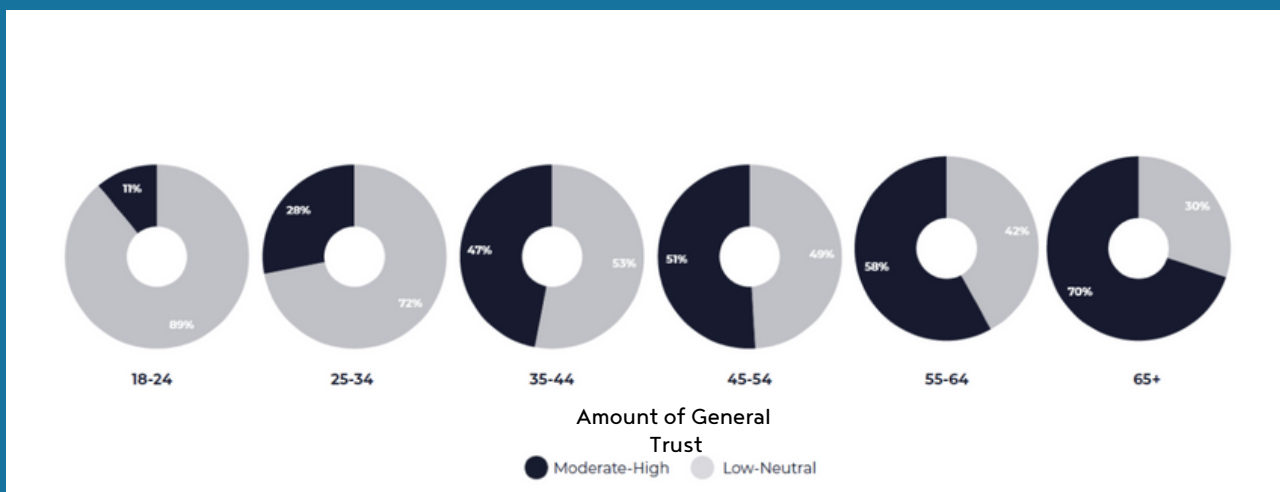
We Learned That...

WOMEN HAVE LOWER LEVELS OF TRUST THAN MEN



Generalized trust refers to the degree of trust one holds toward people in general. Among survey participants, a higher percentage of women (55%) showed low-neutral levels of trust than men (49%).

YOUNGER PEOPLE ARE LESS TRUSTING THAN OLDER PEOPLE



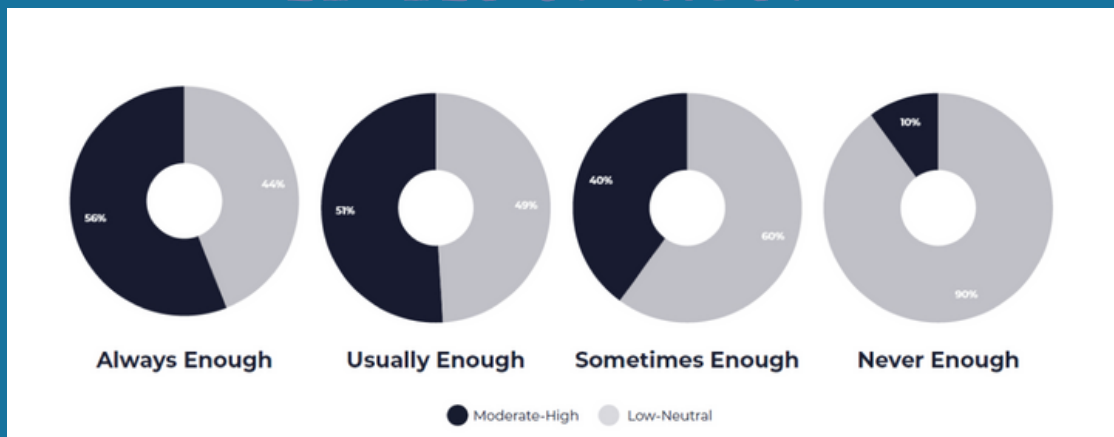
Young people on the Northside were much less likely to have high levels of trust than older people. While 70% of survey participants 65 years of age and older showed moderate to high levels of generalized trust only 11% of 18 to 24 year olds and 28% of 25 to 34 year olds did so.



COMMUNITY TRUST

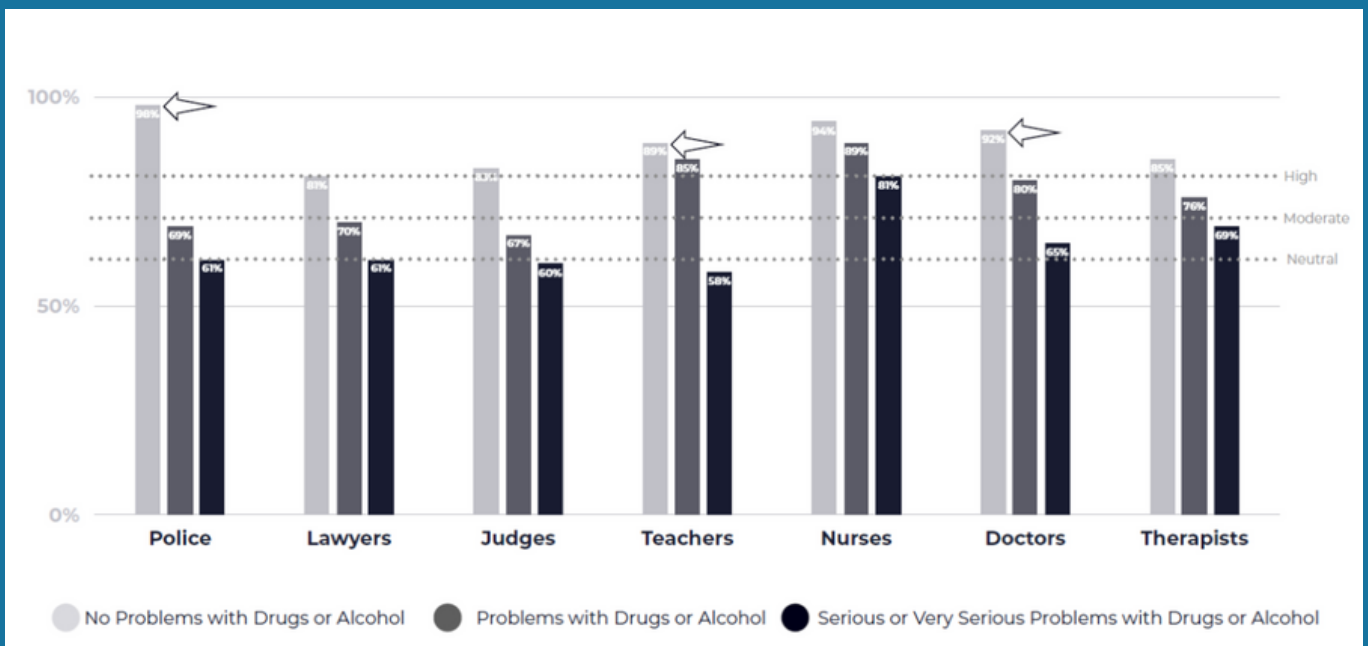
We Learned That...

PEOPLE EXPERIENCING ECONOMIC INSECURITY HAD MUCH LOWER LEVELS OF TRUST



While 56% of Northsiders who always have enough to get by exhibited moderate or high levels of trust, only 10% of Northsiders who never have enough to get by had similarly high levels of trust. 90% of survey participants who indicated that they never have enough to get by had low to neutral levels of generalized trust.

INSTITUTIONAL TRUST



Institutional trust refers to the trust we hold in formal authorities and structures. Invictus findings suggest that in many cases levels of trust are low particularly for those most in need of supports and services.



COMMUNITY DISCUSSION ON TRUST

Pause to consider...

Based on your experience of life on the Northside, how would you describe the state of trust in our community? For whom would you think trust might be either high or low?



What does trust mean to you? What strengthens your sense of trust? What weakens it?



What stands out to you from the research findings? Any surprises? What questions are you holding?



GROWING HOPE IN COMMUNITY



GROWING HOPE IN COMMUNITY

1

*HOPE takes
shape in a social
context*



"If all human beings are probably capable of hoping, the intensity of their hopefulness and the specific hopes they cherish always shape up in particular conditions. In which circumstances, in which times and places, does hopefulness flourish more or less? Who hopes? Who hopes for what? How are intensities of hopefulness and hopes for particular objects distributed among categories of people?"

- *Anthropology of Hope*

"We cannot create the shared lives that we seek on our own."

People want to restore their belief that they can get things done, together."

"[Hope represents] a belief that when people come together we can make good things happen."

- *Rich Harwood, Stepping Forward*

2

*COMMUNITY HOPE
is believing in what we
can do together*



"Authentic hope can be seen when we set out on a course for change and take small steps forward that demonstrate progress."

"People don't want to be sold another bill of goods. This only creates false hope...False hope pushes people away and gives rise to cynicism, fear, and mistrust."

- *Rich Harwood, Stepping Forward*

3

*AUTHENTIC HOPE
requires authentic
action*



"Communities are organic and operate like ecosystems. They're dynamic. They evolve. They change over time. Change in a community tends to emerge in a nonlinear way."

"In time, a community begins to see that it can move itself forward. Civic confidence grows. The community comes to know that it has its own assets, experiences, know-how, and wisdom to tap. Community norms transform – how people talk to each other, interact, and work together improves. And people's expectations of themselves, each other, and the community grow."

- *Rich Harwood, Stepping Forward*

4

*In community
life, change is
organic*



NORTHSIDE
rising



GROWING HOPE IN COMMUNITY

Factors for Consideration

STAGES OF COMMUNITY LIFE

1. The Waiting Place	Depleted and waiting to be saved
2. Impasse	Rock bottom but little capacity to respond
3. Catalytic	Pockets of creative energy in a wider sea of doubt and despair
4. Growth	Clear and steady improvement and an emerging narrative of confidence
5. Sustain/Renew	Hold steady or move to new heights

Communities go through stages in their development, including with respect to aspects of civic culture such as hope, agency and trust. Different stages pose different challenges and call for different responses. [Harwood Institute]

SEEDS OF CHANGE

"People gain trust and hope by seeing others work together."

-Harwood, *Stepping Forward*

"Authentic hope grows when people come together across dividing lines and can see and hear one another."

-Harwood, *Stepping Forward*

"Authentic hope spreads when we tell stories of people striving to improve their conditions, especially when those stories contain their struggles and even failures."

-Harwood, *Stepping Forward*

"The human spark is about seeing the potential in each person. It is that we each have something of value to contribute."

-Harwood, *Stepping Forward*

"We frame our world with stories and the overarching stories we tell form our world view... These stories are largely in the background but the influence they exert on us is wide reaching"

-Community Toolbox

"[Community building] taps into a narrative of future promise, reconciliation and healing. Positive change happens in the context of positive narrative."

-Community Toolbox

FOUNDATIONS THAT HELP US WORK TOGETHER

catalyzing small-scale actions that build momentum

supporting local conversations and research to expand awareness of local issues

building networks for innovation and civic learning

developing local leaders and change agents

building organizations that help engage residents and connect across boundaries of all kinds

opening spaces for community discussions

creating shared norms for interaction and engagement



COMMUNITY DISCUSSION ON GROWING HOPE

Pause to consider...

Do you think that growing hope, trust and agency is important for building a stronger Northside community?
Why or why not?



What types of changes would help to build community hope on the Northside?

If there were one thing you could help do tomorrow to strengthen hope on the Northside, what would that be?

