Community Building 101

Before you talk, listen.
Attend community gatherings. Get to know the people you want to reach and listen to their hopes and fears.

Discuss things that connect you,
Like being a parent or dealing with high gas prices, to build trust avoid bringing up issues that might spark disagreement.

Highlight others’ points of view.
For example, talk about how an Afghani villager feels about us attacking their country. Avoid attacks on politicians or others who hold different views, and the United States.

Focus on why the issues matter to you.
Speak from your heart and experience.

Avoid jargon-filled language.
Ask yourself if you come across as friendly or as a know-it-all.

Avoid emphasizing problems. Suggest actions people can take, and talk about examples of success in similar communities.

Build a Team

Identify a goal
Pick one that can be widely shared, for example, increased support for education. Avoid taking positions on unrelated issues; learn to respectfully “agree to disagree” on topics not essential to your purpose.

Research and recruit potential allies
These are folks who share your concerns, including religious, political, civic, and neighborhood groups.

Explore participants’ interest and concerns about collaborating, and explore ways to address both.

Structure decision making so that power is shared among coalition members and timely action is possible.

Clarify your plan.
Set short-term and long-term goals. Choose carefully among options
Indoor window gardens, outside gardens using existing structures, building from scratch, etc.

Start Small – Plan for a win
Build Trust

Embrace Diversity
Remember that diversity includes diversity you may fear or think that you don’t like or who you may not believe
knows as much as you do. They may not know much about gardening, but they know everything about their
community and a lot about how to get things done.

Bust a few stereotypes
and start thinking about somebody else’s problems. You’ll make new friends and change others’ view of you.

Use short-term, easy wins
to build momentum for the difficult issues that may take a long time to figure out.

Describe a future worth fighting for.
Optimism is deeply ingrained in American culture. We need to be able to talk about what is needed without
making folks feel bad about what is