

COMMUNITY HEROES

TOOLKIT

PART 1

Visioning and Planning Your Project

A PROJECT BY  &  • IN PARTNERSHIP WITH  PhotoWings

HELLO AND WELCOME!

It's exciting that you are thinking about creating a Community Heroes project in your neighborhood, and we look forward to sharing our process with you.

What you hold in your hands is an opportunity to work with your neighbors to recognize and celebrate incredible people who have strengthened and supported your community.

This toolkit was created in response to many people expressing a desire to do this project in their neighborhood, so this is a guide to help you do just that. We believe that this project only works when it is locally organized, when people and organizations close to the neighborhood come together to make it happen. This toolkit shares what we have learned and the process we have developed so that you can adapt and create Community Heroes in your neighborhood, with instructions, worksheets, activities, case studies, and more.

The toolkit is split into two parts:

- Part 1 explains the overview process and guides you through visioning and planning your project.
- Part 2 guides you through producing your project — from outreach, to storytelling, to the exhibition. As you create your project, you may choose to work independently or consult closely with the Community Heroes team.

If this toolkit inspires and resources you to create your own Community Heroes project, we ask that you credit us. While we gladly share this knowledge, we appreciate being informed and acknowledged. When you create a Community Heroes project, you join a network of organizers working with their neighbors to create public art exhibitions about their neighborhood.

A FEW HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE ARCHIVE



26th Annual Fort Greene Peace Fest
May 28, 2016
in Fort Greene Park



Gowanus Houses Old Timers Day
August 13, 2016 +
August 12, 2017
in Gowanus



Red Hook Reporters
July 2018
in Red Hook

Visit our website or read case studies on [page 29](#) for a fuller history!

Watch a welcome video from the project founders:



communityheroes.nyc/toolkit

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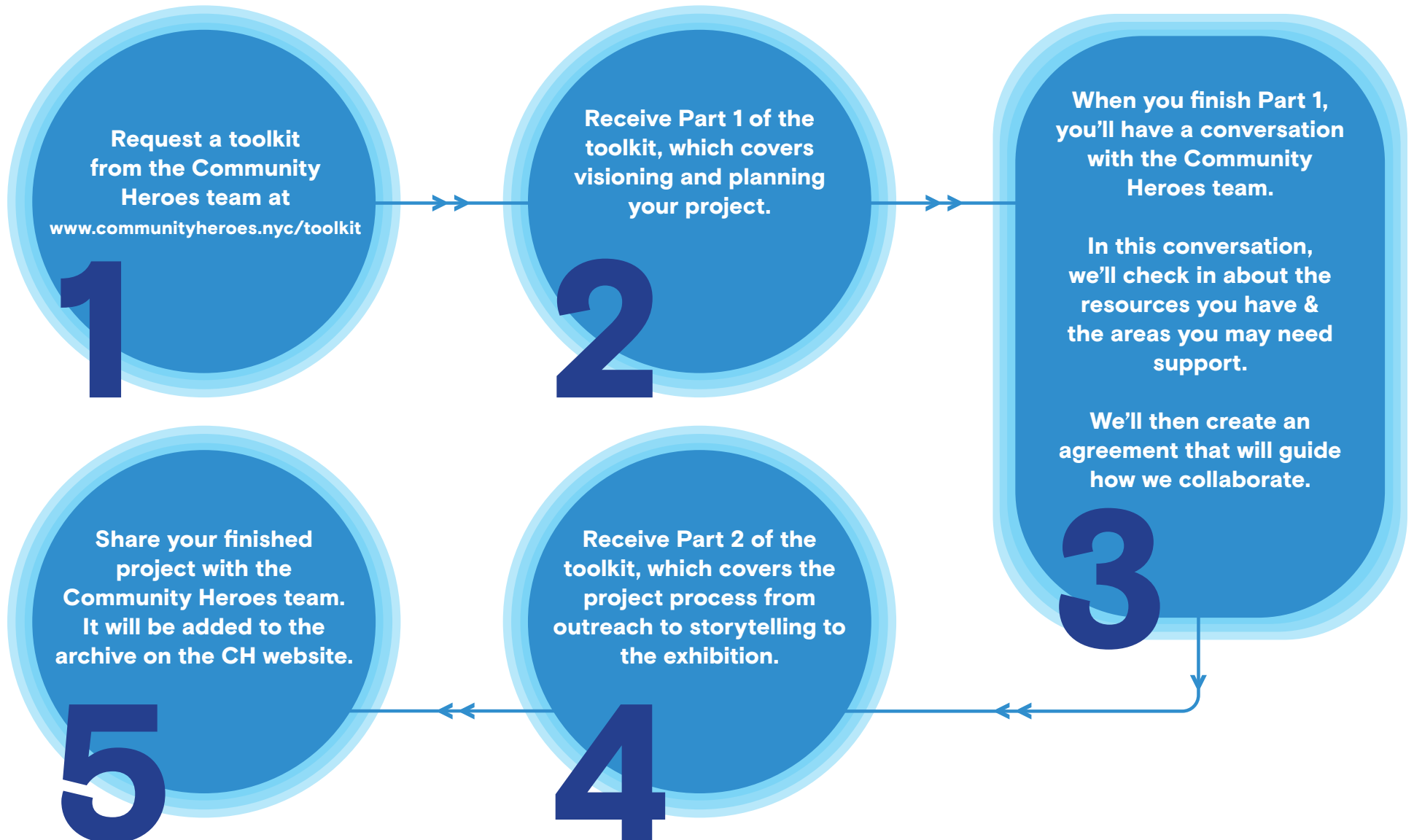


To view and download all worksheets and templates referenced in this toolkit, please visit communityheroes.nyc/toolkit/downloads

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HOW DOES THIS TOOLKIT WORK?



WHAT ARE MY RESPONSIBILITIES WHEN USING THIS TOOLKIT?

The Community Heroes toolkit is a free resource for everyone to use.

You are responsible for fundraising for these elements:

The budget for your project

This covers the materials and the people needed to produce your project (i.e. outreach flyers, artist honorariums, vinyl banners etc.)

Community Heroes license fee*

It took time, energy, and work to create this project and to put it out as a free resource. While we gladly share it, this license fee acknowledges the labor of the Community Heroes team and invests in continued outreach, resource creation, and support for organizers like yourself to do this in their communities.

Anyone that embarks into a Community Heroes project will receive 3 to 5 hours of support from the team. Support may include facilitated planning meetings, strategy sessions on partnerships and fundraising, trainings for artists, organizers, and more. Our team will work with you to create a plan that meets your needs.

Additional support from the Community Heroes team*

If you need more than 5 hours of support, we will work with you to plan and price this out.

Credit and Communication

If this toolkit inspires you to create your own project, please let us know and credit us by including this line on your organization's press releases, websites, promotional materials etc.:

**"This community project is modeled on the Community Heroes project, produced by Photoville and Trellis.
www.communityheroes.nyc"**

*** Sliding Scale Fees**

We recognize that every organizer will have different resources (financial, human, social etc.), so we will work with you in good faith to determine a fee that is fair.

As a guide, we suggest 10% of your project budget for the license fee.

WE CAN WORK WITH YOU ON:

The Community Heroes team is here to help you navigate the toolkit as well as consult and guide your project. Each neighborhood project is unique and may need different levels and layers of support, so at the end of the planning stage when you have a sense of your needs, we will work with you to create a collaboration agreement that suits you.

Here are some ways the Community Heroes team can support you:

Strategy

- Build your neighborhood team through local partnerships
- Create an outreach plan to reach your neighbors
- Raise funds for your project

Training

- Help craft your project values (why you are doing this project in your neighborhood)
- Coordinate with artists and heroes to organize portrait and interview sessions
- Help you develop skills and tools to community organize
- Connect you with other neighborhood organizers to share skills

Production

- Graphic design for outreach materials and banners
- Print and produce banners or artwork
- Install banners or artwork

If you don't see what you need, reach out to info@communityheroes.nyc, and we'll work with you.

Prices are determined on a sliding scale based on what you are requesting and your capacity.



Community Heroes Snapshot

A COMMUNITY ORGANIZING AND PUBLIC ART PROJECT CELEBRATING EVERYDAY HEROES OF A NEIGHBORHOOD.



Project collaborators on the opening day of the Community Heroes exhibition in Commodore Barry Park during Fort Greene Farragut Old Timers Day. August 18, 2018.

This project is a way for communities to:

- Celebrate residents who strengthen, nurture, and support their neighborhood
- Invite local artists and mediamakers to tell neighborhood stories through art
- Encourage intergenerational storytelling in the community by including youth in the interviewing of the heroes
- Listen to neighbors through outreach and civic participation
- Celebrate and gather together
- Organize a local network of storytellers, activists, non-profits, faith leaders, educators, and historic and new residents

SNAPSHOT PROCESS

Groups in a neighborhood

i.e. Park Groups, Faith Groups,
Block Associations, etc.



Planning the Fort Greene project with the Friends of Commodore Barry Park.

Artists in a neighborhood

i.e. Storytellers, Photographers,
Designers, etc.



Artist Taz Drums photographing Community Hero Dave Daniels for the St. Andrews Playground Project.

Work together through:

- Community Meetings**
- Nomination Process**
- Storytelling Sessions**

To Produce:

A Public Exhibition in a neighborhood

Ideally aligned with existing
community event



Community members installing banners for the St. Andrews Playground project.

COMMUNITY HEROES WORKS BY...

Step 1



An individual or group visions and plans the project in their neighborhood



Step 2



Engage with and listen to neighbors through community outreach and participation



Step 3



Invite local artists and writers to document neighborhood stories



Step 4

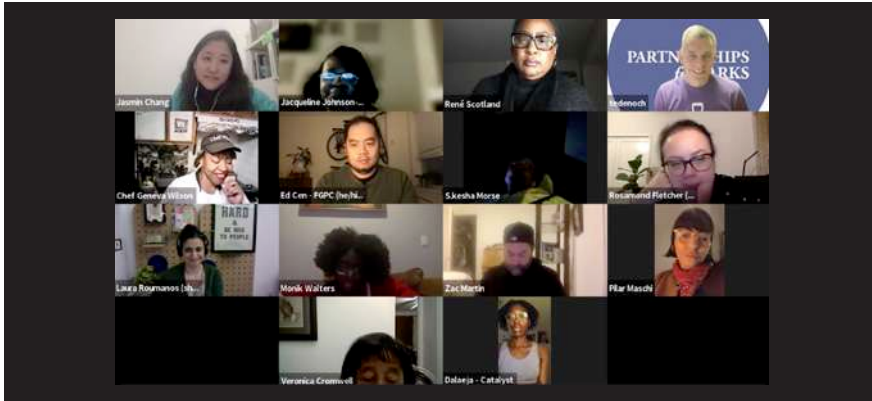


Showcase the resulting artwork in a public art exhibition and gather together to celebrate



PAST COLLABORATORS SHARE...

Watch these videos at communityheroes.nyc/videos



Organizers around the city on how this project can be an act of resistance against gentrification and displacement.



Hero Celeste Staton and artist Ron Foster on working on Celeste's portrait.



Artist Tracie Williams on working with a family to create a legacy hero banner.



Hero Vincent Carolina on the project's positive effect on the community.



Visioning

THINK ABOUT YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

Why are you bringing Community Heroes to your neighborhood? Having clear reasons and values will inform how you go about the project and guide your decisions along the way.

01

Its Story

Describe your community. What is its history? What is constant, what has changed, and why?

04

Its Institutions

Whether museums, parks, galleries, schools, what institutions have strengthened, supported, inspired your community? Also, think outside the box from these traditional institutions.

02

Its Culture

What makes your community unique and beautiful? What does your community create?

05

Its Feel

What does your community remember? ...Commemorate? ...Mourn?

03

Its Dreams, Desires, and Goals

What are the things, people, milestones, issues that your community celebrates, prioritizes, promotes?

Answering and discovering some of these things can help you figure out who the heroes of your community might be and who can help you find and celebrate them.

CONSIDER: WHY THIS PROJECT?

While the output of Community Heroes is a public art exhibition, the heart of the project has always been community organizing. That said, the public art component is vital because it's both a catalyst and a culminating event for the organizing. **Here are the reasons Community Heroes was created and why we continue to do this work. We ask everyone creating a Community Heroes project to consider and agree to these core values with respect to your community. We have also included check-ins to help you think through how to apply these values to your work.**



Build with your neighbors

This project must be led, designed and created by those who live, work and are connected with the community. The project provides lots of opportunities for additional neighbors to join in.

The project helps gather neighbors to develop resources and skills to continue organizing for their community beyond this project.



Check in:

Who's missing?

Be intentional about building your group as it expands. Who is not represented in our group? Who needs to be part of this work and conversation? Consider age, ethnicity, life experiences, and other factors that will broaden and enrich your group's perspectives. Through the storytelling, this project provides space to draw youth into your work and group, providing opportunity for intergenerational connections and collaboration.



Strengthen collaboration

More is always merrier. When many hands touch the project, each brings unique skills, resources, and experiences to it. This project works best when it prioritizes building relationships and strengthening community bonds, while encouraging and contributing to what is already happening.

We believe these connections and partnerships will continue to bear fruit long after the project finishes.



Check in:

What skills do we need?

Many people with many different skills are needed to make this happen. Continually consider: What additional skills do we need to seek out? And what unique skills does each person or group bring?

What's already happening?

What are cornerstones of your community? What events, activities, gatherings have already been taking place? Have you discussed your plans with these organizers? How can you work together with these organizers?



Uplift and celebrate your neighbors

This project is a way to make visible the work of neighborhood heroes, while supporting artists and storytellers in their creative work.

The priority is to uplift those who are not in the spotlight, and have not been widely and publicly recognized.

This project centers long-term residents who have dedicated decades of work to protecting, strengthening, and advocating for their neighborhood, so that everyone can learn and appreciate the history of their community.



Check ins:

Does this uplift?

If you're choosing between a hero with well-known contributions, and a hero with a little-known story, consider choosing the little known story.

Participation, not perfection

If you're choosing between an established artist and a young artist, consider going with the young artist who may have more to gain from this experience.

Placekeeping

If gentrification is a reality in your neighborhood, how can this project bring awareness to the realities and struggles of a changing neighborhood and even actively resist the displacement of long-term community members?



Always listen before doing

Listening is a vital first step into this project. Before presenting, offering, or even introducing the project, work hard to listen to the community.

Listen a lot.
Listen for a long time.
Listen to many long-term residents.

Knowing the feel of your community will help frame the residents you want to honor, the story you want to tell, the way the project looks, and how it unfolds.



Check ins:

Where is your community at?

Our communities may be dealing with multiple layers of trauma, while navigating everyday life. It's important to follow the lead of your community on what they want or need at the moment. Is celebration appropriate right now? Is remembrance and lament a better approach?

Your place

How do you and your group fit within your community? How do your lived experiences compare with those of your neighbors? Does your group represent the socio-economic, ethnic, and cultural differences in the neighborhood?

If you are an 'outsider,' (for example, a white person working in a historically Black neighborhood or a new resident in a gentrifying neighborhood), you should step back and follow the lead of your neighbors. You have a valuable perspective, but you should not be steering the ship.

BY USING THIS TOOLKIT, I AGREE TO...

- ✓ Honor, uplift, and look to those who came before me
- ✓ Collaborate: I cannot do this alone! I will work with and learn from my community
- ✓ Listen before I act
- ✓ Look through the lens of beauty and possibility, and not brokenness
- ✓ Step back. It's not about me. I am a facilitator and a connector. This is not about my school, organization, or business getting fanfare



WORKSHEET DOWNLOAD

VALUES WORKSHEET

Considering the things that make your neighborhood unique, and the core values of Community Heroes, what are the values for your neighborhood project? Take time to write them out so you can reference them and check in throughout your project.



What makes your neighborhood unique, distinct?



Think about the flavor, history, and culture of your community.



What does your community celebrate? Lament? Remember?
What are its important moments?



How could this project help show out, uplift these values?

Answering some of these questions can help you figure out the why [why are we doing it], where [where are we doing it], and who [who are the people or groups of people we want to profile] for this project

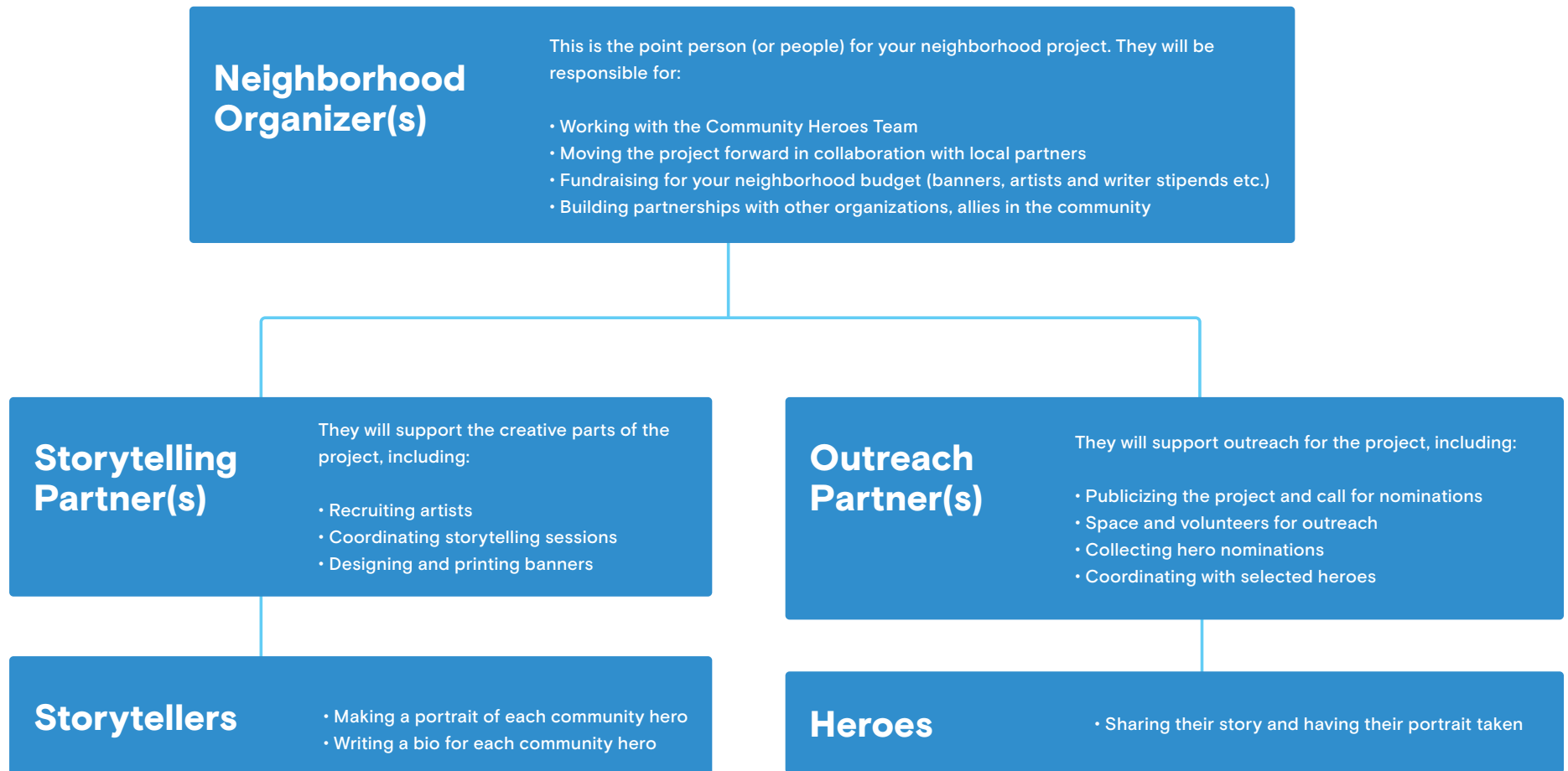


Planning

- » **Building your team**
- » **Timeline**
- » **Budget**
- » **Creating a proposal**

BUILD YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD TEAM

Many people with different skills and resources come together to collaborate on each neighborhood project. Here are the key roles needed, so you can start brainstorming and building your team:



Remember: the Community Heroes Team is here to support along the way!

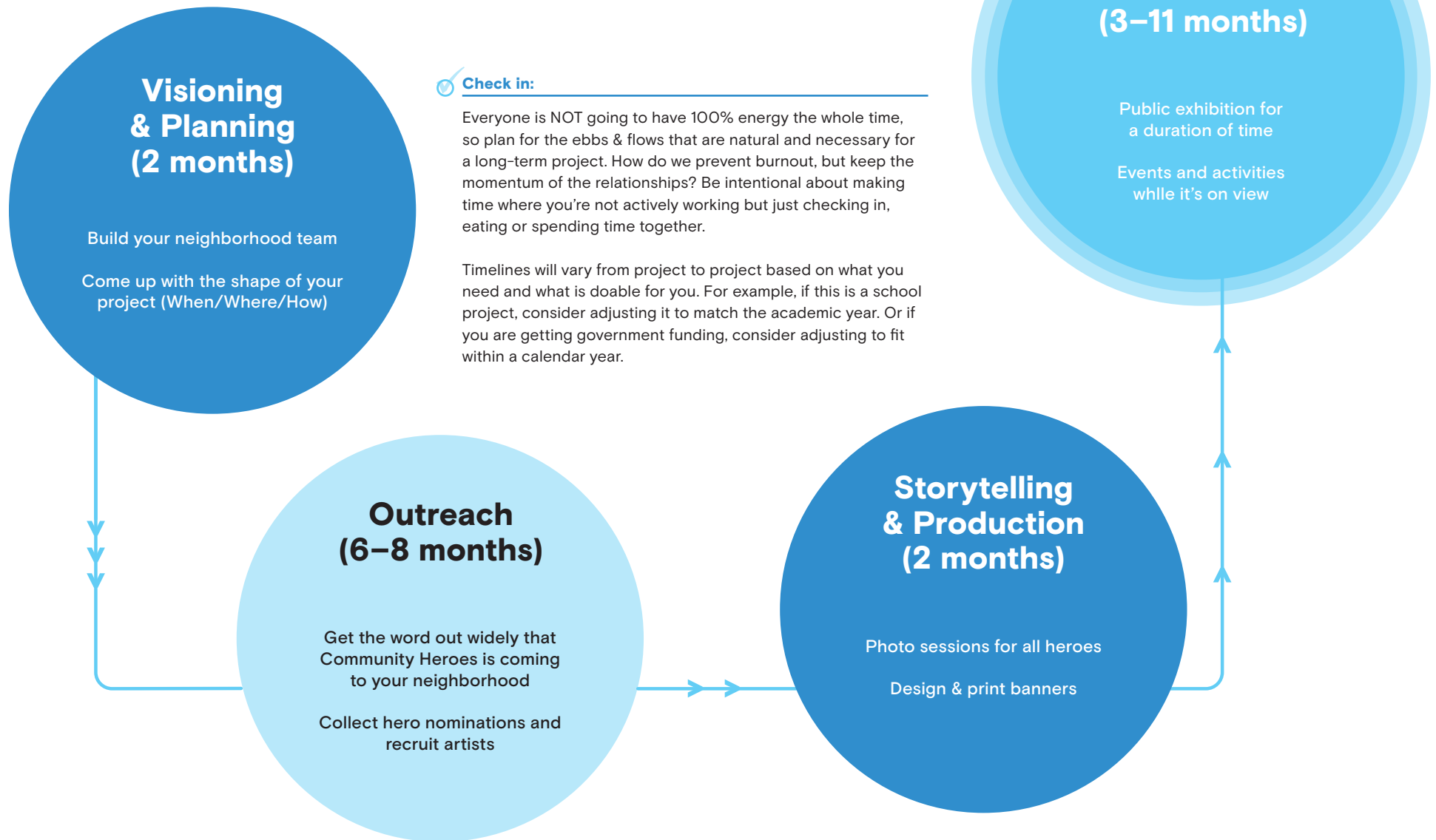
 WORKSHEET DOWNLOAD

BUILD YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD TEAM WORKSHEET

Identify what you have and what you need. Who (or what organizations) in your network can manage these key roles? Then, the Community Heroes team will strategize with you to cover the rest.

We have:		We need:																	
Neighborhood Organizer(s)	<i>I CAN COORDINATE PARTNERS</i>	<i>HELP WITH FUNDRAISING</i>																	
<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2">We have:</th> <th colspan="2">We need:</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Storytelling Partner(s)</td> <td><i>ARTS COUNCIL KNOWS MANY ARTISTS</i></td> <td><i>GRAPHIC DESIGNER</i></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		We have:		We need:		Storytelling Partner(s)	<i>ARTS COUNCIL KNOWS MANY ARTISTS</i>	<i>GRAPHIC DESIGNER</i>		<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2">We have:</th> <th colspan="2">We need:</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Outreach Partner(s)</td> <td><i>COMMUNITY BOARD</i></td> <td><i>CONNECTIONS TO YOUNG PEOPLE</i></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		We have:		We need:		Outreach Partner(s)	<i>COMMUNITY BOARD</i>	<i>CONNECTIONS TO YOUNG PEOPLE</i>	
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Storytellers <i>List all the photographers, writers, storytellers in your neighborhood that you already know!</i>		Heroes <i>These individuals will be discovered through the process of the project.</i>																	

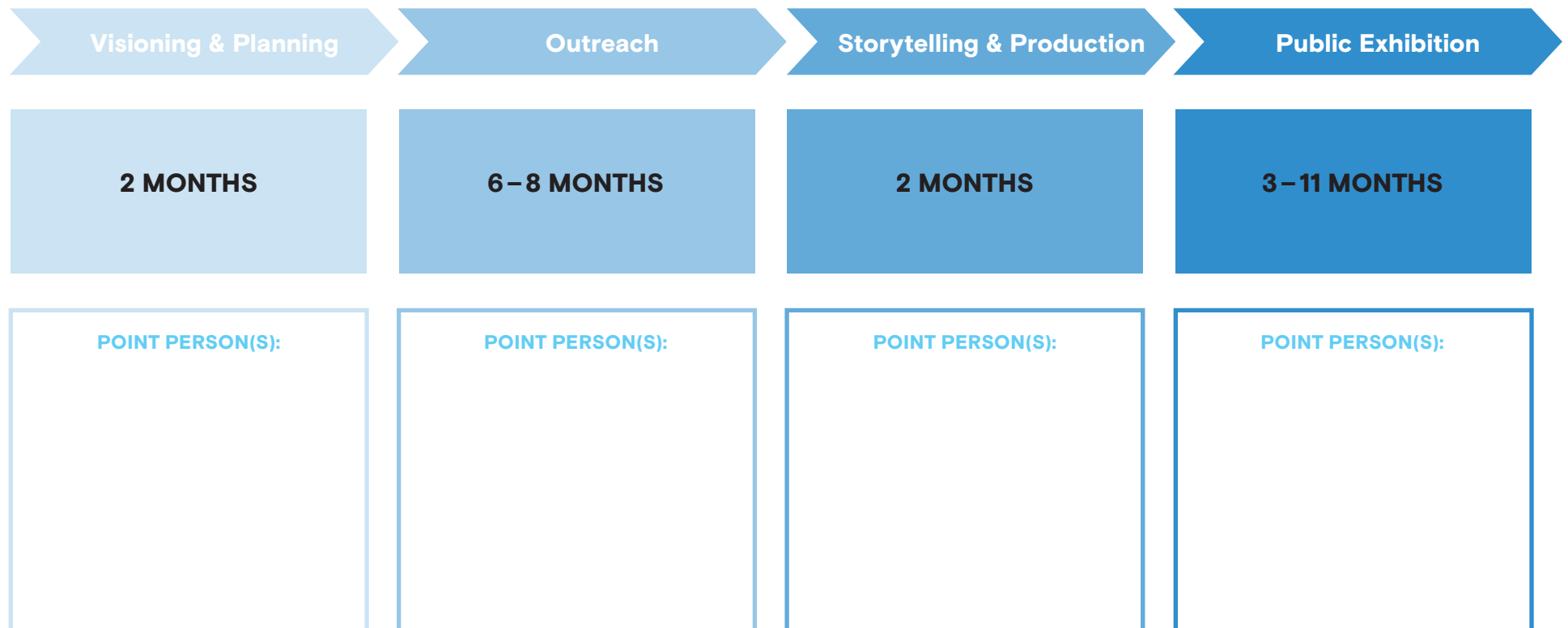
PLAN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD TIMELINE



 WORKSHEET DOWNLOAD

PLAN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD TIMELINE WORKSHEET

Here is a sample timeline for your neighborhood project. All of this work takes time, especially the first time around. Our rule is: Don't rush it — all these steps can take longer.





YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD BUDGET: HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?

Here is a list of line items to consider in building your expense budget.

Refer to your Building Your Neighborhood Team worksheet as you plan these roles, as some may be combined into one person or organization, while others may be divided amongst folks.

PRODUCER/ORGANIZATION/STAFFING COSTS

Community Heroes License

This license fee acknowledges the work of the Community Heroes team in creating and sharing this resource, and supports the team to continue outreach, resource creation, and support for organizers like yourself to do this project in their communities. As a guide, we suggest 10% of your total budget. To be negotiated in good faith with the Community Heroes team.

If you would like additional services and support from the Community Heroes team, we will work with you to plan and price this out.

Neighborhood Organizer

This role is the point person (or people) responsible for spearheading the project and moving it forward in collaboration with local partners. *(This is most likely you!)*

Storytelling Partner(s)

This role organizes the creative portions of the project including recruiting and organizing the storytellers (photographers, artists, youth writers) as well as designing and printing the banners.

Outreach Partner(s)

This role organizes outreach for the project, including creating an outreach strategy to publicize the project and call for nominations.

Graphic Designer

This role produces graphics for your project, from print and online outreach materials to designing your exhibition. This role could be split between people.

Production & Installation

This role handles the production and installation of your exhibition.

PLANNING & OUTREACH

Printing	Printed materials (Postcards, Flyers, Nomination Forms) you will need for outreach.
Outreach Stipends	Optional: Set aside funds to pay community members to help with outreach (flyering, tabling etc.).
Neighborhood Planning Sessions	Optional: Set aside funds for materials or snacks for your neighborhood meetings.
Promotion Banners	Optional: Hang an outreach banner at the future location where your exhibition will be.

ARTISTIC PRODUCTION

Decide how many heroes you would like to honor as this will affect your budget

Curation & Design	This covers photo and banner curation and design for the printed exhibition, as well as for any promotional material necessary.
Artist Honorarium	This honorarium is for each storyteller who is paired with a hero to create their portrait.
Writer Honorarium	This honorarium is for each youth writer who is paired with a hero to interview and write their bio.
Outdoor Vinyl Banners	The cost to print 10 full color vinyl banners at 6ft x 6ft (be really specific about size and material quality — this will affect the budget).
Graphic Designer	This role handles designing the banners and preparing them to be printed.

PRODUCTION AND INSTALL

Production & Installation	This work could be handled by the Production & Installation coordinator with existing workers or a hired install crew.
Install Crew	Example: Could this be 2 people for a 4 hour job? What is their hourly rate? Please be mindful of minimum wage laws and, ideally, you are able to offer additional compensation.
Installation Materials	Zip ties, wires, etc.
Banner Maintenance	Set aside for replacement banners if any get damaged. Ask community members to help with checking the banners to keep them clean and replace zip ties.

EVENT

Documentation

You may want to hire someone to document the exhibition and events, so you can show what you've accomplished.

Opening — Public Event

What does it take to produce an event, and how much will it be?

Public Event #2

Remember to consider cost of food, drinks, rentals, and honorariums.

Public Event #3

Perhaps you can get a local restaurant to cater, but what about tables, a PA system, etc.?

CONTINGENCY

Usually 10% of total budget

Things will always cost more than you think.

TOTAL BUDGET

Add up all the line items, including your contingency. This is how much your project is estimated to cost!



You can download a sample budget spreadsheet to plug in your own numbers.

communityheroes.nyc/toolkit/downloads

YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD BUDGET: WHERE TO FIND FUNDING

Now that you know how much your project will cost, you can strategize about how and where to raise this money. Below are some sources to consider.

A group that advocates for your local park, such as a Friends of group or a Conservancy

A non-profit organization you partner

Your local councilperson or other public official

City or state grant that you apply for

Grant from arts council or arts organization

BID (Local Business Improvement District) or Partnership

Local Business (Bank? Restaurant? Boutique? Travel Agent?)

Individuals (friends or family who wants to support you)

Crowdsourcing: Getting a group of people together to pitch in means everyone contributes a bit to get to a large sum.

Remember the value that you and your neighborhood team bring to the project!

Let potential funders know how much has already been invested into the project. This will show them how much momentum your project already has.



 **WORKSHEET DOWNLOAD**

FUNDRAISING WORKSHEET

List the funding sources you know about and draft a fundraising strategy. Avoid all your funding coming from one source—like everything with this project, many hands investing will make it stronger.

[illegible]

 Check in:

Lean into your strengths. If you're connected to a ton of neighbors, crowdsourcing may be the way to go. If you have strong relationships with public officials, start there. Every project will be funded differently. Do your research on potential funders. What will they ask of you and does this align with your values?

GETTING YOUR PROJECT OUT THERE & FUNDED

01 CREATE A PROPOSAL

As you have worked through Part 1 of this toolkit, you have already drafted your vision and plan. Lay out your values, your neighborhood team, your timeline, your snapshot budget. Remember to be realistic. What can your team, your group handle and manage?

Your proposal should communicate your vision and get people excited about it! Reach out to the Community Heroes team for guidance and inspiration that includes photos, case studies, and testimonials from the team and past collaborators.

02 CREATE AN OUTREACH AND FUNDRAISING PLAN

Identify potential partners and sponsors such as...

- Local businesses
- Elected officials
- Local cultural non-profits
- Foundations that support community work
- Parks groups
- Crowdsourcing (i.e. IOBY)

03 GET IT OUT THERE!

Pound that pavement! Send emails, find out who you know in respective organizations, ask for introductions. Get people excited about the idea and move on from there.

If you would like assistance and consultation on fundraising and partnership strategies with your community project, please reach out to the Community Heroes team (info@communityheroes.nyc).



Case Studies

CASE STUDY: FORT GREENE

2016 **Ideas are generated when you get involved in what's already happening in your neighborhood.**

Community Heroes was created at the invitation of [Family Support & Resources Peace Fest](#), a 26-year-running Memorial Day celebration in Fort Greene Park. Community Heroes co-founder Zac Martin was volunteering with Darrell Cheng and the event organizer, Lady V / Miss Amoo, who expressed interest creating an art activation for the event.

Zac reached out to Fort Greene neighbor and artist Jasmin Chang (Community Heroes co-founder) to get her ideas. Jasmin met with Lady V / Miss Amoo and together we came up with the idea of highlighting peacemakers in the neighborhood.

We partnered with the [Ingersoll Community Center](#), which serves its surrounding New York City Housing Authority developments, to select six community heroes. We paired each hero with a local artist to take their portraits and interview them. The portraits and interviews were printed on banners and displayed during Peace Fest. This one-day display drew in lots of different people — the heroes and their loved ones, the artists and their loved ones, and many people walking by the event. People expressed interest in keeping these banners up longer, so we spent the next while researching and connecting with people and organizations in Fort Greene to figure out how to do that.



2018 **You will need time to do research, and it will take time for your research to coalesce into an opportunity for an exhibition.**

Our research came together at the end of 2017.

We were connected with a group of neighbors coming together to support Commodore Barry Park. They would be working with [Partnerships for Parks' Catalyst](#) to build their group and were interested in a public art exhibition at the park. Jasmin and Zac became part of [Friends of Commodore Barry Park](#) as they worked towards an exhibition that summer.

In early 2018, the [Fort Greene Park Conservancy](#) also reached out to us. They remembered what we had done in 2016, and asked if we could do a similar project for a new summer fundraising event. We were excited that these two opportunities came together at the same time. Since Community Heroes was about drawing connections in a community, what better way to visualize it than to display this project across two parks in the neighborhood?

With exhibition space secured and community support, we ambitiously decided to create 40 hero banners (20 in each park) that would have rolling unveilings throughout the year. In hindsight, the scale of this project was big and stretched us thin. However, it did generate a lot of visibility and attention in the neighborhood which contributed to Community Heroes becoming an annual staple in Fort Greene.



You'll need to put yourself out there and get creative for outreach and fundraising.

We spent January through April doing a ton of outreach alongside [Friends of Commodore Barry Park](#) and the [Fort Greene Park Conservancy](#). We tabled at any neighborhood space (the library, the park etc.) and every community event (holiday festivals, block parties etc.) we could be. We attended every meeting we could be at (community board meetings, church and cultural events). We asked groups and individuals to help spread the word.

We also fundraised in a few different ways. We wrote grants and received a [Brooklyn Arts Council](#) community arts grant and a [Humanities New York](#) action grant. We asked local businesses to make donations and received contributions from [DC Optics](#) and [DSK Brooklyn](#). We also got creative. We found IOBY, a local crowd-funding platform that was offering matching funds and Jasmin did a birthday fundraiser asking friends to donate \$30 for her 30th birthday. Altogether, we raised about \$10,000 for this first large exhibition.

Once we had collected many hero nominations, we reached out to community leaders we had met through the process, as well as many people involved in the initial 2016 project. These people helped decide the heroes who would be honored this round. From May to July, we organized many storytelling sessions—pairing local artists with heroes to take their portraits.

On May 19, 2018, the Fort Greene Park heroes were debuted at the [Fort Greene Park Conservancy's first annual fundraiser](#). After the event, they were moved to an existing fence in the park. On August 18, 2018, the Commodore Barry Park heroes debuted at [Fort Greene Farragut Old Timers Day](#), an annual reunion and barbecue in the park. The Community Heroes banners stayed up in both parks for the next 11 months, until July 2019. Every few months, we added 2–3 new heroes to the exhibition.



2019

Your project will likely change from year to year. Take time to reflect with your partners to decide how to continue the project sustainably.

This year was about figuring out how to take the project and momentum we had built and make it more sustainable. We decided that though the large scale in 2018 was helpful to establish momentum, it was beyond our capacity to highlight 40 heroes every year. Rather than volume, we preferred continuity and making this an annual rhythm in the neighborhood. To do so, we needed to scale down the amount of heroes.

Working with the [Fort Greene Park Conservancy](#) and [Friends of Commodore Barry Park](#), we agreed that we would highlight six heroes in each park every year to unveil at the [Fort Greene Fling](#) and [Fort Greene Farragut Old Timers Day](#). That year, we highlighted six new heroes at Fort Greene Park, but Commodore Barry Park took a break to fundraise for the next project.

The outreach and storytelling of this edition was a much lighter load because there were already so many neighbors aware and invested in the project. All we had to do was activate past relationships to collect nominations and recruit storytellers.



2020 **Ongoing partnerships build trust and make it possible to navigate very tough circumstances.**

We began the year working towards a new set of six heroes in **Fort Greene Park** and **Commodore Barry Park** that summer, but when the pandemic lockdown began, we needed to stop and reassess what to do.

On the surface, outreach needed to drastically change because there were no in-person meetings, no tabling etc. But at the core level, we needed to answer questions of:

- Do we work against the grain to move this project forward this year?
- Why are we doing this project when people are literally fighting for survival?
- In a time of so much death, heartache and fear, who would it make sense to honor as Community Heroes? Or should this become more of a memorial?

No clear answers to these questions emerged, but we continued to check in with our partners regularly and to see how the year progressed. In the midst of it all, we noticed some unexpected but beautiful things.

- Because the hero banners from the previous year were still on display in Fort Greene Park, the beautiful hero stories and portraits were even more appreciated by neighbors because parks were such a crucial escape/lifeline.
- Because there was a strong network of people and organizations around this project, we were able to help make connections for mutual aid in the neighborhood.

During this time, the **Fort Greene Park Conservancy** and **Friends of Commodore Barry Park** applied and received their first collaborative grant to work together on park programming and COVID relief—**NYC Green Relief & Recovery Fund Grant**. Community Heroes was part of the collaboration between these two groups, and was partly funded by this grant.

The **Fort Greene Park Fling** happened as a virtual event on Zoom and Community Heroes created a video asking neighbors to publicly share their stories and honor all those we consider heroes in our lives.



2021

Keep trying new ideas to involve more collaborators and organize programming together.

We began the year again with loose plans of a summer exhibition in both parks, and this year we were able to do so.

In the spring, we came up with a list of priorities that would determine who would be honored, and both park groups convened a group of neighbors to look through the nominations and decide the 6 heroes for each park.

In the storytelling process, we tried a new idea of having local youth interview the heroes to write their bios. We reached out to local high schools and youth organizations to recruit writers, and conducted the interviews over Zoom. This added a beautiful intergenerational piece, and another opportunity for a new neighborhood connection.

When the banners were installed in August, [Friends of Commodore Barry Park](#) and [Fort Greene Park Conservancy](#) co-organized an [Opening Celebration and Walking Tour](#) between the two parks to celebrate with the heroes and artists.

Both parks continue to celebrate and involve the artwork and collaborators in their programming. The [Fort Greene Park Fling](#) was back in person, and included a video featuring interviews with each hero and [Friends of Commodore Barry Park](#) held its [Community Friends Day](#) on the same day.

As your project matures, consider how to foster new leadership.

As we look forward, our hope and intention is to continue the annual rhythm of highlighting a small group of heroes each year to display in Commodore Barry Park and Fort Greene Park. We want to build capacity with new leadership, so that more community members can be leaders and organizers of the Fort Greene project.

To find out more and get involved, please contact us at info@communityheroes.nyc



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wards

CASE STUDY: GOWANUS

2016 **Center the most deeply impacted community members and be consistent.**

Part of the work of an organizer and a major component of the foundation of the work is listening to the community.

After the devastating effects of **Superstorm Sandy** on the Gowanus neighborhood, particularly on residents in **New York City Housing Authority** developments, it became clear that there had been and were going to be long-term needs, and injustices to be addressed that would require multiple organizations working together to address them.

We learned two insights that have helped us through this.

First, by centering this in the most deeply impacted and segregated community, and committing to attending and listening at the NYCHA tenant associations meetings, this was a powerful way to meet and hear from folks who would become heroes and allies in the work.

Second, by focusing on this one meeting, we were able to meet and build visibility and relationships with elected officials, other non-profits, school officials and other community leaders.

This is also where we met **Tracey**, a third generation resident, organizer and community advocate who introduced us to so many others and advocated for Trellis' work in and for the community, and has become such a beautiful ally in our work.

2017 **You'll find allies in the work that become friends and supporters.**

Having spent the time listening, and having a community ally, collaborations and friendships have been built which have helped build on, strengthen, and support other initiatives and projects. This has also helped the community to better understand each other and to advocate for each other.

This Gowanus project participated in the annual **Old Timers Day** event for two years in a row. At this event, residents past and present from the NYCHA residence come together to celebrate their community. It was here where we unveiled banners that, through portraits and biographies, profiled 6 residents doing incredible things in and for their community.

The Community Heroes project has helped give some of these incredible individuals more recognition and support in the community, and has reminded and encouraged the residents that there are people doing important, necessary, and vital work in the community, while also providing space to celebrate them.

This project also helped us move towards better formalizing our nomination process through our ballots and website, and the beginning stages of a group of advisors who would help us decide on the heroes.



The Sutherland Family gathering around as Ms. Jean Sutherland is honored through one of our banners.





Next Steps

WHAT'S NEXT?

Congratulations on working through part 1 of the toolkit and having a plan and vision for your neighborhood Community Heroes project!

Your next step is to meet with the Community Heroes team (whether you're ready to start tomorrow or if you need more time to fundraise or build your team).

In this conversation, we will:

- Hear about your plans for your neighborhood project
- Check in and understand where you are and where you may need support (i.e. do you have partnerships formed already, or do you need help building your team? Do you have funding already, or do you need help strategizing?)
- Create an agreement about how we will work together, based on what you need.

After the conversation, you will receive Part 2 of the toolkit which covers producing the project from outreach, to storytelling, to the exhibition.

To schedule a meeting, please fill out the form at www.communityheroes.nyc/toolkit/readyfor2 or email info@communityheroes.nyc.

TOOLKIT CREDITS

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MEET THE COMMUNITY HEROES TEAM

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Photoville is a New York-based non-profit organization that works to promote a wider understanding and increased access to the art of photography for all. www.photoville.com



Trellis is a community development non-profit that helps neighborhoods address injustice together—creating and managing for collective impact, and building collaboration around common vision, shared resources, and purposeful action. www.jointrellis.org



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This toolkit is modeled on the Toolkit Toolkit, created by Springboard for the Arts (www.springboardforthearts.org) for Creative Exchange (www.springboardexchange.org).

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COMMUNITY HEROES

TOOLKIT

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We're here to help.

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