

inspire

Neighborhoods Conference | 2026



2026 Speaker Preview

SEPTEMBER 11, 2026

ELECTRIC WORKS 1690 Broadway Bldg. 19, Fort Wayne, Indiana
www.inspirefortwayne.com



**Preview | 2026 Conference Breakout
Sessions & Workshops**

Morning Breakout Sessions | 9:10 AM

Collaboration – **Building a Coalition: The story of the Packard Area Planning Alliance**



Kody Tinnel
PAPA– FosterPark
Neighborhood



Holly Muñoz
PAPA– Fairfield
Neighborhood



Erik Long
PAPA– Foster Park
Neighborhood



Lynsday Sheets
PAPA– Williams
Woodland Park



Fred Lanahan
PAPA– Oakdale
Neighborhood

This session is intended to inspire other neighborhood leaders to consider the coalition approach and how it might help their neighborhood achieve its fullest potential. Through a genuine, conversational approach, attendees will hear directly from peers and have the chance to engage with questions throughout the session. Current and past Packard Area Planning Alliance (PAPA) leaders will tell the stories of their involvement in the organization, outline how PAPA has grown and evolved over time, and explain what can be accomplished when a group of neighborhoods decide to form strategic coalitions.

Vibrancy– **Staying rooted when its hard: Sustaining hope and energy in community work**



Kayla Sweet
Coach, Consultant,
Poet, Podcaster

Community work is meaningful, but it can also be exhausting, slow-moving, and emotionally demanding. When we care deeply, it's easy to overextend or lose connection to why we started. This session explores what it means to stay rooted when the work is hard. Through real stories, reflection, and

simple practices, participants will reconnect with their purpose, navigate challenges, and build resilience through connection and shared experience. Participants will leave with practical ways to sustain their energy and continue showing up without losing themselves in the process.

Innovation & Resources – **Neighborhood Safety in Action: Practical Strategies for Neighborhood-Led Change**



Megan Grable
Department of
Neighborhoods



Paul (PJ) Smith,
Fort Wayne Police
Department



Dan Ingram,
Fort Wayne Police
Department



Christopher Felton
Fort Wayne Police
Department



Jonathan Cutler
Fort Wayne Police
Department

Learn how you can partner with Police and City staff to shape change in your neighborhood! This

interactive session shows neighborhood leaders how small, practical changes to streets, public spaces, and community practices can make neighborhoods safer, stronger, and more connected. Participants will learn the basics of CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design), explore a proven multi-year pilot, and identify opportunities to apply these strategies in their own communities. Through interactive exercises, brainstorming, and a dynamic presentation, attendees will share ideas, gain actionable tools, and leave energized to take equity-centered steps that improve safety and resilience— turning insights into real, neighborhood-driven change.

Morning Breakout Sessions | 10:10 AM

Collaboration – Strengthening Neighborhoods Through Relationships and Shared Momentum



Lindsey Keller
North Highlands
Neighborhood



Travis Barman
Hamilton
Neighborhood



Brenda Holse
Hamilton
Neighborhood

Collaborating with nearby neighborhoods is often encouraged, but the practical steps are not always clear. This session will explore ways to build connections with surrounding neighborhood leaders and the community benefits that follow. Drawing from North Highlands' experience in the Northwest Central Collaborative and its role in the \$1 million Connected Communities grant, we will look at how shared goals, consistent communication, and trust made collaboration possible. Participants will learn what worked, what the presenters learned along the way, and how the relationships built through this process continue to influence neighborhood projects even after the grant application.

Vibrancy– Community Advocacy and Disability Rights



Jeffrey Nolish
Michigan National Guard

This interactive session will motivate attendees to campaign for a positive impact in their local, regional, and state communities.

The session will begin with a reflective exercise connecting personal experiences to civic engagement. Participants will then explore case studies focused on the City of Detroit and disability rights, learning how collaboration and resources can drive change. The session will conclude with advocacy tools and strategies for future application.

Innovation & Resources – Who are the People in your Neighborhood



Beth Boatright
Allen County
Public Library



Nathan Law
Department of
Planning & Policy

What do you know about the people that you meet each day? This session will share the best library and government resources for discovering and documenting your neighborhood's demographics, infrastructure, socio-economic well-being, assets, and more. Equipped with this great information, you'll learn how stories and statistics can help you make things better. We'll even introduce you to useful resources, funding, and connections that will empower you to help all the people in your neighborhood.

Morning Breakout Sessions | 11:10 AM

Collaboration 1 – Bringing People together – the art of community convening



Lem Cartman
WE Inc. (With Everyone)

Strong neighborhoods are built through relationships. This interactive workshop explores how community leaders can effectively convene residents, organizations, and institutions to build trust and collective momentum. Participants will learn practical strategies for organizing inclusive conversations and engaging

neighbors around shared challenges and opportunities. Through a guided small-group exercise, attendees will practice a simple community dialogue framework designed to help surface ideas, strengthen relationships, and spark collaboration. Participants will leave with tools they can use to host meaningful gatherings that bring people together and support resilient, connected neighborhoods.

Collaboration 2 – From Helping Hands to Leading Hearts: Inspiring Your Volunteers



Mary Ann Mings
Inasmuch Ministry

This session is designed to move neighborhood leaders from the frustration of "doing it all" to the excitement of "leading a team." Attendees will leave not just with a vision, but with a toolkit to rebuild their volunteer culture.

Most volunteer groups struggle to move beyond a few "do-it-all" leaders, but what if your volunteers ran their own segments like professional staff? In this session, the leader of a 150-person, volunteer-driven ministry reveals the "Leadership Pipeline" model. You'll learn how to treat volunteers with professional rigor—from high-stakes onboarding to delegating true ownership. Move past the "bottleneck" of traditional management and learn how to empower your neighbors to take the lead, hit goals, and run with the vision.

Vibrancy– House to Home to Neighborhood: How Safe First Spaces Build Thriving Communities



Colleen Connell
Mustard Seed Furniture Bank

The difference between a house and a home shapes the trajectory of families and neighborhoods. This session explores how poverty exists not only across neighborhoods, but within homes lacking basic furnishings, comfort, and dignity. When families have safe, restorative first spaces, they are better

equipped to succeed in second spaces like school and work, and to engage in third spaces where community and belonging are formed. Participants will learn how investing in homes strengthens families, activates neighborhoods, and contributes to healthier, more connected cities where lasting change becomes possible. 🌱

Innovation & Resources – Creative Subversion: Tools to Transform Housing and Build Resilient Communities



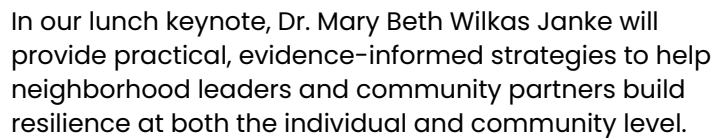
Scott Shall
HOUM | Lawrence Tech University

What if resilience isn't about working harder, but thinking differently? Drawing on two decades of experience in housing and community development, this session introduces "Guerrilla Altruism," a creative approach to overcoming barriers through design, technology, and collective action. Participants will

discover practical tactics for identifying opportunities, mobilizing resources, and creating positive change in their neighborhoods. Attendees will leave with a framework for recognizing high-impact opportunities and turning neighborhood challenges into catalysts for action.

*Practical Tools for Stronger People,
Leaders and Communities*

Doctor of Forensic Psychology, Author, Speaker
Former United States Secret Service Agent



Drawing on experience as both a clinical psychologist and former United States Secret Service Agent, Dr. Janke brings a unique perspective on resilience, decision-making, and sustaining performance in high-pressure environments. Her approach combines psychological science, real-world experience, and actionable strategies that participants can immediately apply in their neighborhoods and organizations.

These strategies are intentionally designed to be realistic and immediately usable—so participants leave with ideas they can begin applying right away!



Afternoon Workshops 3:10

Collaboration Workshop– **Start with What's Strong: Asset Mapping for Neighborhood Flourishing**

Eric Smith, *CommunityWorks*

This workshop introduces participants to Asset Mapping, a practical tool from the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) Institute that helps neighborhoods discover and mobilize their existing strengths. Instead of beginning with problems or deficiencies, asset mapping identifies the gifts of individuals, the power of local associations, supportive institutions, physical spaces, and economic resources already present in a neighborhood. Participants will learn simple methods for engaging residents in conversations that uncover these assets and connect them in new ways. By the end of the session, attendees will understand how to create an asset map and use it to spark collaboration, strengthen relationships, and launch community-driven improvement projects.



Vibrancy Workshop– **Who Does What? The Neighborhood Leader's Guide to Government**

Andrew Downs, *City of Fort Wayne Office of Intergovernmental Affairs*

Great neighborhood leaders know how to build relationships, solve problems, and connect with the right people. In this interactive workshop, participants will explore the structure of the City of Fort Wayne and Allen County governments, including an overview of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches—and the officials, boards, and courts that make them work.

Through engaging discussion and practical examples, attendees will gain a better understanding of how local government operates, how decisions are made, and how to effectively navigate the systems, partnerships, and processes that impact their neighborhoods.



Innovation & Resources Workshop– **Culture & Community: Building Belonging from the Ground Up: How equitable communication transforms neighborhoods, services, and systems**

Raquel Kline & Susana Navarrete, *Language Services Network (LSN)*

Belonging doesn't happen by accident. While communities are increasingly multilingual and multicultural, many systems still rely on communication structures that unintentionally exclude. This session addresses a critical need: ensuring that every neighbor — regardless of language, culture, or background — can fully participate, contribute, and feel valued.

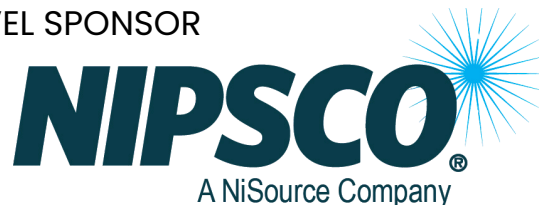
In this workshop, LSN staff will explore how language access and culturally responsive engagement can transform their neighborhoods, organizations, and service systems. Participants will examine the real impact of linguistic inclusion on trust, participation, and community well-being, and will leave with practical tools to strengthen belonging in their own contexts.



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