Discussion Activity

In your community…

• **Who** are the people or organizations who influence major community decisions?

• **What** gives these individuals or organizations credibility or influence in the community?
Historical Characteristics of “Influentials”

- Majority in 40-65 age range
- Above average income
- Above average education
- Business/professional occupations
- Long-term residents
- Often do not reflect the diverse population
- Control key resources in the community
Types of Community Power Structures

Pluralistic

- Individual influence
- Occasional collaborative grouping
Types of Community Power Structures

Elitist
- One person, family, or
- Tightly knit group.
- A Hierarchy
Types of Community Power Structures

Class-based
Social class determines who holds power
Types of Community Power Structures

Growth Machine
- Special Interest
- Single-focus Cause
Importance of Understanding Community Power Dynamics

- Who has the authority to make decisions?
- Who controls/influences resources?
- Who is not part of the decision making process?
- How to build resident and community power from both within and outside of the community?
- Enable us to develop more inclusive, effective community programs.
Community Power Actors Determine…

• Which community *issues* are addressed, or not addressed.

• The *outcomes* of community decisions.

• Allocation of internal or external *resources* needed for community action.
Identifying Community Power Actors

Reputation:
Those with the reputation for community power among knowledgeable members of the community

Positional:
People in organizational positions with authority to make decisions.

Event Analysis:
People who participate most actively in community events.
Healthy Ecosystem
Vital Economy
Social Well-Being

Natural Capital
Built Capital
Financial Capital
Political Capital
Social Capital
Cultural Capital
Human Capital
Political Capital

- Consists of organization, connections, voice and power of individuals in community.

- Is the ability of a group to influence the distribution of resources within a social unit, including helping set the agenda of what resources are available.

*Flora & Flora, (2008) Rural Communities, Legacy + Change*
What Does This Mean for Communities?

- Why would a community want “shared” power?
- How would a community go about creating that if it wanted to?
How Can a Community Build Power?

- **Shared Leadership** – Leadership Development programming
- **Civic involvement** in identifying important issues
- **Citizen voice** in public prioritization and decision-making
- **Developing structures or systems** that allow for shared power and decision-making.