



# FOUNDATIONS OF PRACTICE IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

LEVEL **1** Understanding Communities and Their Dynamics

Understanding Community Power Dynamics

Mary Peabody



## Discussion Activity

In your community...

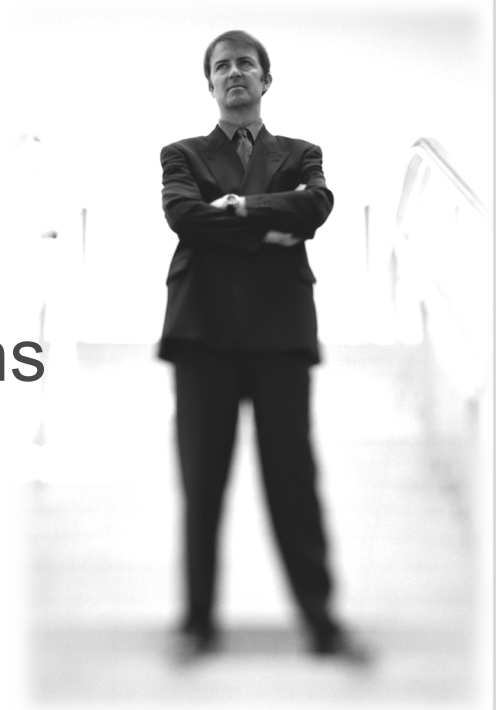
- **Who** are the people or organizations who influence major community decisions?
- **What** gives these individuals or organizations credibility or influence in the community?





## 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

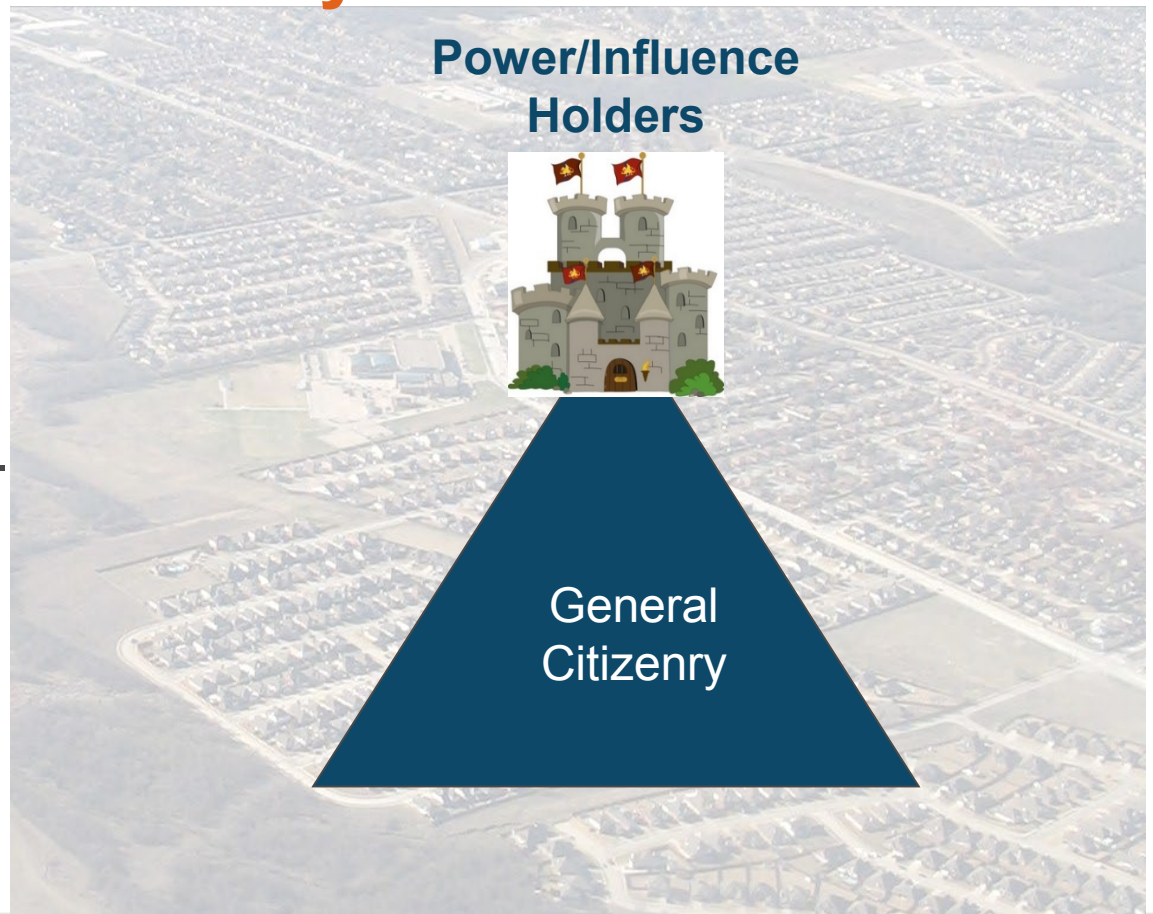




## Types of Community Power Structures

### Elitist

- One person, family, or
- Tightly knit group.
- A Hierarchy





## Types of Community Power Structures

### Class- based

Social class determines who holds power





# FOUNDATIONS OF PRACTICE

IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

**LEVEL 1** Understanding Communities and Their Dynamics

## Types of Community Power Structures

### Growth Machine

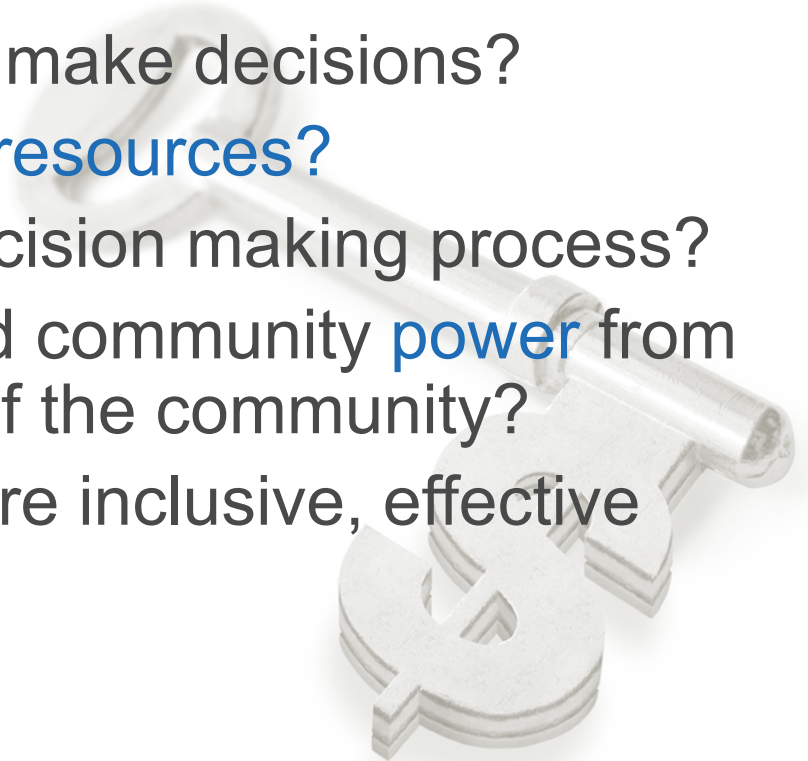
- Special Interest
- Single-focus Cause





## 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:

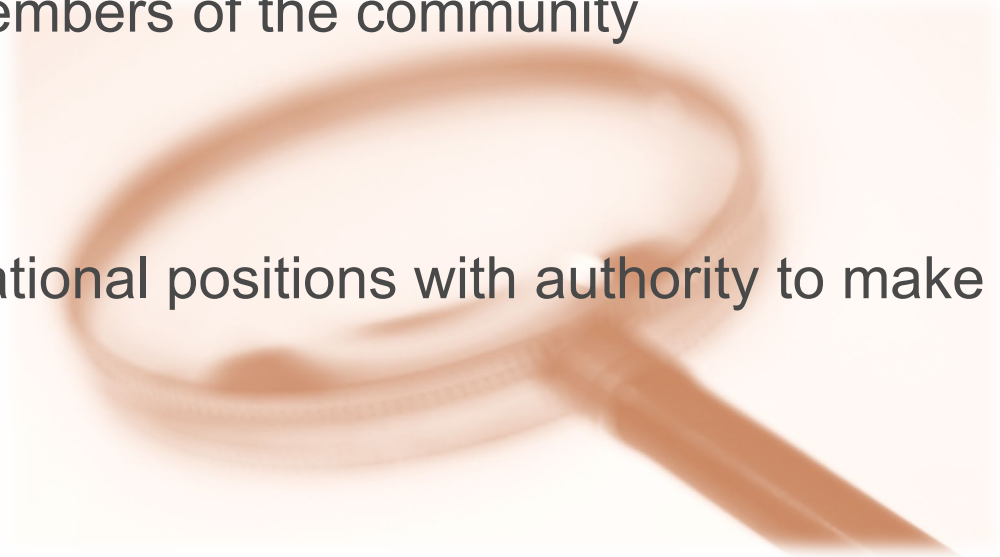
Those with the reputation for community power among knowledgeable members of the community

### Positional:

People in organizational positions with authority to make decisions.

### Event Analysis:

People who participate most actively in community events.

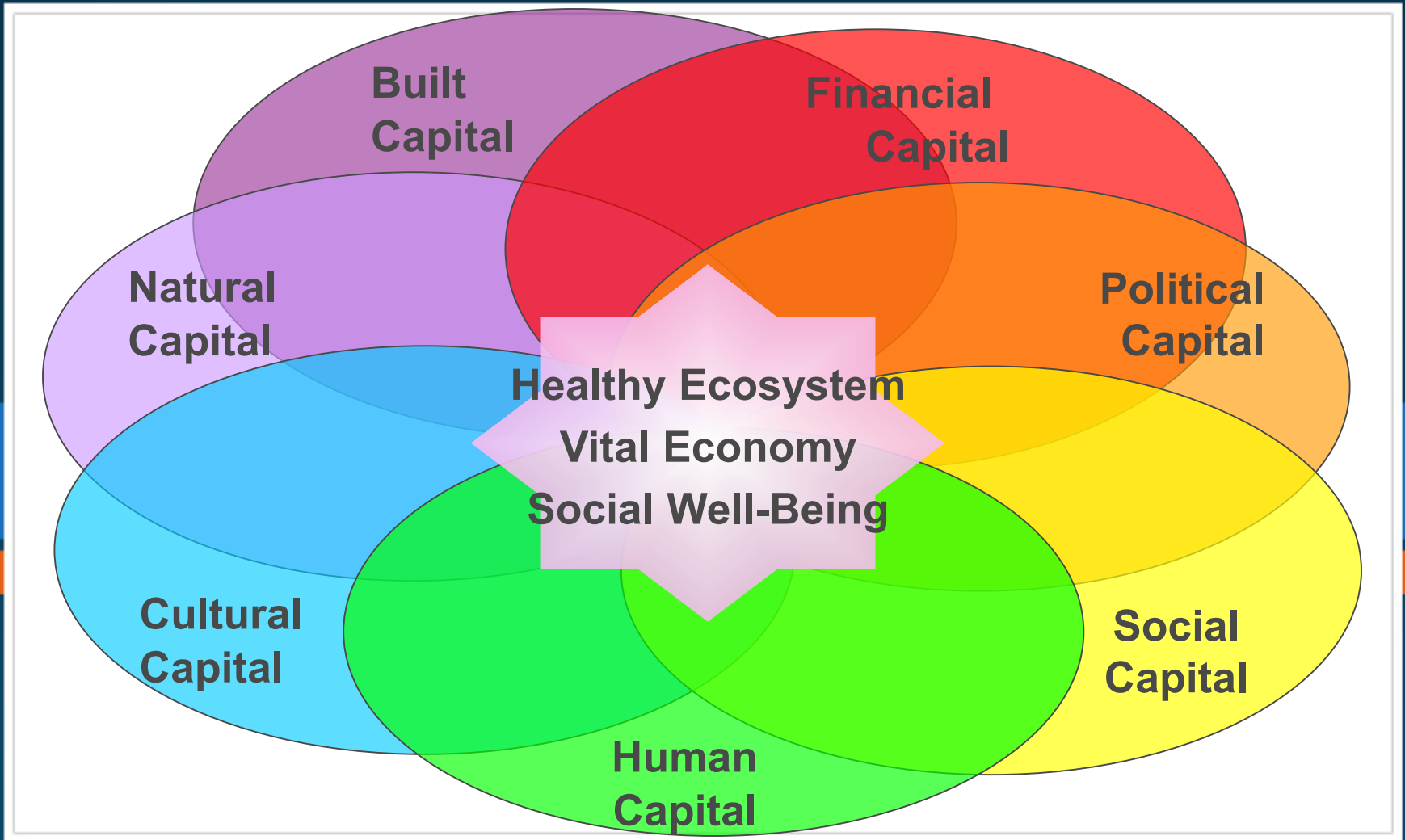




# FOUNDATIONS OF PRACTICE

IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

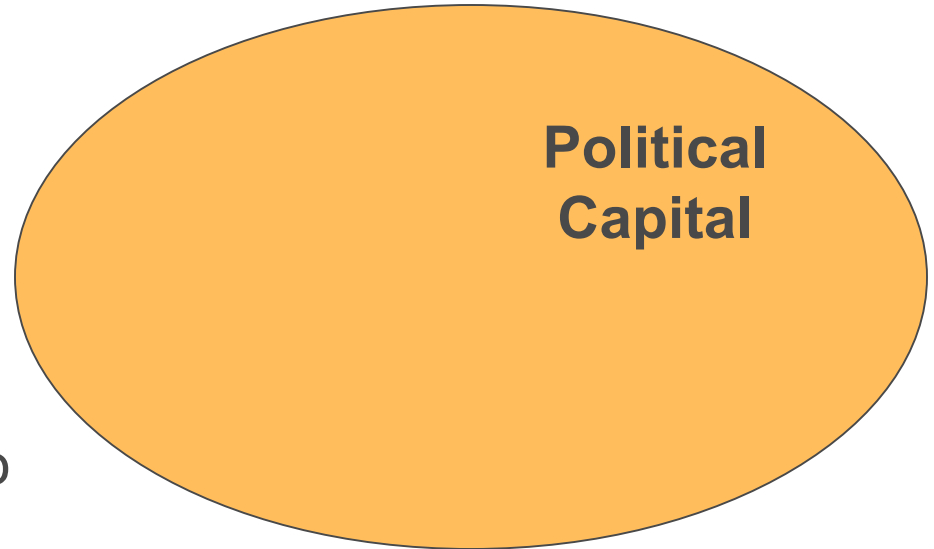
## LEVEL 1 Understanding Communities and Their Dynamics





## 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.