



Connective Tissue Policy Framework

Sam Pressler | September 24, 2024

Who is this guy???



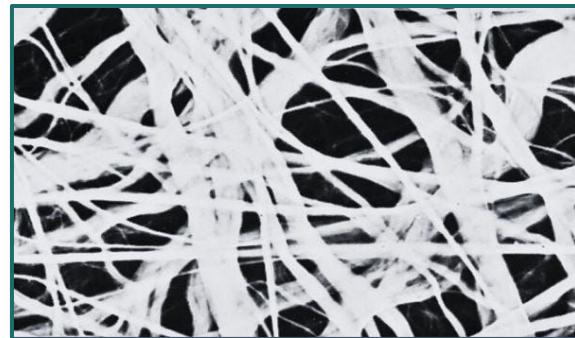
Home

Grew up as a third generation member of Wayne, NJ — where my grandparents were founding members of Jewish institutions, where my extended family lived, and where I was deeply *known*.



Community

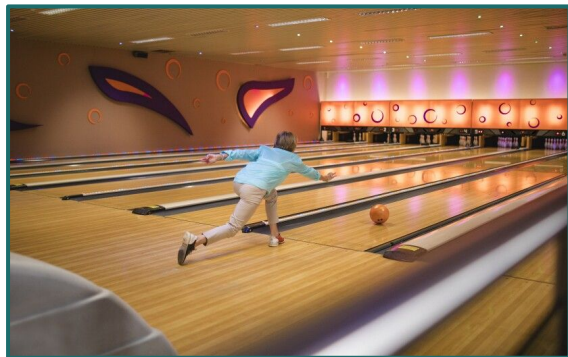
Founded the Armed Services Arts Partnership — the largest community arts org for veterans — and experienced the undefinable power and potential of a connected, trusting community.



Discernment

Researching and writing on the question: “How can we connect more people to the relationships, communities, and commitments that make our lives worth living?”

Policymakers are becoming interested in strengthening connection within communities, but often don't know where to begin.



OPINION
MICHELLE COTTLE

Is the Cure to Male Loneliness Retaking Constantinople?

July 19, 2023

The Moment

Policymakers are realizing that the root problem underneath so many of the problems in American life is the weakening of our civic and social lives.

The Motivation

The seeds of policymaking to strengthen the roots of communities are being planted. Policymakers are motivated to take action.

The Gap

But the connection-focused policy space is underdeveloped and siloed, and policymakers often don't know where to begin.

We created this framework to provide policymakers with an organized, actionable starting point for connection-focused policymaking.

Principled

We identify **3 guiding principles** in the framework for the role of policy.

- ↑ Increase **civic opportunities** for people to participate and cultivate relationships.
- ↑ Increase **participation** in these civic opportunities.
- ↑ Increase the **connections** that both enable and result from participation.

Organized

We make the breadth of this framework **accessible** by structuring it into four complementary chapters — Foundational Changes, Community Institutions, Life Transitions, and Enabling Conditions — each including three to four related sections.

Actionable

We also make it **actionable**: offering specific policy opportunities within each section, organizing them by the level of government that can take action, and accompanying them with specific case studies to inspire such action.

The framework includes 150+ policy opportunities across its 4 chapters and 13 sections, including one on Housing & Neighborhoods.



Foundational Changes

Measures

Personnel

Connection Lens

Community Institutions

Housing + Neighborhoods

**Civic Infrastructure +
Associational Life**

Care + Education

Life Transitions

Early Childhood + Parenting

Adult Transition

Community Integration


Retirement + Older Adults

Enabling Conditions

Work

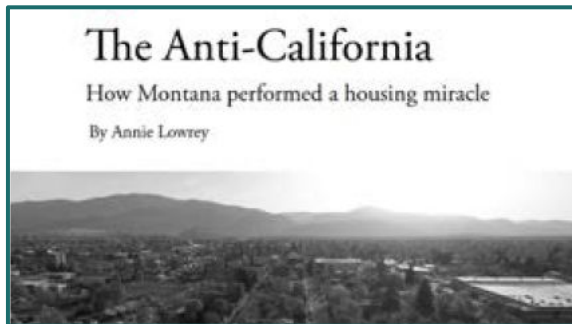
Big Tech + Media

Local News

The background features abstract teal watercolor washes in the corners. A large, light teal shape is in the top-left, a darker teal shape is in the top-right, and a complex teal shape with some white highlights is in the bottom-right. A thin, dark line forms a loop in the bottom-left.

**We have a once-in-a-generation
opportunity to activate the housing
sector and neighborhoods as platforms
for participation and connection — both
overall and across lines of difference.**

Housing is now a top policy priority at the federal, state, and local levels. But the focus has mostly been on the material, not the social.



Where we live fundamentally shapes our social reality:

- ★ The **places** we frequent
- ★ The **groups** we join
- ★ The **neighbors** we interact with
- ★ The **relationships** we form

We are seeing bipartisan policy efforts to ↑ supply + affordability:

- ★ **Middle housing** zoning reform
- ★ **Social housing** developments

Both have the potential to create more mixed-income communities.

... But more supply + affordability doesn't equal more connection.

Connection needs to be prioritized during the front-end design of our policies, through the process of change, and on the back-end through the activation of our neighborhoods.

The framework identifies three housing-related policy opportunities to promote more mixed-income neighborhoods and bridging connection.

1

Middle Housing (*Local + State*)

Reform zoning laws to enable the development of cottages, duplexes, multiplexes, and ADUs — coupled with shallow subsidies — to boost supply, affordability, and cross-class integration.

2

Social Housing (*Local + State*)

Build new social housing developments — mixed-income, publicly owned, and democratically controlled — to ensure long-term affordability and promote cross-class connectedness.

3

Cohousing (*Philanthropy*)

Incubate the cohousing sector — intentional communities of homes organized around shared spaces and activities — to become a more mainstream outlet for affordable living and bridging social capital.

But housing policy alone is not enough. People need to be brought together through neighborhood programming and activities.



Parental Programming *(Local + Philanthropy)*

Launch and fund cohort-based programs for parents within schools that are oriented toward helping their children while encouraging parents to support and connect with each other.



Neighborhood Programming *(Local + Philanthropy)*

Provide micro-grants and capacity support for neighborhood programs, including block parties, BBQs/dinners, violence interruption, welcoming activities, and block improvements.



Micro-Spaces *(Local + Philanthropy)*

Create communal micro-spaces within neighborhoods — via zoning and funding — for people to gather, such as micro-parks/gardens, workshops/tool sheds, and micro-pubs/cafes.

And neighbors can be activated better and more consistently through neighborhood-level leadership and coordination.

① **Neighborhood Leadership (*Local*)**

Promote neighborhood-oriented leadership among residents to consistently facilitate neighborhood programming, cooperation, and coordination, and advocate for their neighborhood's needs to local government.

② **Neighborhood Coordination (*Local*)**

Shift activities from government-to-individual to government-to-neighborhood in collaboration with neighborhood-oriented leadership. *Ex:* Grant money to neighborhood captains for tree-planting to be done as a neighborhood effort.

③ **Neighborhood Learning (*Philanthropy*)**

Support the peer-learning, programming, and connection of (1) cities developing their neighborhood leadership and programming (e.g. Bloomberg's "Love Your Block" Program) and (2) communities of practice specifically for neighborhood-level leaders.



What's next?



Read the framework

Read, challenge, and build on the framework at:

<http://theconnectivetissue.us/>



Share the framework

Share the framework with interested policymakers, researchers, and practitioners.



Meet with me

Meet with me to ask questions, offer feedback, and ID options for building on this work.

INTENTIONALLY BLANK

Our civic life has deteriorated and become sorted by class.

This has left more Americans — especially those without degrees — disconnected from their communities and neighbors.



Declining

Membership and participation in community groups, religious institutions, and unions has declined precipitously over the past 60 years.



Sorting

America's neighborhoods, third places, associational life, and relationships have simultaneously become *more* sorted by class.



Isolating

Americans without degrees have less access to civic opportunity, lower levels of participation, fewer close friends, and less social support, both overall and compared to the past.