



Board of Directors

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Help us grow the movement

- **Donate** to Great Lakes Urban to support our neighborhood strengthening activities.
- **Get to know** your neighbors.
- **Like and follow** Great Lakes Urban on Facebook!
- **Watch and share** our Lunch+Learn recordings and blogs with your networks.
- **Encourage** your church, business, etc. to get involved with a local neighborhood.
- **Visit our website** at: GreatLakesUrban.org to learn more.
- **Share** your ideas with us by emailing: info@greatlakesurban.org

To change how you receive this newsletter, or to talk with someone at Great Lakes Urban, send an email to: info@greatlakesurban.org or call 937-935-4844

Small is Beautiful

In a recent blog post (you can find our blog by visiting www.greatlakesurban.org/blog/), I referenced a quote by author and futurist David Flemming where he asserted that, “Large-scale problems do not require large-scale solutions; they require small-scale solutions within a large-scale framework.”

We don't have to look far to find large-scale problems, whether increased polarization, persistent poverty rates, growing public health concerns, etc. At Great Lakes Urban we are finding that small-scale (neighborhood-scale, to be exact) solutions yield huge benefits across multiple of these problem areas, all at once. Hence the title of this newsletter, *Small is Beautiful*.

Thanks to you and your support Great Lakes Urban, which has been intentionally serving neighborhoods since 2008, is now poised to also build the large-scale framework that will help communities and regions adopt asset based community development. On page 2 read how your support has made it possible to hire a Project Director to lead the charge on this new effort. This is a huge step forward.

To truly make a large-scale change, however, we need your help! You can help us expand our reach as we both widen and deepen our impact in the coming year. Read below some steps you can take in 2023. And thank you!

You will find in the rest of this newsletter some of the rationale behind, and impact of, our strengths-based and community-led approach. All of the successes we have experienced the last couple of years are made possible by our deeply thoughtful and highly engaged Board of Directors. You can read about the most recent member--Brigit Hassig--to join the team on page 4.



Eric Smith, Director

Take Four: 4 Ways You Can Help



- 1 On September 9 we'll be hosting our **9th annual Restoring Our Cities** family-friendly cycling and fundraising event. What can you do? Join us as a rider, organize a fundraising team with family, co-workers, or church friends, or link us to sponsors. Visit www.greatlakesurban.org/rocfundraiser.
- 2 Did you know you can **find us on LinkedIn and Facebook**? You can help us grow our presence by liking and following our social media pages. With a few clicks you can meaningfully extend our reach and resources and help even more neighbors and communities.
- 3 When we say “neighborhood,” what comes to mind? Did you picture a subdivision, city street, or a rural homestead? Whatever neighborhood means to you, you can **gift those living around you with connection and community**. Need ideas to get started? Visit www.greatlakesurban.org/good-neighbor
- 4 Join us as we equip people to do asset based community development, or ABCD. You can find options by visiting GreatLakesUrban.org/events. Our next **Bright Spots in ABCD** episode, for example, will occur April 26 from 12p-1p ET. Or sign up to get trained as a practitioner or certified trainer.

Have questions or feedback? Call or email Eric at 937-935-4844 or esmith@greatlakesurban.org.

Megan Ginn: Building a Large-Scale Framework

As a new Project Director for Great Lakes Urban, Megan will be working to build a national network of Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) trainers/coaches, as well as to develop resources and tools for communities and connectors. She brings relevant expertise, having built a similar network and platform for Serving With Dignity facilitators through The Aravis Network. Besides her experience, Megan also brings a Masters in Social Work and a Bachelors in Political Science. And, importantly, she practices ABCD in her neighborhood. We caught up with Megan to learn more about her as she begins her Project Director role.

Megan, why don't we start with your telling us a little about yourself?

Of course! I have lived in Florida my entire life, and while the heat and humidity aren't my favorite, the people and communities here are amazing. I began my career working with local churches and faith-based nonprofits to strengthen their community engagement approach. I'm extremely passionate about helping others find ways to build life-giving relationships and strengthen the whole community.

You've been in this space for a while now, what attracted you to ABCD approaches?

As a social worker, I was often put in the position of "fixing" or "solving" another person's crisis. It didn't take me long to notice how harmful this was for both the person seeking help and the one trying to provide it. ABCD provided a different approach that gave people permission to be fully human, talents and mistakes alike.

Also, ABCD has a way of attracting some of the most amazing, passionate, and humble leaders I know. I immediately was inspired by not only the knowledge and experience everyone had but how generous ABCD practitioners are in supporting one another.

What most excites you about taking on this role with Great Lakes Urban?

I am so excited to get to know local practitioners better and find innovative ways to build support and community around them! Every person, organization, and neighborhood is unique and seeing how ABCD principles are implemented in such different settings fills me with joy.

Thanks, Megan! It's great to have you on board! As we wrap up can you share your own "Small is Beautiful" story?



Megan Ginn

- **From:** Deltona, FL
- **Hobbies:** Reading, re-watching my favorite TV shows (currently Monk), and trying out new locally owned restaurants
- **My Hero:** Hannah Moore who was a member of the Clapham Sect, playwright, and writer
- **Pets:** Juniper is the cutest two-year-old German Shepard - Dachsund mix you will ever find.
- **Favorite quote:** "I will speak to you as if you have gifts and are waiting to offer them" - John McKnight & Peter Block, *The Abundant Community*

Small is Beautiful in Orlando

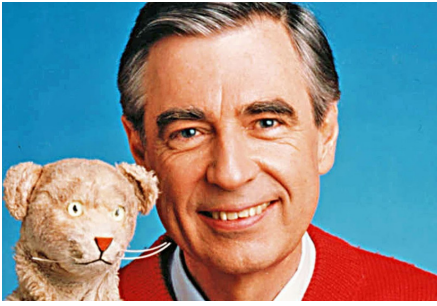


My neighborhood is Azalea Park, FL. This community was built in the 1950s and most of the homes, businesses, and churches reflect the mid-century design. One unique part of the neighborhood is how many residents' families have lived here for multiple generations. In a region where most residents have moved in from another state, many families in Azalea Park now live in a house across the street from where they grew up.

Additionally, in the last few decades, Azalea Park has become a thriving neighborhood for immigrants from the Caribbean, Central and South America. Some of the best (in my very biased opinion) Latin cuisine in Central Florida is found in this neighborhood, and the majority of residents, stores, and restaurants are bilingual.

Azalea Park has a resident-led neighborhood association that connects residents to each other, neighborhood organizations, and government officials.

Small is Beautiful in Mister Rogers Neighborhood



It's March! That means it's time again for Won't You Be My Neighbor Day. This annual celebration the week of March 20 was started as a way to spread love and kindness in honor of Fred Rogers birthday. Mr. Rogers left a legacy of helping children and families believe "It's a Beautiful Day in This Neighborhood". And you can, too! Try to:

- Do something kind for a neighbor. Saying hello to someone new is a great first step.
- Organize a small event, like a potluck or game night. Include kids in the process.
- Make your neighborhood more beautiful, like through sidewalk chalk art.
- Need ideas? Check out www.greatlakesurban.org/good-neighbor-resources.

You can be a part of cultivating the place where you live into a nurturing and safe environment for youth and families. If you choose to do something this March, let us know how you honored Mr. Rogers. You can do this by taking 5 minutes to share about your project and add your zip code to the map at <https://wontyoubemyneighboraday.com/>.

7 Neighborhood Functions Remind Us That Small is Beautiful

Research by the ABCD Institute has identified 7 key functions that neighborhoods play in our society. In January we started a series describing how our work contributes to the health and vitality of the 7 key functions. In remembrance of Fred Rogers, we took the opportunity to explore function #6 in the month of March: Raising Our Children.

At Great Lakes Urban one of our favorite Mister Rogers Neighborhood quotes is, "Everybody you meet has something special to give and receive." In our experience, Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) builds the kind of social environment that Fred Rogers invited us into. Youth need to feel like they matter, like they can help and be helped.

In his book, *Together: The Healing Power of Human Connection in a Sometimes Lonely World*, Vivek Murthy, MD, the Surgeon General of the United States, outlines some of the research behind the impact that connection and belonging have on youth outcomes. Here are a few findings:

- Youth experiencing belonging and social connection do better academically, have higher self-esteem, feel more socially adept, and perform better on intelligence tests requiring logic and reasoning.
- In neighborhoods where people watch out for and are trusted to help with each other's children, adolescents exhibit greater social competence, get along better with peers, and are able to empathize and resolve conflict.

Why is this the case? Author and asset based community development luminary, Cormac Russell, puts it this way, "Communities and the families that exist within them have a central role to play in raising powerful and connected children, which cannot be replaced by professional intervention no matter how well funded. The further a child is from the center of a caring community, the more 'at risk' he or she becomes. By the same token, the closer a child is to the center of a competent community that welcomes both her fallibility and giftedness, the closer she is to her promising present and compelling future."

You can help us turn spaces of disconnection and isolation into neighborhoods characterized by connection, belonging, hope, and wholeness. One way you can do this is by donating to Great Lakes Urban. We will use your support to equip and deploy the Neighborhood Connectors who are on the front lines in often historically under-resourced communities.



18th St. Street Party, Holland, MI

7 Neighborhood Functions

- **Enabling Health**
- **Assuring Security**
- **Stewarding Ecology**
- **Shaping Local Economies**
- **Growing Local Food Production**
- **Raising our Children**
- **Co-creating Care**

Small is Beautiful in Uganda, Africa



Achibu, Uganda

The following excerpt is reprinted with the permission of the team at Visible Hands Collaborative (VHC). This VHC article is based on an interview with GLU Director, Eric Smith. You can learn about VHC at www.visiblehandscollaborative.org. An old African proverb asserts that "it takes a village to raise a child", but what does it take to raise a village? The story of two African villages may hold the answer.

The Tractor: In a remote village in the Democratic Republic of Congo, a broken down tractor sits idly in the sand. The once shiny metal body has been dulled with intense weather exposure, and the heavy machinery serves not as an example of power, but as a reminder of isolation and inadequacy. Well-meaning intentions of improving food security, a high priority for the people, inadvertently caused more distress for the local inhabitants. In the remote village, there was no Tractor Supply

or Home Depot. The training, tools and mechanics to work on this type of product weren't available. With the dead tractor now serving as a glorified garden statue, people reverted to their old practices and the issue of food security was unchanged.

The cattle and the plow: A decade later during his time in Uganda, Eric was working alongside the people of Achibu. Through a process of questions and discovery, Eric found that the the locals were most concerned about food security, mirroring the concerns of the people of Congo. After walking alongside the people to devise a solution, Eric was told that the Acholi, a Nilotic ethnic group of Luo peoples in northern Uganda, were really good at using cattle. "Let's go learn from them," they mused. So they did. Armed with newfound knowledge of how to use the cattle and plow, the community was excited and hopeful. They came together with grit and determination, and took the time to figure out the costs associated with purchasing a cow. Eric and his team purchased a second cow for the village. With their newly acquired cattle, they increased food production ninefold.

Asset Based Community Development in action: Eric has carried these twin stories with him in both his head and his heart throughout his life. He says that these stories exemplify the process of Asset Based Community Development (ABCD), and clearly displays why he believes in ABCD wholeheartedly. Two villages, each with similar concerns, and two polar opposite outcomes. So what was the difference? Eric credits the success of the Achibu community to the process of asking questions and walking alongside the community to find a solution to their food scarcity concerns. Eric has since applied ABCD to a variety of contexts in the U.S.A. Along the way, he's learned that the principals of ABCD work in every circumstance. When the goal is to support a community, the best aid comes in the right dose at the right time to supplement what residents are already doing. This is ABCD at work; a bottom up versus top down approach, and working together to achieve greatness.

This, this is what it takes to raise a village.



Brigit Hassig

Meet Brigit Hassig: Our Newest Board Member

Can you tell us a little about your background, Brigit?

Throughout my career, which is a unique hybrid of human service and corporate leadership, I have been brought in to open opportunities in changing markets or build on the core competencies of an organization to release new avenues, products, and experiences. I like to draw connections between seemingly disparate parts, create trendsetters before the trends, open up synergies previously untapped, and transform assets waiting to be creatively leveraged. Currently I do this as the Chief of Staff/Operations Director for Visible Hands Collaborative.

What interested you in helping to steward Great Lakes Urban as a board member?

As a social entrepreneur and nonprofit executive, I seek to design or expand upon the most efficient, impactful and sustainable practices that serve to create stronger communities. Participating on the Great Lakes Urban Board provides that outlet for this passion as our work is rooted in practice, authentic to a community and made alive by community neighbors!