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RELATIONSHIP TRANSFORMS COMMUNITIES™



Social Capital Collective Impact for Affordable Housing

Pairing Open Table Models with
Low-Income Housing Development

Open Table, as a transformational process, is a form of collective impact, but its investment capital is social and relational capital.

-- Jon Katov, Founder & CEO

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A building is more than a financial asset. It is a neighborhood asset.

Open Table partners with the affordable housing sector to implement its social and relational capital collective impact models. The models concentrate community resources on a development's sustainability goals for residents, the building, and surrounding neighborhoods.

While affordable and supportive housing development is accelerating nationwide, there is a growing, concurrent spotlight on long-term impact. Sustainability of buildings, ongoing social supports for residents, and neighborhood economic development and revitalization derive from more than construction investment, maintenance, and infrastructure upgrades. An expanding number of units increases pressure on human services to provide long-term supportive services. Social determinants of health drive the indicators of the long-term success of affordable housing developments. They are similar to those that make neighborhoods vibrant, economically robust, healthy, and sustainable.

Solutions to the comprehensive needs of residents and social connections and supports contribute to the long-term sustainability of affordable housing programs. Social supports within affordable housing initiatives are crucial to address the multifaceted needs of residents, fostering housing stability, enhancing well-being, promoting economic mobility, and building stronger communities.

Open Table is a form of collective impact that solves resident, building, and neighborhood challenges and contributes to resident and building sustainability. In each Open Table proprietary model, a volunteer team of businesses, people, or individuals is trained to access and combine their personal, social, and business networks (social and relational capital) to help others achieve goals they cannot achieve on their own. These models are paired with affordable housing developments at the individual, building, and neighborhood levels.

The platform for the implementation of Open Table in an affordable housing development combines three anchors: a community engagement coordinator trained to implement Open Table models and funded through the project, a community-based human services agency with multiple support systems, and partnerships with sectors providing long-term volunteer engagements including faith communities and businesses. These anchors also support the development's social determinants of health services, which may include a digital health clinic, childcare center, workforce development, and many others.

The seventeen-year experience of Open Table and its evidence base demonstrate the impact of Open Table models on people, organizations, and communities.

Social Networks (Social and Relational Capital) and Supports are Crucial to the sustainability of Residents, a Building, and Neighborhood Revitalization:

Housing Stability: Many individuals and families in affordable housing may face challenges such as unemployment, financial instability, mental health issues, or lack of access to essential services. Supportive services can provide social support networks, resources, guidance, and counseling to address these challenges, helping residents maintain their housing and prevent eviction or homelessness.

Well-being and Quality of Life: Affordable housing residents may require assistance beyond housing itself. Social networks and supports can provide access to healthcare, mental health services, substance abuse treatment, and other essential resources. By addressing residents' and neighborhood social drivers of health needs, social supports can improve well-being, quality of life, and overall housing satisfaction.

Employment and Economic Mobility: Affordable housing residents often face employment and economic mobility barriers. Social networks and supportive services can provide job training, educational opportunities, career counseling, and employer connections, thereby enhancing residents' employability and income potential. By promoting economic stability and upward mobility, social supports contribute to the long-term sustainability of affordable housing by reducing turnover and improving residents' financial independence.

Community Engagement and Cohesion: Social networks and supports foster community engagement and develop reciprocal social connections among affordable housing residents. This sense of belonging and community cohesion can enhance residents' attachment to their housing, encourage positive social interactions, and create a supportive environment for long-term sustainability.

Prevention and Early Intervention: Social connections and supports can help identify and address issues early on, preventing crises that could lead to housing instability. Through ongoing support, social networks and service providers can detect financial distress, mental health challenges, and other issues and intervene proactively. Timely interventions can mitigate risks and support residents in overcoming challenges before they escalate and jeopardize their housing stability.

Tenant Empowerment and Self-sufficiency: Social supports aim to empower residents by providing them with the tools, skills, and resources necessary for self-sufficiency. By promoting the development of social networks, financial literacy, life skills development, and empowerment, residents can become more capable of maintaining their housing, managing their finances, and achieving long-term housing stability independently.

Key Definitions

SDOH-Driven Supportive Services

- *Affordable housing supportive services refer to a range of programs, resources, and assistance provided to individuals and families living in affordable housing to promote stability, well-being, and self-sufficiency. These services are designed to address the unique needs and challenges faced by low-income households and enhance their quality of life.*

Social Determinants of Health

- *Social determinants of health are the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age and the wider set of forces and systems that shape the conditions of daily life. These social, economic, and environmental determinants influence an individual's health and well-being.*

Social and Relational Capital

- **Social Capital:** *A person's or organization's influence, skills, and personal, social, and business networks.*
- **Relational Capital:** *Reciprocity between people or organizations in which each party receives supportive benefits from the other.*

Levels of Open Table Impact

- **Resident:** *Empower residents to live the lives they envision for themselves and their children, ensuring long-term retention.*
- **Building:** *Support long-term sustainability of the building, property, and its value.*
- **Neighborhoods:** *Generate revitalization in the neighborhoods surrounding the development.*
- **Long Term Supportive Services:** *Open Table models implemented by trained volunteers can be a high impact/low-cost element of long-term supportive services.*

Open Table Social Capital Collective

Impact Models

Supportive Services - Here are some common examples of affordable housing supportive services:

- **Case Management:** Provision of individualized support and guidance to help residents access necessary resources and navigate various systems, such as healthcare, employment, education, and social services.
- **Financial Counseling:** Offering financial education, budgeting assistance, and debt management strategies to help residents build financial literacy and stability.
- **Employment Assistance:** Providing job search support, vocational training, resume writing, interview coaching, and connections to local employers to help residents secure and maintain stable employment. A food accelerator training culinary skills.
- **Health and Wellness Services:** Facilitating access to healthcare providers, mental health counseling, substance abuse treatment, preventive care, and wellness programs to promote physical and mental well-being. An integrated supermarket with healthy foods.,
- **Educational and Skill-Building Programs:** Offering adult education classes, literacy programs, computer skills training, and vocational workshops to enhance residents' knowledge, skills, and employment prospects.
- **Childcare and Youth Programs:** Supporting families with affordable or subsidized childcare services, after-school programs, mentoring, and educational resources for children and teenagers.
- **Legal Assistance:** Providing legal aid or referrals for residents facing issues such as housing rights, eviction prevention, immigration matters, and family law.
- **Social and Recreational Activities:** Organizing community-building events, social outings, recreational activities, and support groups to foster a sense of belonging and connection among residents.
- **Community Engagement:** Encouraging resident participation in decision-making processes, resident councils, and community activities to foster a sense of empowerment, ownership, and social cohesion.

These supportive services aim to address the broader needs of individuals and families beyond just providing affordable housing, promoting stability, self-sufficiency, and overall well-being within the affordable housing community.

Neighborhood Revitalization: COMMUNITY CONVENING™

Community Convening, an application of collective impact, is a model of Open Table, Inc. It catalyzes revitalization and economic impact in neighborhoods surrounding an affordable housing development. In Community Convening for affordable housing, for-profit community sectors -- representing 85%+ of the US economy -- and organizations with a vision for neighborhood revitalization and economic development access their collective skills and social capital and develop partnerships with neighborhoods surrounding the building. Represented sectors include business, education, faith communities, government, healthcare, and others. They work together to solve challenges named by residents and small businesses.

As a commitment to economic development, initial Community Convening members are representatives from the organizations directly involved and benefitting from the development: developer, architectural firm, engineering company, accounting, legal, general contractor, government, as well as faith and civic organizations, and others. Over time, additional sectors, including education and healthcare, are integrated. Together, accessing their businesses' skill, volunteer, and social capital, they can contribute to neighborhood revitalization through projects that might include:

Neighborhood Brings a Priority Need	Community Convening Solution
Developing resident-owned small businesses	Offer skills and social capital to empower residents to start businesses. Invite employees of community businesses to shop in the community and patronize local businesses.
Access good employment opportunities	Implement job fairs on the building's property.
Some homeowners are unable to complete minor repairs or maintain their property	Quarterly home fix-up and property clean-up day with volunteers from business workforces.
Playground equipment in a park is broken	Fix and/or replace playground equipment.
Street and lighting repair	Advocate with government agencies for repairs.

Sustain Building Value, Retain Residents, and Prevent Evictions: NETWORK TABLE™

Community volunteers, including partner organizations and residents, are trained to form a “Network Table,” a model of Open Table, Inc., to access social and relational capital to solve. The Network Table solves social determinants of health needs for building residents individually and those that impact the building itself. The Community Engagement Coordinator and property manager refer needs. Over the course of a year, a Network Table serves up to 50 requests a year based on complexity.

Needs solved by a Network Table may include:

Community Engagement Coordinator or Property Manager Brings a Need	Network Table Solution
New residents need specific furniture and household items.	Network for donations to fill needs.
Provide a computer to residents without a computer who want one.	Network to companies replacing or with unused computers to donate them.
Computer platform training.	Network to people and organizations willing to train at the building.
Possible eviction due to job loss or family crisis.	Network for supports and work with management company to avoid eviction.
A resident needs car repair and others need rides to go to important appointments, but public transportation has barriers.	Organize retirees in faith communities and local organizations to offer rides and develop relationships.

Isolation can create a significant challenge for affordable housing residents, leading to turnover and potential eviction. In affordable housing, isolation refers to the experience of being disconnected or cut off from social networks, support systems, and community resources. Several factors contribute to residents' isolation in affordable housing, including neighborhood characteristics, limited financial resources, lack of transportation options, physical disabilities, and mental health conditions. Moreover, certain marginalized populations, such as single-parent households, senior citizens, individuals with low incomes or disabilities, and individuals impacted by stigma, are particularly susceptible to isolation due to their unique circumstances and challenges. Isolation impacts the following social determinants of health and others:

Mental Health: Isolation can significantly impact the mental health of residents. It can lead to increased levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. Lack of social interaction and support can exacerbate pre-existing mental health conditions and contribute to a sense of loneliness and hopelessness.

Physical Health: Isolation has also been linked to adverse physical health outcomes. Limited social connections can lead to decreased physical activity, poor nutrition, and unhealthy coping mechanisms such as smoking or excessive alcohol consumption. The lack of access to community resources and healthcare services further compounds physical health challenges.

Emotional Well-Being: Living in isolation can negatively affect an individual's emotional well-being. The absence of meaningful connections and supportive relationships can result in feelings of low self-worth, reduced self-esteem, and increased vulnerability to emotional distress.

Through Neighbors, a model of Open Table, inc., a trained community member (“Neighbor”) and a referred individual experiencing isolation and health needs (“Friend”) can develop a one-to-one, ongoing virtual (phone, video, text, email) relationship of listening, empathy, kindness, and encouragement on their terms. By breaking through barriers created by isolation, people become more hopeful and confident, making decisions and taking action to impact their lives positively. Research documents the value of these social connections in individual health outcomes. Every building resident can have a Neighbor connection. Read a White Paper on Neighbors [here](#).

CORE TABLE™

Residents in supportive housing who have multiple complex needs, including previous experience with homelessness, mental health challenges, recovery, and others may need more supports to sustain housing and move forward in their lives. To provide support to these residents, developments implement the Open Table Core Table model.

In the Core table model, volunteers are trained to access their relational and social networks during a year-long process with an individual or family, called a “friend.” Working together, they remove barriers to empower the Friend to achieve their own long-term goals. Table members and Friends connect and socialize outside of Table meetings. Open Table evaluation documents 95% of Friends remain in relationship with Table members for two years and beyond.

A Core Table Focuses on Goals	Core Table Solutions
Relationships	Table and Friend socialize and become a community together
Develop educational opportunities	Visit various types of schools: trade schools, community colleges, universities to explore opportunities.
Apply for financial aid	A team of people experienced with FAFSA is assembled to provide support.
Secure employment that meets individual needs	The Friend describes the components of the job they are looking for and Table members network for opportunities.
Budgeting	Table networks for an individual experienced in home budgeting.
Credit repair	Table finds an individual with experience in credit repair.

GETTING STARTED

The Open Table customized developmental process prepares projects for success. Key phases include:

- Identifying outcome indicators
- Form and implement Community Convening
- Model training
- Data collection planning
- Time and action plan
- Sustainability strategy

ABOUT OPEN TABLE

Many communities can access formal systems and supports. However, to achieve life goals, people with multiple social determinants of health barriers, including poverty, isolation, chronic illness, mental health, and recovery, need access to a broader array of relational and social capital - the community's personal, social, and business networks. Organizations, communities, and enterprises implement **Open Table models and training to build the bridge between formal systems and untapped community relational and social capital resources to create better outcomes for individuals, families, and children while reducing costs.** Evidence drives Open Table models and training. More than twenty studies, including three case studies published by Baylor University, have been completed on Open Table models, which are underwritten by partner organizations in the affordable housing, business, education, faith community, government, healthcare, and social services sectors.

Open Table began in 2005 and is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Read the founding story [here](#).



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