# Chapter 10

# Community

## Chapter Overview

A community is more than just a collection of people living in the same area. It is really a whole sociocultural experience where a sense of place and belonging make it a dynamic group of people that work together. Communities that weather bad times and good are able to do so because the people within them share a number of common bonds about where they live. In most other neighborhoods, these bonds do not exist. The suburban movement of the 1950s created a series of communities where the people were isolated from each other. A commercial solution of the time was to build malls that marketed the attributes that resembled the old downtown communities when people were still connected at a deeper level. These malls didn’t give real community, only the illusion of it.

Today people are looking for new ways to live and be more engaged with the neighborhoods in which they live. Rather than just being anonymous individuals they are seeking out others and creating new forms of civic discourse that used to exist in most communities. Engaged citizens are becoming more mindful of the places they live and are seeking to make a difference in whatever ways they can. Even in the inner city, people are coming together to make empty concrete and asphalt lots bloom into urban gardens. As people begin to reconnect, they are starting to understand what is important in a community and are working more to create the kind of community they want to engage with, not just a home in an area where they know few people.

## Vocabulary Terms

capacity building

civic agency

civic communitarianism

converged multimedia

cooperative endeavor

culturation

demobilizing

ethical rationalization

gentrification

hyperindividualism

libertarianism

mobilization

resilience

sense of place

social capital

social contract

social norms

technocracy

urban growth boundaries (UGBs)

## Terms With Definitions

**capacity building—**Defines the strengthening of civic skills, community competencies, and abilities for more engaged community action.

**civic agency—**Where citizens work collaboratively regardless of cultural or ethnic differences to address common challenges, solve problems, and work for the common good of a community.

**civic communitarianism—**A philosophy that emphasizes strong bonds of community, civic virtue, solidarities of citizenship, and public deliberation about moral issues. Democratic freedom is accomplished not by fostering individual freedom and self-interest but where community works for the common good and overall well-being.

**converged multimedia—**Where all forms of media such as television, radio, print, and the multiple forms of Internet and modern smart wireless technologies (e.g., smart phones) are used, seemingly simultaneously.

**cooperative endeavor—**When multiple stakeholders, often in related businesses, cooperate for mutual benefit and success instead of engaging in competition.

**culturation—**The exchange of cultural features from the interchange of different cultures. While the original cultural patterns of each culture may be modified, the groups remain distinctive.

**demobilizing—**Breaking up or separating functional units.

**ethical rationalization—**Perceiving one’s own ethics to be beyond reproach, thus rationalizing any action in one’s favor as the only rational action to take.

**gentrification—**When more affluent people move into run-down areas; the transformation of neighborhoods from low value to high value. It causes property values to increase, which causes displacement of poorer residents. The development of many decaying downtowns has seen this phenomenon.

**hyperindividualism—**Defines the individual as the most important feature and where everything is focused on the personal level.

**libertarianism—**Where individual freedom is maximized, especially freedom of expression and action as long as it does not harm another.

**mobilization—**Actively working for change that benefits the social, emotional, financial, and physical needs of citizens.

**resilience—**The ability to recover and continue after a traumatic event.

**sense of place—**A broad term that encompasses specific dimensions such as place attachment (psychological and geophysical), community and culture (social attachments), and political-economic (interactive attachments) that help define people’s connections to a place.

**social capital—**The potential of social networks that can be called upon to resolve social problems.

**social contract—**Where individuals agree by a process of mutual consent to abide by common rules for the protection of each other from any kind of harm. It assumes that each stakeholder group has a voice and abides by certain social norms and expectations of ethical behavior.

**social norms—**Group ethical expectations and rules (written or unwritten) for appropriate versus inappropriate values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. Various cultural and legal sanctions exist for not meeting these norms.

**technocracy—**Political decision making where experts are responsible for policy in their respective areas.

**urban growth boundaries (UGBs)—**Controlling urban sprawl by mandating a fixed external boundary to an urban area. It promotes redevelopment of decaying inner city areas and more preservation of rural areas outside the boundary.

## Extended Learning Activities

1. What types of civic engagement do you notice in your community? How would you or anyone in your community get involved in community decisions?
2. Find a community garden in a local community. Visit the garden and determine what the environment is like. What types of people (i.e., demographics) participate in the functioning of the garden? Does the garden get full community support? What are the benefits of the garden? Do you think the garden helps create a sense of community? Why or why not?

## Research and Response Questions

1. Research the primary literature and determine how social media (e.g., Facebook) have an impact on social relationships and how they affect people’s sense of place and belonging.
2. Research the factors that decipher a resilient community from a nonresilient one. What determines how a community can become resilient and provide a sense of place and belonging that people need?
3. Research the problems (e.g., health, social, educational) that are associated with communities that do not offer a sense of place or belonging to those that live in it.

## Web Links

[Civic Tourism](http://www.civictourism.org/)

[Denver Urban Renewal Authority](http://www.renewdenver.org/)

[Garden allotments](http://www.jardins-familiaux.org/frameset/englisch/eoffi.htm)

[Guerrilla gardening](http://www.guerrillagardening.org/)

[Hydroponics](http://www.hydroponics.com/)

[Municipal Research and Services Center of Washington](http://www.mrsc.org/)

[*Urban Garden Magazine*](http://urbangardenmagazine.com/)

[Urban gardening help](http://www.urbangardeninghelp.com/)

[Urban Renewal Corp](http://www.urbanrenewal.org/)

[World Internet Usage Statistics](http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm)