

Underlying Assumptions

Violence comes to communities and community members in all forms and shapes. Provocations of violent behavior are as varied as the people who engage in it. Violence as a response to whatever or whomever provokes it is increasing. As it does, it is easy to feel like the fabric of our society is unraveling.

To the degree that reducing risks of violence and evolving as a community characterized by peace and safety is possible, this invitation is extended. It is predicated on this assumption; there exists in Longmont and the surrounding area a deep reservoir of social capital that when activated can;

- influence local culture in ways that make violent responses to provocations less likely,
- generate new resources for non-violent problem solving,
- create new connections among neighbors and neighborhoods, and
- re-norm the community reflecting shared values of peace and personal as well as collective safety.

Project Process & Outcome Objectives

1. Offer multiple opportunities for community members to share both their worst fears and their best/highest hopes for Longmont as a safe and peaceful place to live, work, and play. (Feb. 15 – May 26, 2023)
2. Publish “worst fears, best hopes, and recommendations for a safer and more peaceful future.

3. A safer, more peaceful, community resulting from community action on recommendations.

Project Description

On February 15, 2023, Longmont area Rotary Clubs hosted an event focused on peace and peace-making. This event was not envisioned as a stand-alone, “one off” event. It was an invitation to Longmont and Niwot area residents to engage with one another in facilitated conversations about what we can do together to live into a safer, more peaceful future.

In a series of community conversations, commencing on February 18th and continuing through May 26th, interested community members are encouraged to share both their worst fears and best hopes for a collective future characterized by greater peace and safety. They will also be invited to propose strategies for realizing their best hopes. The community’s best hopes and strategies for realizing or achieving them will be shared with all members of the Longmont and surrounding area communities. Residents in every segment of the community will be encouraged to review the community’s best hopes and strategies and determine which are most actionable and relevant to their preferred future.

How can interested residents/ organizations participate?

This is truly a grassroots opportunity to organize and activate. For individuals and/or organizations motivated to join others in sharing worst fears, best hopes, and recommendations for realizing collective best hopes for a safer and more peaceful future, these are the activities you will need to take. The process may take up to 2 1/2 hours.

1. Schedule a day and time to convene with your friends, family, neighbors, service club, congregation, professional associations, business associates, or others. Allow two- and one-half hours for your conversation.
2. Materials you will need include note cards, pens or pencils, flip chart paper, and tape.
3. Depending on your number of participants, you will want to organize in smaller groups (maximum of 8 participants per small group).
4. Ask your group, or small groups, to seat themselves in a circle if possible.
5. Distribute three note cards and a pen or pencil to each participant and provide (at least) three flip chart pages to each group.
6. Whomever is facilitating the conversation should begin by asking individuals to “ground” themselves in the process by responding to two questions; how do you feel about being involved and what are your expectations for the gathering? (allow 30 minutes for this activity)
7. After individuals are “grounded” in the process, ask them to write their worst fears about peace and safety in the future on their note cards. Encourage individuals to be as concise as possible.
8. When ready, facilitators should ask for a volunteer to record what participants read from their cards.
9. When each group has a recorder, each participant should read what they wrote.
10. Recorders should list on a page of flip chart paper the worst fears shared by individuals **exactly** as they are written on the note cards.