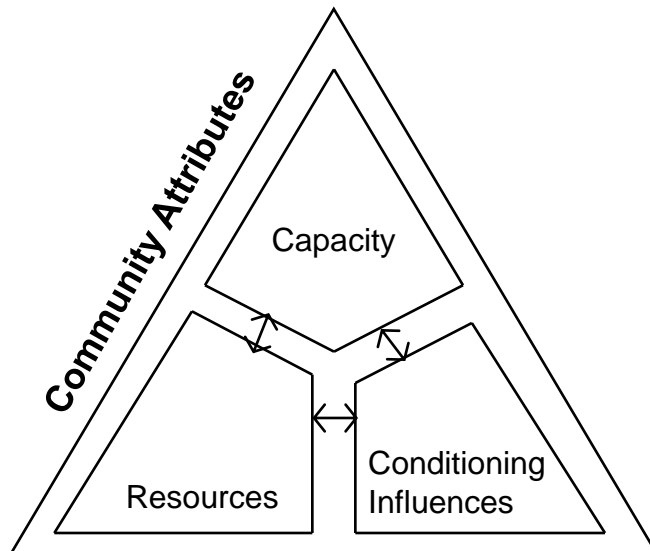# Using the community model: an example

A community wants to do better than average with respect to unemployment rate, poverty rate, school dropout rates, and housing conditions.

To do this, they must identify community components are involved, understand the current situation, make a strategy for action, and then identify and asses the outcomes.
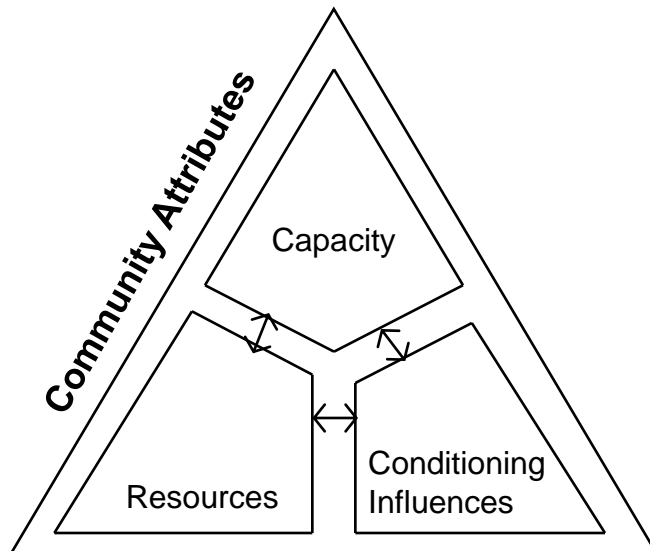
Using the community model: an example

Step 1: **Identify specific goals, keeping in mind the linkages that may exist between factors.**

Here, the specific targets are lower unemployment rate, poverty rate, and dropout rate, and an improvement in housing conditions.

Some of these things can be targeted directly, while some can't. Instead, a community can focus on developing programs to address the issues that can be addressed at the specific community level, and that can take advantage of the connections between attributes.

Community Attributes

Capacity

Resources

Conditioning Influences

Community Changes

GOALS:
• Lower unemployment
• Lower poverty rate
• Lower drop out rate
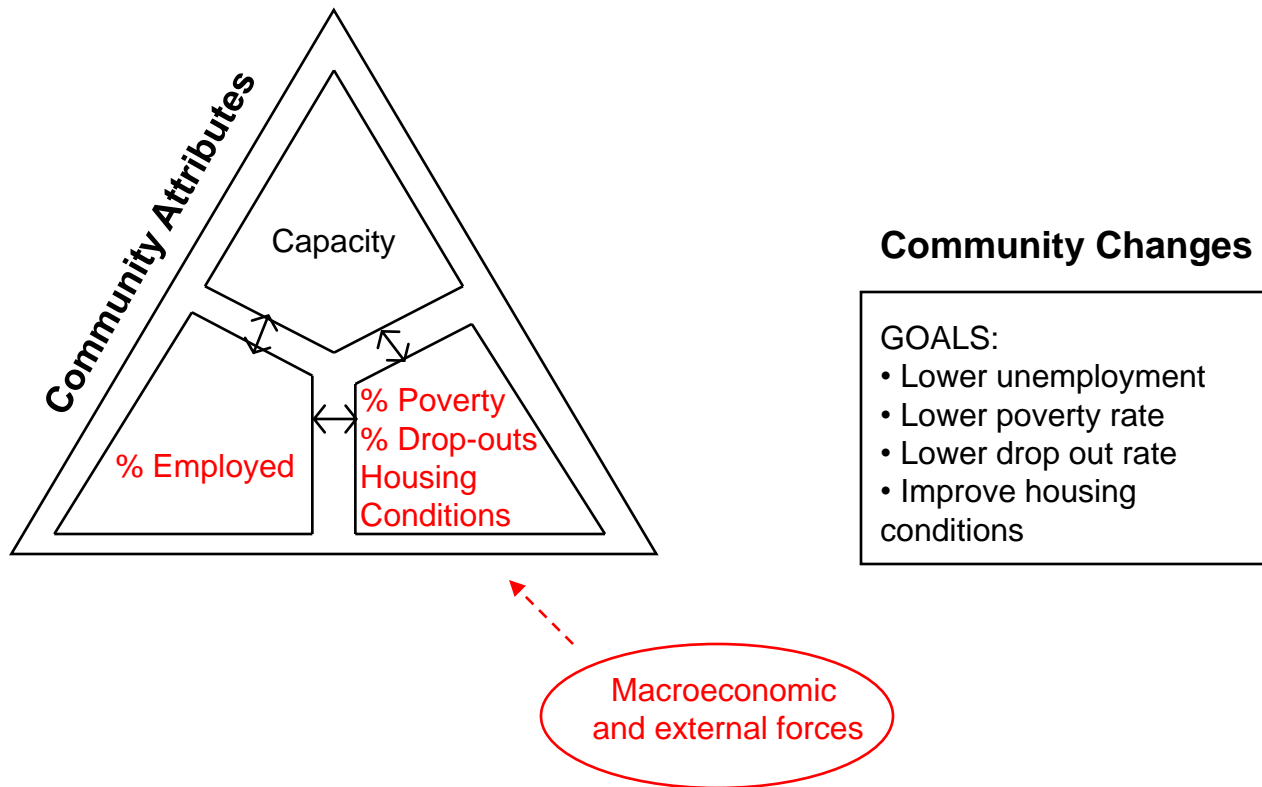• Improve housing conditions

Using the community model: an example

Step 2: Understand the context.

Where is the community currently with regard to the goal? What indicators – actual data – are
available that are relevant to these issues?

What have the recent trends been?

What are the macroeconomic and external forces acting on the community with regard to this issue?

Community Attributes

Capacity

% Employed

% Poverty
% Drop-outs
Housing
Conditions

Macroeconomic
and external forces

Community Changes

GOALS:
• Lower unemployment
• Lower poverty rate
• Lower drop out rate
• Improve housing
conditions

Using the community model: an example

Step 3: Identify what community factors are related to the goal(s).

These community attributes have been shown to be related to low unemployment, low poverty, low drop-out rates, and good housing conditions:

Resources:
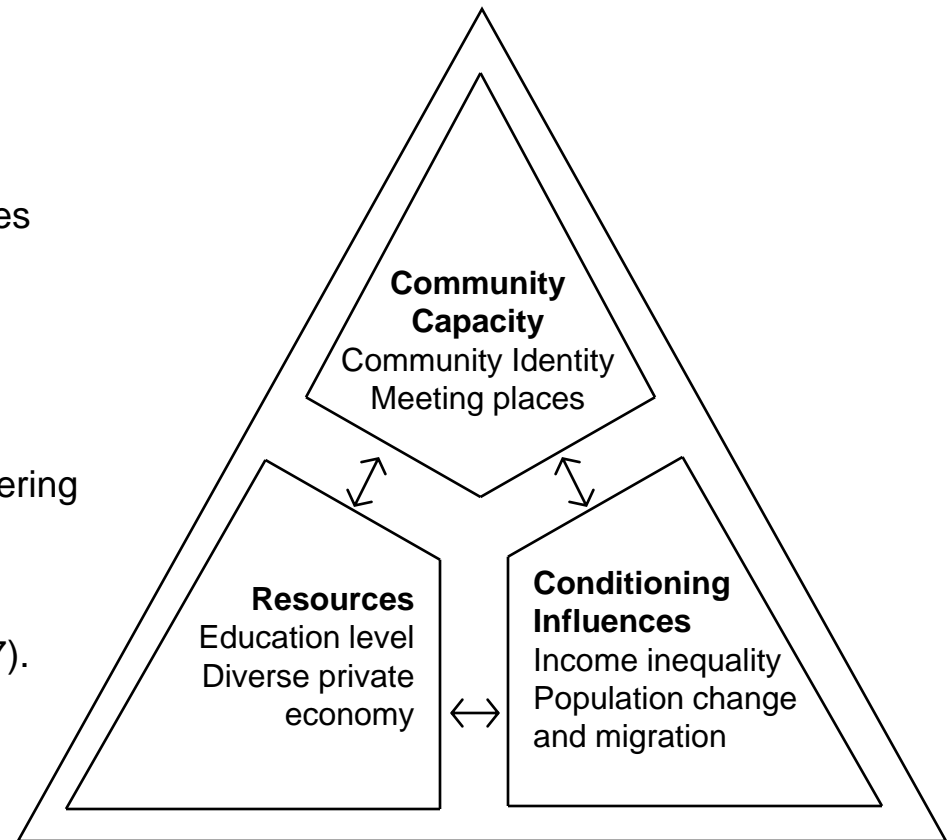   High education levels
    Competitive, diverse private economies
Conditioning Influences:
    Low income inequality
    Low population growth
Community Capacity:
    Having a strong community identity
    Having more social meeting and gathering places

(Source: Isserman, Feser, and Warren, 2007).

Community Capacity
Community Identity
Meeting places

Resources
Education level
Diverse private economy

Conditioning Influences
Income inequality
Population change and migration

Using the community model: an example

Step 4: Generate ideas for community action.

Target things associated with the desired outcomes:

Seek establishment or expansion of community college, to raise overall education levels and reduce poverty

Fund and increase community events, to build local community identity
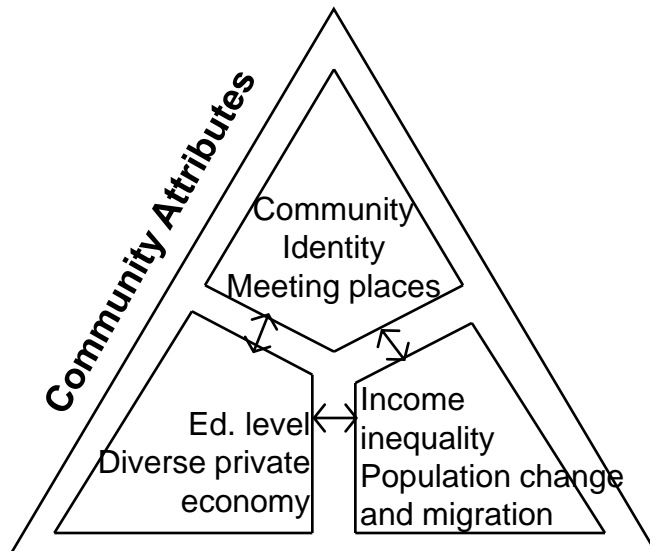
Other

Target the desired outcomes directly:

Institute high school student retention program to lower the drop-out rate

Initiate small business retention programs, to expand local job opportunities and lower the unemployment rate

Other

Community Attributes

Community Identity
Meeting places

Ed. level
Diverse private economy

Income inequality
Population change and migration

Community Changes

GOALS:
• Lower unemployment
• Lower poverty rate
• Lower drop out rate
• Improve housing conditions

Macroeconomic and external forces

Using the community model: an example

Step 5: Take action.

Each time a community initiates an action, it's a unique sequence of events. Remember: the final decision that is made and its implementation depend on not only the initial strategy developed, but also the agents involved. Who is 'at the table'? How does that shape the decision making and plan implementation?

Community Process

Develop strategy	Involve agents	Make decision	Implement plan

Community Attributes

Capacity

Resources

Conditioning Influences

Community Changes

GOALS:
• Lower unemployment
• Lower poverty rate
• Lower drop out rate
• Improve housing conditions

Macroeconomic and external forces
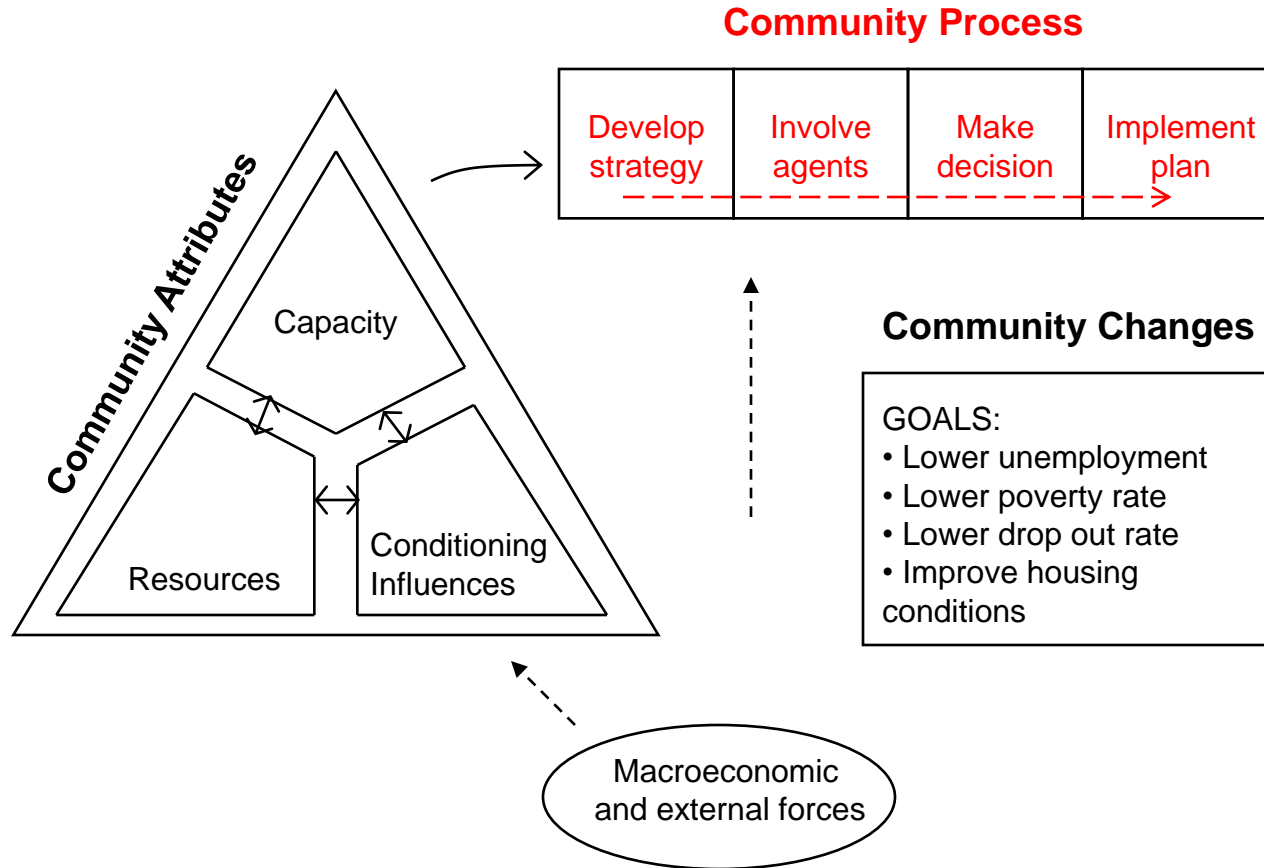
Using the community model: an example

Step 6: Identify and asses outcomes.

Once a community has taken action, outcomes can be assessed.

How have the prosperity measures changed? Were certain actions more successful than others?
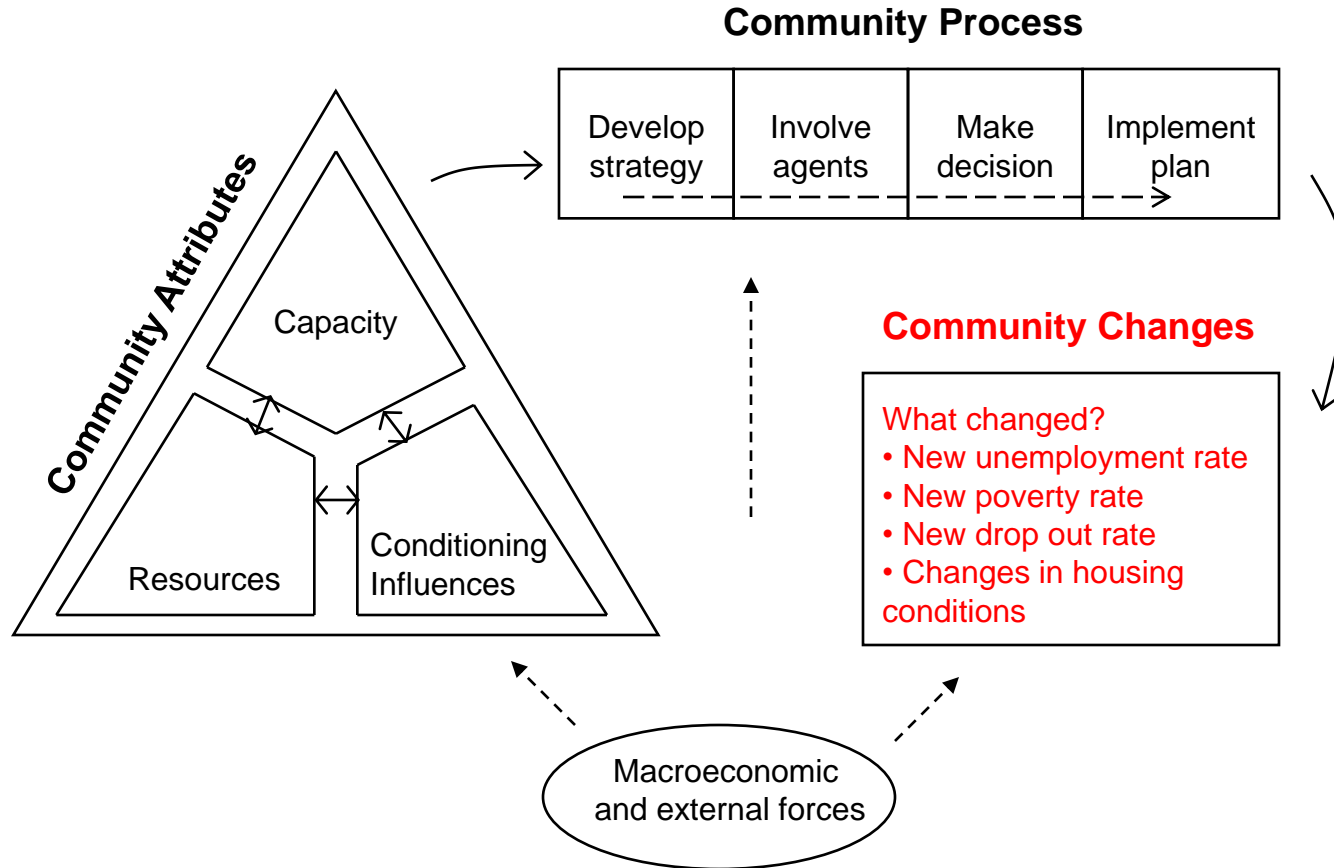
Using the community model: an example

Step 7: Where are we now?

Ultimately, the goal is to track outcomes…and vitality.

By tracking the changes in indicators, a community can gauge the success of a particular action, or assess when a particular desired level of vitality is reached.

The model helps guide the discussion of community goals, identify the factors that are involved, and encourages awareness of the linkages that occur between factors as well as between the community and the world at large.