



Connecting Across a Diverse Community:
A **Silver Spring Village** "Discussion Guide"
November 2016



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A Note on This Guide

This Guide is for use by Silver Spring Village, Inc. participants and others who are involved in creating “aging-in-place” Villages that include diverse neighbors. The Guide offers background and “lessons learned” for further discussion and a strategy to advance diversity and inclusion.

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1 – Definition and Mission for Discussing Diversity

Diversity

The nonprofit Silver Spring Village, Inc. strives to include individuals of varying ages, gender, race, physical abilities, ethnic heritage, sexual orientation, religion, education, income, and work experience. Although there are many ways to define diversity, the demographic characteristics just described are identifiable from U.S. Census Bureau sources.¹ Silver Spring Villages’ parameters of zip code 20910 include communities (clusters or neighborhoods) that may have their own distinct characteristics -- a factor that adds to its concept of diversity.

¹ Source: U.S. Census Diversity Programs Office. www.census.gov

Village Mission and Diversity

Suggested diversity strategies are designed to advance Silver Spring Village’s stated mission² “to build and sustain a supportive network of neighbors helping neighbors remain in their own homes and be engaged in their community as they age.”

2 – The People We Serve

“Montgomery County’s demographic profile has changed dramatically since the 1980s, becoming more diverse at a variety of levels. Part of this change can be attributed to wide-scale demographic trends, such as the aging of the existing population and a surge in foreign immigration.”³

Sample Characteristics of Silver Spring’s zip code 20910

The following population data are available from Towncharts⁴ specifically for zip code 20910:

White = 53.1 percent
African American = 29.2 percent
Hispanic or Latino = 11.3 percent
Asian = 7.7

Further, as of 2010, zip code 20910 females over age 62 = 59 percent and males over age 62 = 41 percent.⁵

Benefits of an Intentional Response to Connecting Across a Diverse Community

Individuals often join a Village to continue to grow and learn – drawing on the Village network and its resources as

² Source: www.silverspringvillage.org

³ Source: “Montgomery County and Growth” @ www.montgomeryplanning.org (Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission)

⁴ Source: Towncharts draws on multiple data sources. Available at: www.towncharts.com

⁵ Source: U. S. Census, 2010, Summary file 1, Tables P12, P13, PCT12. This is for 20910 age by sex.

an opportunity to enrich their life experience. Village diversity can add to that experience. One forward-thinking organization that works with older Americans sought to understand how to consider diversity beyond its long-held Quaker value of respecting differences. A relevant take-away is that the organization was advised⁶ that they could “sharpen their brand as communities strengthened and invigorated by the diversity of life experiences, cultural and religious perspectives and commitments of their residents, their leaders, and their staffs.”

A perspective that diversity can “strengthen and invigorate” has potential for Silver Spring Village as well, particularly when the focus goes beyond recruitment strategies to include cross-cultural communication, programming, and other community-building activities.⁷ Suggested strategies to address specifically the range of challenges are found in Section 4.

Challenges the Village Movement Faces in Addressing Diversity

Villages appear to face at least two kinds of challenges around diversity: cultural and economic. Cultural barriers are as varied as cultures themselves. For example, individuals from some cultures may believe they want a more family or faith-based approach than the Village model provides. Villages have a challenge – and an opportunity – to define how Village membership adds to rather than replaces other more familiar support systems. As described in one interview with researchers, efforts will require flexibility and adaption on the part of all who want to engage.

If they [Villages] are going to be a model to serve a greater aging population . . . the challenges that communities have reflecting the whole population need to be addressed. . . . [t]hose could include some cultural

⁶ Source: B.M. Lakey, PhD, Board Source Senior Consultant. “New Realities Require New Approaches: The Business Case for Diversity.” March 2012 (Funded by Friends Services for the Aging for the benefit of its member organizations.)

⁷ See e.g., sources such as: “Advancing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Message Manual for the Field” @ www.D5coalition.org

*barriers. . . . That means adapting the model to serve existing communities.*⁸

Villages can also face a challenge in addressing **socio-economic** diversity. An estimated 60% of current Silver Spring Village members have incomes below the County median – a strong starting point to understand financial considerations for fee-based participation. In response, Silver Spring Village strives to keep a relatively low price point for dues and offers discounted memberships to those who qualify (and also refers eligible individuals to County and other resources). At the same time, even a discounted membership may be considered a barrier and the cost to join in on activities such as meals at restaurants may as well. Suggested strategies to address specifically the range of challenges are found in Section 4: Lessons Learned.

3 – Overall Narrative: A Plan to Build Upon Existing Village Assets for “Diversity-in-All” and Progress to Date (2015-2016)

Diversity in All: What Does *It* Mean?

Public health leaders have championed a concept of “Health in All” policies as a way of advancing health “by incorporating health considerations into decision-making across sectors and policy areas.”⁹ As applied to diversity, this approach has the potential to avoid “tokenism” and promote sustainable efforts. Adapting some of the elements of this approach yields a set of goals for the Village along these lines: 1) promote diversity; 2) support collaboration; 3) identify co-benefits for multiple partners; 4) engage stakeholders; and 5) create change to build community. These goals are incorporated in the strategies in Section 4.

⁸ Source: Rachel Dornhelm, “‘Village’ Movement for Aging Seniors Faces Some Challenges.” KQED *State of Health*, Nov. 7, 2014.

⁹ *Source: Rudolph, L., Caplan, J., Ben-Moshe, K., & Dillon, L. (2013). *Health in All Policies: A Guide for State and Local Governments*. Washington, DC and Oakland, CA: American Public Health Association and Public Health Institute.

An “assets-based” approach to building Village diversity does not disregard “needs;” for example, the problem of senior isolation appears nearly universal and would rank high in a typical needs-assessment approach. The idea of focusing on existing assets is simply a different starting point -- one that focuses on “[building on the skills of local residents, the power of local associations, and the supportive functions of local institutions to build stronger, more sustainable communities for the future.”¹⁰

Whether or not help can be provided to a specific senior, viewing every Silver Spring senior as an asset rather than burden, supports the essential Silver Spring Village narrative. Experts who study seniors of color, in particular, stress that a “new narrative, one focused on assets, is much needed”¹¹ and the Village can help advance that perspective.

ASSETS and PROGRESS TO DATE: Silver Spring Village already has local people, skills, and a track record. Assets and progress to date include:

- increasing representation of people of color and disability on the Board and/or Committees and in general membership
 - *Progress to date:* Board membership that includes four members of color of an 11-member Board of Directors. General membership includes an estimated 20% of individuals of color, as self identified in a 2016 members survey.
- Cross-representation of Board/Committee members with civic associations, service on other nonprofit boards, and civic advisory committees that include diverse membership
 - *Progress to date:* Board members are active in their neighborhood civic associations and/or other community nonprofits or civic advisory committees

¹⁰ Source: ABCD Institute Center for Civic Engagement Northwestern University. Link to abcd@northwestern.edu

¹¹ M. Delgado, K. Goettge, & E. Gonzales. “The Graying and Browning of America: Seeing ‘Invisible Baby Boomers.’” White House Conference on Aging Working Group at Boston University. June 2015. Research Brief 201507.

- partnerships with minority-owned businesses in Silver Spring
 - *Progress to date:* Multiple Ethiopian and other minority-owned businesses offer Village member discounts and are frequented regularly by Village members; events are targeted to include a broad range of ethnic restaurants and activities
- experience with community-building events
 - *Progress to date:* Two widely-advertised events in diverse neighborhoods on the eastern and western boundaries of zip code 20910; Information Sessions at multi-unit housing that includes significant minority representation; and a strong presence at Silver Spring-wide community events that reach a diverse audience.

Major Initiative in 2016:

- pilot program in which prospective members are matched with “Membership Outreach Team” –Village volunteers who identify prospects for membership and follow up with information and invitations to Village events based on a prospect’s interests
 - *Progress to date:* In addition to larger events, prospect building included monthly coffees with two hosts of color and invitations to a widely diverse group of individuals.

4 - Lessons Learned on Overall Strategies and a Specific Strategy for Membership Outreach

Overall Strategy: Progress to further Diversity and Inclusion may Depend Most Significantly on Two Factors: Ongoing Communication and Trust Building

- **Ensuring that the community knows** that diversity matters to Silver Spring involves continuing communication and action. A diversity-in-all strategy can provide a framework in which all Village members can be involved and creative while still being authentic to the Village model. Steps ahead can include programs to educate and inspire Village Members and the public on topics related to a diverse aging population. These efforts can help support diversity in Silver Spring Village’s membership as well.
- **Building trust** among diverse community members is also a critical objective. The Village’s has strong **tools to continue to build trust** and these efforts can be further explored; for example:

- Networking by Village members in diverse organizations in which they are also members. At the same time, different strategies may be needed to reach “peer professionals” who are newer to Silver Spring and, as new or longer-term immigrants, may or may not be face financial challenges to paid membership.
- Requesting that members from diverse communities act as ambassadors for others from their community based on their ability to validate their experience with the Village
- Following up on relationships with minority businesses that offer Village discounts to include them in selected activities both to invite guests and speak for the Village and its benefits;
- Continue small gatherings – such as coffees hosted by members – which have proven to offer a chance for conversation, information, and hospitality to a diverse guest list
- As with Communication, above, programs to enhance cross-cultural understanding also help to build trust among a diverse community.

Lessons Learned on a Specific (Pilot) Strategy for Membership Outreach

The long-term mission of Silver Spring Village’s Membership Outreach Team is to establish a viable system of volunteers who collaborate to generate new prospects for Village membership and who reach out individually to interested prospects to ensure they feel connected to the Village. This approach has been adapted from an “Ambassador Program” created by Lincoln Park Village in Chicago.¹² Lessons learned, since May, 2016, in implementing a program include:

- a “Dashboard” is valuable for planning and implementing efforts to increase membership and retention – and a membership increase of 18% since May is documented progress;
- organization has to reflect the Village’s unique capacities and interests. Volunteers tend to join the team because of established relationships and recruitment needs to be continuous, with careful attention to satisfaction of team members;

¹² www.lincolnparkvillage.org

- flexibility is key to attracting and sustaining team members; for example, volunteers want to be able to travel and the program needs to adapt;
- Involving team members in recruiting (e.g. coffees) as well as follow up is ideal, but not always possible;
- team members have valuable insights for engaging prospects. In particular, they urge team members to share simple stories about the Village with prospects;
- diversity is a consideration for all team activities and specific lessons follow:
 - for larger events in diverse neighborhoods, a dedicated liaison from the event location sponsor (e.g., community center, church, etc.) encourages much-valued participation from that community;
 - for smaller events, such as coffees, hosting by Village members of color encourages a diverse mix of invitees
 - without community calendars that the *Gazette* papers formerly provided, reliance on civic association list serves and other neighborhood outreach is critical. Email communication cannot be assumed - not everyone has a computer and Internet and printing is expensive (an in-kind donor for printing is a great solution);
 - appropriate message framing and writing is critical for list serv notices and other media;
 - tables at community events organized by others can be time intensive for volunteers, but also offer opportunities to reach diverse individuals
- adding retention strategies – in coordination with the Membership Committee – will be critical to overall success

Suggested Village-wide Roles for Increasing Village Diversity

Several Village Committees – especially **Communications, Membership, Programs, and Volunteer Services** -- have a special role in diversity outreach based on their capacity to promote, collaborate, partner, engage, and power community change. In addition, as of 2016, Silver Spring Village has a dedicated Membership Outreach Team that includes diversity-in-all strategies in its efforts.

Assets for each of these Committees / Teams are considered below, along with a “sample” idea for something that is new and “doable.” (Longer-term, there is high value in considering broader Committee goals for diversity; e.g., is the Committee’s priority to 1) leverage different perspectives and creativity; 2) develop new relationships with those who value an inclusive culture, and/or inspire community building to expand the impact of the Village?)

Communications Committee

Build on **current** Village **communications assets** for diversity, such as:

- experience in crafting flyers, listserv announcements, email blasts and other materials for Silver Spring outreach events that include diversity;
- experience in generating and posting photos that depict diversity;
- capacity to cross-post Village events with media of diverse organizations; and
- capacity to post events of diverse organizations on Village outlet

Collaboration: Staff, Board, Program Committee, community partners

Metric: Numbers represented or activities completed

Sample idea for Communications Committee discussion:

- **Create a template for stories about how Silver Spring Village has taken steps to advance diversity and the impact of this work** – a series of prompts can help the Committee build a story bank that demonstrates the impact of working on diversity (including, potentially, stories that reflect Silver Spring’s diverse history (e.g., Lyttonsville))
- Sample resource: D5, “Advancing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: Message Manual for the Field,” available at: www.D5coalition.org

Membership Committee

Build on **current** Village **membership assets** for diversity, such as: capacity for significant collaboration with planners of outreach events;

- skills in identifying interested individuals in culturally-sensitive follow up, processing, and retention; and
- experience with scholarship program

Assess and potentially revise method for membership subsidies: Consider alternative models to current income verification via tax return submission and a \$100 fee) for subsidized membership. Consider a model in which current Members are encouraged to recommend and offer to sponsor (or co-sponsor with matching funds from grantors if necessary) individuals in their neighborhoods for whom price is a barrier to membership.

Collaboration: Staff, Volunteer Services Committee

Metric: Numbers represented or activities completed

Sample idea for Membership Committee discussion

- Experiment with a one-day recruitment drive -- ask Village-friendly businesses, including those with diverse clientele, if they will allow an information table for a few hours as folks enter

Membership Outreach Team (assists Membership Committee)

Build on current **Village outreach** assets for diversity, such as:

- prospect list that includes diverse individuals
- opportunities to balance outreach events for optimal diversity
- one-on-one support to new prospects that focuses on areas of interest

Collaboration: Staff, Committees

Metric: Numbers participating in outreach events

Sample ideas for Membership Outreach Team:

- prioritize one-on-one support for diverse prospects
- place Village brochure holders for Village literature in venues (e.g., other nonprofits, community centers, places of worship) that include diverse visitors

Programs Committee

Build on **current Village programming assets** for diversity, such as:

- increasingly diverse representation (including by race, gender, physical abilities, and other characteristics) of Program Committee members;
- experience with programs that respond to member interests in, knowledge, and skills of other cultures, such as ethnic cooking; and
- calendar support for the successful Village model to reach new neighbors in 20910 based on outreach activities in May 2015 and February 2016

Collaboration: Staff, community partners

Metric: Numbers represented or activities completed

Sample idea for Programs Committee discussion:

- **Foster cross-cultural understanding by partnering with organizations to structure programs and develop relationships** - a series of programs, highlighting different groups and/or one moderated panel discussion with leaders of multiple groups representing races/ethnicities/cultures to gain knowledge on issues related to their aging populations
- Sample Resource (available upon request): Programs offered (2010-2015) through The Transition Network (TNN) DC Metro Area Chapter
- Identify and expand no-cost activities to encourage participation by more income-challenged members.

Volunteer Services Committee

Build on **current Village volunteer services' assets** for diversity, such as

- experience logging member “stories” involving diverse members and volunteers
- capacity to identify and utilize diverse language skills of volunteers;
- experience supporting the Village outreach model including Google Sheet reservation recordkeeping; and
- specific support for phone RSVPs for outreach events, including callers of diverse backgrounds

Collaboration: Staff for external partners; Communications Committee to message

Metric: Numbers represented or activities completed

Sample idea for Volunteer Services Committee discussion:

- **“Share Your Ancestry Tea”** – an event for all Volunteers to highlight backgrounds (with food, drink or dress) of volunteers and to gauge interest in activities that highlight diversity
- Sample resource available at: www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org [Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School International Night]

Role of Officers, Board and Staff in Promoting Diversity

Silver Spring Village’s leaders can continue to set a positive frame for diversity efforts in many ways. Commissioning this Discussion Guide and identifying diversity as an organizational priority illustrate the high level of commitment to date. New initiatives generated by leadership will have special resonance. For example, a “service back” intergenerational initiative could pair Village members with youth from multicultural backgrounds and focus on Silver Spring’s multicultural history.

Silver Spring Village leaders will be accountable *for* the work of the Committees on diversity. To assist in this effort, suggested metrics were included for each Committee. Timeframes and other measurements – will help the Village to evaluate whether or not diversity efforts are succeeding.

The **Board Development Committee** has obvious importance for diversity efforts. Independent Sector’s influential *Principles for Good Governance and Ethical Practice* for nonprofits includes a principle for Boards “to include members with the diverse background (including, but not limited to ethnicity, race, and gender perspectives), experience, and organizational and financial skills necessary to advance the organization’s mission.”¹³

The Board of Silver Spring Village has very strong assets in place to address diversity, including:

¹³ Independent Sector’s Principles for Good Governance and Ethical Practice available at: www.independentsector.org

- increasing representation of individuals of color;
- regularly-updated Committee Charters;
- a comprehensive Board Manual; and
- frequent and highly participatory Board meetings

Even a simple step such as *requiring* consistent and timely reporting on the metrics of Silver Spring Village Board diversity prior to the start of the Board nomination process can ensure that the Board will consistently have data to inform its work. Beyond Board composition, the Board Development Committee can collaborate with Communications and other Committees to ensure that materials and strategies best convey priorities for diversity.

5 – Conclusion

The ideas for Silver Spring Village around diversity principally require time – a precious commodity for busy staff and volunteers. An assets-based approach seeks out community partners who see value in community building through a Village approach whether or not they are members. Internally, new volunteers who support inclusion can help to ensure that staff, committee, Board members, and current volunteers are not overburdened. Similarly, support from outside partners can help keep associated costs to a minimum. With a perspective that diversity can bring “strength and vigor,” the Village makes a natural case for wide-ranging support ranging from individuals to public and private funders alike. Funding is not the goal for creating a diverse Village, but it can be a much-valued co-benefit for all involved.

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Please address comments on the Discussion Guide to info@silverspringvillage.org (Subject line: “Diversity Discussion Guide” Feedback)

Marcy Frosh, who has served as a Consultant to the Village, developed this Discussion Guide for Silver Spring Village, Inc. The author expresses special appreciation to Village Executive Director Debbie Billet-Roumell and Officers Peggy Gervasi and Claire Maklan. A broader expression of gratitude goes to all involved in the activities discussed in this guide.

Appendix

Silver Spring Village developed significant experience in identifying and using many assets in promoting, collaborating, creating co-benefits, engaging, and building community (i.e., Diversity-in-All Strategies) through two events in neighborhoods that had limited prior exposure to the Village and its mission. As vital neighbors within the Village boundaries of zip code 20910, the goal of reaching out to the communities – including its diverse members – stood out as a Village priority.

Following the success of a May 2015 event held on the western boundary of the Village (at the Gwendolyn E. Coffield Community Center on Lyttonsville Road), organizing steps were largely replicated for a second event (February 2016) on the eastern boundary of the Village (at the Episcopal Church of the Ascension on Sligo Avenue).

The first event attracted nearly 40 individuals and the second event nearly 50 individuals. The diversity of the guests at both events was a leading outcome. Other significant outcomes included:

- identification of community leaders of color who are aging in place;
- public awareness of a commitment to highly diverse neighborhoods;
- outreach to civic and community associations, setting the stage for contacts;
- “pipeline” for prospective Village members

Event planning steps and outreach targets listed below were all considered to be effective.

Steps in Event Planning and Implementation:

Step 1: Initial networking (via the Board and partners) to identify local, community-minded individuals to establish a Planning Committee – with attention to diverse membership and focus;

Example: A Board member who is also on a Citizens Advisory Board (CAB) brought in a key referral to link to neighborhood groups near the Coffield Center

Step 2: Identification of a venue that will have co-benefits for the host and is associated with broad-based community commitment and interest in the aging population

Example: The Coffield Community Center had active involvement of neighbors from the nearby historic Lyttonsville and other communities and a strong interest in serving seniors. The Church of the Ascension already had a member who was a designated Village liaison – a strong measure of interest

Step 3: Planning Committee meetings that tap the knowledge of individuals who know the Community and are opinion leaders

Example: Structure for the event was recommended, including useful ideas such as door prizes (to ensure that contact information is captured for all participants)

Step 4: Involve each and every guest

Example: A stress-free icebreaker connects guests

Step 5: Highlight how participation makes those in the Village feel – not just facts and figures – about what the Villages does

Example: Testimonials by Village members (e.g., describing the value of a “Storm Buddy” or a kind volunteer who drives a member to physical therapy, waits, and gets her home safely)

Step 6: Food with meaning – in-kind donations from local vendors who co-benefit

Example: Parkway Deli has clients of all ages and backgrounds

Top Ten (10) Outreach Targets:

- Silver Spring Village – person-to-person request to bring a friend is key, website calendar and reminders, Facebook, listserv, and email blasts
- Host (i.e., Community Center and Church) - a person-to-person invitation is key (phone calls to recruit and remind), bulletin and event announcements, flyer distribution, posters
- Neighborhood civic associations - person-to-person outreach is key, website calendar, listserv, meeting announcements, and email blasts
- Local neighborhood listservs
- Faith-based groups
- Flyer drop off to neighborhood apartment complexes
- Cultural Community Centers, including person-to-person connection with leaders
- Montgomery County / Silver Spring resources
 - Silver Spring “News-U-Can-Share” +“Sample Happenings”
 - Montgomery County Office of Community Partnerships Calendar
 - SSTCI email blast
- General publicity
 - *Patch* Silver Spring
 - *Washington Post* Community Calendar
 - AARP Silver Spring
- Poster drop offs at businesses that partner with Silver Spring Village