2017 Neighborfest Pilot Report

Program Funders
Executive Summary: In 2017, the NEN’s advanced its third year of piloting the Neighborfest program. The goal was to test out effectiveness of the updated host guide and to determine the interest level of a larger pool of likely hosts. The program team was surprised about not only the number of applications, 35 in relation to the target of 20, but also by size of the community hosted events, some as large as 400 attendees. In summary the 2017 Neighborfest exceeded all expectations and created an unprecedented level of interest by communities in the opportunity of fusing celebration and disaster preparedness.

Background: In 2007, the City and County of San Francisco launched the Neighborhood Empowerment Network (NEN), built on the lessons learned from Hurricane Katrina’s impact on New Orleans, the NEN has created a suite of community capacity building tools and resources that increase neighborhoods’ overall ability to prepare for, and survive, times of stress. A primary goal was to create a fun, approachable program that would bring residents together at the block level and activate them to increase their level of connection and ability to help each other after a disaster. The resulting initiative was the Neighborfest program which fuses together the goals of emergency management and the organic fun and approachability of a traditional block party.

2017 Pilot Overview: The NEN updated the Neighborfest Host Toolkit and opened up the host pool to include Neighborhood Watch Captains, NERTs, ALERTs, Graffitti Watch and Adopt a Drain Volunteers. Over 35 people applied and 32 Neighborfests where hosted. Significantly, 5 Neighborfests were neighborhood wide and has up to 400 attendees. Also the NEN had new fiscal partners, California Earthquake Authority, the Earthquake Country Alliance, The SFMTA and SF PUC, who contributed fund to offset the creation of a whole new suite of marketing materials and collateral.

2017 Pilot Outcomes: the NEN conducted a detailed survey of the hosts to secure data regarding the effectiveness of the Neighborfest toolkits and the impact the program had on the Host block’s preparedness.

Summary: Building on the momentum from last year’s pilot, the NEN is teaming up with the SFMTA to do upgrades on the application process as well as rebuilding parts of the toolkit to make it easier to use. The current goal is to do fifty in 2018.

This year’s partners included:

Funders – SFMTA / SFPUC / Calif. Earthquake Authority / Earthquake Country Alliance / GSA

Program Partners – DEM / Rec & Park / SF Library / DPW / NERT / ALERT / SFPD / SFFD
Survey Responses from Neighborfest Hosts

How many neighbors attended your Neighborfest this year?
24 responses

Attendance:
Attendance for Neighborfest varied depending on the size and length of the events. The block party events drew anywhere from 10 to 100+ participants, while the Neighborfest Plus events attracted participants in the multi-hundreds. Some factors affecting attendance were weather, the time and weekend (consider Holidays and long weekends), and location. There were some cancelations because of air quality for example.

Social Cohesion Generation:
91.9% of the Neighborfest events were able to create new connections in the hosting neighborhood. A new connection in this case doesn’t only apply to new neighbors, as we have heard from some hosts of meeting new neighbors who had lived on the block for years but never crossed paths before. As with the first graph, the smaller numbers of connections are likely from the smaller events as large numbers are likely from the Plus events.

How many new connections with neighbors did you make during the planning of your Neighborfest?
22 responses
Summary:
Overwhelmingly, Neighborfest hosts surveyed felt that many new people from their communities participated in the event. 92% of hosts felt that their event invited new members of their community, which in turn led to new connections and helped create a better sense of community.

Notice how no host said that their event did not attract new members. A couple hosts were uncertain, however. These hosts were likely from a Neighborfest Plus event and with such large numbers of people, it may have been hard to gauge the number of new community members in attendance.

The Ultimate goal of these Neighborfest is to bring the community together. Partnered with education on awareness and disaster preparedness, the Neighborfest is supposed to strengthen the communities’ connections to help them create a network they can rely on in a time of need. Based on feedback from the hosts, it is safe to say we have accomplished our goal. We look to see an increase in next year’s numbers.
How valuable would you rate this program in supporting your event prep? (1 being the least, 5, being the most)

25 responses

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<td>1</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>3 (12%)</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>5 (20%)</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>17 (68%)</td>
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How valuable would you rate the planning tools provided via the Neighborfest Toolkit? (1 being the least, 5, being the most)

24 responses

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<td>1</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>8 (33.3%)</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>10 (41.7%)</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>6 (25%)</td>
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Program Value:

88% of surveyed hosts found our program to have some level of value in helping them plan for their event. 68% found us to be extremely supportive, 20% found us to be helpful and the remaining 12% thought we were useful but remain indifferent to our help for planning purposes.

Every host used the Toolkit in some form or another for the planning and organization of their event. For new hosts planning their first event, the toolkit was absolutely essential as these hosts reported that the Toolkit provided the perfect guide. For more experienced hosts, the Toolkit provided structure but was more of just a guideline rather than essential.
Most hosts felt that we communicated well and were readily available to offer assistance and answer any questions. Some hosts expressed concern with the application process that they felt was confusing and difficult. Some additionally expressed confusion with the process and felt overwhelmed because they were planning their event themselves or with only a few others and did not know about resources available to them.

How many outside agencies/organizations tabled at your event?

This graph shows the difference in size between the Neighborfest versus the Neighborfest Plus Events. Most of the smaller events had a strong showing of one to two agencies/organizations at their event. It is at the larger event where we see the increase in number of agencies participating.
Each host really had a different reasoning for hosting Neighborfest. As you can see from the data, it was pretty well balanced, and most hosts cited multiple reasons for their desire to host the event.

The majority of hosts expressed thankfulness for the fee waiving and cited it as a huge relief off of their shoulders. To many, the waiver was the difference between hosting the event and not saying that getting everyone to chip in is always a tough battle.

Imagine you community is faced with a stress-event, such as a large scale earthquake or fire. Do you feel the plan...e stronger in facing this type of event?

We asked hosts if they felt their neighborhoods are prepared to face the aftermath of a disaster. When asked if the education, exercise, and planning played any part in increasing their toughness and survivability, 70% of hosts seemed to think so. They believe their neighborhoods are more capable of surviving a large scale event.

For the other 30% of hosts who answered, they remained unsure how their neighborhood would fair in the event of a disaster. Their reasoning stems from their uncertainty of their neighbors implementing what they learned and the retention level. They were certainly thankful for our participation and work, but were unsure how the effects would play out in an event.
As you can see from these graphs, there was a significant increase in hosts’ confidence for their neighborhoods' level of preparedness after the Neighborfest events. While we only see one increased 5/5 answer, it is promising to see the 1/5 and 2/5 answers decrease from 4 and 7 to 2 and 1 respectively. There is also a strong increase in the middle ranges 3/5 and 4/5. This can likely be explained by the fact that many people expressed some previous knowledge of preparedness planning but needed to be retaught or refreshed on newer teachings and tips.

As another one of the key Neighborfest goals, it is encouraging to see that what we are teaching is sticking and that we are helping people bring improvement not only to themselves but their neighborhoods.