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News, updates, and announcements from Code for Asheville

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## Want to Go to the Brigade Congress in Philadelphia?

Code for America and the National Advisory Council are excited to announce the [national Brigade Congress](#) in Philadelphia on October 13th - 15th.

This is an opportunity for brigades to share stories on what has worked, what hasn't, and how we can apply to those lessons to future wins. We'll tackle how to prevent burnout, talk about local needs and how to solve difficult problems. We'll talk about our shared values and share how Brigades across the country are working for change at a time when our nation's institutions seem to be under constant attack.

This is a fantastic opportunity for you (yes, **YOU**, the one reading this newsletter), whether you're a grizzled CfA old-timer or a fresh-faced newbie (or even a grizzled newbie). It's a chance to learn about what other brigades are doing and to bring that learning back to share with Code for Asheville, as well as to share our own excitement about what we're doing here.

If you are interested in going, reach out to [Eric Jackson](#) or join us **TONIGHT** at the [brigade planning meeting](#) at the Battery Park Book Exchange at 5:30pm.

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## Imagining a Better Asheville at Our 8/10 Community Night

[Tom Loosemore](#) said digital is about “applying the culture, practices, processes and technologies of the Internet-era to respond to people’s raised expectations.” In the same way, “civic tech” is only about technology in the sense that it transforms what citizens are able to imagine and to expect.

At our August community night we decided to explore those expectations. We tried to imagine what our experience of our community would be in an ideal Asheville: What kind of services would we expect? How would we have a voice in the community’s decisions?

Lived experience in a community is, of course, highly particular. A white male professional’s experience is fundamentally different from that, say, of a homeless woman of color. So we asked participants to use their empathy skills to imagine the desires of people not directly represented in the group, as well as their own.

The experiment was simple. First, everyone spent a few minutes filling out as many versions of imagined experience as they could come up with, following this template:

As a \_\_\_\_\_  
I can \_\_\_\_\_  
So that\_\_\_\_\_.

We seeded the exercise with a couple examples:

- **As a** youth in trouble with the law for the first time, **I can** work with a criminal justice system that actively helps me turn my life around **so that** I can become a contributing member of society and have a chance at a good life.
- **As a** young mother struggling to make ends meet, **I can** find affordable fresh food in my neighborhood **so that** I can keep my kids healthy.

Next we gave each person 12 sticky dots to vote on the stories that they were most enthusiastic about. Afterward, we spent a little time reviewing the results to identify some of the main themes. We have recorded all the results from the evening [here](#).

In the discussion that ensued, we came to two strong conclusions.

First, there was a lot of enthusiasm for the approach. We felt this could be a fantastic way to learn from citizens about priorities for change that envision the outcome rather than just name the problem, opening up possibilities for many more creative solutions.

Equally strong was the sentiment that, while the results of the evening’s exercise are interesting and certainly reflect things that we have learned by being more directly engaged with local community groups, they cannot be the basis for any actual decisions - we need to carry the exercise out into the community, especially those that have traditionally been marginalized, and to let them guide us with their imaginations.

We’ll be talking more at the planning meeting on August 22 about concrete next steps. Stay tuned for more!

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## Have a Story to Share?

We’d love to have your contribution. You can write something up about a Code for Asheville event or share something else going on in the civic tech world. Email us at [code4asheville@gmail.com](mailto:code4asheville@gmail.com).

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## News from the Network

### Civic Spark Day - Code for Durham

On Saturday, August 12, I attended [Code for Durham](#)’s first Civic Spark Day, an opportunity for brigade members, local government leaders, and community members to come together and brainstorm creative solutions to community problems. I got to participate in lots of great conversations, including a panel with co-panelists from the Sunlight Foundation Open Cities initiative and the City of Durham’s new Innovation team. Check out [Cari Keller’s post](#) about the event. I also wrote a more personal

reflection [here](#). -Eric Jackson

## Code for Dayton Tackles Blight

“Government problems are fundamentally human problems.” This is what [Code for Dayton](#) Brigade Captain David Best believes. He and his co-captain, Janet Michaelis, and team of volunteers put this belief into practice with the launch of [LotLinker](#), a tool to help residents find and purchase blighted properties for sale in Dayton, Ohio. Check out more of the story [here](#) on the Code for America blog.

## Upcoming events

### Monthly Planning Meetup

Our next brigade planning meeting is TONIGHT, Tuesday, August 22, at 5:30pm at the Battery Park Book Exchange. RSVP [here](#). These planning meetings take place on the second Tuesday after each community night.

Our tentative agenda:

- Sending representatives to the Brigade Congress in Philadelphia October 13-15, 2017.
- Discuss follow-up to the Imagining a Better Asheville activity at the last community night
- Soliciting input on the Code for America/National Advisory Committee [Values Document](#).
- Event Planning
  - Sep 14: Community Night
  - Sep 23: National Day of Civic Hacking
  - Oct 12: Community Night (Eric out of town)

### Monthly Community Meetup

Our next meetup will be at the Burton Street Community Center on Thursday, September 14 at 6PM (*note the later time*). We'll have details in the next newsletter. You can RSVP [here](#). Community nights occur on the second Thursday of each month. The location rotates around the different Asheville community centers.

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