COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ALLIANCE

Board Retreat

Building the board we need, and deciding how we govern.

Monday, November 16, 2026 · 9:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

What we leave with

1. A shared picture of where we stand
2. Future board priorities and a plan for building expertise
3. Direction on the CAE evaluation
4. Resolutions: constituency plan, Governance Committee, and board handbook
5. Decisions on how we govern and meet
6. A champion and a date for every open workstream

The day

Morning	
9:00	Welcome and agreements
9:10	Why we serve
9:30	Where we stand
10:00	Self-assessment and future priorities
10:45	Break
11:00	Collective-impact skills
11:40	Building the board we need
12:30	Working lunch

Afternoon	
1:00	CAE evaluation (executive session)
1:45	Constituency plan
2:25	Break
2:40	How we govern
3:40	How we meet
4:05	Champions, handbook, close
4:30	Buffer, room held to 5:00

Working agreements

Draft. The board confirms or changes these at 9:00.

Discussion before decision

We talk it through first, then decide.

Every voice at the table

We hear from everyone before we close a topic.

Disagree in the room

Concerns are raised here, not after.

Executive session stays in the room

What is said there is not repeated outside.

Phones down

Full attention for the full day.

Start and end on time

The decision log matters more than the last slide.

WHY WE SERVE

What would a resident say CDA changed?

Pairs · 6 minutes · then a few answers aloud

Collective impact: five elements

Common agenda

A shared vision for change and an agreed approach.

Shared measurement

Consistent data and results across partners.

Mutually reinforcing activities

Coordinated efforts that support one another.

Continuous communication

Open, ongoing dialogue that builds trust.

Backbone support

Dedicated staff who coordinate the work.

Phase 1: what we heard, and where we take it today

Theme	Where it comes up today
Governance structure and role clarity	Governance Committee (2:40)
Onboarding and board development	Self-assessment priorities (10:00); expertise and seats (11:40)
Meeting effectiveness and decision-making	Decision-making protocol (2:40); meeting cadence (3:40)
CAE evaluation and board accountability	CAE evaluation (1:00)
Constituent voice and community engagement	Constituency plan (12:30 and 1:45)
Board culture and communication	Working agreements (9:00); executive session practice (2:40)

Source: Phase 1 board interviews, May to June 2026

Mission-strong, building technical depth

Where we are strong

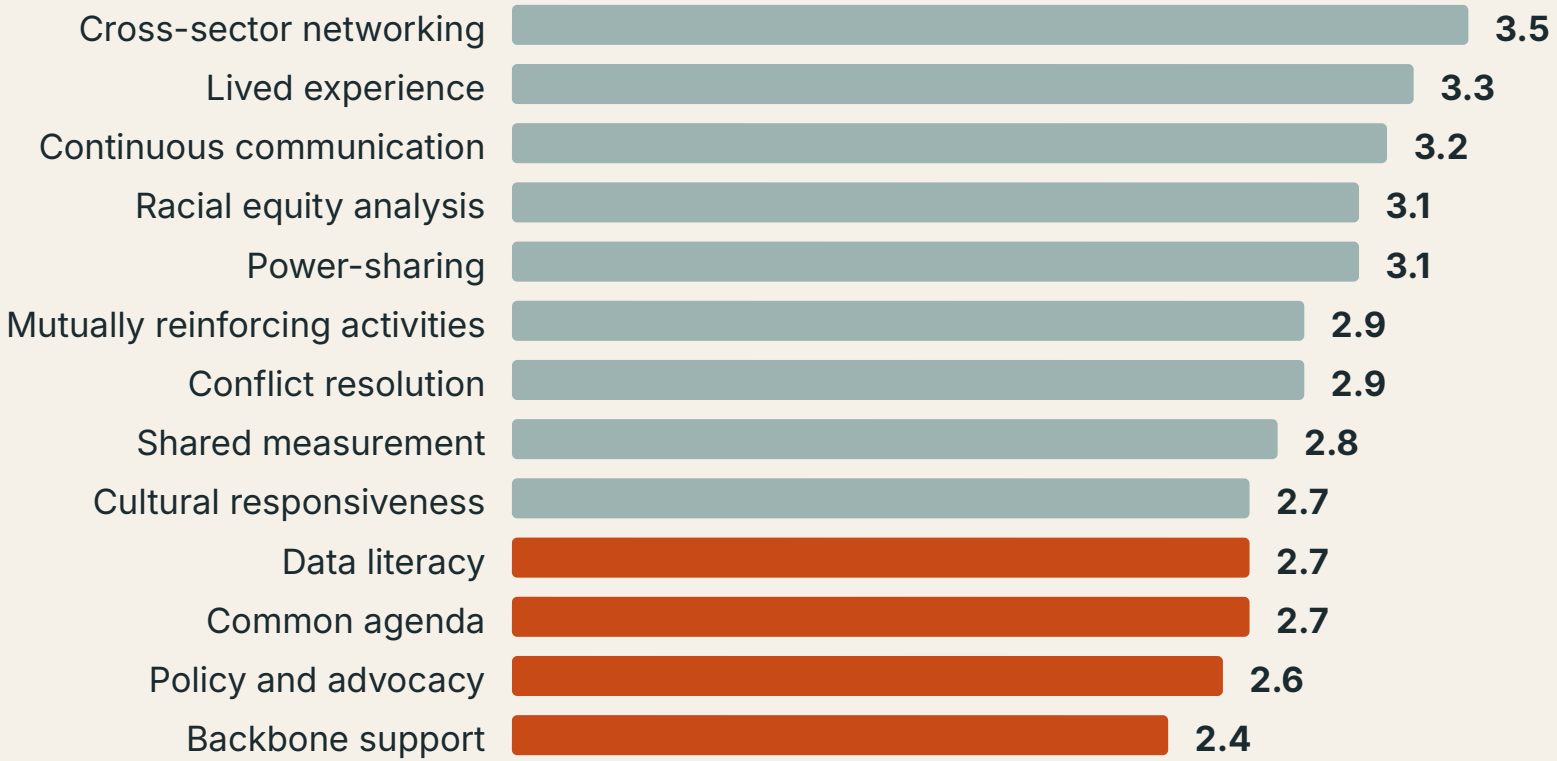
- Resident-centered: 11 of 11
- Administration and management: 11 of 11
- Anti-displacement commitment: 10 of 11
- Racial equity lens: 10 of 11
- Collaborative mindset: 10 of 11
- Comfortable representing CDA publicly: 8 of 11

Where we can build

- Zoning and land use: 1 of 11
- Equitable land trusts: 1 of 11
- LIHTC and urban planning: 2 of 11 each
- Access to money: 1 of 11
- Investment management: 0 of 11
- Technology: 0 of 11

Self-reported by 11 members. A snapshot of the group, not an evaluation of any member.

Strongest on relationships, building on structure



Average self-rating, 1 to 4, 11 members. Orange marks the structural skills the board rates lowest.

Board self-assessment: top three themes

How the 45 minutes works

1. Three themes, with Phase 1 alongside (5 min)
2. Table discussion: what rings true, what is missing (10 min)
3. Future priorities: a card each, then three dots (15 min)
4. Report out: top three priorities (15 min)

What the results point to

1. Governance versus management: strong on staying in the lane, less sure where it is

2. Equity: high commitment, less certainty in practice and power-sharing

3. Learning together: governance training, fundraising, and deeper relationships

Eight members completed it. Aggregate results only; no individual response is shown.

FUTURE BOARD PRIORITIES

What should this board take on next?

- Write one priority on a card and post it (10 min)
- We cluster them together
- Three dots each on the ones that matter most (5 min)

Collective-impact skills: three stations

Eight minutes at each. Hosts are volunteers.

Common agenda

What one sentence describes what success looks like for CDA?

Backbone and shared measurement

What does the backbone need from this board, and what would we measure together?

Policy and advocacy

Where could the board use its collective voice for policy change this year?

CDA Staff Skills Matrix

Skill	Board (of 11)	Staff (of 5)	Where it sits
Technology	0	4	Staff
Zoning and land use	1	3	Staff
Section 8 and HUD funding	3	4	Staff
Legal and compliance experience	3	4	Staff
Marketing and communications experience	2	4	Staff
Real estate expertise	2	4	Staff
LIHTC	2	3	Some in both
Equitable land trusts	1	2	Thin in both
Investment management	0	1	Thin in both
Financial management and accounting	5	3	Board
Affordable housing development	5	3	Board
Property management	3	1	Board

What This Means for the Expertise Discussion

The staff results change how the board can think about closing its gaps at 11:40. Not every gap needs to be filled by a director.

- **Use staff for technical depth, and seats for oversight.** Staff already hold technical housing, legal and compliance, and technology skills. Seat-selection criteria and committee members can focus on strategic and oversight roles instead of duplicating staff.
- **Data and common agenda need outside learning.** Both groups rate data literacy and common agenda at 2.7 to 2.8, so neither can teach the other. Advisors or partner training are the likelier routes.
- **The board needs working knowledge of the backbone.** Staff rate backbone support 3.6 and the board 2.4. The board governs that work, so it needs enough understanding to oversee it. A learning commitment at 11:00 can address this.

Funder access depends on the board. No staff member marked access to money, corporate ties, or philanthropy ties. This lines up with the self-assessment, where advocacy and fundraising was the lowest item in its section. The discussion should ask who opens doors to funders.

- **Pair staff and board on power-sharing.** Staff rate it 3.6, while the board is the most varied on this skill. It is a good fit for peer learning.

Need (strategy it supports)	Board	Staff	Status	Likely route	Owner
Equitable land trusts (land control)	1	2	Thin in both	Advisor or partner	
Investment and fund management (Acquisition Fund)	0	1	Thin in both, and now a need	Advisor now; the Housing Investor or Lender seats	
Mortgage underwriting and lending (Opportunity Mortgages)	Not measured	Not measured	Gap in the data	Follow-up question; the Housing Investor or Lender seats; advisor	
Homebuyer counseling and DPA management (counseling growth)	Not measured	Not measured	Gap in the data	Follow-up question; the Homebuyer Counseling seat	
Funder and corporate relationships (capital for the fund and mortgages)	Corporate 3; philanthropy 5	0	Rests with the board	Seat-selection criteria for funder seats; a development committee member	
Data literacy and shared measurement (all strategies)	2.7; 2.8	2.8; 2.8	Thin in both	Training or an advisor	
Common agenda	2.7	2.8	Thin in both	Training and a conversation with partners	
Backbone support	2.4	3.6	Staff strong; board thin	A board learning commitment	
Policy and advocacy (Bill of Rights, displacement)	2.6	3.0	Thin on the board; staff at working level	Advisor or partner policy bodies; treat as a priority	
Power-sharing (resident sessions and council)	3.1	3.6	Most varied among board members	Peer learning with staff	

GAP Assessment

Need (strategy it supports)	Board	Staff	Status	Likely route	Owner
Racial equity and community engagement	Lens 10; lived experience 8	5; 4	Strong in both	Maintain	

What the Table Shows

- **Staff cover most of the technical depth.** Technology, zoning, compliance, and marketing are all held by staff, so seats do not need to duplicate them. Seat criteria can aim at oversight and strategy.
- **Four needs are thin in both groups.** Equitable land trusts, investment management, data literacy, and common agenda have no strong holder on either side, so they need outside help: advisors, partners, or training. Policy and advocacy is thin on the board and only at working level for staff.
- **Two strategies make thin areas urgent.** The Acquisition Fund needs investment and fund management, where only one person across board and staff marked the skill. The Bill of Rights work needs policy and advocacy, the board's second-lowest collective-impact skill.
- **Three needs are not measured.** Mortgage underwriting, homebuyer counseling and DPA management, and acquisition fund management are central to the strategies but absent from the matrix.
- **Funder relationships rest with the board.** Staff write the grants (4 of 5 marked fund development), but none marked funder or corporate ties. The Acquisition Fund and opportunity mortgages both need capital partners.
- **The Treasurer role needs a pipeline.** By default the Vice Chair serves as Treasurer, so each year someone with financial skills should be in line. Five of 11 board members marked financial oversight.
- **The board needs working knowledge of the backbone.** Staff rate backbone support 3.6 and the board 2.4. The board governs that work, so a learning commitment fits better than a new seat.

Staff and board skills together

Staff add

- Technology: 4 of 5 staff, no board member
- Zoning and land use: 3 of 5, against 1 of 11
- Legal and compliance: 4 of 5, against 3 of 11
- Backbone support: 3.6 against 2.4
- Power-sharing: 3.6 against 3.1

Both groups are thin

- Data literacy: 2.7 board, 2.8 staff
- Common agenda: 2.7 board, 2.8 staff
- Funder access: no staff, 1 of 11 board
- Equitable land trusts: 1 of 11, 2 of 5

Not every gap needs a director. Seats can focus on oversight and strategy, with staff covering technical depth.

Building the board we need

CDA's seats are constituency-designated. Three routes can add expertise within that structure.

Seat-selection criteria

Constituencies weigh needed expertise when they choose who fills a seat.

Committee members

People with the expertise serve on committees without holding a board seat.

Advisors

Experts advise the board on specific questions as needed.

Decide today: which route fits which need, who owns the expertise gap assessment, and who champions it. Intended owner: the Governance Committee.

Working lunch: seat-type table review

12:30

Eat and reset

10 minutes

12:40

Draft expectations introduced

5 minutes

12:45

Tables mark: clear, missing, unrealistic

15 minutes

No decisions at lunch. Feedback goes to Adrian Spencer for the 1:45 session.

Constituency plan: expectations by seat type

Starting point: the CDA-RON relationship as the template.

Bring

What do we expect a member in this seat to bring?

Connect

How does the member stay connected to the constituency?

Report

How and when does the member report back?

Resolution: adopt the constituency plan, or adopt it with named edits by a date. Then choose the next seat types to draft.

Decision-making protocol: reflection before votes

Draft for discussion.

Same meeting

Routine matters are introduced and decided at one meeting.

Across two meetings

Consequential matters are introduced and discussed at one meeting, with materials ahead, and voted on at the next.

Consensus first

The board aims for consensus and votes when consensus is out of reach.

Resolution: which matters count as consequential, and where consensus gives way to a vote.

Executive session practice

Draft for discussion, following Article III.D.3 of the bylaws.

Question	Draft answer
When	The CAE evaluation, sensitive personnel matters, litigation, and other matters that would harm CDA if discussed openly
Who attends	Directors and the CAE, except on CAE matters; others only by board invitation
Record	Minutes note that a session was held; any action is taken in open session
Who calls it	A majority vote of the directors present

Governance Committee

Board development, onboarding, and decision-making structure. Scope follows the six responsibilities in the Governance Committee Guide.

Six responsibilities

- Recruitment and composition
- Orientation and development
- Self-assessment
- Leadership pipeline
- Policy oversight
- Culture and conduct

Resolution: establish the committee

- Size: [__] members
- Chair: appointed by the Board Chair
- Members: [__]
- How it reports to the full board: [__]

First tasks: expertise gap assessment, self-assessment priorities, officer transition guide, seat-type follow-up.

Officer succession plan

Four officer roles, as the bylaws define them. The Vice Chair is Chair-Elect and becomes Chair the following year unless the board votes otherwise. Resolution: adopt the plan and transition guide, or set an adoption date.

Chair

Presides, supervises the CAE, and appoints committee chairs. Serves as Secretary by default.

Vice Chair

Has the Chair's powers in the Chair's absence and is Chair-Elect. Serves as Treasurer by default.

Treasurer

Principal financial officer: books and records, funds, and the annual financial statement.

Secretary

Reviews and approves the CAE's minutes, sees that notices are given, and oversees records.

To fill before adoption: days to approve minutes, monthly time commitment for each role, and years of records to review. The board decides whether to designate a separate Secretary.

Five-phase handoff

Every officer transition, from a scheduled term end to an unplanned vacancy, follows the same five phases.

T-90

Slate proposed

The board proposes incoming officers.

T-60

Shadowing begins

The incoming officer joins meetings and reviews files.

T-30

Formal handoff

Outgoing and incoming officers review open items.

T-0

Election and transition

The board elects at the annual meeting and the term begins.

T+30

30-day check-in

The Chair confirms onboarding is complete.

At the formal handoff: open items, access, introductions, and institutional knowledge. For the Chair, a briefing on the CAE relationship and any sensitive matters. The Governance Committee recommends a slate and reviews the guide each year; the full board elects.

Resolution: adopt the guide, adopt it with edits by a date, or set an adoption date.

How we meet: cadence and materials

Discussion and direction, not settled policy.

5 to 6 meetings a year

Expand the calendar so decisions have room to be deliberated.

Materials two weeks ahead

This retreat's packet went out five days ahead.

Discussion first

Fewer presentations, more discussion.

Daytime meeting options

Considered alongside the cadence.

Board handbook

The handbook is attached to the packet. Bring edits in writing.

Adopt as written

The handbook takes effect today.

Adopt with named edits

Edits are made by a date, then it takes effect.

Hold for the next meeting

The board reviews again and adopts then.

Resolution: adopt the board handbook.

Board champions for open workstreams

Workstream	Champion	By
Expertise gap assessment		
Collective-impact learning commitments		
CAE evaluation actions		
Next seat types for the constituency plan		
Officer succession plan and transition guide		
Meeting cadence and materials		
Future board priorities		

Decision log

#	Item	Type	Outcome
1	Top three development priorities and future board priorities	Direction	
2	Learning commitment for each collective-impact skill	Direction	
3	Route for adding expertise within constituency seats	Direction	
4	CAE actions: criteria, process, and timeline	Direction	
5	Constituency plan	Resolution	
6	Decision-making protocol	Resolution	
7	Executive session practice	Resolution	
8	Governance Committee	Resolution	
9	Officer succession plan and transition guide	Resolution, or date	
10	Meeting cadence and materials	Discussion	
11	Board handbook	Resolution	
12	Champions for open workstreams	Assignment	

Next steps: owners and dates

Next step	Owner	By

Each member names one thing they will do before the next meeting.

Thank you

The decision log and next steps go to the board within two business days.