



# Co-operative Councils

## Innovation Network

## COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING



## Birmingham City Council

### Community Economic Development Plans - Policy Lab

As part of the Levelling-up Birmingham agenda, Birmingham City Council is investing in its local landscapes and communities to create a better, bolder Birmingham. Funded by the CCIN, the council undertook Community Economic Development Planning (CEDP), a process of economic development within a specific geographic area, to make the economy in that area work well for that community.

In CEDP, the power to drive the change rests within the community of residents, local businesses, local service providers including councils, community groups and voluntary sector organisations with a direct stake in the economic health of that area. These groups have the best insight into how to tackle the interconnected environmental, social, and economic issues in the area and recognise the importance of connections between the local, regional, and national layers of the economy. Each project aims to build on the knowledge, experience, and resources in that community, to identify and maximise the local economic opportunities available to re-shape the underlying economic system in the area.

In Birmingham, three CEDPs were delivered with the support of the EU-funded project USE-IT! which ran from 2017-2019 and the Local Innovation Fund (LIF). The development of CEDPs was part of the legacy strand of the project.

The Summerfield CED plan grew out of a coalition of voluntary organisations and local residents as part of the legacy strand of the EU-funded project USE-IT! in 2019. Initially it focused on bringing a local playing field next to the Edgbaston Reservoir back into community use. The field is owned by Birmingham Settlement (a local charity) and had not been actively used for a number of decades. As a result of the growing activity in the area, the charity began to think more about how the space could be utilised by the

community. Several open community days were held on the field to explore its potential and raise awareness of the space. Birmingham Settlement have since secured funding and built a community building on the field, as well as allowing local groups to use some space for food growing.



## Community Economic Development Plans as a Tool for Fostering Co-operative Working Between Councils and the Community



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One indicator of the success of a CED plan is the emergence of co-operatives, community led businesses and social enterprises following implementation. In Ladywood in 2019, EAT MAKE PLAY was established. The organisation has gone on to open a 'Share Shack' in a local empty retail unit, in conjunction with another local co-operative, The Active Wellbeing Society. This is essentially a 'library of things', where residents can borrow tools and equipment instead of purchasing.

Using a CEDP approach evolved into a mechanism to both empower the community and bring them and the City Council together to explore the future of the whole Reservoir. Rather than residents campaigning against redevelopment plans that they felt did not meet their needs, they instead used the CEDP process to create an alternative. This ultimately led to better partnership working with the City Council and enabled the residents to essentially co-produce the regeneration plans.

The programme was successful in galvanising a key group of organisations and making them believe they could affect change. It also encouraged Birmingham Settlement to take action and invest in the area which led to establishing several cooperatives, like EatMakePlay and Warm Earth.

Following the success seen in Summerfield, BCC launched another CEDP in Ward End and is planning to utilise this tool in other parts of the city. The current work focuses on women in the economy and the social economy potential in two assets: the Women Dolphin Centre and the Unity Hubb.

Our CEDPs have led to a change in the way communities engage with Local Authorities, as they are better placed to advocate for themselves and enable constructive conversations. Local Authority support in



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community economic development planning can enable systems change to take place, rather than small scale activities and compliment other activities that Local Authorities are undertaking. This is a powerful tool for change when embedded within wider policies, strategies, and plans.

*“Eat Make Play provides everyday opportunities for the people of Ladywood to connect through sharing, learning, making, and doing together, involving activities around practical skills like food preparation, growing, art, crafts, sewing and DIY and also social activities and events which cost nothing to attend. We have an emphasis on making good use of resources, sharing, and improving our environment while reducing waste. Our project aims to benefit all of the residents of Ladywood working with them to shape the programme and development of the organisation to meet the needs and aspirations of our community.”*

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