Emergent Project Development
At the East Scarborough Storefront

The Storefront uses emergent/organic community development practices which are described in detail in John McKnight's work, the Abundant Community or Frances Westley, Brenda Zimmerman and Michael Patton's book Getting to Maybe.
We have used these approaches and created a meaningful emergent community development process that works.

At the heart of the model is the role of The Storefront. The Storefront acts as a "backbone" organization, a term coined by Jahn Kania and Mark Kramer in Collective Impact, Stanford Social Innovation Review, Winter 2011 and adopted by The Storefront in 2012. A backbone organization is one that acts as convener, connector and facilitator when multiple players (organizations, institutions and individuals) come together in an organized way to create social change.

As a backbone organization, The Storefront uses an emergent initiative development process that includes the following:

1) Ensuring we understand and have built strong relationships in the community we are working. This is ongoing and involves both macro and micro communities

2) Scanning internal and external environment to assess where momentum and opportunities for change lie

3) Assessing momentum and opportunities in relation to overall vision, mission, strategic directions and capacity to ensure the initiative that evolves is in keeping with the overall direction we are going

4) Listening to residents formally (through Community Speaks, focused discussions with groups, surveys etc) and informally by talking to them each and every day in order to identify resident perceptions of community needs and assets to be built on

5) Identifying emerging trends and issues

6) Listening to everyone who wants to make KGO a better place and, not only their ideas, but their willingness to participate in a piece of the solution (mostly informally as part of other processes)

7) Bringing together key people interested in the identified issue area (this could include residents, non-profits, politicians, funders, academics, businesses, designers etc)

8) Begin co-creating a model that will address the issue to be solved.

9) Always starting with a solid grounding in philosophy and values and focusing on process, systems, and structures

10) Listening to everyone at the table and really understand what aspect of the issue/solution that they are passionate about and what skills and assets they can bring to the project. What do they want to get out of it (i.e. meeting mission/mandate, gaining experience, making change for a specific group of people etc)

11) Developing a model (process and structure) that addresses the issue with multiple activities where each player has the opportunity to create and play the role they are passionate about. The initiatives that Storefront develops are all designed to use collective solutions to complex issues

12) Documenting the roles that each participant will play towards building the initiative/approach in the short term and in the long term

13) Sketching out a workplan that includes multiple approaches and activities taking place simultaneously in an interconnected way. Workplans are fluid and flexible enough to take into account complex interactions between component parts of the project

14) Bringing idea back to residents...

15) Using the same process starting at step one as a feedback loop to communicate and collaborate as the project emerges