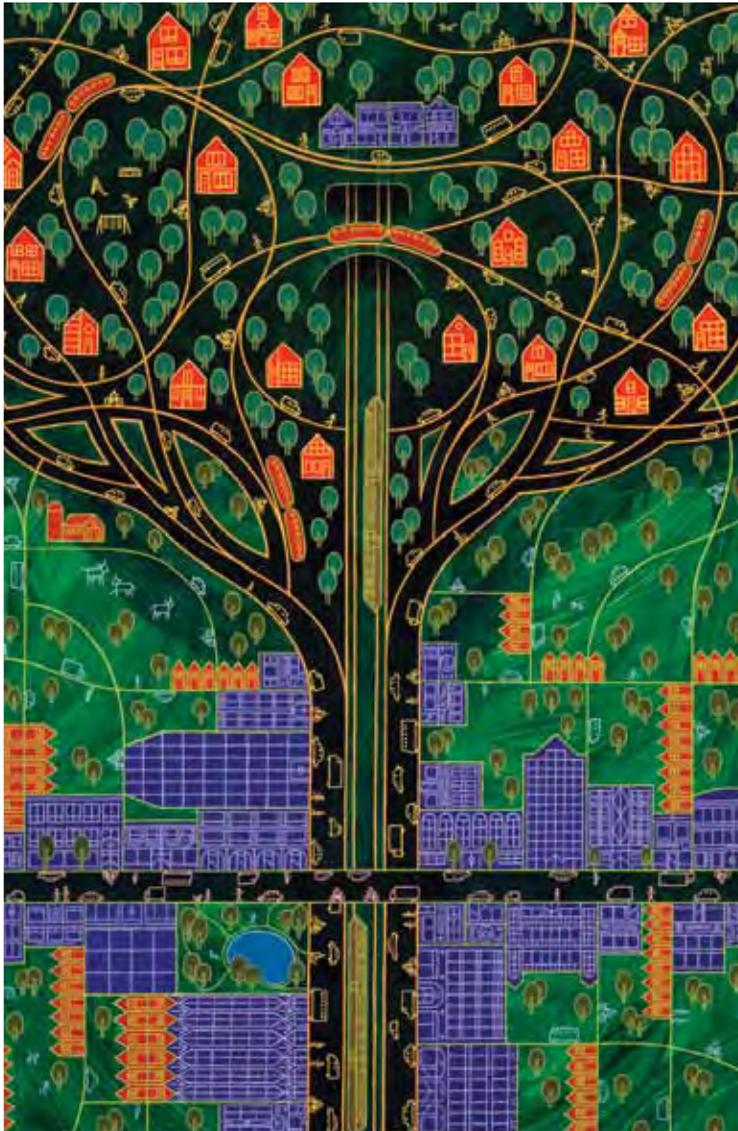


# VOICES FROM THE FIELD III



Anne C. Kubisch  
Patricia Auspos  
Prudence Brown  
Tom Dewar

Lessons and Challenges from  
Two Decades of Community Change Efforts



THE ASPEN INSTITUTE

Roundtable on Community Change

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*In Memory of Harold A. Richman*

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## Executive Summary

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**I**n the 1990s, comprehensive community initiatives (CCIs) arose as an ambitious strategy to address the needs of residents of poor communities. They intended to go beyond the achievements of existing community-based organizations, notably social service agencies and community development corporations (CDCs), by concentrating resources and combining the “best” of what had been learned from social, economic, physical, and civic development in order to catalyze transformation of distressed neighborhoods. In contrast to other community initiatives that focused on one intervention at a time—such as the production of affordable housing units or improving the quality of child care—CCIs adopted a comprehensive approach to neighborhood change and worked according to community building principles that value resident engagement and community capacity building.

Over the course of the past 10–15 years, the landscape of community change work has grown and diversified in many important and welcome ways. Most significant is that new kinds of public and philanthropic funding have become available, and more institutional actors are taking on this work, including Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs), banks, anchor institutions (such as hospitals or universities), and new local family and health conversion foundations. These institutions have expanded the range of connections, leverage, and capacity available to poor communities, and created opportunities for powerful and innovative work going forward.

It is important at this point in the field’s development for practitioners, analysts, policy makers, and funders to be as clear as possible about what community change efforts can and cannot accomplish, what structures and actions are most effective, and what needs to change for future place-based work to be more successful. To that end, the Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change has reviewed 48 major CCIs and related community change efforts of the past two decades. By assessing the evidence about what CCIs and related community change efforts have accomplished, summarizing key lessons, and providing commentary from a variety of practitioners and observers, this volume offers a framework for thinking about place-based investing in the future.

## What's Been Accomplished

### ***Investments to Improve Human, Physical, and Economic Development***

Accomplishments in the programmatic arena—that is, activities focusing on human, physical, and economic development—have been mixed. On the positive side, the quantity and quality of programs to support low-income families increased in most of the target neighborhoods. In turn, many of the initiatives showed improvements in the well-being of individual residents who participated in programs in their target neighborhoods; but those programs did not produce population-level changes. Some community change efforts can demonstrate physical improvements in their neighborhoods as a result of housing production and rehabilitation and have been able to show related positive outcomes, such as increased property values and reduced crime. Community-based actors, often working in partnership with local government and developers, have also succeeded in sparking commercial development. By and large, however, place-based efforts have had difficulty stimulating broader economic development, as too many of the forces that drive economic activity are outside of the control of neighborhood actors.

### ***Investments to Strengthen Community Capacity***

Community change efforts also aim to create stronger and more resilient communities through “community building” strategies that mobilize citizens and their connections to one another, foster their ownership of the work, identify and build on their assets, and strengthen their civic capacity. Virtually all of the efforts reviewed by the Aspen Roundtable can point to accomplishments on the community building front in the form of stronger leadership, networks or organizations, and/or improved connections between the neighborhood and external entities in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. There is still no empirical evidence demonstrating that increases in community capacity lead to improved outcomes at the individual, family, or community level, however. Such evidence would require sophisticated demonstration research and evaluation, which to date has not been a priority for funders and other leaders in the field.

### ***Investments to Generate Policy and Systems Change***

In addition to their direct interventions at the neighborhood level, community change efforts aim to spark policy and systems reform in ways that could yield positive returns for their neighborhood over the long term. Experience to date shows that community-based efforts can partially compensate for, but not solve, the problems of siloed public and private funding. Nevertheless, community change efforts have succeeded in changing policies or systems in two ways. One indicator is funding levels. The presence of an organized, legitimate, and effec-

tive community intervention in a neighborhood increases its visibility and influence, helping to leverage new public, private, and philanthropic resources. Other examples of policy and systems change come from partnerships between communities and actors who are successful advocates and have access, leverage, and influence in the public sector.

## **Lessons and Implications for Moving Forward: Progress Requires Better Alignment of Mission, Action, Capacity, Collaboration, and Learning**

Recent community change efforts have applied best practices from social services and human development programs; they have taken advantage of government incentives and private sector development expertise to undertake housing and other kinds of physical development; they have been both pragmatic and creative as they seek strategies to increase assets, income, employment, and economic activity; and they have benefited from decades of experience in effective community building, organizing, and engagement.

Despite these accomplishments at the programmatic, community, and system levels, most CCIs and related community change efforts have not produced the degree of community transformation envisioned by their designers. For example, few, if any, have been able to demonstrate widespread changes in child and family well-being or reductions in the neighborhood poverty rate.

The efforts that stand out as exemplary have been the ones that managed to align all pieces of their work and ensure that they reinforce each other. This review suggests five dimensions of alignment associated with success.

### ***Clarity about mission, desired outcomes, and operating principles***

Ensuring that all actors are in agreement about the core purpose of the work is critical to creating and maintaining focus. Too often, the goals sought by community change interventions are defined too broadly or abstractly at the outset, either for political reasons or technical reasons resulting from the absence of good theory or solid evidence about what produces community change. However difficult to develop, a common framework and vision provide participants with shared language, focused goals, and a set of operating principles around which to engage people and interests. They also clarify the level of effort and the time frame that are required to achieve the goals.

### ***Intentionality in action***

Where community interventions have invested intentional program effort, they were able to count program successes and improved outcomes. Community change efforts that did not make deliberate investments or assumed that invest-

ments in one domain would have spillover effects in others did not improve outcomes. Even when an intervention aims to increase a less tangible outcome, such as social capital or organizational learning, investments must be intentional and not simply the hoped-for by-product of other strategies. The objective is to bring a comprehensive lens to the work while still implementing targeted and high-quality programs in the various sectors—to manage the tension between complexity and intentionality.

***Assessing and building capacity***

The theory underlying community change efforts is based in systems thinking, which views the strands of community life as interconnected and interdependent. The challenge has been that any resulting design, especially of complex community change efforts, requires significant capacity to implement—capacity that under-resourced organizations in distressed neighborhoods often do not have. Goals must be assessed in light of actual capacity to implement them, and if that capacity is weak, there are two options: goals must be scaled back, or investments must be made to build the capacity to do the work. For broad community change efforts, these investments must move beyond building the capacity to implement a particular initiative and instead focus on building the capacity of a community to set agendas, gain access to resources, and respond to community needs.

***Effective management of partnerships and collaborations***

Managing a community change effort requires maintaining a complex web of relationships among residents, funders, intermediaries, neighborhood organizations, public sector agencies, private sector financial institutions, and consultants. Aligning all of these actors is largely about building relationships and understanding self-interest and can be impeded by many things: the lack of real or perceived self-interest; cultural, historical, racial, or legal barriers; or the direct personnel and institutional costs associated with making the relationships effective. To overcome such obstacles, a range of actors must expend significant time as well as political, social, and economic capital. They must literally and metaphorically “subsidize” the relationships, sectors, and interests until new habits of thinking, acting, and collaborating enable alignment to occur more naturally. Usually, brokers are required to build these relationships, raise money, remove both political and practical obstacles, and move information back and forth.

***Learning and adapting along the way***

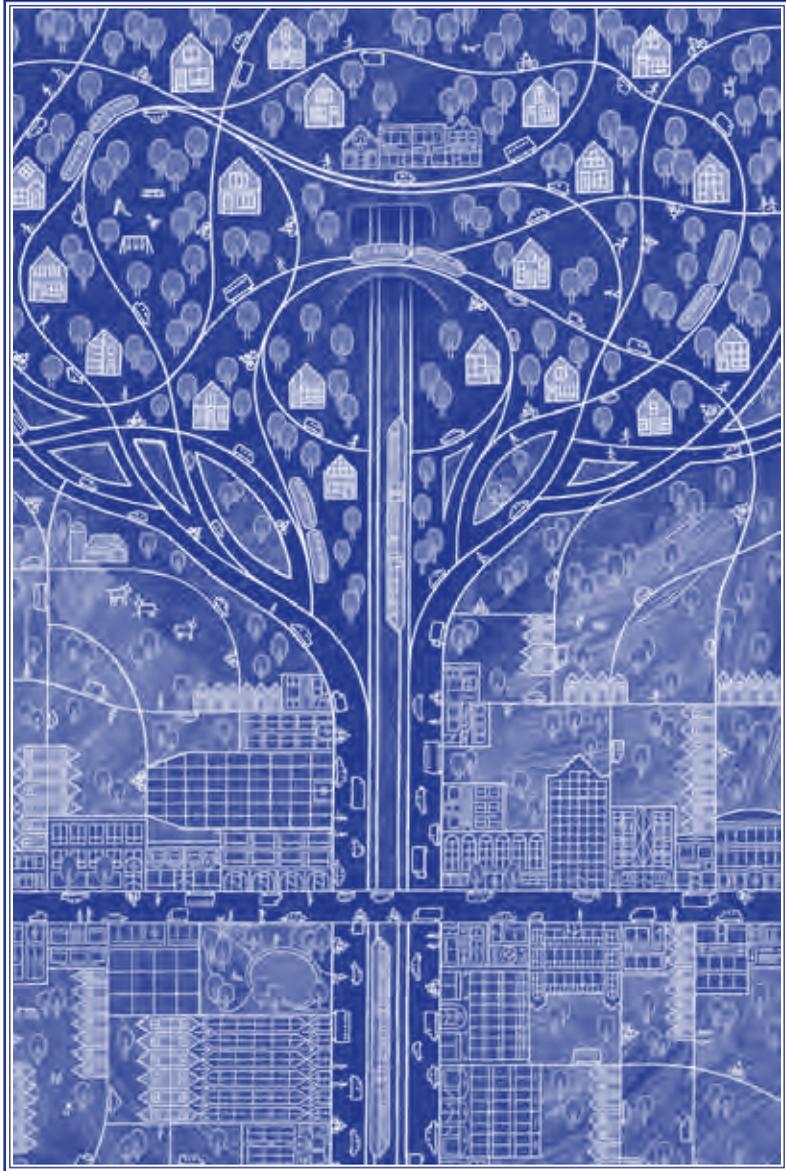
Learning is a continuous process. Evaluation in community change work has been increasingly viewed as a means to enhance real-time learning and decision-making, refine strategy, and institute midcourse corrections. Soliciting the

opinions and priorities of multiple and diverse stakeholders in developing key evaluation questions cultivates ownership of the learning process and increases the likelihood that results will be useful, relevant, and credible for potential users. The iterative process of learning and doing helps to position evaluation as a tool for improving practices and nurturing change at every level. No longer an outsourced function, it becomes the collective responsibility of all stakeholders. In order to support this process, funders and evaluators must often work hard to provide sufficient resources and structures to support learning, and to create a culture that values candid dialogue and analysis and embraces the idea of learning while doing.

## **Conclusion**

When the first CCIs were created more than two decades ago, their designers understood that alignment of their many parts would be key to generating meaningful change in poor communities. The assumption was that a “comprehensive” approach to neighborhood change would generate the necessary alignment in programs and strategies, and that “community building” would generate the necessary alignment among stakeholders. As it has turned out, alignment has been harder to achieve than was anticipated. It does not automatically result from a one-time community planning process or a foundation-sponsored initiative. The alignment that is needed is about fundamental ways of working, and it addresses goals, activities, capacities, relationships, and learning priorities. It also needs regular recalibration as the work proceeds. As with most ambitious change endeavors, we start with a hope for an efficient and direct route to our goals, only to find that there is no easy path or shortcut.

The challenge, then, is to apply what we have learned about the importance of a clear mission, good management, effective partnerships, and results accountability within the more fluid ecology of a distressed neighborhood located in a porous region. We need new ways of being strategic when we are working in a complex adaptive system. We need new ways of managing the work when we have to interact with so many actors. We need new forms of accountability when we are innovating and trying unproven strategies. We need new ways of defining success when we control so little. We need new ways of learning when causal connections are diffuse and difficult to establish. This is the charge to the next generation of community change work.



**T**his book is the third in a series of state-of-the-field reviews of comprehensive community change initiatives (CCIs) by the Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change.<sup>1</sup> The previous volumes, published in 1997 and 2002, described CCIs' goals, principles, structures, and strategies. This volume looks at what CCIs and related community change efforts have accomplished over the past two decades, distills lessons and conclusions about how to do this work well, and identifies priority issues around which policy, practice, and learning agendas should be organized going forward.

As with the previous two volumes of *Voices from the Field*, the Aspen Roundtable team did not rely solely on written documentation to draw conclusions about the community change field. Too much knowledge is still in people's heads and has not yet found its way into print. Therefore, the information in this volume comes not only from reviewing research, evaluations, and other writing about community change but also from interviewing stakeholders and participants, individually and in small groups, and from the authors' own observations of and participation in community change efforts over the years.

In addition, we solicited essays and commentaries from 15 experts, which are included in this volume. We did this because experiences on the ground matter so much to community change efforts that we felt that these extended perspectives would be more informative than a compilation of briefer quotes. We selected the essayists and commentators based on the depth of their individual experiences and the diversity of their combined points of view. Our goal was to present a genuine cross-section of "voices from the field" rather than to represent every community change effort or every point of view.

This volume has three parts. Part I, by Anne C. Kubisch, provides an overview of the field of community change—how efforts have evolved and what they have accomplished over the past 20 years. It covers the structures, strategies, actions,

1. The Aspen Roundtable is a national forum in which leaders of innovative and promising efforts to improve conditions in poor communities can share lessons about their work and make progress on common challenges. The Roundtable's goal is to strengthen the quality of policies, research, and practice aimed at improving outcomes for children, youth, families, and communities in distressed areas. For *Voices from the Field* (1997) and *Voices from the Field II* (2002), see [www.aspenroundtable.org](http://www.aspenroundtable.org).

and results of community change efforts in three arenas: programmatic work in the areas of human, physical, and economic development; community building and capacity building; and engagement with external institutions and systems.

Part II zeroes in on three themes that have emerged as central to effective implementation of community change efforts. Chapter 3, by Patricia Auspos, discusses management and alignment of goals, strategies, and practices within complex community change efforts. Chapter 4, by Tom Dewar, addresses the alignment of partnerships and relationships between communities and external actors. In chapter 5, Prudence Brown focuses on evaluation, learning, and adaptation. Each chapter is followed by three essays by practitioners that give depth and nuance to the themes and explain how the issues have played out in different contexts.

Returning to the big picture, Part III identifies broad lessons about designing and implementing community change and suggests topics that must be understood better to strengthen the next generation of work. Anne C. Kubisch's chapters are followed by response essays from five experts, each of whom picks up on and elaborates some important challenges to the community change field.

The Concluding Message presents reflections by the four principal authors. It suggests that the field is at a turning point in understanding how to do this work well and offers a different way to think about and approach community change going forward.

Appendix 1 contains a brief, chronological description of all of the community change efforts cited in this volume. Appendix 2 lists the meeting participants and interviewees whose insights informed the main chapters. Appendix 3 provides references to publications cited by the authors and other contributors as well as additional products that illuminate issues and themes in community change. We include references in the text only if the source requires clarification or the information is not general knowledge.

In order to make the strongest possible statements about the state of the field, we have taken two liberties:

1. Our process for gathering, reviewing, analyzing, and distilling experience and evidence was inductive. This is not a systematic review of all community change work. Rather, it is an attempt to study a broad array of information, seek patterns, and pull out of recent experience some conclusions about what the field has learned and what remains uncertain.

We use evidence selectively to illustrate and give richness to the larger points. We do not highlight themes if there is not enough evidence or experience to justify their inclusion here. Nor do the examples that we use depict the initiatives in their

entirety. The examples illuminate specific issues and dimensions in our analysis, but for the full story on each initiative we direct readers to the reports listed in Appendix 3 and other materials available on the initiative or funder websites.

2. We state our conclusions as boldly as possible, in a deliberate attempt to be provocative.

We decided to err on the side of boldness rather than reticence for two reasons. The first is that it is notoriously difficult to draw conclusions about what works in this field. The variation among communities and the place-based efforts to improve them is so great that stakeholders have had difficulty drawing conclusions about what works better, when, and under which conditions. Because what “works” in this field inevitably depends on context, history, goals, capacity, culture, funding, infrastructure, and so on, the most responsible analysts will answer every question with “it depends.” Therefore, most of the documentation produced by this field falls at the extremes of a spectrum anchored at one end by broad generalizations and at the other end by highly specific, rich, and descriptive case studies of particular communities or initiatives. The literature is replete with attempts to name and frame an issue, discussions of tensions and competing interests, and rich descriptions of local interventions and events. While it is interesting, it provides little guidance to practitioners, funders, policymakers, and communities trying to figure out what to do. The Aspen Roundtable has contributed its share to this type of literature, but the challenge for the field is to “fill in the middle” between the two ends of the spectrum: to add depth and complexity to the general statements and to draw out patterns from the individual case studies that permit distillation of lessons and conclusions for the field as a whole. Therefore, this publication aims to push harder toward definitive statements.

The second reason to err on the side of boldness is that values, beliefs, and funding realities sometimes cloud the ability to analyze and interpret evidence in this field. For example, many actors place such high value on the principle of empowerment that they hesitate to consider when resident engagement makes a difference and when it is not necessary. The recent trend toward results-based accountability is another example: it might lead some people to undervalue or discount the capacity building and community building dimensions of the work. And because so many stakeholders depend on foundation support to carry out this work, some might hesitate to criticize philanthropy lest they bite the hand that feeds them.

The Aspen Roundtable team is certain that readers will take issue with some of the conclusions in this volume and will be able to find counterexamples that challenge them. We surely have missed some points that others will think are crucial. We welcome correction and refinement on every front. Indeed, one of

the main purposes of this book is to generate discussion and debate in the hope that the field as a whole will benefit.

The four principal authors of this book are Anne C. Kubisch, Patricia Auspos, Prudence Brown, and Tom Dewar. Although each is the primary author of one or more specific chapters, all had significant input into the entire volume, and it is a collective product.

Many others also made important contributions to this volume. The writing team benefited significantly from the background work, support, and guidance of three key colleagues: Emily Buck, Blake Emerson, and Keith Lawrence. Other members of the Aspen Roundtable staff who provided support are Mira Abraham, Raymond Codrington, Karen Fulbright-Anderson, and Gretchen Susi. Fifteen experts from the policy, practice, and research arenas contributed essays and commentary that greatly enrich the messages in the individual chapters: Angela Glover Blackwell, Charles Bruner, Thomas Burns, Ron Carlee, Claudia J. Coulton, Frank Farrow, Elwood Hopkins, Mark L. Joseph, Doris Koo, Alan Okagaki, Robert J. O'Neill Jr., Hallie Preskill, Joel Ratner, Katya Fels Smyth, and Margery Austin Turner. Finally, Leila Fiester brilliantly edited all of the content and made a coherent volume out of many diverse pieces. The authors are grateful to all of these people for their unique and invaluable contributions to this volume.

Until July 2009, the team had the great fortune of benefiting from the guidance of Harold Richman, the Chair of the Aspen Roundtable on Community Change for 15 years. His wisdom and commitment to social justice inspired many of the community change leaders whose work is described in this book. We are certain that he would endorse such an honest reexamination of the field. He would draw hope from this analysis and would encourage all of us to renew and recharge our efforts bearing these lessons in mind. We dedicate this book to him in appreciation for all that he gave to the authors and to this field over his lifetime. We feel his absence keenly.

This project was funded by Living Cities, the Ford Foundation, the Northwest Area Foundation, and the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The Aspen Roundtable team is grateful for their support.

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# Part I

## Overview of Community Change Efforts, 1990–2010

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*Part I of this book reviews the past two decades of community change work. The first chapter defines comprehensive community initiatives (CCIs) and related place-based efforts and provides an overview of the field and how it has evolved since 1990. Chapter 2 covers the structures, strategies, actions, and results of community change efforts in three arenas: programmatic work in the areas of human, physical, and economic development; community building and capacity building; and engagement with external institutions and systems. The chapter also contains occasional descriptions of specific community change efforts as a way of illustrating and providing examples of key themes.*

# Recent History of Community Change Efforts in the United States

*By Anne C. Kubisch*

**E**very decade of antipoverty and social justice work since World War II has had its own identity. The 1950s was the era of urban renewal. The 1960s linked antipoverty work with the civil rights movement. In the 1970s, large social welfare experiments were launched to address income support, employment, and housing. The 1980s brought the new federalism, the devolution of community development and social services programs to the state and local levels, and the introduction of indirect supports, such as tax credits, as primary development tools. In the 1990s, local innovation efforts attempted to integrate services and connect physical, human, social, and civic development. Also during this period, the philanthropic sector became an increasingly important influence in social, civic, and community development work.

Each era has seen a balancing, and then a rebalancing, of familiar themes:

- Should we place higher priority on investing in people or place?
- How do we respect a community building process while simultaneously pushing for tangible outcomes?
- Which are more effective, targeted and circumscribed programs or broader comprehensive interventions?
- How do we engage in partnerships and collaborations while enforcing accountability for results among all stakeholders?

- How do we tackle structural and policy reforms while also obtaining meaningful victories for real people in real communities in real time?
- How do we maintain a focus on reducing racial inequities while keeping universal buy-in for the work?
- How do we protect the interests of the disempowered in a system that is reticent to regulate the functioning of private markets?
- How do we attend to the circumstances of the long-term, isolated poor while also responding to the varying needs of the working poor, immigrants, and those who have lost jobs due to economic restructuring?

During the first decade of the 21st century, the pendulum of antipoverty, community revitalization, human services, and social justice history swung to a place that revisits these familiar themes. But this decade's work also has some new attributes that reflect a changed economic and institutional context.

## **Comprehensive Community Initiatives from 1990 to 2010**

In the 1990s, comprehensive community initiatives (CCIs) arose as an ambitious strategy to address the needs of residents of poor communities. CCIs intended to go beyond the achievements of existing community-based organizations, notably social service agencies and community development corporations (CDCs), by concentrating resources and combining the best of what had been learned from social, economic, physical, and civic development in a particular place. They aimed to implement an intervention in which the whole would be greater than the sum of its parts, a vehicle that would catalyze the transformation of distressed neighborhoods.

Although CCIs varied enormously depending on location, sponsor, and community capacity, the “classic” CCIs had similar design features. They analyzed neighborhood problems and assets holistically, created a plan to respond in a comprehensive way, engaged community actors, and developed a structure for implementing the plan. Each sought to achieve multiple results with a combination of inputs centered around some conception of “community.” Their goals included individual and family change, neighborhood change, and systems change. They operated according to community and capacity building principles. A wide variety of programmatic activities was open to them, from human services to economic development to social capital building strategies. The initiatives and their sponsors generally invested considerable time, energy, and money creating the vehicles, systems, and relationships for implementing this model of how community change should unfold.

Many national, regional, and local funders chose to organize their innovative work in community and human development through the vehicle of an “initiative.” Foundations that took the lead include Annie E. Casey, The California Endowment, Edna McConnell Clark, Ford, Hewlett, James Irvine, Lyndhurst, MacArthur, McKnight, Northwest Area Foundation, Pew Charitable Trusts, Robert Wood Johnson, Rockefeller, Surdna, and W.K. Kellogg. Foundations also invested in initiatives through the vehicle of intermediaries such as MDRC (for Jobs-Plus), Public/Private Ventures (Community Change for Youth Development), the Enterprise Foundation (Sandtown–Winchester Neighborhood Transformation Initiative), and the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) (New Communities Program). A rough, back-of-the-envelope calculation results in a ballpark estimate of at least \$1 billion in philanthropic dollars invested in CCIs over the past 20 years.

The federal government has also invested in similar place-based change efforts through HOPE VI, Empowerment Zones, and initiatives such as Weed and Seed. State governments took the lead in some cases, such as New York’s Neighborhood-Based Alliance, but more often local governments took up the cause of certain neighborhoods in cities as varied as Indianapolis, Savannah, and San Francisco. When we add in government investments, the total invested in comprehensive community change efforts could easily exceed \$10 billion.

## **Where the Field Is Today: New Types of Funding and New Actors**

This review begins with the premise that the classic CCIs of the past 20 years are, for the most part, winding down or finished, but policymakers, philanthropists, practitioners, and community residents continue to put a high value on “place” as an organizing principle for social and economic change. Indeed, over the past decade the landscape of community change work has grown and diversified in important and welcome ways. Most significant is that new kinds of funding and new institutional actors exist. These have broadened the range of community change efforts and the connections, leverage, and capacity available to poor communities. As a result, new approaches have been added to the repertoire of place-based interventions, and there are opportunities for innovative work going forward.

Within the public sector, there has been considerable diversification in the type and structure of funding, especially the monies available for physical and economic development. New opportunities for place-based development have come through the Community Reinvestment Act, tax credits, transit-oriented development, funds for “green” building, and new federal initiatives such as Choice Neighborhoods, Sustainable Communities, the Neighborhood Stabilization Program, and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The activities

of for-profit and nonprofit developers and community development financial institutions have grown in response to these funding streams. Local innovation in child and family development have been enabled by the continued block granting of federal funding in social services, waivers granted through other funding streams such as Medicaid, and new funding from federal demonstration programs such as Promise Neighborhoods.

The philanthropic actors working on community change have also diversified significantly over the past ten years. The CCIs of the 1990s were stimulated largely by national foundations. Recently, regional, local, and family foundations have become more engaged in place-based work. Locally “embedded” funders, corporate, and health conversion foundations are examples of new types of philanthropies that make long-term commitments to their local communities and attempt innovative place-based work. Anchor institutions, notably universities and medical centers, also have increasingly shown leadership in changing the face of their surrounding neighborhoods.

Identifying and analyzing this new phase in the development of the field will enable all who are working in it to locate themselves in the broader spectrum of reform strategies. By clarifying what our work is really about—that is, our theories of change—we lay the groundwork for improving our own practice and for developing essential knowledge for the field. Moreover, there are clear indications that governmental and philanthropic investment in place-based work and in poor communities will continue even in the face of the economic crisis that has constrained public sector budgets at the state and local levels. The more we know, the better we can respond to these new opportunities.

## Types of Community Change Efforts Included in this Book

The authors of this book have purposely drawn a wide boundary around “what’s in” and “what’s out” of the universe of community change efforts examined here, so as to be able to distill lessons and conclusions from as many relevant experiences as possible. A total of 48 community change efforts (see Appendix 1) were reviewed, supplemented by in-depth interviews and small-group discussions with the leaders of approximately half of them.

The community change efforts included here have the following similarities:

- **They are “place-based.”** They identify a geographically defined area, often a neighborhood, small town, or Native American reservation, but sometimes a larger area such as the South Bronx or the Gulf Coast. “Place” is viewed as both an administrative launch pad for the interventions and as a target of change.

- **They place priority on “community building.”** They highlight the people who live in the selected place and the social, cultural, psychological, civic, political, racial, and organizational attributes of the population. They intend to mobilize and build the “community” attributes of the place by ensuring resident engagement in and ownership of the work, forging connections among stakeholders, and strengthening civic capacity and voice. The terms *community* and *community-based*, then, indicate the linking of the people and place dimensions of this work.
- **They adopt a “comprehensive lens.”** They recognize and attempt to exploit the links among social, economic, physical, and civic development. They also work at multiple levels: individual, community, organizational, and system. Even the initiatives that focus on narrower outcomes, such as improving school readiness or increasing employment, bring a comprehensive perspective to their efforts. Classic CCIs identified comprehensiveness as an operational goal, but most current community change efforts recognize that working on all fronts is not possible. Instead, the field continues to search for the right balance between appreciating the complex and systemic nature of the problems and their solutions, and finding strategic entry points for structuring the work.

These community change efforts also differ in important ways. One important distinction is in the initiating or sponsoring institution, because institutional aegis strongly affects the design, structure, and goals of the work. There are three ways to classify community efforts by sponsoring institution:

- **National, regional, or statewide multisite efforts.** These include national foundation initiatives (e.g., by Ford, Rockefeller, Annie E. Casey); federal government initiatives (e.g., Empowerment Zones, HOPE VI); and regional or state multisite initiatives (e.g., by the Northwest Area Foundation, Hewlett Foundation, and California Endowment).
- **Efforts sponsored by city-based institutions that have strong local ties but are not community based.** These sponsors can be local foundations (e.g., Skillman in Detroit), a local intermediary (e.g., the LISC-MacArthur collaboration around the New Communities Program in Chicago), anchor institutions (e.g., the University of Pennsylvania’s West Philadelphia Initiative), or local government (e.g., the City of San Francisco’s Communities of Opportunity).

- **Efforts initiated by community-based institutions.** These can include embedded funders (e.g., Jacobs Family Foundation in San Diego), a local nonprofit corporation (e.g., Hope Community in Minneapolis, Dudley Street in Boston), or a faith-based organization (e.g., New Song Urban Ministries in Baltimore).

A second important distinction in community change efforts concerns the primary focus of the work. While there are exceptions, most tend to emerge out of one of two core lines of work:

- **Human development and social services.** This includes efforts focused on educational outcomes (e.g., Harlem Children’s Zone), health outcomes (e.g., Children’s Futures in Trenton), or family well-being and success (e.g., Annie E. Casey Foundation’s Making Connections).
- **Physical revitalization and economic development.** This covers a range of efforts to build affordable housing and stimulate commercial revitalization in poor neighborhoods, including CDCs, anchor institutions, and nonprofit and for-profit developers who have a holistic view of community development.

A third way in which the efforts differ is in how centrally they place the principle of community building—or community empowerment, community ownership, community organizing, resident engagement, and so on—in their work. This area is rife with inconsistency and contention, because the ways in which the concepts are defined and operationalized vary significantly from place to place. What one initiative describes as “deep community engagement” might appear to another as “occasional community consultation.” Moreover, how community building figures into the theory of change—as a means to an end or as an end in itself—differs from place to place. This is such an important and contested theme in the community change field that it is discussed in several contexts throughout this book.

Thus, the universe of community change efforts included here goes well beyond classic CCIs. They can be initiated by any of a number of actors, last for any length of time, target a variety of outcomes, and involve a range of different participants. In this document, the term *initiative* is avoided unless it refers to classic CCIs. More generic terms such as *work*, *interventions*, and *efforts* are used more often and signify that the net is cast far more widely. For example, an initiative with the goal of “community change” is clearly within bounds, but is a place-based effort that focuses on a single outcome, such as increased employment or improved birth outcomes, included in this review? The answer is yes if it

also meets the following criteria: it brings a comprehensive analysis to the cause of the problem and makes connections with other domains of work; and it recognizes that “community” has an influence on the problem and that some kind of community-level action needs to be part of the response.

# Structures, Strategies, Actions, and Results of Community Change Efforts

*By Anne C. Kubisch*

**I**t is critical at this point in the field's development to understand what community change efforts have and have not been able to accomplish, so that experience can guide future undertakings and expectations. This chapter describes how community change efforts have been structured and implemented around three main types of work—programmatic (including human development, housing/physical development, and economic development); community building; and engaging with external institutions and systems—and draws some operational lessons from those experiences. It also gives examples of the outcomes reported from community change efforts, whenever possible.

The short answer on what community change efforts have accomplished is this: Most can show improvements in the well-being of individual residents who participated in programs in their target neighborhoods. Some produced physical change in their neighborhoods through housing production and rehabilitation, some reduced crime, and a few also sparked commercial development. Most can demonstrate increased neighborhood capacity in the form of stronger leadership, networks, or organizations, or in improved connections between the neighborhood and external entities in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. A few can point to accomplishments in policy and systems reform.

While these are important, tangible outcomes, most of the interventions have not produced the degree of community transformation envisioned by their designers. For example, few (if any) have been able to demonstrate population-level changes in child and family well-being or rates of poverty. Where significant community-wide change occurred, it was the result of changes in the population of the neighborhood due to mobility caused by regional economic dynamics or

major physical revitalization that often meant displacement of significant numbers of the original residents (e.g., HOPE VI).

## **Programmatic Investments**

The majority of community change efforts have their roots in one of three sectors: human development and social services, housing and physical revitalization, or economic development. For sure, the various efforts reviewed here reach beyond the boundaries of a single programmatic anchor, which is a prerequisite for their inclusion. Nevertheless, for the purpose of identifying and understanding their accomplishments, it is useful to consider them within these broad sectoral categories (as opposed to investments primarily in community building or systems reform, which are discussed later).

### ***PROGRAMMATIC STRATEGY 1: HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INVESTMENTS***

Community change efforts of the past two decades—many of which emerged out of the integrated services field—can easily demonstrate increased access to programs and services targeting children, youth, adults, and families. Almost all launched or expanded programs in such areas as health care, child care, child and youth development, family support, job training and placement, income support, and asset building (e.g., creation of Individual Development Accounts, home ownership assistance, financial literacy). The health-oriented work, in particular, is on the rise with growing public awareness of the social determinants of health and health equity and with the increased number of place-based health foundations.

In addition, almost all of the efforts currently in place have programs to increase resident enrollment in public benefits programs, especially the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and, where possible, state health insurance programs. Funders and program leaders call this the “low-hanging fruit” in that it is an existing public benefit that is underenrolled, and increasing participation is relatively low cost and easy to implement and puts money directly into the pockets of low-income people.

Most of these investments did not increase simply the quantity of human services in target neighborhoods, but also their quality. Through their links to foundations and intermediaries, many community change efforts have access to national information, and they use it to bring high-quality, evidence-based programs to their target neighborhoods.<sup>1</sup> They have been able to draw on the wealth of experience and research on effective social service practice in the public sec-

1. For example, after consulting empirical research, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation introduced the tested Nurse-Family Partnership home visiting program into the Children’s Futures Initiative. The Annie E. Casey Foundation brought its considerable experience with the Jobs Initiative to Making

tor, philanthropic circles, and academia. The good news here is that not only is there considerable evidence from around the country about “best practices” and “programs that work” to promote early child development, school success, youth development, and the like, but it is also possible to assemble that evidence and use it to design and implement high-quality programs for children and families in poor neighborhoods.

Still, while many of the human development-oriented community change endeavors of the past 20 years can identify improved outcomes for some residents of the targeted neighborhoods, these investments have not aggregated to improvements in neighborhood-wide well-being or produced population-level changes in, for example, infant mortality rates, graduation rates, or income. Why? The conclusion drawn by observers and actors in the field is that these human development investments have not reached adequate dose, scale, or duration to give the theory a true test. It also is possible that something about the theory of change needs to be reconsidered. For example, should we reconsider the power of “community” as an entry point for producing population-wide change in human development outcomes? Can we ever reach the dose and scale required through this entry point? If not, what complementary or different strategies are required? Based on experience to date, we can no longer make assumptions about the answers to these questions. The theory of change guiding place-based efforts depends on asking and finding answers to these questions.

A special challenge to achieving population-level effects in many low-income neighborhoods is that the target populations are so mobile. A report tracking populations in Making Connections sites found that about half of the families with children moved to a new address over a three-year period (Coulton, Theodos, & Turner, 2009). Even MDRC’s Jobs-Plus Initiative, which is highly regarded for effectively implementing an evidence-based, high-quality intervention that aimed to increase employment and earnings for all residents in public housing developments, does not make any claims about neighborhood effects. MDRC reports that

*Jobs-Plus findings caution that the degree to which individual-level effects on employment outcomes will translate into community-level effects will depend to an important extent on residents’ move-out rates. Furthermore, it may take much bigger effects on employment and earnings rates than were observed in Jobs-Plus developments . . . in order for such effects to lead to improvements in other dimensions of the community or neighborhood quality of life.* (Bloom, Riccio, & Verma, 2005)

Connections. MDRC applied lessons learned from testing employment and income support strategies to the Jobs-Plus Initiative. The Northwest Area Foundation ensured that efforts in Seattle and Portland reflected best practices in employment programs.

The community change efforts that have achieved programmatic successes bring a comprehensive lens to their problem analysis but also focus and target their work clearly. They are precise about the outcomes they seek and make programmatic investments designed to lead directly to the desired outcome. It is now abundantly clear that to significantly improve outcomes for residents of the most

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## PLACE-BASED EFFORTS THAT FOCUS PRIMARILY ON HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

**The Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ)** is a neighborhood-based program that builds a pipeline of high-quality supports for children from birth through high school graduation in a distressed neighborhood in New York City. Activities include parent education, an early childhood focus, a charter school, after-school programs, job skills training, and college preparation. HCZ grew from a small child and family service program in the early 1990s into a comprehensive neighborhood services organization covering 100 square blocks with a budget of \$69 million. Sample outcomes include the following:

- In the Asthma Initiative, use of preventive medication increased from 44 percent to 66 percent; the proportion of asthmatic children visiting the emergency room over a 3-month period dropped from 46 percent to 15 percent; and the proportion of asthmatic students missing school over a 14-day period dropped from 26 percent to 7 percent.
- In Harlem Gems, the pre-K program, 100 percent of participants performed at grade level.
- In the Promise Academy charter school, 100 percent of third graders and 87 percent of eighth graders scored at or above grade level on their math exam.

**Making Connections** is a ten-year multisite initiative, sponsored by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, that aims to increase family earnings and income, increase family assets, and ensure that young children are healthy and prepared to succeed in school. The sites have built collaborative local partnerships to introduce, expand, improve, or link up services for children and families as well as activities to build family economic success. In their focus neighborhoods the sites have placed residents in jobs, increased EITC returns, increased the number of savings accounts, and improved school readiness. For example:

- In Louisville's four target neighborhoods, 2,000 residents received \$2.5 million in EITC returns in 2008; from 2005–2008, 520 residents were placed in jobs.
- In White Center (Seattle), 1,650 residents were placed in jobs from 2005–2009; \$2 million in EITC benefits were returned to White Center residents in 2009.
- In San Antonio, the percentage of children ready for kindergarten in Loma Park Elementary School, a target Making Connections community, rose from 29 percent in 2005 to 59 percent in 2009; in 2008, Making Connections–San Antonio placed 374 residents in jobs.

**Children's Futures** is a ten-year community-based initiative that aims to improve children's health, well-being, and school readiness in Trenton, N.J. Six neighborhood centers serve as hubs for child and family services; a home visiting program is in place for pregnant women; and partnerships with other organizations provide literacy, mental health, and other health services.

- 4,000 children have received primary health care services.
- In 2008, 297 pregnant women participated in home visiting programs, and 10 percent of African American women in the program experienced preterm births compared to a state average of 17 percent.

*SOURCE: Websites of the featured initiatives*

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disadvantaged neighborhoods, programs must be implemented at the highest level of quality and with enough “dose” to trigger change. Initiatives that claim they will improve test scores for third-grade children, improve the health and safety of youth, or reduce child poverty cannot do so without making specific, well-executed investments in high-quality programs that have high potential (based on sound theory and/or evidence resulting from research or experience) to produce those outcomes.

The Harlem Children’s Zone (HCZ) is a good reminder of this lesson about intentionality and dose. In 2009, HCZ had a budget of \$68.6 million and an endowment of \$128 million. HCZ’s cost per child is about \$5,000; the average across all participants, including family members, is \$3,000. It is important to recognize that HCZ’s most notable successes occur from its most concentrated investments—especially the Promise Academy charter school, where a 2009 budget of about \$12.8 million covered 974 students (\$13,000 per child). The agency spends several thousand additional dollars per Promise Academy student on in-school and after-school activities, for a total of \$19,272 per student. Evidence of the success of these investments can be seen in the test scores for third- and eighth-graders in the Promise Academy. Funders and policymakers need to understand and internalize experiences like HCZ’s so that they have realistic expectations about levels of investment, outcomes, and time frames for the work.

Where interventions did not make deliberate or concentrated enough investments—or where they made assumptions that investments in planning, capacity building, community building, and the like would have spillover effects in programmatic terms—they did not improve outcomes for children, youth, or families. Less direct investment or investment at lower doses has failed to achieve desired outcomes in, for example, the Communities Organizing Resources to Advance Learning (CORAL) initiative that the James Irvine Foundation launched in 1999 “with the goal of helping to improve the academic achievement of children in the lowest performing schools in five California cities.” CORAL focused on community organizing and collaboration among nonprofits in the design and implementation of after-school programs. Aside from homework help, however, none of the activities had a direct educational component. Implementation was problematic and educational outcomes were elusive. After four years and \$30 million, the foundation instituted a midcourse correction that focused all of the work on high-quality literacy and enrichment activities (Walker, 2007).

Another attribute of successful human development investments is that they are housed in high-capacity organizations with effective management and financial systems. This does not mean they are large organizations—just well-run ones. Nor is highly effective leadership (while important) the sole source of their accomplishments. High-capacity organizations have structures and systems that

ensure accountability, use data and management information to track their work, reward success, and identify and remedy the causes of failure. In addition, the successful community change efforts reviewed here were entrepreneurial with regard to funding. They used flexible foundation grants to complement traditional public sector funds by strategically filling service gaps, funding planning and partnerships, and developing data and assessment systems.

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## **A SPECIAL CHALLENGE TO COMMUNITY CHANGE EFFORTS: WORKING EFFECTIVELY WITH PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Over the course of their development, most community change efforts have had difficulty dealing directly with schools or public education systems. Whether due to downtown district control, intransigent school bureaucracies, or the fact that many youth do not attend schools in their own neighborhoods, many community change efforts have resorted to working around the edges of the school system rather than within it. Most of the community efforts that did engage in educational issues chose to focus on:

- Developing high-quality early childhood education activities (e.g., Children’s Futures, the Good Neighborhoods Initiative, Making Connections, Neighborhood and Family Initiative);
- Providing high-quality after-school and youth development supports (e.g., Community Change for Youth Development, Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative, Making Connections, Neighborhood Improvement Initiative, Neighborhood Partners Initiative, New Futures, Urban Health Initiative); or
- Mobilizing resident voices to advocate for policy and practice changes within the educational system (e.g., Building Healthy Communities, CORAL, Making Connections—Denver, Yes We Can!).

None of these strategies represents a direct investment in teaching and learning in schools.

Some community change efforts have worked directly on schooling by starting their own school. The Harlem Children’s Zone has its early childhood program, Harlem Gems, and its charter school, the Promise Academy, at the heart of its work. Other examples are the charter school formed by the Germantown Settlement, a site in the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s Rebuilding Communities Initiative, and the contract school started by New Song Urban Ministries in Baltimore.

Field leaders concur that education must be a priority for community change work because good schools are essential for achieving housing development, human development, and community building objectives. In fact, one private for-profit developer has stated that unless he is sure that the neighborhood school can be improved—that is, the city or superintendent has committed to the school in the neighborhood, or a charter school is being created—he will not embark on a neighborhood development project.

Next-generation efforts need to work deliberately on how to place schools at the center, rather than the periphery, of their efforts. Recently, there have been several encouraging efforts in which community change efforts and schools have worked together to improve classrooms, curricula, and instruction as well as the community supports that promote good educational outcomes. For example, the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s Making Connections initiatives recognized that grade-level reading success could not be achieved without targeted efforts to improve both teaching and out-of-school supports. As a result, Making Connections has partnered directly with “focus-schools” and in some sites more broadly with school districts.

## **PROGRAMMATIC STRATEGY 2: HOUSING AND PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT INVESTMENTS**

Many community change efforts have strong roots in the housing and physical revitalization sector, and two decades of experience have produced evidence that this is an effective catalyst for neighborhood change. The rationale for focusing on physical revitalization is perhaps the clearest of all the elements in a theory of change for place-based work: Living in run-down housing contributes directly to poor outcomes for individuals and families due to lead paint, pests, physical hazards, and so on. Moreover, neighborhoods with blighted physical infrastructure have a wide range of associated problems. They are often situated on or near environmental hazards, lack parks and other amenities, have design features that invite criminal activity, and have a low tax base that contributes to poor schools and limited political power. Finally, the actions required to improve deteriorated housing and infrastructure are relatively clear, and the concrete results of physical revitalization satisfy many constituents.

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### **TYPES OF ORGANIZATIONS WORKING ON HOUSING AND PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT**

**Community-based nonprofits:** Two major national intermediaries have played major roles in supporting the work of local CDCs in low-income housing production and neighborhood revitalization. The Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), founded in 1980, has aggregated more than \$9 billion in equity, loans, and grants to help finance some 245,000 units of housing as well as commercial space and neighborhood facilities. Enterprise Community Partners has raised \$10 billion to help finance 250,000 affordable homes across the country.

**Anchor institutions:** In West Philadelphia, the University of Pennsylvania has acquired and rehabbed property for ownership and rental, and provided financial incentives for current and new residents to improve or purchase properties. Significant investment in commercial space spurred development of retail stores, a grocery store, restaurants, and a movie theater. Additional quality-of-life improvements include a new K–8 school, street lighting and cleanup, and a minibus service that connects residents with major centers and institutions in Philadelphia.

**Nonprofit development companies:** The Community Builders, which has completed 22,000 units since 1964, is the largest nonprofit housing producer in the country. It plans developments to catalyze comprehensive neighborhood revitalization. Mercy Housing has developed a wide spectrum of affordable housing across the United States since 1981 and is committed to creative visioning, extensive community planning, and combining the best of nonprofit and for-profit practices.

**For-profit development companies:** McCormack Baron Salazar is the leading for-profit developer of economically integrated neighborhoods, having developed 14,000 units of housing since 1973. This company creates developments according to new urbanism principles and attends to amenities, social services, schools, and partnerships with community organizations.

*SOURCE: Websites of the featured entities*

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Historically, community development corporations (CDCs) have played an important role in this strategy. They have worked to compensate for the failure of the housing market to provide for low-income families, promote a comprehensive neighborhood revitalization agenda, and ensure that resident interests are met. Evaluations of housing production and rehabilitation supported by CDCs in the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) network demonstrate positive results in terms of removing blight, invigorating housing markets, and increasing property values (Galster, 2005).

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### **HOPE VI SHOWS THAT PHYSICAL CHANGE, WHILE CRUCIAL, DOESN'T ALWAYS LEAVE RESIDENTS BETTER OFF**

The federal HOPE VI initiative has been the most ambitious low-income housing production program of the past 15 years. Investing \$6 billion in federal funds, HOPE VI has torn down or rehabilitated 100,000 units of blighted public housing and is replacing them with higher-quality, mixed-income developments.

HOPE VI does not fit into the definition of community change efforts described in this document because it is not a fully comprehensive approach and does not emphasize a community building philosophy: It was a physical revitalization program that included some supportive services for relocated residents. But HOPE VI, more than any other place-based initiative of the past two decades, has changed the face of poor neighborhoods. HOPE VI sites have experienced improved housing, reduced crime, and reductions in poverty, and there is some evidence of spillover effects that have led to greater investments in surrounding neighborhoods (Popkin et al., 2004).

The main criticism of HOPE VI is well known: In many locations, only a small percentage of the original public housing residents have returned to benefit from the new mixed-income housing; most have been displaced. (For instance, a 2002 study of eight early HOPE VI sites found that only 19 percent of surveyed residents returned to a revitalized HOPE VI development; see Buron et al., 2002.)

Evidence is beginning to show that those residents who received vouchers to move to new neighborhoods, and those who moved back into the improved housing, are doing at least as well and perhaps better than before HOPE VI (see Cisneros & Engdahl, 2009). But many others moved to other equally bad public housing, weren't eligible to return because of criminal records or employment status, or simply fell through the cracks. Those residents are no better off. Thus, for many neighborhood change advocates, the HOPE VI experience has been just another form of urban renewal that removed blight without attending to the rights and housing needs of the poorest and least empowered.

Newer housing construction initiatives are working on "development without displacement" or "responsible redevelopment" that watches out for the housing outcomes of original neighborhood residents. The East Baltimore Revitalization Project, for example, worked with 396 households to place them in good housing during the redevelopment phase and to guarantee their right to return once the construction is finished. In addition, HOPE VI is generating lessons about intentional efforts to promote mixed-income communities. Lessons from these efforts will need to be woven into HUD's Choice Neighborhoods initiative, the next generation of HOPE VI, and other major physical development efforts.

High-capacity CDCs blend physical development with other aspects of neighborhood change in responsive and responsible ways. They are special institutions in the American antipoverty landscape that were created by a convergence of public and philanthropic commitment to alleviating urban poverty from the mid-1960s to the mid-1990s. They are often uniquely positioned to implement a broad revitalization agenda in the most devastated neighborhoods.

Some policymakers, funders, and observers of CDCs also recognize flaws in the approach, however. One concern is that, almost by definition, CDCs concentrated their housing in low-income communities, whereas it is now commonly accepted that the goal should be to create mixed-income neighborhoods. A second concern is that many CDCs, especially smaller ones, failed to develop a broad revitalization mission, became narrowly focused on low-income housing production, and often were not efficient even in these more limited roles.

In the past decade, government funding streams for physical and economic development changed significantly and influenced the types of institutions working in the field. Tax credit financing for housing construction and neighborhood development, which took off in 1986 with the Low Income Housing Tax Credit, spawned the rapid growth of CDCs and nonprofit housing developers. During the following decade (1995–2005), a variety of new actors began to emerge in the physical and economic development arena, stimulated by the emergence of additional financing streams—notably HOPE VI, modifications of the Community Reinvestment Act, the Community Development Finance Institution (CDFI) Fund (created in 1994), the New Markets Tax Credit program of 2000, and most recently the Neighborhood Stabilization Fund (2008). Much of this funding came indirectly, through tax incentives, rather than through direct financing. This, one leader in the field put it, is “like feeding the sparrows through the horses.”

Driven by federal programs, by 2000 a number of other types of institutions had joined CDCs and nonprofit developers working in poor urban neighborhoods, including for-profit developers who could take advantage of tax credits,<sup>2</sup> quasi-public organizations,<sup>3</sup> more than 700 CDFIs, and other innovative investment or reinvestment funds. These entities have shown that private developers can be effective, efficient community developers. There is evidence that they can operate in ways that attend to a comprehensive agenda for neighborhood change, value responsiveness to residents’ needs, and be attentive to the “triple bottom line” of financial, social, and environmental returns on investment. In the words of one professional, “There is an incorrect idea that we developers prefer to work with disorganized communities so that we can just come in and have our way.

2. For example, McCormack Baron Salazar in St. Louis; Michaels in New Jersey; Integral in Atlanta; Beacon in Boston; William C. Smith in Washington, D.C.; Habitat in Chicago.

3. For example, the Times Square Alliance.

The truth is that we far prefer to work with organized communities that have a vision of what they want and a plan, because then we can work with them faster and better.”

Although the number of for-profit organizations and developers who pay attention to social as well as financial benefits appears to be growing, the risk of displacement is also increasing as the foreclosure crisis leaves large sections of poor neighborhoods vulnerable to land speculation and gentrification. The power imbalance between professional development entities and low-income families is self-evident, and strategies must be in place to ensure that community interests are represented and protected. This is a comparative advantage of community change efforts.

Observers of the field concur that opportunities for physical development will increase in the new few years, in spite of the economic downturn of 2009–10 and the mortgage foreclosure crisis. Several new types of public funding offer opportunities for local development, notably the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (the so-called “economic stimulus” funding), Choice Neighborhoods, the Partnership for Sustainable Communities, transit-oriented development, and “green” development.

Given that physical revitalization has been a powerful local engine of change in poor neighborhoods, it will be crucial for community-based efforts to develop the ability to tap into these funds or create alliances and partnerships that ensure these funds work effectively for their development. The greatest potential lies in combining the federally funded, large-scale physical development funding streams with the human development and community building work that local organizations can do so well. The challenge here is that capacity for accessing major public funds tends to exist in large public and private-sector institutions rather than at the community level, so creating effective working relationships between communities and developers is a priority agenda for the foreseeable future. This will be key to ensuring that the new infusions do not repeat the failings of urban renewal and lead to displacement of low-income residents.

### ***PROGRAMMATIC STRATEGY 3: ECONOMIC AND COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT INVESTMENTS***

Community change efforts have been able to count some successes in commercial development. Community-based actors have worked in partnership with local government and developers to plan retail spaces and commercial corridors with stores, restaurants, services, entertainment, and other businesses that serve residents’ needs and help stabilize a community. Local merchants have developed associations to boost commercial areas, improve safety, and attract new business-

es and new customers. Government has provided incentives in the form of tax credits, Empowerment Zones, Enterprise Communities, business improvement districts, and so on. Anchor institutions, notably universities and hospitals, can also play important roles in supporting local businesses because the scale of their procurement needs is significant.

However, the community change efforts reviewed here have had little success stimulating broader local economic development because too many of the forces that drive economic activity lie outside the control of neighborhood actors—or even of more powerful local actors in city or county government. If the larger metropolitan economy is vital, then even the poorest neighborhoods have the opportunity—though not the certainty—of benefiting from that vitality. A good example is the experience of Harlem, New York City, over the past decade. In these cases, the task of neighborhood actors is to ensure that the benefits of the growth accrue to lower- and moderate-income residents, and that they are not displaced through gentrification.

If the larger region suffers from economic stagnation, as is the case in many declining industrial centers in the Northeast and Midwest or parts of rural America, then it is highly unlikely that a neighborhood-level intervention can have a significant impact on poverty and related indicators of community well-being. So, for example, the strategies that might have worked in the 20th century, such as providing tax incentives for manufacturing companies to locate in a particular community (known as “smokestack chasing”), prove fragile in the global economy of the 21st century. The global economic restructuring of the past two decades and the economic crisis of 2008–10 have had devastating consequences for poor communities in America, making the economic development challenge even more acute.

More recently, the field of community change has been influenced by the emergence of “regionalism”—that is, the recognition that regional economic dynamics are critical determinants of employment, business development, demographic shifts, infrastructure investments, and so on. In retrospect, too many of the community initiatives of the past 20 years were designed as though the broader macrotrends were factors whose impact could be controlled or countered by community-level efforts. The regionalism movement helps community change leaders integrate these broader trends into their analysis of community assets and into their plans. They are assisted by increasingly sophisticated scholarship on regionalism that has emerged over the past decade from such sources as the Brookings Institute, the Institute on Race and Poverty at the University of Minnesota, and the Center for Justice, Tolerance, and Community at the University of California–Santa Cruz.

At the practice level, community-based efforts find it feasible to work on connecting neighborhood residents to economic opportunities that present themselves in the larger region—through, for example, sectoral employment programs and transportation strategies that link workers to jobs, or by organizing residents to ensure they obtain jobs in major industrial or civic development projects in the region. This approach to regionalism, however, is limited to connecting individuals to the regional economy.

A more ambitious approach to economic revitalization in poor communities would aim to ensure that low- and moderate-income neighborhoods get their share of the larger region’s economic spoils. New frameworks, analyses, and tools are emerging that help antipoverty practitioners understand communities in a regional context and guide decisions about community economic development strategies. Most attempt to classify the assets, problems, and potential of communities and offer typologies of communities that have implications for action. While in the early 2000s, the field was making basic distinctions between “hot/strong” and “cold/weak” markets, more nuanced distinctions are now being made among low-income communities. For example, these analyses distinguish between (a) poor communities that are historically disinvested and made up of long-term low-income residents, (b) communities that are poor but have a stable housing and worker base, and (c) communities that are poor but dynamic in that they are “receiving neighborhoods” and launching pads for new immigrants.

These new tools for thinking regionally include the following:

- ***The Dynamic Neighborhood Taxonomy*** tool, developed by RW Ventures, which enables cities and neighborhoods to see how they fit into the regional economic landscape
- ***The Community Vitality Index***, developed by the Metro Chicago Information Center, which combines various databases and geographic information systems to quantify the relative potential of Chicago neighborhoods
- ***The Communities of Opportunity*** framework and the opportunity maps developed by the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity at Ohio State University

In addition, organizations such as PolicyLink and the Funders’ Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities translate these new technologies to policymakers, funders, and practitioners. They also identify, track, and assess development strategies that adopt a regional orientation.

One innovative direction in community economic development revolves around assessing the comparative advantage of specific communities and developing ways for them to fill a specialized economic niche, much the same way that businesses develop plans to specialize and profit in the marketplace. In urban centers, planners have found opportunities to make abandoned inner-city neighborhoods attractive for artists' galleries, coffee houses, and performance spaces. They actively market these attractions to artists, gay or childless couples, and students, who in turn attract commercial services and housing development. Funds targeted to environmental projects and energy-saving businesses have also spurred innovative local development projects ranging from housing rehabilitation and retrofitting in Detroit to urban agriculture experiments in many inner

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## TYPES OF INSTITUTIONS WORKING ON ECONOMIC AND COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN POOR NEIGHBORHOODS

**Locally driven commercial development:** The Greater Southwest Development Corporation, a long-standing CDC, currently is part of the LISC-MacArthur New Communities Program in Chicago. It has attracted or retained more than \$500 million in commercial enterprises for the Greater Marquette Park area since 1974. The local Growth Commission supports commercial development and growth by providing business consultation and services, site identification, advertising, help keeping the area clean and graffiti free, and so on. Newer approaches to strengthening local commerce also include marketing programs that encourage residents to buy locally, avoid “big box” stores, and use farmers’ markets.

**Community Development Financial Institutions:** More than 700 CDFIs have grown up across the country to enable local business and commercial development in low-income communities. ShoreBank is the best known of those that have made significant enough investments in poor neighborhoods to affect commercial activity and employment. For example, ShoreBank Enterprise Cleveland has invested nearly \$14 million in Cleveland businesses and supported the creation of more than 4,000 jobs.

**Sectoral business development:** The Pennsylvania Fresh Food Financing Initiative (FFFI) increases the number of supermarkets and other grocery stores in underserved areas of the state. As of June 2009, FFFI had committed \$57.9 million in grants and loans to 74 supermarket projects in 27 Pennsylvania counties, ranging in size from 900 to 69,000 square feet. In total, these projects are expected to create or retain 4,854 jobs and more than 1.5 million square feet of food retail. The Reinvestment Fund, a leading CDFI in the field, helps manage the initiative and provides technical and financial support to stores.

**Assessing and building on local comparative advantage:** Urban and rural regions are thinking strategically about the unique attributes of their localities and coming up with economic development strategies that build on them. These are as diverse as the development of a wind turbine company in Miner County, S.D.; the encouragement of art galleries in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn, N.Y.; organic dairy farming in northern California; and the creation of a Mississippi Delta Heritage tour in four states along the southern Mississippi River.

*SOURCE: Websites of the featured entities.*

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cities. This approach to revitalization has many unknown aspects, including what level of investment is required and whether the approach is powerful enough to serve as an engine of economic development in very poor communities.

## **Community Building and Community Capacity Investments**

In addition to programmatic outcomes, community change efforts also aim to create stronger and more resilient communities through community building investments. Most stakeholders describe community building work as an effort to give voice and authority to individuals and organizations that can legitimately represent community interests. Community building also is meant to strengthen social and civic relationships among community residents.

Community building is simultaneously a lens that guides how the work is done and a deliberate type of investment. In the former case, it is a value that requires programmatic activities to be designed, implemented, and evaluated in ways that are participatory, build local capacity, and strengthen positive and productive relationships among stakeholders. In the latter case, it is a set of individual and community capacity building actions.

There are four general lines of investment in community building: developing individual leaders; increasing organizational capacity; increasing social capital and sense of community among residents; and increasing civic capacity across the neighborhood's individuals and organizations, especially building more effective partnerships and collaborations among organizations within the neighborhood and beyond (Auspos, 2005).

Virtually all of the efforts reviewed here proudly point to accomplishments on the community building front. While evidence of these increases in capacity and connections is hard to quantify, the qualitative evidence, the anecdotes and stories, and the conviction expressed by those who are engaged in the work are powerful.

For some people in this field, community building outcomes are valid indicators of success in their own right. This constituency places high value on strengthening the participatory democratic process among society's disempowered and alienated members. For others, community building is a means to an end; they are concerned that community building can become too much about "process" and "feel-good" strategies if programmatic outcomes don't follow, and that community building might even distract from the real work of poverty reduction. While many people are tempted to gloss over this distinction and accept that the work is "both/and," this issue is a constant, unresolved source of contention in the field. The clearest dichotomy is between community activists who are

deeply aware of the lack of power, resources, and hope in poor communities, and funders (both public and private) who need to account for their investments and demonstrate material results to a set of stakeholders.

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## COMMUNITY CHANGE EFFORTS WITH A STRONG EMPHASIS ON COMMUNITY BUILDING AND STRONG RESULTS

During the late 1990s, Minneapolis’s **Hope Community** began the process of transforming itself from a homeless shelter into a center for community organizing and visioning for the neighborhood. Hope’s work engages over 500 youth and adults each year in learning, leadership, art, community dialogue, and organizing. It builds extensive community networks and partnerships to benefit the broader community. When it became clear that run-down and drug-infested buildings were at the root of the problems in the neighborhood, Hope Community reluctantly took on the task of acquiring and rehabbing buildings and transformed the Franklin-Portland intersection.

Since 1998, the **Jacobs Family Foundation** and **Jacobs Center for Neighborhood Innovation** have partnered with an underinvested San Diego community to identify and painstakingly acquire 45 blighted and underutilized properties that could be put back into productive use. Following Jacobs’s philosophy of “resident ownership of neighborhood change,” the Village at Market Creek is being planned and designed, and will ultimately be owned, by community residents. Over the past 12 years, the Jacobs Foundations have leveraged \$20 million in investment in the Village to attract an additional \$60 million in investment from approximately 18 public and private investment partners.

**New Song Urban Ministries** is a church-based Christian community development association in the highly distressed Sandtown neighborhood of Baltimore. Begun in 1988, New Song gradually built a set of activities to fill critical housing, education, health, and employment needs for residents. Its mission is strongly rooted in a vision for a community of faith, in which residents come together in common purpose and take charge of the neighborhood’s well-being. New Song’s accomplishments include a contract school and 270 units of Habitat for Humanity housing.

The **Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative** (DSNI) in Boston has, since 1984, engaged in community planning and organizing to address the physical, economic, social, and human revitalization of a devastated community. Through the unprecedented acquisition of eminent domain and partnership with the city, DSNI established a community land trust with permanently affordable housing and antireforeclosure protections. Under the leadership of residents, DSNI has brought together many stakeholders to create a vibrant community.

**Latino Health Access** trains community residents as *promotores*—advocates who go door to door in a community of otherwise isolated immigrants in Santa Ana, Calif. Initially, the *promotores* focused only on diabetes control, but as they developed trust and relationships they took on more difficult issues, such as domestic violence and substance abuse. They recently organized to gain control of unused city property and raised funds to develop a park that children and adults can use for physical and social activity.

**Lawrence CommunityWorks** has numerous outreach and organizing strategies based on network theory and has developed a decentralized approach to promoting co-investment in family and neighborhood change with residents and others (as opposed to a focus on just “resident

engagement”). Its 5,000 members participate in civic or programmatic activities in ways that match their needs, desires, talents, and interests. Launched in 1986 as a CDC focused on winning land rights for affordable housing construction, the organization now covers a wide range of social, physical, and economic development activities. It also has a department dedicated to civic engagement and fostering leadership around social change, and a department dedicated to peer learning and sharing with other organizations around the country.

While it is difficult to generalize from these six distinct community change efforts, they have some common characteristics:

- **They are all deeply committed to resident leadership and ownership** (economic or political) of the work, and their legitimacy and power derive from this commitment. They are clear that their locus of accountability is the community. They have developed governance and management structures that reflect and operationalize this value. They are willing to take the time required to ensure that the community owns the work, and they never short-circuit that process. In the words of Susan Tibbels of New Song Urban Ministries: “Our mission is to love God and neighbor, not just to run a good school. That’s not just semantics, it’s a philosophical difference. At heart is relationships, people, and how we relate to each other.” The personal commitment of individuals to each other and the community is what motivates the work, and that personal commitment can be translated into the organization’s mission. America Bracho of Latino Health Access says, “You recruit the heart, not the brain. You can train the brain, but not the heart.”
- **They are organic in that they grow out of neighborhood strengths and needs** rather than being dictated or constrained by external agendas. They take the time they need to “do things right.” They do not see themselves as having a start and end date. They learn as they go and they build out their scope of work as successes accrue, as residents voice new demands, as needs become evident, and as opportunities arise.
- **None is limited by a single programmatic priority**, but neither do they set out to be “comprehensive.” Their entry point is just that: an entry point that builds experience, legitimacy, and institutional capacity and is the first step on a long-term journey of community change.
- **All have found it necessary to engage in some kind of physical development** in their community. Some have done so as their core activity, while for others the physical development—such as housing or a park—was seen as key to achieving other goals.
- **Like every successful organization, they benefit from extraordinary leaders** who successfully balance community building processes with an ability to “get the job done.” They have ambitious visions, but they also are strategic, realistic, and pragmatic about what they have undertaken. Their strategies match their spheres of influence. They know how to be opportunistic and take advantage of policy openings and investment opportunities as they come along, without being distracted from their central mission.
- **Unlike many traditional CCIs, they are not “sponsored” by a single funder.** Instead, they have a variety of funding sources and are not associated with a particular funder. The Jacobs Family Foundation is the notable exception in this group: It is an embedded funder that uses its resources in ways that are different from traditional philanthropy and has a long-term commitment to the neighborhood. (See chapter 5; and Sojourner et al., 2004.)

*SOURCE: Websites of the featured entities*

The absence of convincing evidence that increased community capacity leads to better outcomes at the individual, family, or community level exacerbates this long-standing schism. Such evidence would require sophisticated demonstration research and evaluation, which, to date, funders have been unwilling to support. At this moment, however, the field as a whole has become sophisticated enough about how to define community building and the community building theory of change that such research would be possible.

### **COMMUNITY- AND CAPACITY-BUILDING STRATEGY 1: LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND SKILLS BUILDING**

This field abounds with stories of individuals who worked in community change efforts and then became community leaders, rose to management positions within their organizations, or moved into leadership positions beyond their communities. Clearly, there are some attributes of a community building approach that, by their very nature, spawn leadership. The emphasis on community participation means that there are multiple avenues for residents to engage and to play leadership roles. The fact that community building is not a specialized and credentialized profession but, rather, a way of relating to people, institutions, and communities creates opportunities for people who might otherwise be excluded from community development or social services work for lack of training. And the emphasis on youth engagement means that people have an opportunity to mature within the context of community change work.

Leaders who emerge from community change work may be different from other leaders in the sense that they are used to thinking about the interrelated causes of poverty and community distress and are comfortable reaching beyond particular programmatic domains. They follow strong values about promoting resident engagement and forging partnerships. As a result, they have unique experience and skills around comprehensive planning, community engagement, and forming strategic alliances.

Community change efforts have so many constituencies and moving parts that the bar for what constitutes an effective leader is high—perhaps inhumanly high. The qualities of good leadership in community change efforts, listed below, might not exist in a single individual, but they characterize the collective working style of all of the individuals and organizations engaged in community change work. They include the ability to

- Appreciate the complexity of issues and interactions while maintaining a focus on goals and driving toward medium- and longer-term outcomes
- Inspire hope and urgency among colleagues

- Implement programs effectively
- Use community-level data to analyze and mobilize the community
- Interact across technical and sectoral boundaries
- Interact effectively across race, class, and cultural differences
- Recognize the power bases that can enhance or impede change and engage effectively with them
- Establish and maintain trust with a wide range of constituents
- Be opportunistic and take advantage of new political openings, policy trends, funding streams, and economic upswings
- Be entrepreneurial with regard to funding
- Be open to learning, creating feedback loops to manage internally and to learn and adapt

Leadership development is almost always a goal of community change efforts, but a few have been explicit about this part of their work and built in targeted leadership strategies. The Northwest Area Foundation, for example, developed its Horizons program to increase residents' capacity to understand the nature of poverty in their communities and then work together to develop solutions. In most cases, however, leaders have emerged as community residents assume jobs or governance positions in the change effort (as in the Jacobs Center for Neighborhood Innovation); or as initiative staff move on to foundations (as in the Skillman Foundation), to intermediaries (as in LISC in Chicago), or to leadership positions in city government (in San Francisco and Savannah, for example). Indeed, the community change field can boast alumni in many public, private, and nonprofit positions today. Perhaps the clearest current example is in the Obama administration, which has employed many leaders from the community building field. Their influence can be seen in the administration's emphasis on place-based approaches that cross sectoral boundaries and value community participation.

Most traditional leadership development programs do not map well onto the demands of the community change field. Leadership programs focus on individuals, whereas community building focuses on developing the capacity of a community, group, team, or organization. Moreover, some express concern that

the formal leadership programs identify high-capacity individuals, give them skills, and open avenues for them to work outside the community rather than within it (although they do not begrudge individuals who make that choice). The challenge for the field is to increase the pace of leadership development by identifying and nurturing potential leaders, supporting and encouraging existing leaders, and creating growth opportunities for them at all levels within the field. Recognizing that young people might provide new and energetic leadership, several place-based efforts have reached out to youth as organizers and community researchers.

### **COMMUNITY- AND CAPACITY-BUILDING STRATEGY 2: ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING**

Organizational capacity building strategies generally aim to help community-based organizations implement their programmatic work more effectively, broaden their scope of work, and bring community residents and priorities more to the center of the stage. Some examples include:

- The Comprehensive Community Revitalization Program (CCRP) initiated by the Surdna Foundation in the South Bronx (and since replicated through LISC, first in Chicago and now nationally through the Sustainable Communities program) targeted high-capacity CDCs and asked them to take on a broader and more ambitious community change agenda.
- The Annie E. Casey Foundation’s Rebuilding Communities Initiative increased the capacity of several CDCs to deliver social services and expand their human development work.
- The Neighborhood Partners Initiative, funded by the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, strengthened the capacity of five neighborhood agencies in Harlem and the South Bronx, New York City, to carry out neighborhood improvement projects such as refurbishing parks, promoting neighborhood safety, providing youth services, and advocating for better public services.
- The Ford Foundation’s Neighborhood and Family Initiative aimed to develop the capacity of community foundations to take on a comprehensive community change agenda.

These and other initiatives demonstrate that community change efforts can enhance and strengthen the capacity of the organizations that house them. Not

all organizations thrive in the context of community change work, however. The Hewlett Neighborhood Improvement Initiative experienced two problematic organizational relationships: The implementing organization for the 7th Street McClymonds Corridor Neighborhood Improvement Initiative dissolved three years into the initiative, and the Mexican American Community Services Agency withdrew as the lead agency in Mayfair after five months. Similarly, a well-known CDC in the South Bronx withdrew from the Comprehensive Community Revitalization Program early on.

The problems that organizations encounter in community change initiatives can be either about managing the work or managing relationships. The capacities required to grow from a singular focus—on housing development, say, or service delivery—to a more comprehensive agenda should not be underestimated. Community change efforts require different types of skills and actions at the level of board, staff, and administration. They also require relationships with a broad array of individuals and organizations, which have to be managed carefully. This takes the time and energy of key staff and requires cooperation, power sharing, and collective accountability. If the community change enterprise and the mission of the organization aren't well aligned, problems arise.

Not every organization can or should carry out a comprehensive community change agenda. For many, the better strategy is to stay within the bounds of existing expertise and collaborate with others on a more comprehensive neighborhood agenda. For this reason, funders should be cautious about encouraging organizations to move beyond their comfort zone. (For a detailed discussion of challenges in managing the organizations and relationships involved in a broad community change effort, see Brown & Fiester, 2007.)

Is it better to (a) house a community change effort in an organization that is already strong, either programmatically or in terms of community building; (b) invest in building the capacity of a weak institution; or (c) develop a new entity to carry out the work? The answer depends on the purpose of intervention.

If the primary goal is to implement activities efficiently in order to produce programmatic outcomes at the individual or community level, then the work should be housed in a very strong organization that has proven its capacity to implement programs and achieve outcomes. The work is hard enough, and over-taxing a weak organization is a recipe for failure. If the goal is to develop new voices, democratize the change process, broaden the agenda of work, or build capacity, the intervention might be better if housed in organizations that are less program driven and that interact with a range of community actors.

In many distressed communities, there is little choice: There are few or no high-capacity organizations, and individual leaders are stretched too thinly to take on a comprehensive new agenda or challenge traditional power bases, as

a community change effort requires. And there often is little history of success or trust on which to build an expansive program of work. In these neighborhoods, the starting point might well be fragile organizations that need systematic strengthening before they can take on an ambitious agenda. Creating a brand-new entity should only be a last resort and should only be contemplated if the sponsor or funder can make a long-term commitment to its institutional development and survival. Funders and other initiators of community change efforts must assess capacity and align their type and level of investment to goals that are achievable in context.

Very often, programmatic capacity and community building capacity do not reside in the same institution. Unfortunately, there are many accounts of efforts that initially had empowerment and capacity building goals but were judged—usually prematurely and negatively—by whether they achieved programmatic outcomes. Or, funders chose effective service delivery agencies and housing developers as lead agencies for their initiative but these entities had difficulty adopting the mind-set of a participatory community building process. Without clarity and consistency of purpose, neither programmatic outcomes nor increased capacity can be achieved.

**One trend that foundations have promoted and sponsored over the past decade** involves improving the management practices of nonprofit organizations. For example, the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation altered its grant-making strategies to focus on strengthening the capacity of successful organizations working to improve outcomes for disadvantaged youth to scale up, notably including the Harlem Children’s Zone. One indicator of this philanthropic trend is that the foundation affinity group Grantmakers for Effective Organizations grew over the past decade from an informal handful of funders to a group of 350 philanthropies focusing on building strong nonprofit organizations.

Over the past decade, traditional management consulting companies have boosted their nonprofit work. Bain and Company launched Bridgespan in 2000 as a management consulting firm specializing in nonprofits; McKinsey and Company has been actively involved in several foundation-sponsored community change efforts; and Monitor, a group of business advising companies, launched the Monitor Institute to work with social and environmental organizations. “Social investors” have also brought organizational development and management practices from the private sector into the social services and community development fields.

**The organizational capacity building work described here has generally been** built into the design of a community change effort, and its primary purpose has been to enhance the intervention’s results. In some places, however, organiza-

tional capacity building has an even broader mission: to strengthen the capacity and infrastructure of the overall neighborhood. For example, the theory of change guiding the Skillman Foundation's work is that youth outcomes in Detroit will increase if there is a well-developed system of supports and opportunities for youth in each neighborhood. Skillman is pursuing various strategies to strengthen the network of child and youth development, educational, civic, and other organizations in the neighborhoods, whether or not they are foundation grantees. In the New Communities Program in Chicago, a primary goal is to strengthen the organizational infrastructure of the 16 target neighborhoods. LISC describes this work as "building the platform" for ongoing and effective community change work. The Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation has modified its grant-making to emphasize building local, state, and regional "infrastructure" to move people and places in the South out of poverty.

This pattern could signal an important new direction for the role of philanthropy in community change. As one community-based practitioner put it, "Don't fund an organization. Fund a community."

### **COMMUNITY- AND CAPACITY-BUILDING STRATEGY 3:** *SOCIAL CAPITAL BUILDING*

Increased social capital and "connectedness" among residents is a core goal of almost all community change efforts. *Social capital* refers to "features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit" (Putnam, 1995). Community change efforts seek to build social capital in distressed communities for affective reasons—to ameliorate the corrosive effect that extreme poverty can have on interpersonal bonds and supports—and for instrumental reasons—to build the civic, economic, and political power of residents for collective action and community improvement.

The value placed on building social capital is grounded in multiple theories. Literature on child and youth development stresses the importance of nurturing relationships for successful outcomes. Community development research cites the importance of neighboring for good property maintenance. Sociological research on collective efficacy documents its relationship to reducing crime. Immigrant experience highlights the importance of social networks for successful settlement of newcomers. And community organizing and empowerment models emphasize the development of relationships for collective action.

For some, increasing social capital also has the goal of changing the norms or culture of the community. The rationale for attempting this level of cultural change emerges out of the mounting literature describing effects of neighborhood conditions—broadly defined to include community norms—on individual and family well-being. In addition, outcomes from the Gautreaux Project provide

evidence to support social science research on the effects of neighborhood circumstances on individual behavior (Turner and Briggs, 2008).

Thus, regardless of the entry point—whether the on-the-ground intervention orients toward child outcomes, physical development, or community empowerment—community change efforts find value in increasing social capital and creating a sense of community.

Efforts to build social capital focus on creating social, cultural, psychological, and civic connections among neighborhood residents. The premise is that strong communities both supply and depend on interpersonal connections among individuals and families. Those connections create a sense of community and provide supports in the form of neighboring (e.g., picking up mail when a neighbor is out of town, shoveling snow off the walk for an elderly neighbor), family support (e.g., shared babysitting), or informal information sharing (e.g., about after-school programs, church activities, employment opportunities).

Many community change efforts organize regular community gatherings and celebrations that include food, recreation, and cultural events to bring residents together in informal ways. Others deliberately build one-on-one relationships among residents, such as the “parent ambassadors” in the Making Connections–White Center (Seattle) site, who stay in regular touch with designated households and provide information about health care, school, and community resources. Still others pursue classic community organizing and outreach strategies.

The fundamental prerequisite for increasing social capital is no different from the prerequisite for any programmatic outcome: intentionality, in the form of deliberate investment in actions designed to produce the desired outcome. Staff time allocations, governance structures, funding decisions, outreach strategies, and so on must be determined according to how likely they are to increase social capital.

A good illustration of this fact comes from the literature on housing development. One of the theories behind the rationale for mixed-income housing efforts such as HOPE VI is that poor youth with unemployed parents will be positively influenced by being in the vicinity of middle-class neighbors who go to work every day. However, a comprehensive literature review found no evidence that this occurred (Joseph, 2006). Conversely, a study of three CDC housing communities by Briggs and Mueller shows that “where CDCs were able to expand residents’ casual ties and networks of acquaintances, it was because the CDC staff made intensive, ongoing, sustained efforts to create social connections among residents” (LaPrade & Auspos, 2006). Thus, even when an intervention aims to increase a less concrete outcome, such as social capital, activities must be deliberate and not simply the hoped-for by-product of other strategies.

There is evidence that social capital building strategies can affect the knowledge and actions of individual residents of a community. The broader and still unanswered policy question is whether community change efforts can positively impact the culture or behavioral norms of an entire community. One aim of the Harlem Children’s Zone is to change norms about parent-child interactions by teaching parents to use richer and more positive language when they communicate with their children. Similarly, in New Song, parents have been encouraged to read to their preschool children and now do so at higher rates. The Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH) project, sponsored by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, seeks to change norms for weight, diet, and exercise and to encourage community residents to support each other’s weight control efforts. All three of these can demonstrate behavioral changes at the individual level. As yet, it is unclear whether these individual-level changes can aggregate to community-wide change and whether place-based efforts can catalyze this level of change.

***COMMUNITY- AND CAPACITY-BUILDING STRATEGY 4: CIVIC CAPACITY—  
COMMUNITY DATA ANALYSIS, PLANNING, AND ORGANIZING***

The broadest community building goal is to increase community civic capacity, defined as “the ability to influence or shape policy, practice, and resources in the public, nonprofit, for-profit, and philanthropic sectors in ways that increase the scale, scope, and effectiveness of community change activities” (Auspos et al., 2009). Civic capacity is a key goal for community change interventions because it has the potential to trigger ongoing improvements in outcomes for individuals, families, and communities over the long run. The community change field is still young in this arena; evidence about how to do it and what it accomplishes are still emerging. Still, the strategies that community change efforts can and do pursue to enhance their communities’ civic capacity are becoming clearer. Three have dominated the recent generation of efforts: community data analysis, community planning, and community organizing.

***Community Data Analysis***

The community change field has used—and strengthened—methods for community data collection and analysis. For example, the Redwood Coast Rural Action initiative in four Northern California counties brought together two universities and the Humboldt Area Foundation in an effort to develop accurate data about the regional economy for planning, action, and advocacy. The Annie E. Casey Foundation established local learning partnerships in Making Connections sites that involve residents and organizations in collecting, analyzing, and using data

to assess community circumstances and advocate for change. The Rockefeller Foundation’s Community Planning and Action Program helped local institutions build data capacity—sometimes at a university (e.g., Case Western Reserve in Cleveland) and sometimes through a nonprofit (Urban Strategies Council in Oakland and DC Agenda in Washington). This laid the foundation for what has become one of the most important new resources in the community change field, the National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership, a consortium of local data intermediaries connected through the Urban Institute.

Community data can facilitate more than just the technical dimensions of planning; it also serves political ends. The term *democratization of data* emerged over the past decade to capture this aspect of data use, and more public access is indeed occurring. The increased availability of community-level data has already begun to give residents information they can use to advocate for and hold institutions accountable to neighborhood needs, and it has the potential to become an even more powerful resource in the future.

### **Community Planning**

A second strategy that CCIs and other community interventions use to build local civic capacity is a participatory neighborhood planning process that brings local voices, knowledge, and commitment together into a vision for the neighborhood’s future. The availability of local area data has improved these planning processes significantly. The planning process launched by the Comprehensive Community Revitalization Program (CCRP) in the South Bronx has become a sort of guidepost for the field. CCRP developed five neighborhood plans that drove the initiative. Its planning model served as a guide for the MacArthur/LISC New Communities Program in Chicago and, ultimately, in LISC’s nationwide Sustainable Communities initiative. Other neighborhood-driven planning processes make use of door-to-door surveys, living room meetings, locally decided small grants programs, and traditional community organizing around local priorities. Community plans have served not only as a way for residents to come together for common purpose but also as a launch pad for neighborhood action and interaction with outside entities.

Practitioners and organizers have developed high-quality, comprehensive community planning processes that various stakeholders view as legitimate by applying the following guidelines:

- ***Beware of community “gatekeepers”*** whose voices and opinions are most easily heard by outside funders, technical assistance providers, and facilitators. Effective community planning processes utilize strategies to elicit and incorporate the views and participation of less-visible,

less-outspoken, and less-connected residents. The youth organizing field, for example, has developed innovative ways of reaching disengaged youth.

- ***Not every community resident has to be involved all the time.*** Community participation can and should vary according to the outcomes sought and the effort's stage of development. It is now clear, for example, that employment programs do not require broad community engagement; rather, they need individuals and institutions to link residents with training programs and employers. Neighborhood safety programs, on the other hand, often need to engage youth, parents, the elderly, social service providers, police departments, and local housing authorities.
- ***Community planning is not constant.*** In some cases, a participatory planning process occurs at the beginning of an initiative and establishes a platform for future work. In other cases, such as with the University of Pennsylvania's West Philadelphia Initiative, outreach only occurs when the management needs local input into a specific project. One caveat is that some communities have been victims of overplanning, with different outside entities conducting separate, overlapping, and sometimes contradictory planning processes in the same area. When this happens, the planning process is delegitimized and residents become cynical. To avoid this, some local offices in LISC's Sustainable Communities initiative are building on preexisting community plans. Although they may sacrifice some buy-in and momentum that come from developing a new community plan, they avoid reinventing the wheel.
- ***Planning shouldn't substitute for action.*** A major challenge is how and when to move from planning to action. While some of the early CCIs spent as long as two years on planning, it has become clear that two years is too long for most stakeholders to stay engaged. Current efforts have a shorter planning cycle and move more fluidly, and organically, between planning and acting. For example, they might embark on some early "quick wins" to gain traction and momentum, even as they build strategies for broader institutional and policy reform. One of the earliest leaders in the CCI field advocated for "planning while doing" and insisted that planning stood hand in hand with action—never alone.

## ***Community Organizing***

In the early years of traditional CCIs, much of the community organizing work fell under the broad umbrella of “consensus organizing.” Advocates of this approach focused on the fact that comprehensive change in the most disinvested communities required effective working relationships across a multitude of community, private, and public institutions. Since poor communities had long been disconnected from outside entities, the key to sustained long-term change was to build cooperative connections. Critics of this approach suggested that community builders were naïve about the realities of power arrangements and where vested interests lay. They faulted CCIs for not having strong community advocacy/organizing components and for designing apolitical but programmatically sound neighborhood change strategies. Instead, they argued, community change agents should be prepared to confront and make demands on a wide range of institutions that can determine the neighborhood’s trajectory.

Over the past decade, community organizing has broadened in ways that emphasize matching organizing strategies to specific issues, community histories, and leadership capacities and cultures. Virtually all of the work focuses broadly on holding the public and private sectors accountable to the community. Many community change efforts aim to help community residents and interests get to the governance table and stay actively involved. Along the way, organizing directly addresses the distrust and apathy that can grow in the wake of false promises and inconsistency.

On the public sector side, organizing efforts advocate for local government to provide new services or programs for the neighborhood, such as parks and garbage pickup, or to fulfill its existing responsibilities (around, say, code enforcement or policing). They also work to ensure that government programs are implemented effectively by mobilizing residents to take advantage of existing benefits, such as EITC or state child health insurance programs. Some of the more innovative projects encourage residents to get into “the business of government,” as Lawrence CommunityWorks does when it teaches citizens about public budgeting and encourages them to advocate for the community at key moments in the policy cycle.

Organizing and advocacy targeted at the private sector generally focus on ensuring that the community benefits from new investments in housing, infrastructure, and economic development. In many of the largest city redevelopment activities, such as Atlantic Yards in Brooklyn and the Staples Center in Los Angeles, resident mobilization has ensured that community benefits agreements are in place to guarantee jobs at family-supporting wages, affordable housing, local hiring, responsible contracting, and investments in parks and recreation. In Denver, for instance, two neighborhoods that were part of the Annie E. Casey

Foundation's Making Connections initiative bordered on the site where a major manufacturing plant was scheduled for redevelopment. Casey provided grants to a coalition of community groups, convened by the Front Range Economic Strategy Center, that worked together to ensure that the developer agreed to decent jobs, affordable housing, environmental cleanup procedures, a ban on big-box stores, and other conditions to benefit local residents as a condition for receiving city subsidies.

Two critiques persist about the ways in which current community change efforts approach community organizing. The first revolves around whether the organizing work genuinely hears and represents the perspectives of area residents. There is an ongoing sense that the professionals, organizational staff, and community gatekeepers who run initiatives dominate the agenda-setting process and actions. In this view, community organizing is meant to create buy-in for theories of change and outcomes that are externally defined. Questions that remain are whether and how a community change effort initiated from the outside can achieve genuine community responsiveness, representativeness, and, perhaps most important, trust.

The second critique is that community organizing in this field still avoids addressing the fundamental power imbalances that structure opportunity in America. It is organizing for the narrower ends of projects or initiatives, which thus swims against the tide of powerful interests, that maintains the status quo or, at best, treat only the symptoms. Because those interests are racially organized, the empowerment work is even more complex than issue- or class-based organizing. Emerging regional equity efforts, such as those pursued by the Gamaliel Metro Equity Campaigns, are beginning to take on this set of issues. New organizing efforts focused on youth and immigrants might also inject new energy in this work and help strengthen the social and political potential of organizing among highly mobile populations.

## **Investments that Facilitate Engagement between the Community and External Institutions and Systems**

Community change efforts operate on the assumption that a healthy community depends on effective alignment among the capacities and resources of three major sectors:

- The community, including nonprofit organizations, for-profits, and individuals in the community
- The public sector, including public agencies, investments, officials, and policies

- The private sector, meaning primarily business and real estate investment and activity

Many community change efforts describe this work as “systems change,” although the definition of *systems change* and its expected outcomes is somewhat murky. Some describe their local work as an entry point for larger efforts to dismantle existing relations of power and privilege; they speak in ambitious terms about their transformative social, political, and economic agenda and articulate visions of a more equitable society. But even those that make more modest statements about their objectives build in some kind of link between their local, programmatic work and larger policy and system reform. They aim to generate improvements in sclerotic systems—usually public sector systems—so that they encourage and support, rather than discourage or undermine, effective and innovative work at the local level.

When community change efforts describe their own external engagement, they tend to highlight three strategies: illuminating and legitimizing community-level work and community priorities, brokering and aligning efforts, and building partnerships with powerful allies. Stepping back and viewing the field as a whole, it is apparent that there is a fourth, less tangible way in which these community efforts have influenced systems over the years: The core principles they follow and the capacities they build have infiltrated the language, frameworks, and methods of public and philanthropic leaders in the antipoverty, social services, and community development arenas.

#### **EXTERNAL ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY 1: ILLUMINATING AND LEGITIMIZING COMMUNITY PRIORITIES TO STIMULATE INVESTMENT**

At the most basic level, the mere presence of an effort that structures work and funding on behalf of a community can lift it up, make it more visible, and give it greater legitimacy. Causality is difficult to ascertain, but stakeholders in community change efforts point to examples of how their work has influenced the overall policy environment in ways that have had a positive effect on their communities or the issues that matter to them. For example, community efforts usually begin by assessing community needs, gathering data, and creating opportunities for stakeholders to discuss what needs to be done. In this process, the community begins to take the lead in setting an agenda that, in turn, has a positive influence on external decision-makers and power brokers.

In the Redwood Coast Rural Action initiative, for example, community leaders worked to increase broad public awareness about economic and environmental alternatives for the future of Northern California. Having laid that foundation, they reached out to policymakers and business leaders to support a new vision

for the region's future. The collaborative process resulted in lawmaker support for innovative state policies to promote widespread public access to broadband communications throughout rural California, which was viewed as a prerequisite to regional economic development.

Many initiatives have tried to quantify changes in the amount of funding that flows to neighborhoods (for economic development, housing, social services, education, parks, and public services) in order to show that their efforts focused external attention on their communities. Most of the community-based efforts reviewed here report that they leveraged new public, private, and philanthropic resources on behalf of neighborhoods:

- According to MDRC's evaluation of the New Communities Program in Chicago, the lead agencies report leveraging more than \$250 million in housing-related investments for the 16 neighborhoods and almost \$100 million for economic development, public space, public policy, education, and social services.
- The CCRP initiative reported that it used Surdna's \$9.4 million philanthropic investment to leverage \$44 million in additional investments in its South Bronx neighborhoods.
- The presence of Annie E. Casey Foundation funding and activity in Seattle/White Center induced other funders to put issue-specific dollars into the community.
- When the Camden redevelopment plan was allocated New Jersey state funds, the Ford, Casey, and Campbell Foundations stepped in to provide supplemental funding.
- Anchor institutions, such as the University of Pennsylvania and Johns Hopkins University, have leveraged significant investments in their neighborhoods.

The challenge is to demonstrate that community change efforts actually prompted new investments that would otherwise not have been forthcoming. Even if the leverage claims are interpreted conservatively, it is likely that the presence of an organized, legitimate, and effective community intervention in a neighborhood increases the visibility of a community's change efforts and gives enhanced credibility to neighborhood activities that, in turn, lead to additional investments. This is particularly true when high-quality neighborhood plans are publicly available.

## **EXTERNAL ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY 2: BROKERING AND ALIGNING EFFORTS**

When effective alignment occurs among the community, public, and private sectors, it often is because some kind of broker helps marry the parties' interests and counterbalance the inequities in power, information, expertise, and money. The broker can be an individual, an organization, or a network. It can emerge out of any of the three sectors or be external to them. It can be organic or invented (if it is the latter, a foundation usually is the spark).

In many classic CCIs, the sponsoring foundation created the broker. This was the case when the Annie E. Casey Foundation required local partners to form or designate a Local Management Entity (LME) to carry forward the work of Making Connections; when Surdna created CCRP, Inc., in the South Bronx; and when the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation created the Institute for Community Change as the intermediary for its Urban Health Initiative. Sometimes, an existing institution is asked to develop a new brokering capacity, as with the community foundations in the Hewlett and Ford initiatives (and some of Making Connections' LMEs).

Sometimes, an intermediary can broaden its existing brokering functions to include a more comprehensive agenda, as LISC is doing in the New Communities Program in Chicago and in its national Sustainable Communities initiative. More recently, "embedded funders," such as Jacobs in San Diego, have developed expertise to carry out this function. This latest brokering model could be especially powerful because the endowments of embedded funders permit them to sustain the function over time. Finally, some institutions are so powerful that they can actually undertake alignment themselves (e.g., large developers like McCormack Baron Salazar or strong anchor institutions like the University of Pennsylvania).

Instead of subscribing to a particular institutional model for brokering and alignment, recent community change efforts vary their strategies according to the desired outcomes and existing capacities. For example, in efforts to improve child and youth outcomes, brokering is likely to focus on the actions of the public and community sectors. In efforts to improve housing and commercial development, where the private sector holds a position of power, brokering is likely to focus on strengthening the relative position of the community and the public sectors—for example, through enforcement of community benefits agreements.

The task before the field of community change is to identify the mediating functions that permit alignment to occur and to support these functions as much as possible. The functions and roles required for effective alignment among the public, private, and community sectors include:

- **Using data**—gathering, analyzing, using, and publicizing data about the community for community betterment
- **Convening and legitimating**—serving as a neutral or values-driven convener among the wide range of institutions and individuals who have a stake in the community; establishing legitimacy among neighborhood stakeholders and between the neighborhood and outside entities; creating the forum where everyone can work together
- **Strengthening community voice and advocating**—ensuring that community interests are powerfully represented to the public and private sectors through various channels, including community organizing, budget analysis, enforcement of community benefits agreements, and voter mobilization
- **Visioning and planning**—leading or helping to develop a collectively owned vision for the neighborhood and plans for achieving the vision
- **Accessing technical expertise and best practices**—ensuring that local actors have access to the most up-to-date research, technical information, and best practices in the programmatic domains in which they are working
- **Facilitating partnerships and coalitions**—facilitating strategic partnerships and collaborations that fill gaps in community activities and generate collective action on the community’s behalf
- **Managing communications**—ensuring or managing strategic communications among neighborhood stakeholders and between the neighborhood and outsiders
- **Leveraging resources**—connecting the community with external resources
- **Responding to crises or opportunities**—being entrepreneurial and leading the community to respond as circumstances change; anticipating over-the-horizon issues
- **Resolving conflicts**—smoothing the way when institutional, legal, regulatory, or interpersonal agendas conflict or compete with one another
- **Keeping true to mission**—keeping all parties aimed at long-term goals, even as short-term distractions or exigencies appear

Sometimes, brokering means rationalizing multiple community initiatives that operate simultaneously in one neighborhood, sponsored by different entities with different objectives and working styles. Initiatives can actually conflict with each other or make competing demands on limited local capacities, and the burden then falls on the community to manage the external investors. One example is the Fruitvale section of Oakland, where several foundation- and government-sponsored initiatives have been launched over the past two decades. In this community, a local CDC (the Unity Council) has served as the aligner and broker among the various investors and the keeper of the overall neighborhood strategy. In another California example, an evaluator says she has been commissioned four times to evaluate four different initiatives that unfolded in one neighborhood, and that none of the initiatives' sponsors knew of the other three. This evaluator believes she is the only person who understands all the major change efforts in the neighborhood, and she laments the missed opportunities for greater impact and knowledge development that could have occurred if sponsors had managed to interact effectively.

***EXTERNAL ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY 3: BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS WITH POWERFUL ALLIES TO INFLUENCE PUBLIC SYSTEMS***

Systems change successes have resulted from the access and influence of powerful actors, informed by partnerships or parallel work with community change efforts. As the sidebar on the next page illustrates, local communities' ability to influence the ways in which public or private systems operate does not come naturally, nor does it seem to automatically bubble up out of good programs. Successful examples of policy and systems change have come from analyzing the self-interest of the power brokers associated with the community priority, identifying a specific policy or practice change that will benefit the community, and developing a strategy that either mobilizes the community's power or creates a relationship with a powerful ally who can change the system.

Strategies include taking advantage of the power and access of foundation and intermediary partners, using “brokering partnerships” to change public and private sector behavior, and developing an independent policy track to support local work. In each case, specific strategies are developed to respond to a specific policy reform agenda. In this view, systems change is better done by actors who understand the policy reform process, including advocates, special commissions, and other entities with civic capacity.

## USING ALLIES TO PROMOTE CHANGE IN SYSTEMS

**Partnerships with powerful institutions:** In the New Communities Program in Chicago, both LISC and the MacArthur Foundation are recognized as real partners with the city around community development. This allows them to work to expedite permits and streamline the city's approval process for neighborhood-based development projects. In this case, the experience of the community work on the ground has sparked powerful intermediary and funding partners to use their influence with city government to change city procedures in ways that helped neighborhoods across the city.

**Bringing multiple stakeholders to the same table:** In the Harlem Children's Zone's (HCZ) Asthma Initiative, HCZ, Harlem Hospital Center (a public hospital), and Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health partnered to screen and treat children with asthma in the Children's Zone. Participation in this program was correlated with reductions in the incidence and severity of asthma attacks among children. The HCZ Asthma Initiative laid the groundwork for a more substantial change in the relationship between the community and the larger health system, expanding the scope of services by engaging the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene in the collaboration, and expanding HCZ's collaboration with the traditional public schools in the zone. HCZ's institutional ability to bring multiple players to the table who then worked together to support fund-raising and program evaluation laid the groundwork for a successful demonstration of how a community organization can partner with a health system to create an active, preventive approach to a health problem.

**Building a system reform track that parallels the community work:** This strategy directly targets power brokers in the private or public sectors and defines interaction with them as an explicit line of work. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Urban Health Initiative worked directly at the city level to increase government efficiency, target funding, improve the quality of services, and track government performance. The California Endowment designed several of its initiatives (including California Works for Better Health, the Agricultural Farmworkers Initiative, and its ten-year Building Healthy Communities initiative) with a two-level strategy of working locally on community priorities and, simultaneously, at the state level on policy reform. They call this the "grassroots-to-treetops" strategy. Similarly, the Skillman Foundation supports state- and city-level school reform while also funding parent organizing to articulate demands from the community level.

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### ***EXTERNAL ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY 4: INFLUENCING THE FUNDAMENTAL WAYS THAT CORE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS DEFINE AND CARRY OUT THEIR WORK***

While classic CCIs are on the wane, the principles that guided their work endure and have infused the ways in which the public, nonprofit, and philanthropic sectors operate. These include

- The value of "place" as an entry point for planning change
- The guiding principle of comprehensiveness and cross-sector collaboration

- The guiding principles of community building and, especially, of engaging residents in planning, governance, implementation, and learning
- The processes of evaluating and learning along the way
- Attention to regional dynamics
- Willingness to invest in individual and organizational capacity building

Part of this trend can be traced to the fact that a generation of leaders who were groomed in community change efforts are joining the ranks of the federal government, local government, and philanthropy. They have carried these principles into many of the Obama administration's new policy initiatives and into a wide range of other government and philanthropic initiatives.

**I**n summary, it is clear that the outcomes of most community change initiatives did not match the high hopes placed on them. The expectation was that these efforts would produce a greater impact than narrower programmatic interventions, that the whole would add up to more than the sum of the parts, and that they would unleash a cascade of change that would transform highly distressed communities. The fact that CCIs and related efforts did not achieve these ambitious goals has, in the eyes of critics, relegated them to the category of “failures.”

Paul Brest, president of the Hewlett Foundation, in his introduction to an external review of the Foundation's Neighborhood Improvement Initiative (NII), writes: “Despite the huge investment of financial and human resources, however, the NII fell far short of achieving the hoped-for tangible improvements in residents' lives. While some stakeholders view characterizing the NII as a failure as too harsh, it certainly was a great disappointment” (Brown & Fiester, 2007). Like Hewlett, many of the original funders of classic CCIs (e.g., Edna McConnell Clark, Ford, Hewlett, Pew, Rockefeller, Surdna) no longer invest in this type of community change effort.

On the other hand, as this review has demonstrated, there have been many important successes. To name only a few: The Harlem Children's Zone brought third-grade test scores up to the New York state average; the population of West Philadelphia enjoys safety, decent housing, a good school, and commercial space; the Diamond Neighborhood in San Diego has a vibrant commercial and community center with plans to spread out to adjacent areas in the 88,000-person neighborhood; 16 neighborhoods in Chicago have high-quality comprehensive plans

and initial implementation successes; Miner Country, S.D., has put into place renewable energy facilities that are revitalizing the local economy; and community development corporations have built hundreds of thousands of units of good housing for low-income families.

The question is not simply, “How did these community change efforts perform?” but, rather, “What have the community change efforts put into place that promises still greater returns on investment in the future, even if not fully appreciated at this moment?” The change efforts have built capacities in people, organizations, and communities that stakeholders in the field believe will surely continue to pay off. At the broader field level, these efforts have generated important knowledge about the dynamics of change in poor communities that can guide future work in a number of arenas.

When evaluators assess why interventions do not succeed in producing desired outcomes, they look at whether there is “theory failure” or “implementation failure.” Most community change efforts experienced both. Theory failure in community change efforts can be described as follows: A relatively modest amount of philanthropic or government dollars (usually about \$1 million to \$3 million per year) is expected to catalyze events that will build on each other and lead to major improvements in well-being for the poorest people in the most distressed communities within a limited time frame (usually about seven to ten years). Implementation failure usually occurs because decades of underinvestment have depleted community assets, staff and organizational capacities are weak, the effort struggles to balance “process” objectives with products, and leaders cannot overcome the challenge of managing multiple relationships and activities. As a result, programmatic effort does not achieve the necessary dose or scale.

The challenge before the field is to glean from both the good and the bad in order to inform the future, for there is no doubt that place-based community change efforts will continue to be an important instrument in the toolbox of anti-poverty, community development, and social justice strategies. Despite regional influences, mobility, identity group allegiances, and the popularity of technology-based social networking, place-based communities are still important. Our challenge is to keep getting better at it, not to abandon it. It is important, therefore, to be as honest and as analytical as possible about the reasons why high hopes for community change initiatives weren’t met, so as to guide those who carry this work into its next phase. The rest of this book provides analysis, lessons, and conclusions to inform that next generation of community change work.

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# Part II

## Examining Three Core Design and Implementation Issues

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*Part II focuses on three themes that have emerged as central to effective implementation of community change efforts. Chapter 3, by Patricia Auspos, discusses management and alignment of goals, strategies, and practices within complex community change efforts. Chapter 4, by Tom Dewar, addresses the alignment of partnerships and relationships between communities and external actors. In chapter 5, Prudence Brown focuses on evaluation, learning, and adaptation. Each chapter is followed by three essays by practitioners that give depth and nuance to the themes and explain how the issues have played out in different contexts.*

# Internal Alignment in Community Change Efforts

*By Patricia Auspos*

**S**uccessful community change efforts are both well conceived in theory and well implemented on the ground. The structures, styles, and frameworks they use for management purposes are designed to meet the particular challenges of work that intends to break down categorical silos and repackage strategies and programs in new ways.

The chief challenges include managing an array of programs, projects, and activities carried out by a variety of organizations with varying capacities and resources; working in partnership with a broad range of institutions and organizations; and developing relationships with neighborhood residents whose voices have long been silenced or ignored. Additional tensions are generated by the need to plan up front versus the need for projects and activities to emerge over time, and the need to focus on specific results versus the need to be responsive and adaptive.

Because community change efforts involve so many programmatic elements and so many stakeholders in different arenas, the various pieces of the work need to fit together in such a way that they reinforce each other, work smoothly together, and keep the whole effort moving forward—much like the component pieces of a bicycle. If the individual pieces stall or work at cross-purposes, forward motion can stop or be seriously slowed. This is the challenge of “internal alignment,” and it involves both breaking the work into component parts that can be managed effectively *and* integrating them into a meaningful whole.

Although people tend to assume that having a charismatic, visionary leader will solve most problems, meeting the challenge of internal alignment also requires careful, active, constant, and flexible management—not only in terms of leadership, oversight, and monitoring but also in adjusting to changing circum-

stances and in building, managing, and maintaining relationships over time. Relationship building is the glue that holds the pieces together and the lubricant that allows the effort to move forward.

In many ways, the leadership and management dilemmas that community change efforts face are similar to those confronting modern complex corporations, and management theories that have been developed for other venues offer some guidance here (Senge, 1990; Collins and Porras, 1994). In other ways, however, the nature of community change and the complexity of these partnerships make the challenges of developing and maintaining internal alignment unique.

So powerful are the management challenges in community change work that a number of organizations have either created a new organization or fundamentally restructured one to manage the work. Many also hired staff who possess a new set of skills. This is true of the Jacobs Center for Neighborhood Innovation, the Harlem Children’s Zone, the University of Pennsylvania’s neighborhood revitalization efforts, Hope Community, New Song Urban Ministries, and the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) that developed the New Communities Program in Chicago. The discussion here draws on those examples as well as the Communities of Opportunity initiative in San Francisco and the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s Making Connections initiative. Collectively, these examples represent a spectrum of change efforts and change agents, ranging from very large enterprises organized by powerful anchor institutions to efforts undertaken by small community-based organizations that are deeply embedded in the fabric of their neighborhoods.

This chapter is organized around three requirements of effective internal alignment: (a) clarity about the core goals and principles of the community change effort, (b) an overall management structure that reflects those goals and principles, and (c) management systems that recognize the dynamic nature of the work and facilitate effective alignment of all of the relationships and moving parts over time.

## **Clarifying Goals and Values**

Although all community change efforts have to balance competing interests, the efforts that progress most smoothly have some internal consistency in how to approach the work—that is, some core values or philosophy or an overarching goal that guides practice and decision-making and helps to maintain focus and momentum. This may include, for example, an emphasis on building community capacity and resilience, a commitment to engaging residents as full partners in the work, an emphasis on tangible products such as redevelopment of housing or other physical spaces, programmatic strategies focusing on individual and family outcomes, or a system reform agenda. For instance:

- The University of Pennsylvania focused much of its work around the idea that a higher rate of homeownership was the key to stabilizing the neighborhood and catalyzing sustainable change in the area around the university. “How we answered many of the issues and questions all tied back to that strategy,” a university official said. “The homeownership goal was key to our work, and it helped us focus.”
- In the Harlem Children’s Zone, a commitment to ending the educational achievement gap has driven decisions about school policy, curriculum, and hiring in the Promise Academy and the development of a pipeline of projects designed to change the behavior of both parents and children.
- For Communities of Opportunity in San Francisco, a focal strategy is to develop an integrated case management system and coordinated service delivery for 2,600 households in a well-defined geographic area that receive multiple sources of public aid.
- The goal of the New Communities Program in Chicago is to develop neighborhood projects and organizational networks that strengthen community capacity and build a platform for accessing and utilizing resources, thus creating more resilient communities. A key alignment mechanism is the Neighborhood Quality-of-Life plans. The process for developing these plans engages community organizations and residents and produces a blueprint for change. The plans also are a management tool: the measure of effective implementation is whether the lead agency can work with neighborhood organizations and develop networks and opportunities to carry out planned projects. Demonstrating this capacity enables communities to draw down funds from the MacArthur Foundation and attract other resources.
- The Jacobs Center for Neighborhood Innovation created a network of community teams in which residents work together to set the agenda for the community change work, design it, track its progress, and literally own a piece of the work. These team efforts develop the skills, knowledge, learning, and capacity of residents who participate while producing tangible outcomes in commercial and physical redevelopment.
- New Song Urban Ministries, motivated by the principles of Christian community development, cultivates leadership and other capacities by creating opportunities for residents to gain knowledge, skills, and experience as they do the work, either as volunteers or in paid positions.

Habitat for Humanity, for example, uses neighbors and other volunteers to build the houses it produces, and New Song Academy provides work for volunteers in classrooms and school administrative offices. About two-thirds of all New Song staff are community residents.

## **Developing Management Structures that Support Goals and Values**

Management structures that foster collaborative, cross-departmental work not only reinforce a sense of collective identity, responsibility, and mission but also support a fundamental goal of place-based work: getting out of silos, adopting more comprehensive approaches, and knitting together the pieces of work in more creative ways.

One typical approach, adopted by both small and large community change entities, is to create an overarching structure that provides general leadership and oversight, maintains adherence to vision and values, and integrates the component pieces while at the same time giving substantial autonomy to the managers of specific departments or programs. In this scenario, leaders (individually or collectively) set the direction but individual managers work out the details and have responsibility for their own piece of work. This structure reinforces the idea that the separate pieces of work must be well implemented and managed if the whole is to function properly.

Some community change entities build team structures throughout the organization, not just at the highest levels of management, to reinforce the sense of collective identity and responsibility, embed the core vision and values of the approach, and facilitate interaction among departments. To this end, the Jacobs Center organizes its work not around program areas but around broad strategy areas of physical development, civic engagement, family and community networks, economic opportunity, and shared learning and investment. Integrating community development work into the business side of the organization, rather than isolating it in a community development “department,” seems especially useful. For example:

- In New Song Urban Ministries, the units responsible for housing, education, health, employment, and the arts are separate 501(c)3 organizations; each has its own board, and the director and associate director of each belong to an executive leadership team that meets monthly. For many years, the leadership team revisited New Song’s model and mission to ensure that each manager was grounded in the collective values and could apply them to the problems at hand. The meetings also help staff learn from each other, take a more holistic approach to helping program

participants and their families, and integrate the supports and services they provide.

- Harlem Children’s Zone, the University of Pennsylvania, the Jacobs Center for Neighborhood Innovation, and Hope Community all use a similar structure of cross-disciplinary teams to manage their community change efforts, believing that cross-fertilization produces synergistic effects and that the team approach keeps managers focused on the overarching vision for change.

The team approach can also extend to managing relationships with partners outside the lead organization. For example, the Jacobs Center for Neighborhood Innovation holds large team meetings of residents to set the general direction and goals of work and then establishes smaller planning teams to work on specific projects. Having the smaller teams report back to the whole ensures that plans and recommendations are not working at cross-purposes with each other and are consistent with the goals articulated in full-group meetings. (When two separate community teams developed irreconcilable criteria for selecting tenant businesses in Market Creek Plaza, the solution was to allow a mix of tenants that satisfied each set of criteria.)

The managers interviewed for this chapter value the creative and innovative potential of cross-discipline teams but noted that it requires careful—and, sometimes, heavy—facilitation and management to maintain focus, keep decision-making on track, and mediate competing interests and priorities. In the case of Communities of Opportunity, for example, the foundations that invested in the mayor’s initiative grew concerned about “drift” when competing priorities began to vie for attention and resources within key city departments. The funders worked with the city to create a chief of staff position to maintain the focus, handle internal strategy, and oversee the initiative’s implementation.

## **Creating Systems to Align and Manage the Work Over Time**

Community change requires a complex web of relationships and partnerships—between funders and intermediaries, between intermediaries and lead agencies, between lead agencies and neighborhood organizations, and between the managing entities and neighborhood organizations. It is difficult to ensure that all components are led and implemented well when they are executed by so many players over whom there is so little control, and who have many competing demands, values, and interests. Moreover, people, relationships, and the focus of the work change over time, which complicates the situation considerably. An effective system for internal alignment faces three challenges in particular: man-

aging partnerships; managing community relationships; and learning and adapting while maintaining alignment over time.

### **CHALLENGE 1: MANAGING PARTNERSHIPS**

Effective frameworks for managing partnerships involve written agreements that clearly specify roles, relationships, and tasks for each partner; relationships that motivate partners and create a sense of collective accountability; and a willingness to take corrective action and establish consequences for poor performance.

**Written agreements.** Managers of community change efforts emphasize the need to put clear accountability frameworks in writing—to produce “a specific road map” that clarifies roles, strategies, plans, and expectations regarding performance in partnerships and collaborations. As the director of a community-based organization observed, “It’s much more than money that brings accountability. More often, it’s about . . . who’s going to get feedback and how information will be shared. You have to be very clear about laying out the parameters: This is what we expect from you, and this is what we’ll provide for you.”

Although there are notable exceptions (Walker & Arbreton, 2004; Greenberg et al., 2010), theories of change, business plans, and neighborhood plans typically are more helpful for setting the overall vision and mobilizing commitment to common goals than for spelling out the precise roles and responsibilities that management requires. More frequently, managers use carefully constructed memorandums of understanding, grant specifications, or performance contracts to specify roles and relationships, expected outcomes, and reporting requirements.

**Relationships that motivate action and create collective accountability.** A partnership that hinges solely on a legal contract or written agreement won’t fly, say experienced managers of community change. They point to the power of relationships that motivate staff, grantees, and partners to engage in the work and follow through on what they agree to do. “When you build the relationship of trust—when they feel they want to do it—then it’s more about the carrot and not about the stick. It’s self-monitoring behavior,” one explained. Another talked about meeting over drinks with collaborative partners to develop the “bonding, intimacy, and trust” necessary to have honest conversations about accountability.

Intermediaries that position themselves as partners with neighborhood organizations’ community change efforts can help to create an atmosphere in which individuals and organizations work together to identify and diagnose difficulties, solve problems, and make adjustments when things aren’t working according to plan. In one initiative, for example, a neighborhood organization trusted the initiative director enough to report financial difficulties it was having

in other aspects of its work, and that person then worked closely with the organization's board to resolve the problems before they affected the organization's ability to carry out the initiative's agenda.

It is essential to keep partners focused on how their work contributes to the overall goal and how the combined effort will help each organization accomplish its own goals. Collective identity should not diminish individual accountability, however; rather, each partner retains responsibility for a particular piece of the work and is accountable for it to all of the other partners. The assumption is that each of the pieces must be implemented as planned or the overall result cannot be accomplished. Thus a collective accountability framework can be a management tool as well as an enforcement mechanism. For example, if partners carry out the agreed-upon strategies as planned but do not achieve the desired results, the framework can flag the fact that partners need to rethink and retool their strategy or consider other approaches or partnerships.

***Consequences and corrective action.*** Increasingly, managers see accountability mechanisms and frameworks as important tools for the latest generation of community change efforts. For example:

- The Harlem Children's Zone has fired teachers whose classes fail to meet the target standards on reading and math tests and removed a principal of the Promise Academy. It also provides financial bonuses for staff who exceed goals.
- In Chicago, LISC instigated action that resulted in replacing one lead agency with another in a New Communities Program neighborhood, after the original agency proved unable to implement the neighborhood plan. In another case, LISC worked with the board of a lead agency as they sought to replace the executive director, who all agreed had been unable to make the transition from planning to project implementation.
- Making Connections sites use "results-based management" to monitor the performance of partners and grantees and make it clear that when they provide resources to organizations, they expect to see results. In one location, the managing entity worked with partner organizations to shift responsibility for implementing efforts around children, youth, and families away from one organization to another that had staff based in the school where action was focused.

In each case, the decision to require changes was not made lightly. The process began with discussion, negotiation, and problem-solving and drew on rela-

tionships that had been established. Nevertheless, changes had to be made when an organization or individual was judged incapable of delivering on its piece of the community change effort. Managers say that such action is required if they are to be “good stewards of public [or philanthropic] resources.” When other organizations see this behavior, it reinforces the idea that they, too, have to be accountable for achieving better results for the neighborhoods in which they work. “It’s not a service to the community if you can’t do the work. It’s really not fair to the community,” one observed. Another commented, “The commitment is to the neighborhood, not the lead agency.”

Peer organizations that work together—especially those that share relationships and work outside the partnership in question—may find it more difficult to hold each other accountable when performance falls short and results aren’t achieved. In these cases, managers and partners often engage in behind-the-scenes “shuttle diplomacy” and use the partnership’s collective influence to hold each member accountable for honoring its agreement or making changes. Managers caution that collective accountability does not function well if one organization has to serve as the heavyweight in all discussions about accountability. The most effective way to rein in a partner that begins to act like a “lone ranger,” one suggested, is for the other partners together to remind each other of their “group aspirations.”

## **CHALLENGE 2: MANAGING COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS**

Community interests and resident ownership are cornerstones of many community change efforts. Well-implemented and internally aligned efforts apply many different philosophies and practices in operationalizing those principles. Several have designed their programmatic work to reflect and advance a community engagement strategy, creating structures and mechanisms that facilitate resident involvement and integrate it with programmatic activities. These include the Jacobs Center for Neighborhood Innovation’s Market Creek Plaza project, in which residents led the planning, design, building, and leasing and then forged a pathway for resident ownership; NCP, which focuses primarily on community organizations rather than residents; and the University of Pennsylvania, which works to inform, consult, and communicate with residents and community groups. Other initiatives, often externally catalyzed ones, have had a harder time aligning programmatic strategies with community engagement. In some cases, these two lines of work are distinct and parallel, which can reduce their potential impact and can even mean that they work at cross-purposes.

Some early community change initiatives ran into serious implementation problems when they adopted the rhetoric of resident empowerment but, in practice, offered residents much more limited roles in decision-making; when they

tried to alter the strategic direction of resident-developed neighborhood plans and impose a different accountability framework partway through the initiative; or when a city-led development effort ignored neighborhood plans and failed to hold meetings with neighborhood groups. In general, the field has become more sophisticated and smarter about engaging residents in community change work and responding to community concerns and interests. Alignment tensions still persist, however, especially around the potential for conflict between a funder who wants to implement certain programs or strategies to achieve certain outcomes and local actors who have different priorities, preferred approaches, or target outcomes. Other managers noted the difficulty inherent in developing an organizing strategy when the city is likely to become a target of opposition but is also a major partner in the initiative—a tension that played out in Camden’s revitalization effort (Greenberg et al., 2009).

There is no “right” formula for how much or what forms of community engagement are needed. It is important to match strategies with purposes and to be clear about how the resident engagement strategy relates to change effort’s overall goals and programmatic strategies. It is also important that community change managers and directors play a key role in facilitating resident decision-making and creating opportunities for resident voices to influence the decisions of partners and funders.

***Facilitating resident decision-making.*** Many managers believe that the purpose of resident engagement should be as much about developing residents’ knowledge and helping them analyze the trade-offs associated with different decisions as it is about resident ownership of the process. For example, the residents in one New Communities Program neighborhood resisted the idea of building more market-rate housing in a gentrifying community, but they wanted to build new schools and other amenities for the community. The housing developer provided a chart that showed the financial implications of adjusting the proportions of market-rate and affordable housing, which underscored the fact that increasing the amount of market-rate housing would pay for schools and an arts and recreation center.

Similarly, when resident teams were making decisions about leasing strategies for the commercial space in Market Creek Plaza in San Diego, facilitators used a projector and screen in the meeting room to engage all team members in exploring the potential effects of different leasing options and weighing the trade-offs of alternative choices (Robinson, 2005).

***Facilitating resident interaction with funders and partners.*** Managers and intermediaries play a key role in representing community views and opinions to funders and positioning neighborhood groups to speak for themselves. Several

intermediary staff, many of whom are trained community organizers, reported successfully negotiating with a sponsor or funder to make changes that reflected the concerns and recommendations of neighborhood groups. At the urging of local groups, for example, one intermediary encouraged funders to go beyond traditional community area boundaries as the focus for the comprehensive initiative and, in another instance, to use a different parent engagement approach in its middle-school model. Another intermediary negotiated with the funder to enroll residents in English as a Second Language before providing job training. In another city, the managing entity added outcomes relating to the built community to the set of outcomes it monitored for the foundation sponsor. By getting the funders to agree to these changes the managers defused possible tensions, contributed to a smoother implementation, and built trust with the community.

Managers and directors also can create opportunities for residents to serve on decision-making teams with service providers and other partners. This has been a focus in Making Connections sites and for the Jacobs Center for Neighborhood Innovation. This activity involves educating partners about how to engage with residents; service providers, in particular, often find it difficult to shift from viewing residents as clients to seeing them as decision-making partners.

### **CHALLENGE 3: LEARNING, ADAPTING, AND MAINTAINING ALIGNMENT OVER TIME**

To keep community change on track and running smoothly, good managers are always adjusting, pushing, tweaking, and problem-solving. What is needed isn't midcourse corrections so much as ongoing efforts to develop and improve the work as it unfolds. Because there is no model for success, the work is very experimental, and managers learn by doing and by trial and error. As Susana Vasquez, program director of the New Communities Program, explains:

*I get “smarter” about the work because I am constantly getting information about what happens in diverse neighborhoods with diverse actors. I learn from it all, am constantly adjusting. Everything I do is action, reflection, adjustment. . . . We ask for grant reports and have a monthly report back. We are in constant communication with the lead agencies. Scribes are sent out, people tell us things, there's a flow of information constantly.*

As this manager observed, feedback, assessment, and learning need to be constant activities, not just a periodic response to reporting requirements or an end-of-the-program evaluation. Especially when relationship building is a key aspect of the work, managers need multiple sources and types of information in addition to formal reporting data—including from staff who spend time in com-

munities, interacting with residents and organizations to gather information. The organizations highlighted here typically hold internal reviews every month during cross-departmental team meetings and strategy sessions. (Some meet more often and some, such as Jacobs, hold quarterly retreats for top management as well as monthly staff meetings.)

Managers recommend going slowly, not starting everything at once or “becoming comprehensive” too quickly. It is better to start with a solid core and then broaden the effort gradually as experience and capacity increase. This can mean expanding the array of programs or projects included in the change effort (as Jacobs, New Song, and NCP neighborhoods all did) or expanding the geographic scale and focus of the work (as Harlem Children’s Zone and Jacobs have done). The important thing is to break up the work into manageable chunks. Going more slowly also allows organizations and initiatives to build trust and support as they go along. Developing a reputation for success helps to build a constituency for the work, increase engagement and interest from other stakeholders, and create a pool of partners for each new project or phase of the work. And expanding gradually allows managers to apply newly learned lessons to the next phase of work.

A related approach is to pilot-test a program or approach in order to gauge its success, work out the kinks, and fine-tune before rolling it out on a broader scale. The New Communities Program, for instance, was based on a model developed by the Comprehensive Community Revitalization Program in New York, which LISC tested in three Chicago neighborhoods and further adjusted before launching in a total of 16 neighborhoods. Communities of Opportunity similarly piloted its integrated case management system with a subset of service providers before launching it citywide.

It is equally important to reassess the effort periodically. As Jennifer Vanica, president and CEO of the Jacobs Center explained, “About every three years you have to rethink how to manage the work to make sure that you’re still moving in the right direction, because over the course of the three years it has gotten bigger, it’s gotten more complex, and things have changed. You really need to streamline things regularly in order to stay entrepreneurial.”

For example, the University of Pennsylvania created a real estate development strategy matrix that identified how the university would need to rethink its investment strategy and role as real estate market conditions shifted over the course of the university’s initiative. At the start, when Penn was virtually the only investor, it had to be willing to absorb full risk in order to stimulate and incubate the market forces. But as the university’s investments stimulated other investors to come into the market, its share of the overall investment and the amount of risk it had to take on fell. So it had to review its strategies in the light of the changing market conditions (Rodin, 2007).

Above all, managers and intermediaries have to be adaptive. *Nimble, flexible, fast* were the terms used repeatedly by managers to describe the skills they and their staff members need for community change work. Because flexibility and adaptation are “the name of the game, and things are always changing,” staff have to be comfortable with uncertainty. Staff can’t be too wedded to any particular way of doing business, and they have to be able to admit to mistakes and acknowledge that they don’t have all the answers. “We’ve learned that we have to find people that are willing to be very flexible. If you want to know what you will be doing every day, this is not the place to work,” a CBO director said.

Effective management of community change efforts—internal alignment—is highly dependent on local contexts, conditions, and capacities. While there are no cookie-cutter solutions to the challenges, good practices and principles have emerged to help leaders manage partnerships and community relationships, learn and adapt, and maintain alignment over time.

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## Response Essay

*By Alan Okagaki  
Independent Consultant  
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I want to look at two issues that emerge from Patricia Auspos’s chapter on internal alignment in community change efforts. The first takes off from the question of why internal alignment has proven to be so difficult. The second elaborates on her discussion of learning, adapting, and maintaining alignment over time.

### **WHY INTERNAL ALIGNMENT IS DIFFICULT TO ACHIEVE**

The issues that most commonly make internal alignment difficult are money, turf, and power. Community change efforts at any scale can change the normal flow and distribution of resources into a neighborhood, and when that happens there are winners and losers. Typically, there

is a lead agency that bears primary responsibility for implementing community change, and that role can change the accountability and power relationships between the agency and other organizations participating in the initiative. One organization’s position as lead agency can cause resentment among other organizations in the neighborhood. As the plan for the neighborhood takes shape, some organizations may be asked to take on new and unfamiliar roles or else modify or divest themselves of programs they like. Many of these organizations may have histories of competing for funding and turf, which get in the way of smoothly functioning partnerships. Under these conditions, internal alignment is not going to be a walk in the park.

The challenge of attaining internal alignment also looks different depending on the size, resources, positioning, and nature of the lead agency. The University of Pennsylvania, Jacobs Neighborhood Center for Neighborhood Innovation, and

Harlem Children's Zone lie at one end of the spectrum. Each is a "big dog" in its neighborhood who can control most of the resources necessary to carry out the community change effort and who has most of the capacities needed to execute the strategy. With these institutions, Auspos points to two primary internal alignment challenges: (1) bridging silos between the various departments or operating units, and (2) keeping the change effort aligned with resident interests, empowerment, or ownership.

I want to speak here to the silos issue. Auspos describes a number of techniques these organizations have used to break down silos, including monthly executive leadership team meetings, cross-disciplinary teams, and organizing the work around broad strategy areas rather than programs. While the problem of silos should not be minimized, the fact that resources and capacities reside in a single organization has at least two significant advantages: the operating units are accountable to a common leadership and governance structure that can mandate collaboration if units are not cooperating; and they share common organizational values and culture, which facilitates communication and joint problem solving.

Given personality differences and the inevitable organizational politics, these two advantages do not provide absolute assurance that silos will disappear. However, the problem of internal alignment becomes qualitatively different when major elements of the change strategy are spread among multiple organizations and those organizations do not share a common institutional accountability structure and culture. In such cases, other alignment techniques become more important. For example, in the Chicago New Commu-

nities Program (NCP), the lead agencies generally are community development corporations that lack the scale, scope, and resources of a University of Pennsylvania or a Jacobs. They derive their positioning through their relationship to funding sources. The management and leadership challenges in maintaining alignment rise exponentially in this situation, especially around issues of performance. In this case, NCP uses Neighborhood Quality of Life plans as a management and accountability tool.

Auspos describes the necessity of establishing consequences for partners who do not perform and gives several examples. However, the problem is not just one of techniques but, more fundamentally, of skill. The weaker the positioning of the lead agency and the more dependent it is on the performance of other partners, the more the lead agency has to rely on the powers of persuasion and diplomacy. In extreme situations, even the diplomatic skills of a Henry Kissinger or Bill Clinton might not be sufficient to get to internal alignment.

This line of argument—teasing out the lead agency's position and its implications for leadership and management—takes us toward two questions about internal alignment. First, and most sobering, it makes me wonder if the success of community change efforts correlates to whether the lead agency is or is not a big dog. While this is hard to determine, beginning with the methodological issues of measuring "success," I do not think it is a coincidence that so many of the community change efforts highlighted by Auspos fit the big dog category.

Second, we need to drill down much deeper into the precise leadership and management skills needed to successfully

implement community change efforts. There are many different types, styles, and philosophies of management and leadership. What are the specific capacities, organizational cultures, and other organizational characteristics that lead to success? A starting point for this exploration should be a review of the management literature.

### LEARNING, ADAPTING, AND MAINTAINING INTERNAL ALIGNMENT

I take issue with Auspos’s comment that “there is no model for success.” My sense of the management literature is that there is a coherent picture of how organizations continuously improve and move toward higher performance and greater excellence. Auspos mentions pieces of the process (e.g., “Feedback, assessment, and learning need to be ongoing and constant”). While there may not be one single implementation model, there is a recommended process that looks something like the one outlined in the figure at right.

In this process, learning and improvement proceed through a cycle of stages that continually repeats. The process begins (Stage 1) with a deep organizational commitment to performance, excellence, and the core values and purpose of the organization. These commitments are ingrained in the culture of the organization and are palpable to all who work there. In Stage 2, organizations have systems for measuring and tracking performance. They utilize metrics not because their funders demand it but because they value the information as critical for their improvement.

In Stage 3, the metrics (along with people’s qualitative experiences) become

the basis for analysis, reflection, and learning. Learning is oriented around the question “how can we do better?” Performance data are used not to assign blame but to better understand what is working, what is not working, and why. In Stage 4, learning is translated into action: strategy changes, innovations in products or services delivered, improvements in the systems for delivering services, upgraded staff skills, new talent brought on board. These changes should result in greater performance and more impact (Stage 5). Success reinforces the culture and commitments made in Stage 1, and the cycle repeats itself indefinitely.

Some community change efforts have incorporated a learning cycle into their work. From January 2008 through April 2009, I was a consultant to the White Center Community Development Association (WCCDA), a small nonprofit organization



that served as the Seattle “Local Management Entity” for the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s Making Connections initiative. During that time and in previous

years, Casey made very large investments in metrics, including data collection systems, reporting, and data interpretation. Casey required participating sites to build their annual strategic plans around the data and trained the sites on using data as a learning tool and paid for a consultant to conduct multiday reflective learning sessions with staff. Despite this commitment to data-driven improvement, my perception is that the learning and improvement process never quite jelled, at least as of April 2009. The data collection systems were cumbersome, required high-level cooperation from many partner agencies, and the indicators may not have been “fine-grained” enough to yield meaningful insight. The reflective learning sessions did not tie back to the data and were a one-time exercise rather than a regular organizational practice.

Two problems stand out to me as even more fundamental. To my knowledge, Casey had difficulty communicating an overarching learning and improvement strategy (like the one pictured above), and I suspect that the WCCDA and its partners never fully grasped—much less embraced—a path for getting to excellence. Second, and most critically, the cycle is absolutely dependent on Stage 1, the culture of performance, which is very difficult to instill in a team that comprises people from multiple agencies, each with its own organizational culture. So, Casey was able to intervene with varying degrees of effectiveness at Stages 2, 3, and 4 but was unsuccessful in conveying a picture of the overall process or cultivating a team culture of high performance.

Toward the end of the initiative, the WCCDA got closer to a true ongoing cycle of learning and improvement. A major step was to bring data collection and

evaluation more in-house. Previously, they were conducted by a “Local Learning Partnership” that functioned somewhat autonomously, although not by intent or design. As the WCCDA gained more ownership of the data, it saw the value of data in improving strategy and tactics.

*In my experience, a culture of high performance has to come from within the organization; it cannot be imposed or dictated by an external actor, even one that controls the purse strings. It emanates from organizations that feel a deep urgency to accomplish more, faster, and better. Usually the driving force is the executive director, but an unusually active board chair or board of directors can also fill that role. Collins and Porras describe this sense of urgency and how it becomes part of organizational culture in their book *Built to Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies* (1994):*

*The critical question asked by a visionary company is not, “How well are we doing?” or “How can we do well?” or “How well do we have to perform in order to meet the competition?” For these companies, the critical question is, “How can we do better tomorrow than we did today?” They institutionalize this question as a way of life—a habit of mind and action.*

I first thought seriously about performance measurement in 2002 when designing a set of metrics for ShoreBank Enterprise Cascadia, a community development financial institution with a mission to focus on a triple bottom line (economy, equity, and environment). The first and most significant decision we made was that the most important audience for the metrics was internal (staff and board

members) rather than external (funders and other stakeholders). The purpose of the metrics system was to hold staff accountable for impact, but it also had to provide information that enabled staff and the board to discern which activities were most effective in achieving impact and *how* and *why* they were working. The external audience, while acknowledged, was secondary.

In foundation-driven initiatives, the external audience becomes primary. But externally driven performance measurement can change the conversations that are so crucial for learning, because the relationship between learning and accountability is delicate. Measurement for the purpose of accountability leads to defensiveness and “spinning” of the numbers for public relations purposes, especially when funding decisions are at stake. In contrast, learning requires openness and honesty, which only happens in an environment of trust. High-performance organizations have to manage this tension between trust, accountability, and learning.

In 2009, my colleague Jennifer Froistad and I had the privilege of conducting site visits to four organizations that serve deeply impoverished rural areas: Southern Bancorp in the Mississippi Delta; Mountain Association for Community Economic Development, and Federation for Appalachian Housing Enterprises in Appalachian Kentucky; and Four Bands Community Fund on the Cheyenne River Reservation in South Dakota. Our research was part of an international study of “hybrid organizations,” so called because they bring together unusual combinations of anti-poverty strategies by the Ford Foundation Rural Livelihoods Learning Group.

All four organizations (along with ShoreBank Enterprise Cascadia, which

directed this project for the Ford Foundation) are community development financial institutions but view their missions much more broadly than offering loans or providing financial services. Each is a place-based organization with a deep analysis of poverty that encompasses local economic, political, social, and cultural factors. Their strategies attack poverty at multiple levels, from the individual to broader systemic and policy change. They operate in partnership with other organizations that provide complementary services and institutional strengths. They are actively engaged in their communities and, in different ways, seek to empower residents or cultivate local leadership. They deeply respect the community residents with whom they work.

In sum, they have much in common with community change efforts. Each arrived at strategies and activities on its own, responding to community needs, rather than at the behest of a funder or other external stakeholder. The commitment to community change is embedded in each organization’s DNA; they are permanent, not transitory. Moreover, each organization has a learning and improvement cycle similar to the one described above and is skilled at translating learning into action. They have absorbed management principles related to learning and improvement and have instituted them in their organizations.

*These experiences suggest that the internal alignment challenge is really only the first stage. We want to move the community change field beyond issues of internal alignment to the pursuit of excellence. Beginning with Peters and Waterman’s book *In Search of Excellence* (1982), the management literature over the past 25-*

plus years has explored many dimensions and pathways to excellence in different settings and from a variety of perspectives. I sometimes feel that the field of management has been the ugly stepsister among the disciplines that contributed to community change—never appreciated and infrequently consulted for the insight it could lend to these efforts. I am convinced that a critical examination of community change efforts through the lens of the management literature would yield insights that could make future endeavors more sustaining and more powerful. ■

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## Response Essay

*by Frank Farrow*  
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*Washington, D.C.*

Community change efforts are tough to manage in many ways. They are complex undertakings with multiple partners and ambitious, varied goals. Aligning the many ingredients necessary to improve the odds for success requires a high degree of management skill, intentionality, and creativity.

This commentary amplifies several themes in Patricia Auspos's chapter on the management structures and systems that constitute internal alignment. Building on my experiences with the Annie E. Casey Foundation's ten-year Making Connections initiative—one of several community change efforts that are place-based and strongly "results oriented"—it reflects specifically on the challenges of "managing for results" for children, families, and communities.

Cities participating in Making Connections work to build capacity in select

neighborhoods to achieve better results for children and families in the areas of *improving family earnings and income* (e.g., helping parents acquire good jobs with benefits, boost earnings and incomes, and develop and keep assets) and *ensuring that young children are healthy, prepared to succeed in school, and successful in the early grades* (as benchmarked by reading proficiency by the end of third grade). We call this a two-generation approach to addressing poverty.

For at least the past five years, Making Connections cities have pioneered management processes, structures, and tools that allow unusual alliances to manage by results. In so doing, they have developed results-oriented forums for community planning, invented new tools for tracking performance, and joined together around new "tables" where progress is assessed and strategies revised.

Efforts to develop a "culture of results" were jolted by the national recession, which forced participants to reevaluate strategies for helping families achieve economic success. Nonetheless, local leaders persevered with a continued focus on the core results. The fact that economic trauma reinforced local commitment to results instead of derailing it underscores the potential benefit of beginning with the end in mind and sticking with efforts to achieve that goal. Managing by results can sustain commitment to critical goals for children and families when many other factors conspire to erode it.

### **PROCESSES, STRUCTURES, AND TOOLS THAT PROMOTE MANAGING FOR RESULTS**

The observations in this essay are drawn primarily from Making Connections' ex-

perience in four communities: Louisville, Ky.; White Center/Boulevard Park, Wash. (communities outside the Seattle city limits, in the unincorporated area of King County); Providence, R.I.; and San Antonio, Tex. These cities systematically built their capacity for results management among many partners and across multiple community systems. They involved residents and civic leaders in this process and created processes that they hope to maintain and make permanent.

While the cities' actions vary greatly, they all created a management infrastructure—a new set of working groups, tools, and capacities—to sustain their focus on results. These include the following:

***Processes for gaining broad-based commitment to a common set of shared results.*** Making Connections' core results involve (1) family economic success, and (2) children's preparation for school and early grade success. Originally, the results that each community set were validated by a broad-based process of neighborhood and civic leader input. Now that the core results have been in place for many years, each city keeps partners' commitment to these results fresh by sharing information about progress and continually reinforcing why these results remain important.

***Forums for assessing progress, learning from experience, and revising strategies.*** It is common for one organization or agency to set and pursue a clear set of results for children and families. But it takes more deliberate attention for many agencies to stay on course toward the *same* result. Three of the cities whose experience is reflected here convene "results tables"—public and private agency representatives

and neighborhood residents who meet regularly (usually monthly) to review data about their strategies' successes and failures and adjust strategies as necessary. In addition, San Antonio and White Center/Boulevard Park hold annual community forums in which residents critically review progress. And all four communities assess their strategies annually against multiyear targets for performance, to ensure that actions are paying off.

***Performance measurement tools and processes that heighten accountability.***

Tracking performance and progress is essential for the type of management these efforts are trying to achieve, and this requires new tools and procedures. Four especially important ones are shared across these cities: (1) performance contracting, which clarifies expectations for each partner's contribution to achieving shared results for children and families; (2) regular management review of progress with a close-in set of partners, which identifies and deals with any problems early on; (3) an annual process of recalibrating year-to-year targets in light of prior progress and new circumstances while holding fast to longer-term goals; and (4) some type of "dashboard" or easily communicated report to the broader community.

***Investments in community capacities necessary to support a results focus.***

These cities' experiences—and, in fact, the broader experience of all Making Connections sites—strongly suggest that results management cannot flourish without investments in the following associated capacities: (1) ongoing capacity to gather, analyze, and process data needed for decisions, including data on the prog-

ress of strategies and on changing community decisions; (2) staffing for the forums and working groups (e.g., “results tables”) where neighborhood participants and organizational leaders make plans and maintain accountability; (3) capacity to mobilize residents as a continuing point of leadership and support for this work; and (4) linkages to citywide, regional, and state-level policy and budget decision-makers, so that the local results process is supported, not undermined.

### LEADERSHIP QUALITIES AND SKILLS NECESSARY TO MANAGE BY RESULTS

Ultimately, the success of results management depends not on management infrastructure (important as that is) but on the talent and skills of the managers who lead these community change efforts. The Annie E. Casey Foundation and its partners are documenting these qualities in depth, but focus groups of local Making Connections leaders suggest several qualities and skills especially suited for this approach to managing community change. In addition to the usual leadership qualities, these include:

- **Facilitative leadership** both advances and unites the interests of many partners, recognizing that a combination of strong efforts by many people is needed to achieve results.
- **Ability to inspire people to meet long-range goals.** Managing to achieve ambitious multiyear results requires leaders to keep partners’ eyes on a prize that is several years (or more) in the future, using interim accomplishments to remind people about the longer-term goals.
- **Capacity to balance relationship building skills with a strong orientation toward data, accountability, and performance.** All community change efforts thrive on leaders who relate powerfully to others and build and sustain trust. For results managers, these relational skills must be combined with a parallel and interrelated focus on performance and accountability. To the mantra that community change is about “relationships, relationships, relationships,” these managers add, “but it doesn’t count unless it’s *also* about results.”

### DOES IT MATTER? DOES IT WORK?

The value of results management in Making Connections is being assessed in several ways. It will be reviewed as part of the formal evaluations supported by the Annie E. Casey Foundation nationally and in partner cities. Lessons also are being studied and documented by the Center for the Study of Social Policy and others. Ultimately, the approach will be validated (or not) by the extent to which it is integrated with the operations of partners who are now committed to maintaining the work of Making Connections over the coming decade.

Several observations suggest what this approach can achieve and why its continuation and expansion may be valuable:

**Results management heightens accountability and makes it possible to justify specific methods and approaches to multiple partners.** It’s always difficult to make the case for community change; the goals are long range, and while the impact on children and families can be measured, the equally important target outcomes for community capacity are

more elusive. The careful assessment of performance that results management brings to the table reassures funders and decision-makers and generates data on positive differences.

**Results management keeps the focus on the outcomes sought for families and children when other factors pull attention away from these outcomes.** Because it's difficult to achieve positive change for children and families in tough neighborhoods in the face of economic and other challenges, many public and private programs end up substituting more easily measured inputs or activities rather than results. This has been true of the human service and community development fields for years. Results management changes the dynamic, making visible—often for the first time—whether the theories of change behind human service and community development strategies can actually produce results. This may not be a comfortable contribution, but it is always an important one.

**Managing for results in the ways described above—and particularly the management role of examining the progress achieved for different groups of people—surfaces equity issues in a way that forces people to deal with them.** In these four Making Connections sites, performance measurement (particularly in the activities designed to achieve third-grade reading proficiency) is resulting in a fine-grained look at exactly which children are and are not succeeding. This points to inequities by race, language capacity, and other dimensions and allows partners and systems to address those issues.

**The results focus and results management of Making Connections sites ultimately help to link community change activities to the mainstream and very important activities of local United Ways, community foundations, city governments, and other powerful investors and agents of change.** Results management is a trend that is transforming not only the community change field but also the nonprofit and philanthropic sectors. As early adopters of the approach, the leaders of the four Making Connections sites whose experiences are reflected here are joining with, and in some cases becoming integral to, the most powerful forces of change in their communities.

**Managing for results may help other partners and investors recognize the centrality of community capacities that otherwise would be overlooked or ignored.** In communities it is often difficult to secure ongoing funding to build data capacity, develop local leaders and mobilize residents, and support the alliances and collaborations that community change requires. By demonstrating that these capacities are essential for achieving clearly defined results—and then showing those results in terms of improved family and child well-being (more employment, higher assets, better achievement in the early grades of school)—results-focused community change makes the case that investments in community capacities pay off.

**Nothing about managing community change efforts is simple.** However, for those who care about the well-being of children and families in tough neighborhoods, and about the health and vitality of these neighborhoods themselves, greater

clarity about how to manage community change efforts is a critical goal. The efforts of hundreds of local managers, leaders, and partners in the cities recognized here—who are not only managing by results but demonstrating deep commitment and devoting endless hours of effort to achieving results—provide some answers. ■

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## Response Essay

*By Doris W. Koo  
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Patricia Auspos correctly identifies the prerequisites for successful implementation of community change efforts: a shared vision and core values. Crucial to these factors is an effective organizing structure that manages ongoing and evolving relationships and challenges.

Two community change efforts can help illustrate the importance of these requisites. One is the successful redevelopment of the former Holly Park public housing complex in Seattle. The other is the ongoing rebuilding effort in New Orleans that followed the 2005 hurricanes. These examples present two strikingly different locations, each with unique circumstances, obstacles, and opportunities. But in both, investing significant time and achieving trust made it possible to build a common vision and core values, two fundamental, transformative factors.

### EXAMPLE 1: FROM HOLLY PARK TO NEWHOLLY

Attributing Holly Park's transformation to "internal alignment" would seem to undermine the highly intuitive and individualized nature of this important community change effort. But the journey from the most distressed property in the Seattle Housing Authority's portfolio to a shining national example of mixed-income development truly does represent a textbook case of successful community transformation through internal alignment—or, as Auspos explains, of "the various pieces of the work fit[ting] together, and keep[ing] the whole effort moving forward."

Today, the Pacific Northwest has a total of seven HOPE VI communities, from Seattle and King County to Tacoma and Portland. All embraced the model of shared vision and values, sustainable design, and successful public-private partnerships in neighborhood transformation. Some of these communities feature new neighborhood schools; others boast libraries, access to light rail, supermarkets, and thriving local businesses. All have formed positive relationships with new homeowners and built an enduring network of community partners, service providers, and the housing authorities that sponsored and implemented the transformation.

In 1994, however, Holly Park—a complex created for World War II defense workers—was an anomaly in Seattle's otherwise seamless neighborhood fabric, a distressed community in a highly functional city. Located on 125 acres within 20 minutes of downtown, Holly Park was home to 875 households, 90 percent of whom were minorities. (In comparison, minorities made up just 17 percent of Se-

attle’s population at that time.) Residents included African and Asian refugee families, African Americans, and a small number of whites. The community also had the city’s highest homicide rates and lowest household incomes. More than half of Holly Park’s residents were children under the age of 18.

The vision to transform Holly Park came from then-Mayor Norman Rice, the first African American elected to the city’s highest office. Mayor Rice’s vision was at once simple and ambitious: Turn Seattle into a city of thriving urban villages, where families of diverse ethnicity and incomes live in safe, walkable neighborhoods anchored by high-quality integrated schools, community centers, libraries, and small businesses, with access to open space and mass transit.

That vision took root when then-HUD Secretary Henry Cisneros, a former mayor himself, launched the HOPE VI program as a bold experiment to change the face of public housing around the country as well as the experience of its residents. Seattle applied for one of the first HOPE VI planning grants and was awarded \$500,000 to come up with a vision and implementation strategy to redevelop Holly Park.

Comprehensive community planning was an unknown concept to most Holly Park residents, who spoke a total of 16 different languages. Fear of crime in their new community, coupled with vivid memories of war, forced many refugee families to remain locked in their own homes. Asian and East African young men grouped together in response to pressure from local gangs. Residents and businesses in the surrounding neighborhoods shunned the public housing residents and called for their removal.

The housing authority’s decision to apply for a planning grant gave Holly Park residents an opportunity to help rebuild their community. The organizing principles involved in master planning provided a framework for resident participation in visioning exercises and productive dialogue (headsets akin to those used at United Nations meetings eliminated language barriers). The process enabled residents to gain a voice, make choices, and eventually negotiate residents’ right to return and new community rules with the housing authority. Residents and businesses in the surrounding community also were invited to participate in the planning process, and they did.

By the time the housing authority secured its HOPE VI implementation grant, the city of Seattle had established an interagency task force, coordinated by one single point of contact, to align resources and neighborhood priorities within the city and with the housing authority. This team worked with design professionals, consultants, neighborhood representatives, Holly Park residents, city council staff, legal advocates, affordable housing developers, and service providers. Together they planned, debated, negotiated, and reached decisions at each step of the development process.

Between the initial planning and the grand opening of the first home in “NewHolly,” close to six years had passed. It would take another eight years to complete the transformation of Holly Park as residents, the city, and neighboring communities had envisioned it. By the time the last home was built and occupied, three more public housing redevelopments would be funded and come to fruition across Seattle. All would follow the guiding vision and paths blazed

by the Holly Park residents and anchored by a lasting partnership between the city, housing authority, service providers, and nonprofit community development organizations.

Clearly, time and trust proved essential to the positive outcome at Holly Park. Yet, at the core of this and similar success stories are the residents. Many still live in the community today and remain active in Southeast Seattle's various block clubs, PTAs, and civic associations (which replaced the former public housing resident council). Since its grand opening in 1999, the NewHolly public library has doubled its collection of books, magazines, and CDs while greatly expanding residents' access to computers. It remains one of Seattle's most highly subscribed neighborhood libraries—a measure of success that some might have dismissed as unlikely or inconceivable before despair and discord gave way to internal alignment.

## **EXAMPLE 2: CREATING ALIGNMENT IN NEW ORLEANS**

The effort to rebuild New Orleans after the devastation of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita offers a sharply different story and set of circumstances. Combined, the magnitude of the destruction and the massive dislocation and displacement from both disasters created an atmosphere of urgency and distrust. As a result, resident planning and engagement in the rebuilding effort became nearly impossible. Early planning efforts by numerous experts produced a variety of sustainable rebuilding approaches, including “shrinking the city footprint” to create “new, protected green space in areas deemed unsuitable for rebuilding.” The people of New Orleans, along with

Mayor Ray Nagin, deemed these options unfit for consideration.

From the start, New Orleans struggled with the absence of a coherent vision or shared principles for how or what to rebuild. A massive infusion of federal funds (including grants, tax credits, FEMA assistance, and billions more in block grants to the Gulf States) got bogged down by multiple federal agencies trying to administer funding with conflicting rules and varying timetables. Through the concerted efforts of foundations, universities, and volunteer organizations, a solid organizing structure has begun to emerge. But even five years after the storms, there is no coordinated strategy to direct the resources and capacity needed for a comprehensive rebuilding effort.

The proposed redevelopment of four large public housing complexes generated suspicion. The prevailing distrust was worsened by the difficulty of sharing accurate information with residents who were widely displaced across the country. Advocacy organizations brought litigation against the housing authority, which remains under receivership, preventing officials from demolishing the buildings. With many essential ingredients for internal alignment absent or rendered ineffective, emotions soared.

In the midst of this turmoil, Enterprise Community Partners and Providence Community Housing worked quietly and collaboratively to rebuild the culturally rich community in the Tremé and Tulane/Gravier neighborhoods on the site of the former Lafitte public housing complex, demolished by HUD in 2008. Construction has begun on the first phase of the redevelopment to create a mixed-income community of choice with 1,500 new sustainable, affordable homes on the

27-acre Lafitte site and in surrounding communities.

Over time, Enterprise and Providence began to build a sense of trust by communicating with hundreds of residents dispersed across the nation and providing transportation for hundreds more to attend community planning charrettes in New Orleans and Houston. One-for-one replacement of subsidized homes and right-of-return for all 865 families speak to the core vision and values driving this strategy. Also paramount is a commitment to extensive case management services as well as jobs and opportunities for minority- and women-owned businesses. Residents currently have access to services at the reopened Sojourner Truth Community Center adjacent to the Lafitte site.

Progress occurs slowly, with the severe economic downturn further hampering efforts as many displaced public housing residents remain in scattered, unfit housing. Yet rebuilding in New Orleans and across the Gulf Coast region has come a long way. Construction nears completion on some of the new public housing and other affordable developments that were built with disaster recovery resources, and these offer displaced residents long-awaited options for returning home. Whatever planning and reconstruction remain under way are a credit to the resourcefulness and sheer will of a network of local nonprofit organizations, often working in partnership with national intermediaries or private-sector developers and philanthropic leaders.

In 2006, researchers from the Urban Institute expressed guarded optimism, noting the city's "unique opportunity to recreate itself as an economically diverse, inclusive city that offers its residents with

low incomes authentic opportunities." (Turner and Zedlewski, 2006) But their conclusion was generally bleak, absent evidence that "officials are working together toward a systematic and open process; indeed there are legitimate concerns that many residents may never be able to return." Four years later, resilience and resourcefulness have generated signs of hope. Robust local leadership and a stable community development infrastructure will be critical for public housing residents in New Orleans to enjoy the same opportunities made available to residents of Seattle's former Holly Park and other successful redevelopment efforts. A strong organizing structure on the ground is vital to stimulating the community rebuilding efforts residents so desperately want and need.

At a national level, a platform has emerged that could indirectly provide valuable leverage for place-based community change efforts and their internal alignment. The Obama Administration has begun aligning agencies such as HUD, EPA, and the Departments of Transportation, Energy, Education, and Labor toward providing coordinated response systems and incentives to test place-based solutions. The Promise Neighborhoods and Choice Neighborhoods initiatives, which draw from holistic, community-based efforts piloted by Enterprise and others, seek to combine the Department of Education's school reform efforts with HUD's community development strategies. Aligning weatherization funds with the need to make affordable multifamily properties and public housing more efficient and cost effective adds scale and dimension to the Department of Energy's climate change strategy. The interagency Partnership for Sustainable Communi-

ties encourages comprehensive planning to link housing, transportation, smart growth, and regional economies within a place-based framework—the roots of which trace back to forward-thinking community change efforts nationwide.

Once again, time and trust will prove equally important to these federal pilots. The initiatives promise needed incentives to encourage local coordination

among regional and local governments, along with philanthropic and other private anchor institutions, to fuel community-based change efforts. They represent internal alignment in action. And they offer the community development industry a source of both pride and inspiration to continue adjusting and rethinking our respective alignment as needed. ■

# Aligning with Outside Resources and Power

*By Tom Dewar*

**I**t has become commonplace to assert that place-based community change must start with but go beyond the existing assets within any particular neighborhood, project, or initiative. The goals that energize and focus place-based work—increased jobs and income, family stability, affordable housing, better educational outcomes for children, reduced crime and violence, and the like—simply require more and different kinds of resources and influence than even the most resourceful and active community can provide. Therefore, successful community change efforts also require connections and relationships with people and institutions outside the geographic areas targeted for change—players who can help stakeholders access, leverage, and influence key forces for (and against) change, including external power holders, resources, policies, and markets. Such connections can be thought of as “external alignment” and are a fundamental strategy for getting the most out of place-based work. When done well, this type of alignment can change systems, create or influence public and private perceptions, and play a decisive role in how resources are allocated.

Powerful outside systems often aren’t set up to align naturally with communities, however. Moreover, cultural, historical, regulatory, racial, and legal barriers, along with high up-front costs, can impede mutually beneficial relationships between the community and the public and private sectors. To overcome the obstacles, a range of actors must expend significant time and political, social, and economic capital to broker relationships between communities and external powers. They must literally and metaphorically “subsidize” alignment between sectors and interests until new habits of thinking, acting, and collaborating enable these alignment to occur more naturally.

Effective brokers and intermediaries of external connections are highly intentional, opportunistic, and adaptable. They build relationships, raise money, remove obstacles, and move information back and forth. They learn from others while educating them, creating a favorable context for the work, and eliciting help. And realizing that self-interest usually is what drives people toward alignment, they pay continuous and thoughtful attention to how potential allies' interests develop, intersect, and change.

Growing recognition that external alignment is important has led many place-based projects to expand the range and scope of potential alliances. Initiative developers and local leaders have become increasingly sensitive to the contributions of key actors, such as anchor institutions and businesses, whose interests intersect with the local community's interests (Webber & Karlstrom, 2009; Binder et al., 2007), and they are more specific and pragmatic about what they require from government and philanthropy (Briggs, 2007b). This perspective also encourages community change efforts to incorporate a regional or metropolitan strategy into their work (Muro et al., 2009; Weissbourd, 1996, 2009).

Along with these shifts, new ways of organizing have emerged that feature stronger and more inclusive coalitions (e.g., across age, racial, and identity boundaries and among resident-controlled, church-based, and labor organizations)—often in combinations and forms meant to build the specific kind of power most relevant to a specific goal. At the same time, many well-established methods of organizing are being adapted or scrapped in the face of new challenges, such as increased mobility by residents of disadvantaged communities, or the involvement of immigrants and youth who want to exert voice and power but don't identify with "neighborhoods" in the same way that previous generations did.

## **Themes in External Alignment**

### ***THEME 1: A COMMON FRAMEWORK AND SHARED VISION CAN BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER AND FOCUS THE WORK.***

Many place-based efforts benefit from having a common framework and vision that give participants shared language and a focused set of goals around which to engage people and interests, both in and outside the community in question.

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#### ***A Common Framework Brings Coherence to Alignment***

A coalition of diverse interests formed in Youngstown, Ohio, driven in large part by the economic and social crisis that radiates throughout the entire northeastern Ohio region. Here alignment features

- A broadly inclusive “visioning” process for developing the plan for change, spanning boundaries that are normally impervious to relationship building (let alone joint action);
- Creation of a “community-owned” plan for the city’s future that shifts focus from growing rapidly to keeping the city small but improving quality of life, connecting it to the regional economy, and mobilizing residents to work toward that vision;
- Some shared fund-raising and investment that tap local sources but also aim to leverage outside money and political support; and
- A communications strategy that includes public awareness campaigns, up-to-date information, and clear analysis of how local conditions are changing, enabling participants to “stay on the same page” while moving in different networks.

“There is simply no way we could have started out on such a usefully different footing if that vision and plan had not been done in advance,” says Joel Ratner, president of the Raymond John Wean Foundation and a partner in the change effort.

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***THEME 2: IT TAKES POWER TO GET RESULTS, AND NO SINGLE ORGANIZATION OR INTEREST GROUP HAS ENOUGH TO GET THERE ALONE.***

Multifaceted revitalization requires strong partners, each of which brings value in the form of authority, resources, and network. But strong organizations and institutions often pull in separate directions. The trick is to get them working together on behalf of shared goals and mutual interests—and that’s when a common framework can be an invaluable tool.

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### ***Powerful Allies Work Together***

Two of the key players in the city of Youngstown work are the Mahoning Valley Organizing Collaborative (MVOC) and the city of Youngstown—unlikely but successful allies.

MVOC is a “broad-based organizing collaborative” that engages residents of the valley’s four counties in community change. Through its membership base of churches, schools, neighborhood associations, and unions, MVOC mobilizes multiple networks around issues such as vacant properties and weak public services; provides grassroots leadership training; and connects the city to regional and state-wide allies.

Mayor Jay Williams, who led the visioning process in his former role as Director of City Planning, uses his ties and authority to advance the work. He embraces

MVOC's organizing role because it "forces many . . . in the public, private, and non-profit sectors who previously saw ourselves as distinct, separate, and even competitive, to start looking for ways to work together, and to follow plans that call for joint action."

MVOC's leaders, meanwhile, realize they are now allied with people and interests outside their normal reach or sphere of action.

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***THEME 3: ALLIES NEED TO COLLABORATE RATHER THAN CONTROL OR LEAD THE WORK.***

When multiple, active brokers and intermediaries are involved—and in a successful community change effort, this should be the case—allies need to be aware and respectful of what each other is doing, send clear and consistent messages, and try to reinforce core goals and values.

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***Collaboration, Not Sole Ownership, Moves Efforts Forward***

The Raymond John Wean Foundation (RJWF) is a strong partner in Youngstown's community revitalization effort. But although RJWF has operated in Ohio's Mahoning Valley since 1949, the new city plan had already been created when RJWF joined the effort. So instead of imposing itself on others, RWJF tried to find ways to fit in. The foundation changed its grant-making approach and expanded its role. RWJF now seeks ways to contribute resources and support that would otherwise not be available and to help glue together the newly articulated "intersections of interest" and "collaborative spirit" that animate Youngstown's revitalization. RJWF also looks for ways to help residents become more directly involved and better informed (e.g., supporting public forums, a new CDC, leadership training, and grants for small neighborhood projects).

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***THEME 4: SOME ALIGNMENT CAN BE DESIGNED INTO THE STRUCTURE AND GOVERNANCE AT THE OUTSET; SOME IS LESS FORMAL; AND SOME EMERGES AS THE WORK DEVELOPS. ALL ARE IMPORTANT.***

Partnerships for community change can promote and formalize external alignment by creating governing boards that represent diverse interests, including those of stakeholders and allies outside the geographic area, which gives each member a role and a stake in the effort; identifying and targeting results that matter to people inside and outside the community; and holding public forums to learn from and educate external stakeholders.

But external alignment also comes from informal outreach. Successful community change agents work actively behind the scenes to learn what people “are really thinking,” interpret and translate messages to potential allies, reveal and defuse opposition, and uncover interests that might inspire an external power broker or resource to come on board. As the director of one community change partnership observes, alignment isn’t “like getting ducks lined up in a row and then it takes care of itself. That’s not how it works. These people have minds of their own, and so I try to inform and influence them.”

Moreover, external alignment strategies are shaped by the places, people, and goals involved. Because these factors change over time, so do the opportunities for alignment. A situation that begins with misalignment can be turned into constructive interaction through purposeful, patient, and persistent persuasion and relationship building. Conversely, a community change effort that starts out with solid external support can deteriorate as players change or alliances fall apart if no one makes the effort to keep interests aligned.

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### ***Formal, Informal, and Ongoing Strategies Build External Alignment***

Chicago’s **Partnership for New Communities (PNC)** was formed in 2003, with support from the Chicago Community Trust and MacArthur Foundation, as a way for business, civic, and nonprofit leaders to support the Chicago Housing Authority’s Plan for Transformation. The Plan, launched in 1999, seeks to provide 25,000 new and rehabilitated homes for low-income families and seniors over 15 years; many will be located in mixed-income communities on or near former public housing sites.

To strengthen links between the new communities and external resources, PNC’s board was strategically composed of private- and public-sector interests. To attract and retain outside support, PNC targeted two areas for results that played to the partnership’s strengths and outside priorities: workforce development and economic development. PNC’s ability to demonstrate results—especially in terms of home purchases by low-income residents and improved outcomes for workforce development programs—generated ongoing external support. PNC’s executive director also has a small group of advisors outside the partnership who serve as an informal sounding board for ideas, plans, and concerns.

In San Diego’s Diamond Neighborhood, the Jacobs Family Foundation (JFF) serves as lead investor, trusted convener, and external power broker for the **Market Creek Plaza** project. Through feedback from residents, JFF recognized that a top neighborhood priority was to have a decent shopping center. The foundation acquired an abandoned industrial site and supported an inclusive, four-year planning process. The Jacobs Center for Neighborhood Innovation (JCNI) was created to implement the plan for creating Market Creek Plaza, a \$23.5 million commercial real estate development that encompasses a grocery store, other business, and a cultural center.

Links to external resources were made as the plan evolved. Because opportunities for resident ownership were considered important, for example, JCNi engaged residents and Jacobs staff in working with lawyers, financial experts, policy makers, and regulators to craft an Initial Public Offering for the project and win state approval for it. Additional funding came from program related investments, which also required interaction and alliances with outside investors, financial planners, and policy makers.

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***THEME 5: ALIGNMENT BETWEEN STRATEGIES AND CAPACITIES IS ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT.***

Strategy and capacity can be aligned at the outset of a community change effort, or even before a specific project presents itself. For instance, the director of community planning and economic development for one city believes his role is to make sure the “way is cleared” for local, place-based work before it emerges. “It’s too late to try and get people working together once the projects get going,” he explains. “I see my job . . . as getting the various rules, regulations, incentives, and day-to-day professional practices of my staff aligned internally so that when someone approaches us with a good idea, we are ready.”

More often, however, this type of alignment happens as the work unfolds and weak or missing capacities are discovered. As the director of one effort explains, “Where relevant capacity is available internally, we try to nurture and strengthen it. Where it’s not, we go find it on the outside.”

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***Advance Planning Helps Align Strategies and Capacities***

The Bay Area’s **Great Communities Collaborative (GCC)** aligns strategies with capacities in advance to ensure that transit capacities will match “smart growth” over the next few years. The region expects to see continued population growth, accompanied by 100 new mass-transit stations. In neighborhoods within a half-mile radius of these new station areas, GCC fosters cooperation among relevant public and private institutions, seeds local plans and actions, offers technical assistance, and tries to ensure that development is environmentally friendly and sustainable (e.g., housing choices are safe and affordable and neighborhoods are “walkable”).

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***THEME 6: EXTERNAL ALIGNMENT SHOULD AUGMENT, NOT REPLACE OR PRECEDE, A FUNDAMENTAL COMMITMENT TO GIVING RESIDENTS A CENTRAL ROLE IN SHAPING AND LEADING THE WORK.***

A commitment to having residents meaningfully involved in all phases of the work lies at the core of most community change efforts. This keeps the work rooted, offers ways for residents to be part of their own solutions, and provides a counterbalance to the growing influence of outside interests. A commitment to residents doesn't have to stand in the way of efforts to create external alignment, however. Rather, it means that community leaders need to be developed and encouraged to operate both on the inside (mobilizing other residents) and on the outside (facilitating access to resources, investments, and opportunities for broad ownership). This is easier said than done but is by no means impossible. It does, however, require thoughtful pacing of actions and persistence. It also requires everyone involved to reach outside their personal networks and relationships, and not everyone can do that. A fair number of development projects never do manage to move neighborhood residents into leadership or governance positions in their initial design phases. Most proceed anyway and may try later to recover "resident voice" and build local capacity.

It is much harder to engage residents if they were ignored or their role minimized during the start-up stage. In this sense, as one practitioner noted, external alignment "clearly has potential to cut both ways." Another practitioner observes that some outsiders come looking for the "poor" community but only want to engage on their own terms and to justify their own agendas. In several sites in which this person worked, local communities were "captured" by service delivery agencies and their funding streams, which can produce "chronic misalignment" between local neighborhoods and outside professional and agency interests (Mathie & Cunningham, 2009.)

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***External Alignment Should Support, Not Supplant, Community Involvement***

In San Diego, the **Jacobs Family Foundation (JFF)** committed publicly to keeping residents at the center and creating a realistic way for them to "own" the project if they so desired. JFF began by careful and well-organized "listening" sessions with residents and then, through the Jacobs Center for Neighborhood Innovation, developed plans that relied on continued resident involvement. External supports were added as work on Market Creek Plaza and in the Diamond Neighborhood matured, but the Jacobs Center promised to remain open to residents and make changes if results fell short of their expectations: "Nothing was set in stone. If it worked, it was retained. If not, it was dropped," observes Jennifer Vanica of JFF.

The **Hope Community** in South Minneapolis similarly built external alignment gradually and only after a sustained process of “community listening.” Hope serves as its own broker or intermediary for internal and external relationships, and Executive Director Mary Keefe warns that “while you have to find creative ways of linking community listening to external systems and resources, you also have to make sure you get the sequence right.” A particular challenge is to balance residents’ views of the agenda for change with the way outsiders, even allies, may perceive and respond to the same agenda. “It’s not that those powerful and important people outside the neighborhood are not central to our work reaching its full potential—they clearly are!” Keefe explains. “[But] I would rather . . . audition some of them to work with us once I have made sure we have built strong ties and trust within the community and know what we want. . . . I have to keep listening, bringing in new people, and finding ways to meet residents where they are rather than changing our table around to serve the big, outside interests.”

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***THEME 7: ALIGNMENT SHOULD OCCUR AT THE INSTITUTIONAL, ORGANIZATIONAL, AND PERSONAL LEVELS.***

All levels of alignment are important, and in practice they often blur into one another. Links to the institutional level engage political and financial powers (e.g., the mayor’s office, banks, housing authorities) in community change. Alignment at the organizational or network level leverages public events, forums, and social gatherings to exchange information and keep current or potential allies informed. And alignment at the personal level mobilizes a broker’s own ties, experiences, and reputation to advance the community change agenda. Because the players within these levels may change, external alignment often is more about removing obstacles and finding solutions in a specific circumstance than about locking in blanket agreements.

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***Multilevel Alignment Creates a Platform for Community Change***

Chicago’s **New Communities Program (NCP)** works through the local office of LISC, which serves as the intermediary. NCP’s mission is to support the development of 16 targeted neighborhoods across the city by connecting local organizations and projects with the resources and support they need. Some of these resources are provided by LISC, which passes on various types of assistance to lead agencies and local projects, and some resources come from the wider city and region. NCP’s core operating principles reflect an emphasis on external alignment at multiple levels:

- Investment in a lead agency in each of the selected neighborhoods
- Investment in bottom-up, comprehensive quality-of-life plans as blueprints for change

- Emphasis on “doing while planning” (a fast-start approach)
- Direct support for core staff, technical assistance, and venture capital to implement specific projects
- Facilitation of peer learning and organizational development
- Help for creating partnerships to achieve greater results
- Focus on outcomes, with venture capital and other financial support awarded on a competitive basis
- Ongoing effort to establish links between new programs and renewable public and private resources

These elements are intended to build a kind of platform that will enable place-based work to emerge, take root, and grow. They have certainly produced important commitments to NCP by the mayor, key city officials, banks, business leaders, and other entities outside the neighborhoods. Examples include loans and financial guarantees to launch or operate housing, economic development, and commercial projects; city budget commitments; and proposed changes to city practices in response to new relationships with NCP players, both at LISC and in the neighborhoods. For instance, Chicago’s mayor hired 12 project managers to work inside city government to help “facilitate progress” and “trouble-shoot on behalf of projects” that emerge from NCP’s local plans. He also authorized an Expedited Projects Initiative to keep things moving and coordinated on NCP’s behalf.

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***THEME 8: STRONG STARTS AND EVIDENCE OF PROGRESS HELP LEVERAGE EXTERNAL ALIGNMENT.***

“To do this work well,” observes a practitioner, you have to earn a reputation as “an honest broker, . . . a reliable go-between and translator,” and someone who can deliver results: “People need to see that you do what you promise.” Positive early steps and little successes are crucial because they draw attention, create trust, build momentum, and win support from and among key players.

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***A Communications Strategy Builds External Support around Early Successes***

Chicago’s NCP assigned a professional “scribe” to each participating neighborhood. The scribes write up notes from meetings, activities, and events for the lead agency and the NCP network. NCP also distributes stories illustrating how key outside actors (such as loan officers, local developers, public officials, and frontline staff) think about and act on their interests. These efforts help local leaders and people outside NCP understand what the initiative is aiming for and encountering as the work unfolds.

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The themes described here cover many of the lessons being learned about how to position place-based work with respect to outside interests and resources and suggest some essential methods and roles to consider. The take-away message is that the process of brokering external alignment is largely about building relationships that leverage self-interest. It encompasses many roles—convener, facilitator, educator, planner, reporter, coach, capacity builder, performance-oriented investor and monitor, gap filler, translator, listener—and evolves along with the work. External alignment benefits from intentional, opportunistic, and continuous attention and deserves more attention in place-based work.

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## Response Essay

*By Joel Ratner  
Raymond John Wean Foundation  
Warren, Ohio*

External institutions and leaders represent money and leverage that can turn a small, promising community change collaboration into a transformative one for cities and regions. Alignment with these external resources has a flip side, however—one with potential to endanger the stability and success of local partnerships and engender considerable frustration.

The danger arises from the fact that seeking support from, and attempting to coordinate programming with, external powers like national foundations and state and federal agencies is essentially gambling. True, it is a form of gambling whose benefits can be enormous and whose risks can, theoretically, be minimized by thorough preparation. But it is gambling nonetheless and can result in serious disappointments for place-based alliances that invest considerable time, effort, hope, and trust in pursuing outside support.

In the Youngstown area of Northeast Ohio, we at the Raymond John Wean Foundation have experienced firsthand both the good and the bad of efforts to

align local community change efforts with outside resources. The Wean Foundation views its primary tools as leadership, convening, catalyzing, and advocating; grant-making comes second. It is our view that many foundations, by assuming a more passive stance, fail to leverage their considerable resources and thus, too often, do not optimally serve their communities. Our approach, based on a mutual perception of shared economic and social problems, has led to considerable success in coordinating community change work with other local stakeholders and resources.

One example of the Wean Foundation's approach—a model, in fact, for our work—is the Mahoning Valley Organizing Collaborative (MVOC), launched in 2007. MVOC is an alliance of individuals and grassroots institutions such as schools, churches, neighborhood groups, and unions. It came about through the enterprise and imagination of community leaders and with the support of the Wean Foundation. Other community leaders, including Youngstown Mayor Jay Williams, Congressman Tim Ryan, and the Regional Chamber of Commerce, quickly grasped the strengths of MVOC, so local alignment occurred easily.

A partnership between the foundation, MVOC, and the City of Youngstown led to the creation of the Youngstown Neighborhood Development Corporation (YNDC), an organization established to address the area's lack of capacity to implement neighborhood development and revitalization programs.

MVOC and YNDC collectively represent the region's most effective community change collaboration to date. Yet our attempts to align YNDC with significant national resources in 2009 and 2010 have so far met only with disappointment. In particular, our failed effort to align with the federal Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) demonstrates just how difficult it is to attract outside resources and attention.

Like many local partnerships, the Youngstown area's neighborhood improvement alliance was attracted to external powers because of money: The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development had a great deal of that and other resources at its disposal, and money and resources were exactly what Youngstown was missing. We thought that HUD funding would be the answer to our problem.

In the first round of NSP funding, we were bitterly disappointed to end up with far less money than we had hoped—far less, in fact, than other Ohio cities received, especially when the scale of our vacancy and abandonment problem was taken into account. The NSP decision was a letdown, but we thought that the state (which was distributing the second portion of NSP funding) would recognize the shortfall and compensate Youngstown in its subsequent distribution of funding. We were wrong. The next round of NSP funding by the state generated absolutely nothing for Youngstown.

Although we were upset and angry, we still saw the NSP and its multi-million-dollar budget as the solution to our regional development needs. When NSP II was announced as part of the federal stimulus package, we worked hard to prepare what we considered a strong proposal for funding on behalf of a consortium of nine Mahoning Valley cities led by Youngstown. We made sure we took all the necessary steps in terms of advocacy and even earned recognition from the Brookings Institute for having an exemplary amount of collaboration.

Again, our reward was . . . nothing. When we asked Washington officials why we had been turned down, we were told that our region was seen as lacking sufficient capacity to effectively implement the funding.

The entire painful process incurred tremendous costs, in terms of both valuable time and energy wasted, and the psychological setback we suffered. We had to reset our goals, redefine success, and reevaluate our entire community change approach. If big money wasn't going to be an option, at least right away, we would have to figure out another way to *build* resources so we could *win* resources—a classic chicken-or-egg dilemma.

**What we learned can benefit other community change collaborations nationwide.** First, we realized that we had pinned our hopes and plans on outside resources for which we weren't yet ready to compete and had spent precious energy and dollars doing so. If we wanted to get ready to compete, we were going to have to do it ourselves.

We haven't given up on aligning with external resources. We have done something better: discovered and invented re-

sources among ourselves. In the process, we are becoming more creative, more self-sufficient, and more successful at developing the strong partnerships and infrastructure we need for broad and deep community change. We have discovered that in ourselves—and in our powerful collaborations with local partners—we possess incredible strengths.

We learned the inestimable value of political will and self-reliance in moving community change forward. We learned that alignment needs to grow organically, beginning with our closest partners and neighboring resources and moving outward to the larger region before any bid for national programs can be successfully tried. The Wean Foundation's recent collaboration with the larger Cleveland Foundation for two major grant proposals represents this kind of incremental expansion, connecting the Youngstown community change effort with an institution whose greater leverage can provide contacts and resources currently beyond the power of our own local institutions to access.

Most significantly, perhaps, we've also learned that it isn't enough to be creative and self-reliant at the start of local redevelopment. A community must always be creating local resources for itself and always be increasing local commitment and capacity, even if the only tools available are bubble gum and Scotch tape. Only when the structure is steady and complete enough to stand on its own can local partners effectively reach out for help from beyond their community borders.

In this case and others, we try to act on the belief that a foundation must try to use all its various assets and play a range of active roles. To be part of this alignment process, a foundation has to be willing

to find ways to add real value. This may change over time and across projects.

The search for value is informed by certain principles. One was stated at the outset: It's not just the money. We don't assume that our grants are the only or even most useful thing we can do; we can also help convene, facilitate, advocate, and inform.

Second, this kind of work requires teamwork. We all need each other and should try to value and respect each other. As Dewar's chapter notes, we may give up some control in doing this but we gain much in return—and, most importantly, we think we improve the prospects for impact.

Third, in taking all of our assets seriously, we ought to try to remember that as a foundation we can take some risks that others cannot. Thus, it's more useful to try to inform and support risk-taking than to avoid it altogether.

Finally, foundations can act quickly and respond to a surprise or emergency—to an emerging challenge—or to clear evidence that something is not working. We have the discretionary power and flexibility to recognize these moments of opportunity and respond. In some cases, our willingness to do this can help solve problems in real time. ■

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## Response Essay

*By Robert J. O'Neill Jr. and Ron Carlee  
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Numerous foundations and nonprofit organizations have long advocated the importance of public participation in

place-based neighborhood and community development. Its importance is compounded by the long-term fiscal prognosis for the federal government and most states. Increasingly, responsibility for dealing with issues that matter to residents will fall to local communities. Their ability to harness a community's assets to change efforts will determine the quality of life for us all.

Despite this reality, little attention has been given to the role that local government and other institutions play in the success of community initiatives. National foundations and the federal government have the ability to focus attention on major community issues and provide the resources required to initiate action. Unfortunately, their attention and investments often are short lived. To have a long-term impact and achieve the scale required to achieve systemic change, local governments and local institutions must forge critical partnerships.

Here's the dilemma: Local governments alone cannot build sustainable communities, but it is impossible to build sustainable communities without local governments. Thus the question becomes one of alignment: How do we get the right people to work together to improve the community?

There are several necessary, though not sufficient, prerequisites for successful external alignment in community building efforts: leadership; stakeholder engagement, especially among residents; a shared vision; long-term commitment to the outcome; and capacity building. Tom Dewar's discussion of external alignment highlighted similar themes, and we revisit them here from our experience.

## 1. LEADERSHIP

The essential underlying variable in virtually all societal endeavors is leadership. Leadership of community change can be initiated anywhere—within the neighborhood network or through an outside catalyst. For diverse groups to come together in a shared effort, however, someone must start the conversation. Leadership in this context requires awareness of the need or opportunity; leaders must have a vision for what is possible and an understanding of how to launch the effort and gauge its success. One person becomes two, two become three, three become four, and so on until they achieve the critical mass necessary to translate ideas and vision into a plan.

## 2. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Connecting and aligning diverse players around a common goal is a challenge for all societal efforts. What is unique about community building is the need to involve neighborhood residents and other stakeholders.

Community change efforts occur within a governance context that, at least in the United States, is based on the principles of democratic engagement. Therefore, community development should be about improving the lives of the people who live in a neighborhood rather than furthering the financial interests of any institutional stakeholder. Often, it is local institutions (for-profit corporations, large nonprofit entities like hospitals and universities, or government itself) that hold the most power within a community. However, the wholesale and unethical destruction of communities and displacement of their residents can occur when

residents' interests are ignored in favor of the exclusive interests of institutions. It is paramount, therefore, that the people who live in the community be at the center of any community development effort.

### 3. SHARED VISION

Common purpose does indeed unite diverse stakeholders, as Tom Dewar's chapter on external alignment notes. When people's interests are purely transactional and clear financial metrics are in play, the potential value of relationships across organizations is easy to calculate—it's all about making money. In community building, however, many of the benefits of working together are intangible and long term. Some parties, such as residential and commercial property owners, investors, and government, have a clear financial stake in the work while other actors (resident organizations, advocacy groups, government, and enlightened businesses and institutions) are motivated by policy or societal objectives. And the homeowners, renters, and small business owners who live in the community being changed have the greatest financial and emotional stake in its outcome.

Resident-centric, place-based community change aims to achieve multiple wins for a range of stakeholders. This includes the broader, enlightened self-interests that community partners may have along with more traditional goals for financial returns. In a redevelopment case involving Arlington, Va., for instance, the planning process brought residents, landowners, local government representatives, and other stakeholders together to develop a shared vision for the community's future. Participants attended charrettes and design workshops to view

drawings and models before settling on a dramatic redevelopment plan that led to the first reinvestment in a generation.

### 4. SUSTAINED COMMITMENT

A truly sustainable community that improves residents' lives requires ongoing commitment to building bridges of trust among all stakeholders and community institutions. This is a messy and time-consuming process in a broadly based, participatory effort; the returns often show up in the next generation, not the next quarter. (The revitalization plan in Arlington took the better part of a decade to complete. Another spanned four years, and some components are still in development ten years later. Each plan is intended to guide its community for 30 to 50 years.)

Nonetheless, as political scientist Robert Axelrod writes, there is a need to "enlarge the shadow of the future." Thinking long term forces us to ask hard questions. What happens if we do nothing? What will be the lasting implications of our work? How can we ensure sustainability and create a community in which people choose to live, work, play, and invest—today and throughout subsequent generations?

Commitment by professional staff in local governments and institutions is especially important. While elected officials and top executives in local businesses and nonprofits can play catalytic roles, it is the ongoing efforts of the city or county manager, agency heads (e.g., directors of planning, public works, neighborhood services), and street-level staff (e.g., planners, traffic engineers, inspectors, police officers, street crews) that, with assistance from counterparts within local institutions, create real change.

Local governments' professional staff generally have the tenures required to see a project or program through from conception to outcome and across several economic cycles. (In Arlington, for example, it was the handful of county directors of planning and public works who preserved and advanced plans to redevelop a dying commercial corridor into a vibrant urban center during the 45-year period it took to achieve the goal—a period during which 33 county board members came and went.)

So many individuals and groups today can veto public decisions that it is sometimes impossible to know who can say yes. Local professionals are familiar with the diffused power structure of the community; they are often the ones who regularly influence resource allocation decisions, focus on implementation, align rules and regulations—and, frankly, live with the results. These individuals possess the skills required to build consensus around a decision, even when they alone do not have the power to do so, as management consultant James Collins (2001) has pointed out.

## 5. CAPACITY BUILDING

Even when well-intentioned people with diverse interests unite around a shared vision, they may not know how to realize it. This is why capacity building is so important. Too often, however, it focuses on increasing the effectiveness of residents through education, training, and other tools when they participate with more sophisticated parties—rather than building the skills of developers, government representatives, and professional advocates to work effectively with residents and each other. Attention must be paid to developing everyone's capacity to under-

stand each other's interests and engage in constructive dialogue and negotiation.

In this respect, effective facilitation is essential. Community building demands more than conversation; it requires conversation about how to converse. This is one area in which foundations, professional associations, nonprofits, and academic institutions can have significant impact by supporting demonstration projects, research case studies, lessons learned, and other tools that teach people how to address a community's unique needs.

Our take-away message about external alignment is that successful placed-based development requires creating a community where people live not just by accident but by choice and where improvements to the community's future don't hurt the people who live there today. Ethical community development unites and aligns a neighborhood with local government, businesses, and institutions to develop a new and better vision for the community. This requires leadership, community engagement, shared vision, sustained commitment, and new capacities. Ultimately, people and institutions that reside, invest in, and govern each neighborhood must institutionalize the commitment to ethical change that is rooted in respecting and improving the lives of every resident. ■

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## Response Essay

*By Elwood Hopkins  
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Tom Dewar describes what for me are the most important set of issues that have defined the evolution of comprehensive

community change efforts in the past decade: the widespread awakening of interest in aligning external resources with community needs, and the new intermediaries that have emerged to facilitate that alignment through partnerships based on mutual self-interest.

It would be hard to sum up more succinctly the issues that have informed my own work in the field over the past 15 years. Los Angeles was the site of one of the first rounds of place-based initiatives that began in the early 1990s. Immediately after the Los Angeles civil unrest of 1992, a consortium of foundations called Los Angeles Urban Funders (LAUF) was formed. I was hired by LAUF to help the funders frame and carry out place-based initiatives in neighborhoods that had been most impacted by the rioting or were considered potential locations for future riots.

Even then, LAUF members understood the importance of bringing in resources from outside the community. The root cause of the civil unrest, they felt, had been a lack of economic opportunity: In one of the largest, most prosperous regions in the world, economic opportunities were not filtering down to the poorest neighborhoods. LAUF conceived of itself as an honest broker that could help create new channels through which growing industries could bring their opportunities to the geographic areas that needed them most.

To be sure, progress was made. By 2000, neighborhoods targeted by LAUF were showing signs of increased economic productivity and readiness. Financing infused through local business assistance programs had grown microenterprises into viable firms. School-based programs measurably improved student academic performance, and new workforce pipelines con-

nected adults with jobs. A range of financial education and asset building programs, delivered through churches and schools, prepared households to participate in the mainstream economy. And block clubs were organized to document their buying power in order to persuade national retailers to come to their communities.

But despite this progress, one of the principal goals identified by residents—the attraction of new bank branches—remained out of reach. Bank executives had been brought to the table. They had contributed to the pooled fund that supported the capacity building work. But from the perspective of the financial institutions, the entire effort was as a philanthropic venture. They did not see it as a means to their ultimate self-interest: profit.

The problem, of course, was not new. Over the past generation, a number of intermediaries have arisen to address the failure of banks to serve low-income neighborhoods. Some, like Community Development Finance Institutions, have compensated for the lack of banks by providing alternatives to mainstream financing. Adversarial groups have mounted pressure campaigns aimed at forcing banks to do a better job of meeting the financial needs of the poor. And national community development intermediaries have sought to help banks comply with the Community Reinvestment Act through partnerships with community development corporations.

But even when they explicitly set out to meet the self-interests of banks, these intermediaries are often so strongly identified with the communities they serve that they struggle to influence the financial sector. They tend to speak community development language and approach their conversations with out-

side institutions from the perspective of community needs. While they have succeeded at bringing financial resources into low-income communities, they are rarely viewed as “insiders” by the banking world.

In recognition of these limitations, LAUF leadership began to evolve a new, bifurcated structure, one that could become an insider in both the community and the banking industry while building bridges that would span the two worlds.

A nonprofit, the Center for Place-Based Initiatives, was established to build the neighborhood’s capacity to access economic opportunities. It helps community groups in targeted neighborhoods adopt a market orientation, incorporating a range of asset building and family economic stability services into regular programming. The center works intimately with these groups and is privy to the organizations’ internal challenges and capacity needs. It supports community-wide investment strategies aimed at expanding decent housing stock, cultivating small business districts, and generally growing the neighborhood economically and improving its productivity as a market. And it mobilizes the philanthropic support required to carry out this work.

In parallel, a for-profit consulting firm, Emerging Markets was established that could contract directly with banks to help them find profitable business opportunities in the low-income neighborhoods. Emerging Markets looks and feels like a conventional corporate consulting firm, and its team includes individuals with expertise in banking who can speak the language of banks. Like any corporate consulting firm, it signs nondisclosure agreements with its clients and is granted access to internal business data

and proprietary business models. And its contracts are defined and evaluated in terms of their impact on corporate profits.

Unlike conventional consulting firms, however, Emerging Markets only helps banks with business development strategies in low-income neighborhoods. And in addition to having personnel with backgrounds in various business disciplines, Emerging Markets has hired more than 100 neighborhood residents who also serve as consultants, bringing their local market intelligence and relationships as neighborhood influencers to the table as a resource for the financial institutions. Many residents who were enlisted for neighborhood research projects or to lead financial education workshops as part of LAUF’s early work now find that their knowledge and experience are of great value to corporations interested in doing business in their neighborhoods. It is a new spin on the old concept of “resident engagement.”

The Center for Place-Based Initiatives and Emerging Markets are distinct in a legal and fiscal sense, and they have firewalls that prevent the free flow of information between them. However, they also have interlocking staff and boards and a shared strategic framework that allows them to coordinate work in the same community and find points of collaboration between the corporate clients and the community groups. This strategic framework is the bridge that makes possible the collaboration between disparate partners.

The focus on a shared strategic framework ensures that local partners are not co-opted by corporate agendas. Rather, the partnerships are structured in ways that help the community groups fulfill their own missions:

- Through the schools, banks help parents create matched savings accounts to save for their children's higher education.
- Through local chambers and business assistance centers, banks administer microloans, graduating clients over time to mainstream loan products.
- Homeowner associations can revitalize residential districts by negotiating favorable home improvement financing for their members.
- Nonprofits that provide job placement or free tax preparation services can help clients protect their new income or refunds by opening a savings account at the local bank.
- Church groups promote financial education through home-based prayer meetings as a way of promoting family stability.

Banks have begun to understand that these collections of local organizations and associations comprise a delivery system for educating potential customers and a trusted referral network for driving more consumers to their branches. And as banks learn to honor the spending power and market intelligence of low-income families, those households discover a new kind of empowerment—one derived

not from organized political force but from organized consumer power—that gives them a voice in corporate practice.

The approach was first tested in Pacoima, a neighborhood in the northeast San Fernando Valley of Los Angeles. Through a combination of community-based financial education programs and profit-oriented consulting services to Wells Fargo, a bank branch finally opened in the community in 2003. It quickly proved itself to be among the most profitable in the trade area. Since that time, we have worked with other financial institutions, such as Bank of America, Union Bank, Washington Mutual, JP Morgan Chase, and Wachovia, and the work has expanded to more than a dozen neighborhoods throughout the Southern California region.

As this work expands to cities in other parts of the country, a new set of industry standards has quietly begun to emerge in the banking world. Paralleling the work of Emerging Markets and the Center for Place-Based Initiatives, the community development and profit sides of financial institutions are now collaborating to grow markets in low-income neighborhoods. In a real sense, we are seeing greater alignment within the financial institutions themselves. ■

# Evaluating and Learning from Community Change Efforts

*By Prudence Brown*

**T**he conceptual and technical challenges of evaluating community change initiatives are well known (Connell et al., 1995; Fulbright-Anderson et al., 1998). So, too, are the difficulties these initiatives face in gathering and using data to inform strategy and resource decisions in real time. Nonetheless, during the past decade the field made considerable progress in developing evaluation and learning practices that improve community change efforts and build knowledge—in part because the foundations that support community change (and help to design evaluations as well as invest in them) have given learning a more central place in their mission, goals, strategies, internal structures, and external partnerships (Hamilton et al., 2005; see also Behrens & Kelly, 2008).

The discussion of trends and challenges that follows illustrates the progress made in evaluating and learning from community change efforts and the difficulties that still lie ahead.

## Progress in Evaluating and Learning from Community Change

Progress can be seen in movement toward shared evaluation frameworks, more realistic expectations for measuring impact, more attention to real-time learning, greater use of geo-coded data, and new approaches to evaluating policy and systems change.

### **TREND 1: SHARED EVALUATION FRAMEWORKS**

Since about 2000, most community change initiatives have developed an evaluation framework (often created through a theory of change or logic modeling pro-

cess) through which they articulate goals and strategies and specify measurable interim and long-term outcomes. Evaluators increasingly play a role early on in helping to sharpen the thinking behind these frameworks and refine the success measures based on research-based evidence and examples of what has worked in other communities.

The development of an evaluation framework can engage key stakeholders, discipline strategic thinking, specify accountabilities, and establish shared expectations and realistic timelines (Brown & Fiester, 2007). Indeed, it is often in the process of defining both short- and longer-term outcomes and identifying how they will be measured that stakeholders ultimately agree upon the nature of the work and their own roles in it. Evolving community initiatives with multiple stakeholders and complex, multilevel goals can also use the framework to keep everyone aligned around mutually agreed-upon priorities and accountabilities and to manage expectations over time (Walker & Arbretton, 2004).

A particularly promising development is that foundations increasingly recognize their own critical role in determining the outcomes of community change efforts and therefore include their own performance in the evaluation framework (Brown, Colombo & Hughes 2009).

## ***TREND 2: MORE REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS FOR MEASURING IMPACT***

Funders and their partners have developed a better understanding of the “attribution problem” and the difficulty of drawing a straight causal line between investments in community change and specific outcomes. This more nuanced appreciation of the complex and dynamic nature of community change has led evaluators to focus more on trying to understand how such investments add value and capacity, serve a catalytic role, build on or accelerate existing momentum, help shape relevant resource and policy decisions, leverage new resources and partnerships, and/or contribute to achievement of specific outcomes (Kramer et al., 2007; W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 2007; Grantmakers for Effective Organizations, 2009).

As evaluators have grown more aware of the multiple causal factors at play within the complex ecology of community change—and as their clients have grown more interested in learning how to create change, not just proving that it has occurred (Behrens & Kelly, 2008; Westley et al., 2006)—they have begun to use multiple methods and sources of data to “make a compelling case” that links the change effort with intended outcomes or lack thereof.

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### ***Multiple Levels of Focus Capture Results***

Vibrant Communities, a Pan-Canadian initiative in 12 communities using multi-sectoral approaches to poverty reduction, developed an extensive learning and

evaluation process to help partners track progress, make adjustments, and build a knowledge base (Leviten-Reid, 2008). One component of the evaluation organizes results according to three levels of action (community capacity for poverty reduction, individual and household assets, and policy and systems change), each with four or five key indicators. For example, the community's ability to solve problems and take advantage of opportunities to address poverty is assessed periodically in terms of convening capacity, multisectoral leadership, collaboration, and community awareness.

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### ***TREND 3: MORE ATTENTION TO REAL-TIME LEARNING***

Learning is “a continuous process, a culture, and a commitment to support the capacity of people to reflect on their work in ways that help them see the paths that can lead to ever-improving performance,” as one interviewee said. Evaluation in community change work has been increasingly viewed as a means to enhance real-time learning and decision-making, refine strategy, and institute midcourse corrections (Bailey, Jordan, & Fiester, 2006; Walker, 2007). Soliciting the opinions, concerns, and priorities of multiple and diverse stakeholders in developing key evaluation questions cultivates ownership of the learning process and increases the likelihood that the results will be useful, relevant, and credible for potential users (Preskill & Jones, 2009).

The iterative process of learning and doing helps to position evaluation as a tool for improving practices and nurturing change at every level of the work. No longer an outsourced function, evaluation becomes the collective responsibility of all stakeholders (Patrizi, 2006). In order to support this process, funders and evaluators must work hard to provide sufficient resources and structures to support learning, and to create a culture that values candid dialogue and analysis and embraces the idea of learning while doing (David, 2006).

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#### ***Data Improve Effectiveness***

Making Connections' evaluators developed a tool for assessing a community's capacity to develop and implement powerful change strategies. With site input, they created a developmental assessment scale along various dimensions like “scope,” “scale,” “resident leadership,” and “accountability and use of data.” Evaluators used substantiating evidence to rate each site and then facilitated sessions with site teams to elicit their perspectives, gather more evidence to refine the ratings, and ensure that all players were working toward the same goals. These periodic sessions became safe places to celebrate successes, engage in constructive criticism, and reinforce the role of empirical data from independent sources in helping local teams improve their effectiveness.

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**TREND 4: GREATER USE OF GEO-CODED DATA**

The past decade of evaluation has increasingly recognized the power of geo-coded data to facilitate learning about neighborhood context, assist in community planning, foster informed public discourse, and gain support for the change effort by educating the public about economic and racial disparities. Evaluators can map neighborhood change over time, compare the trajectories of target neighborhoods to others, and combine the results with other sources and types of data to explore the impact of community change efforts. Significant investments have been made in building local data intermediaries that democratize access to data for all stakeholders. Some of these data intermediaries are freestanding, while others are associated with city government or a university; many are linked together in a network sponsored by the Urban Institute to “further the development and use of neighborhood-level information systems in local policymaking and community building” (see [www.nnip.org](http://www.nnip.org)).

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***Geo-Coded Data Reveal Neighborhood Trajectories***

One component of MDRC’s evaluation of the New Communities Program (NCP) is a neighborhood trajectories analysis to measure long-term trends in the quality of life of its 16 target communities. Evaluators examine demographic changes in each neighborhood as well as the nature, extent, and pace of change in such neighborhood indicators as crime rates, housing market activity, and commercial vitality. The analysis can describe trends starting some years before NCP and extending a number of years afterward. It can show how trajectories vary across NCP communities and how they compare to changes observed in selected non-NCP neighborhoods and for the city of Chicago as a whole.

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**TREND 5: NEW APPROACHES TO EVALUATING POLICY AND SYSTEMS CHANGE**

Community change efforts have paid increasing attention to the ways in which place-based change can be connected to policy and systems change in order to achieve large-scale benefits both within targeted communities and more broadly. Evaluators, too, have devoted significant effort to finding more effective ways to assess advocacy and the impact of policy and systems change (Guthrie et al., 2005, 2006; Coffman, 2007; Harvard Family Research Project, 2007; Innovation Network, 2009). New work has even produced an online resource, the Advocacy Progress Planner ([www.planning.continuousprogress.org](http://www.planning.continuousprogress.org)), and a tool that evaluators can use to design evaluations of advocacy efforts that are useful, manageable, and resource efficient (Harvard Family Research Project, 2009).

These new approaches are particularly important for emerging community change efforts that explicitly structure their work to operate at both the community- and policy/systems-change levels (as in the California Endowment’s 14-site Building Healthy Communities Initiative) and that position the sponsoring foundation as change maker as well as grant maker (as in the Skillman Foundation’s Detroit Works for Kids initiative).

## Next Steps in Evaluating and Learning from Community Change Efforts

The five trends described above, and undoubtedly others, signify important progress in how people involved in community change define and judge the success of their work and learn to improve it along the way. While they may not be universally adopted or always implemented effectively, the trends do reflect new attitudes and new standards for practice in the field. Predictably, however, each step forward brings new complexities and challenges that, when combined with long-standing but unresolved impediments, can undermine progress on the ground and the generation of field-level knowledge.

The discussion that follows addresses three such challenges. While their relevance extends beyond community change work, these three issues surfaced frequently in interviews and focus groups and appear to be ripe for next-stage progress.

### **CHALLENGE 1: CREATING MORE ROBUST EVALUATION FRAMEWORKS**

The use of theory of change or related evaluation frameworks helped to promote clearer thinking about the dose and scale of strategies required to produce results in community change work. The stronger the theory, and the more informed by evidence-based practice—as well as by the local knowledge stakeholders bring to the development process—the more powerful the framework can be in identifying the populations to target and the strategies most likely to achieve desired results at the population and community levels.

The following recommendations can help make evaluation frameworks even more robust:

- **Make the framework creation process real and inclusive.** Creating a detailed framework can be time-consuming, contentious, and feel “beside the point” for people trying to change a community. Some evaluators try to speed the process by creating a theory for stakeholders, based on a review of relevant initiative documents, and submitting it to the participants for approval. Evaluators certainly can facilitate the process in a way that respects people’s limited time, uses clear language, and infuses ad-

ditional knowledge into the framework. The effort to be efficient can also undermine the process, however. If the evaluator creates the framework in the back room, or the funder produces it in a “command and control” fashion, stakeholders are unlikely to own the strategies and outcomes for which they are accountable, let alone position the framework to drive action. For the most part, framework development cannot be outsourced, because it is the basis for effective strategy, accountability, and continuous improvement.

- ***Build stakeholders’ capacity to monitor their own performance.*** Enabling the people who carry out a community change initiative to monitor their performance can help build a culture of results and data-driven decision-making, if accompanied by the support needed to implement this responsibility effectively (York, 2005). Similarly, foundation staff and trustees need to know how to assess the work for which they are accountable (FSG Social Impact Advisors, 2009). If rigidly adopted, performance monitoring can overemphasize indicators of progress that are easily measured rather than those that are more significant, if more difficult to measure (Sridharan, 2009). It can also crowd out innovation (Giloith & Gewirtz, 2009) and ignore the dynamic complexity of the community. Combined with evaluation and learning strategies designed to answer more strategic or big-picture questions, however, performance monitoring is a powerful component of an evaluation framework.

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### ***Stakeholders Monitor Their Own Performance***

Harlem Children’s Zone requires children’s test scores to be reported and vetted in a timely and accurate fashion so teachers and school administrators can ascertain what is working and what needs to change and adjust their approach accordingly.

In the Jacobs Center for Neighborhood Innovation in San Diego, more than 30 teams of residents and other stakeholders set specific goals and monitor their progress toward these goals. The teams do not need highly sophisticated technical skills, but they do need to know how to ask questions. Answers to the questions help people track their progress, adjust their strategies, and increase their effectiveness.

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- ***Work harder to specify interim outcomes or markers of progress.*** Given the long-term nature of community change, a robust framework must capture markers of progress along the way to achieving an initiative’s ultimate goals. Evaluators underscore the technical and conceptual chal-

lenges of specifying interim outcomes in sufficient detail to be useful for evaluation and management purposes. The growing number of well-tested outcomes and indicators for assessing child, family, and community well-being helps, as does new work on policy and advocacy evaluation frameworks or benchmarks. But when limited resources constrain data collection, evaluators must also be creative in developing proxy measures that are feasible to collect, consistent with existing knowledge, and accepted as valid and useful by stakeholders.

As one evaluator noted, “As inelegant as these proxy measures may be, if they help [initiative] leaders adjust their strategies to be more effective or modify the initiative’s theory, we’re way ahead of the game.” Another evaluator underscored the importance—especially in multisite initiatives—of selecting interim outcomes that reflect community-specific nuances and dynamics of race, culture, politics, and history. The fact that these nuances become increasingly apparent as the work proceeds further reinforces the need for evaluators to periodically refine and elaborate interim outcomes, as well as the broader framework, over time.

- **Revisit and readjust the framework periodically** as participants change, new data suggest refinements, and the work matures within an evolving economic and political context.

## **CHALLENGE 2: FINDING VEHICLES TO INTEGRATE LEARNING INTO THE WORK**

Few would challenge the value of learning, but it is easy to underestimate the time, tools, and resources needed to do it well. Community change work necessarily involves many stakeholders: community residents, nonprofit leaders, public and private funders, private developers, policy advocates, and so forth. The management challenge is to keep all the stakeholders moving forward together with shared understanding and accountability. The learning challenge is to design vehicles for sharing information—and for using that information to guide action—that produce agreed-upon outcomes consistent with a shared framework.

The biggest obstacle to learning, for both evaluators and community change participants, is time. Time to examine and reflect is often trumped by the need to act. Even when learning structures were in place, for example, Skillman Foundation staff and partners found that the pace and complexity of the work led them to use these meetings to discuss pressing operational issues rather than strategic decisions or lessons (Brown, Colombo, & Hughes, 2009). “Relentless execution,” however, leaves little room for the “experimentation and reflection vital to sustainable success” (Edmondson, 2008).

The following recommendations help to maximize learning:

- **Share data.** Sharing data in a timely fashion, in formats that different audiences can digest, and in ways that respect confidentiality is challenging—even in a collaborative culture that values dialogue and reflection. It often takes significant investment to create user-friendly systems for consolidating data and tracking outcomes. (Communities of Opportunity in San Francisco, for example, spent several years on this task.) It takes time for a local data intermediary to negotiate data agreements with various agencies and build the capacity of community groups, advocates, and nonprofits to value data and use it well. Learning when and how to share different kinds of data can also be difficult; historically, the balance between the risks and rewards of “going public” has tended to tip toward privacy (Hamilton et al., 2005) or has generated public products that are so sterile or self-promotional that their value is limited.

Pressures to be more transparent and to learn from mistakes, however, have sparked reflection and sharing within the philanthropic sector and beyond (Giloith & Gewirtz, 2009). If all partners agree up front on how indicators of success will be measured, when disappointing data emerge the conversation shifts more easily from assigning blame to improving partners’ collective performance and revising the framework’s assumptions about how to achieve good results.

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### ***Participants Reflect, Learn, and Take Action***

In Hope Community, a CDC devoted to community revitalization and empowerment, the evaluator moved from being an external consultant to a part-time internal staff person who helped coworkers gather and interpret data, provided timely program feedback, offered training and support individually and in groups, and facilitated larger discussions for mutual reflection.

After 18 months, the evaluator reports that “Hope Community has broadened their preexisting respect for ‘reflection’ and transformed it into more concrete, more systemic, and more flexible ways to learn, plan, and react. Regular documentation is now well established.” Frontline staff are more accountable for their work while understanding more clearly the links between it and Hope’s broader vision, the board and staff are more aligned in their understanding, and outside funders are benefiting from more concrete data and Hope’s commitment to learning for continuous improvement.

—Adapted from Tilney, 2009

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- **Establish vehicles for translating learning into action.** Learning by doing only works if learning is translated into action (e.g., new skills, improved practice, reformulated theories, new strategies and partnerships; see Giloth & Gewirtz, 2009). Many vehicles can serve this purpose for different actors. For example, foundations have engaged grantees in “ongoing discussions with structured learning agendas, where funders and grantees work together to compile, analyze, synthesize, and integrate information for mutual benefit” (Chin, 2006). Funder collaboratives (GrantCraft, 2009), peer learning groups, and broad communities of practice, among others, can help participants distill and share lessons, specify how to translate lessons into practice, and identify necessary supports (e.g., technical assistance to implement a new tool or practice, coaching, site visits to like-minded sites, training and professional development; see Trent & Chavis, 2009). The conditions under which this translation is most likely to occur are fairly well known: development of a group culture that incentivizes learning and adaptation, leadership that values and models candid exchange, and clear and realistic expectations for who will take new actions and with what supports.
- **Create thoughtful links between evaluation and communication.** Effective internal communications help keep diverse partners engaged, focused on shared outcomes, and less vulnerable to mission drift and fatigue. External communication can build local momentum, leverage financial support, and disseminate lessons to the broader field. Both rely in part on information generated by evaluation, particularly reports on progress and success. Each partner uses data in its own way for its own purposes (e.g., to raise funds, attract new partners, reassure trustees, persuade policy makers, report to community residents), which can create inconsistencies or misunderstandings in the absence of a larger coherent narrative.

In particular, the “campaign” quality of communications can pressure or tempt evaluators to overpromise, interpret data prematurely or in the most positive light, and/or develop scorecard indicators with tenuous connection to meaningful results. One way to maintain the integrity of evaluation is to specify who can release or publish what findings, when, and with what kind of review among partners. Close informal working relationships among the evaluator, the evaluator’s funders, and those charged with communications (and sometimes fund-raising) can also promote consistent messages. Another “balancing” vehicle is a group with expertise in both evaluation and communications that periodically reviews evaluation materials and helps frame them for different

audiences. The more all these strategies exist within a culture of critical inquiry, a collective understanding of the theory behind the work, and a commitment to invest and work together over the long term, the greater the likelihood that evaluation and communications function well together.

### **CHALLENGE 3: LEARNING WITH PARTNERS**

The long-term success of a complex community change enterprise depends more on building broad problem-solving capacity among diverse players than on developing any one player's short-term knowledge or expertise. Progress and innovation occur when all the players contribute and reflect together on what they have learned from diverse experiences. This is why the traditional hub-and-spoke model, with the funder at the center of the work, is no longer appropriate (Chin, 2006). The challenge is to create new organizational arrangements that encourage—even insist upon—learning as a group. Few such examples exist, so the next step is to test a range of collaborative structures and systemic approaches to see which yield the most learning as reflected in improved practice and new knowledge development.

Until recently, funders tended to focus on the lessons from “their” initiatives and grantees but were less successful at building on each others’ learning in concert with other stakeholders. Kubo and McKenna (2009) suggest collaborative evaluation as a strategy for aligning learning interests, encouraging accountability, building a broader knowledge base, and getting more return on evaluation investments. They conducted fieldwork and collected data in the same community for more than five years, using diverse methods on different projects for different funders. The evaluators developed deep knowledge about community dynamics, but no formal investment in this knowledge existed: each funder and each community-based group had its own goals and interests, and each required reports that were generally not shared with each other or the larger community. With collaborative evaluation, however,

*grantees in a single geography could come together to develop a common theory of community change and a useful research agenda that would provide critical feedback on their individual and collective contributions toward this change. As a group, they could ask a cadre of funders already invested in their programs to support this research agenda collectively. Interim and final reports . . . would be occasions for community and foundation stakeholders to come together for learning, reflection, and strategic course corrections.*

Even more ambitious is Kramer, Parkhurst, and Vaidyanathan's (2009) proposed investment in adaptive learning systems:

*[These systems] engage a large number of organizations working on different aspects of a single complex issue in an ongoing, facilitated process that establishes comparative performance metrics, coordinates their efforts, and enables them to learn from each other. Benefits include improved alignment of goals among different organizations, more collaborative problem solving, and the formation of an ongoing learning community that gradually increases all participants' effectiveness.*

The authors cite the STRIVE initiative in Cincinnati, in which more than 300 players, organized into 15 action networks, coordinated and worked to promote better education outcomes. Such an approach seems highly relevant to many community change initiatives but would take significant leadership and investment on the part of funders and highly engaged professional support for the process.

## **A Note about Establishing Impact**

No discussion about evaluation is complete without touching upon the question of how to attribute causality. Many community change efforts have faced serious design and implementation problems that limited both their impact and their ability to contribute new knowledge. As a result, the movement within philanthropy away from establishing “proof” toward seeking more flexible and timely sources of data to improve performance within a complex and changing environment (Kramer et al., 2007; Grantmakers for Effective Organizations, 2009) seems like a good match with the current state of knowledge about community change practice.

An emphasis on *contribution* rather than attribution in no way devalues the importance of incorporating rigorous methodologies and evidence-based practice into the work when appropriate. Nor does it mean that each stakeholder is not accountable for measurable results (as opposed to program outputs). These are important concepts for funders, especially foundation trustees, to understand. Investors in community change efforts understandably want clear evidence of success with which to persuade other partners to join them. “But the cost, complexity and duration” of impact studies that provide “incontrovertible evidence” of results directly tied to the foundation’s grants limit their feasibility (FSG Social Impact Advisors, 2009). Rather, staff should help trustees understand and invest in an evaluation framework that articulates the logical links between clear goals, the strategies in use, and the measurable results that trustees need to inform their decisions and champion the work more widely (Buteau, Buchanan, & Brock, 2009).

Rather than devote primary attention to trying to prove impact, it is more appropriate at this stage to place priority on creating more robust evaluation frame-

works and developing the capacity of all community change stakeholders to collect and analyze data in a way that helps them make better collective decisions and improve implementation, thereby also increasing the likelihood of actually testing their theories and generating knowledge for the field. When learning systems are effectively integrated into community change work, evaluators will be better positioned to study causal pathways and assess long-term impact.

Nonetheless, it is clear that the debate about what constitutes a sufficiently robust design and “good enough” evidence remains unresolved (Schorr, 2009; Smyth & Schorr, 2009). Despite a recent GAO report (2009) that concludes that a variety of rigorous methods beyond random assignment can help identify effective interventions, some people still believe the social policy field needs to push for randomized experiments before it can establish effectiveness definitively and scale up interventions. Several current evaluations should inform this debate, including LISC’s evaluation of its multisite Sustainable Communities Initiative (a serious attempt to apply new analytical and informational tools to measuring change in target neighborhoods compared with matched neighborhoods; see Walker, Winston, & Rankin, 2009).

The evaluation of community change has evolved in concept and practice over the past 20 years. One thread running through the discussion here involves the time, intention, and resources needed to do this work well. Instead of thinking about these resources as “evaluation costs” that compete with the operating costs of a change effort, they should be seen as inseparable from the work itself. Just as we made the case that good practice requires all stakeholders to monitor progress toward the goals for which they are accountable, so we believe that, at its core, community change work is about learning, adaptation, and building collective capacity among diverse stakeholders to work toward common goals. In this way, over time evaluation can help make an enterprise smarter, more powerful, and more sustainable.

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## Response Essay

*By Hallie Preskill  
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proaches to evaluating policy and systems change. I believe that these trends offer the community change field the perspectives and processes needed to make evaluation findings credible, relevant, and useful.

This essay focuses on three of the five trends described in Prudence Brown’s chapter on evaluation and learning: increased use of shared evaluation frameworks, more attention to real-time learning, and new ap-

### SHARED EVALUATION FRAMEWORKS

For more than a decade, evaluators have worked with stakeholders to increase their

awareness of, and build consensus about, a program or initiative's assumptions, activities, outputs, and short- and long-term outcomes through the development of theories of change and logic models. While these processes and tools have had many positive effects on clarifying an evaluation's goals, purpose, and objectives, they tend to be developed for individual programs or initiatives within one organization. Yet, as this book points out, we know that to change communities requires community-level action. The question becomes, how do we develop shared evaluation frameworks that reflect the multiple goals and activities of a variety of community change actors working to create community-level evaluation outcomes?

FSG Social Impact Advisors sought to answer this question through research funded by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. The report, *Breakthroughs in Shared Measurement and Social Impact* (Kramer, Parkhurst, & Vaidyanathan, 2009), suggests that, "If we are to conquer the urgent challenges that our society faces, we can no longer depend on the isolated efforts of individual grantees. Rather, we must invest in building the capacity, aligning the efforts, and tracking the performance of the nonprofit sector as a whole through shared measurement processes such as these." The study's findings pointed to three types of shared measurement systems:

**Shared measurement platforms.** These systems allow organizations to choose from a set of measures within their fields, using web-based tools to inexpensively collect, analyze, and report on their performance or outcomes. Benefits include lower costs and greater efficiency in annual data collection, expert guidance

for less sophisticated organizations, and improved credibility and consistency in reporting.

**Comparative performance systems.** These systems require all participants within a field to report on the same measures, using identical definitions and methods. Therefore, users can compare the performance of different organizations and collect reliable field-wide data. Grantees can learn from each other's performance, funders can make more informed choices, and the field as a whole can more accurately document its scale and influence.

**Adaptive learning systems.** These systems engage a large number of organizations working on different aspects of a single complex issue in an ongoing, facilitated process that establishes comparative performance metrics, coordinates their efforts, and enables them to learn from each other. Benefits include better alignment of goals among the organizations, more collaborative problem-solving, and the formation of an ongoing learning community that gradually increases all participants' effectiveness. FSG's report includes case examples of organizations and communities that are using each approach, as well as eight common elements of success.

**While these shared measurement frameworks have distinct benefits, challenges, and costs, each offers an exciting next step in considering how we might evaluate community change initiatives—opening up unprecedented opportunities for evaluation to be a catalyst for cross-program, multi-initiative, and large-scale organization and community learning.**

## MORE ATTENTION TO REAL-TIME LEARNING

Learning is a topic I have spent nearly my entire professional career thinking, teaching, researching, and writing about. As Brown writes, “The iterative process of learning and doing helps to position evaluation as a tool for improving practices and nurturing change at every level of the work.” Similarly, Kolb’s learning cycle (which encompasses concrete experience, or feeling; reflective observation, or watching; abstract conceptualization, or thinking; and active experimentation, or doing) reminds us that learning needs to be nurtured and facilitated through intentional processes (Kolb, 1984).

Studies have further shown that knowledge and learning are inextricably integrated within the setting in which they occur. Thus a “learning perspective” acknowledges that

- Learning is a social phenomenon;
- Knowledge is constructed between individuals;
- Relationships are central to adult learning;
- Learning must be located in authentic activity; and
- Learning is a process of enculturation.

In an evaluation context, this means that learning from and about evaluation should be planned and purposeful throughout a community change evaluation’s design and implementation, and should not be left to chance. If evaluation is the “systematic collection of information about the activities, characteristics, and results of programs to make judgments about the program, improve or further develop program effectiveness,

inform decisions about future programming, and/or increase understanding” (Patton, 2008), then evaluation is fundamentally about learning.

The notion of evaluation as an agent of learning also was reflected in a study by Fleischer and Christie (2009). Their survey of 912 American Evaluation Association members found that evaluators tend to believe that evaluation

- Contributes to an organization’s ability to learn from its experiences (84%);
- Can be a powerful planned change strategy (78%);
- Enhances group learning (69%);
- Enhances individual learning (66%);
- Develops users’ systematic inquiry skills (52%).

A fair question at this point is, how do we create intentional and sustainable learning practices throughout a community change evaluation process? Here are several ways we can respond.

**Slow down the process.** Every time the evaluation team (which hopefully includes stakeholders) meets to discuss the evaluation process or findings, time should be allocated for reflecting on and discussing what is being learned—about each other, the program or initiative, evaluation, and, ultimately, the evaluation’s findings (Preskill, Zuckerman, & Matthews, 2003).

**Embed learning processes into evaluation-related meetings.** When stakeholders get together, they should intentionally engage in reflection; questioning; dialogue; identifying and challenging values, beliefs, and assumptions; and providing constructive feedback (Preskill & Torres, 1999).

***Look for opportunities to glean learning throughout an evaluation process.***

Stakeholders should pay special attention to new questions, things that don't fit expectations, emerging patterns, and developing insights, as data are being collected, analyzed, and synthesized. Whenever possible, learning from the evaluation should be communicated in a variety of ways during the evaluation process and not relegated to an end-of-year final report (Torres, Preskill, & Piontek, 2005).

***Learn from success as well as failure.*** Attention should be paid to things that have gone well in an evaluation or in the community change effort as well as things that appear to have failed. Appreciative inquiry (Preskill & Catsambas, 2006) and the success case method (Brinkerhoff, 2003) are two approaches that evaluators have used to better understand what initiatives look like when they succeed or have elements that contribute significantly to meaningful change. Learning from failure has also been found to help articulate faulty assumptions and errors in thinking that led to disappointing outcomes (Argyris & Schon, 1995; Garvin, 2003).

***Develop mechanisms for sharing knowledge and learning.***

What we learn from evaluating community change initiatives must be shared in ways that facilitate individual, group, organizational, and field-wide learning. Whether we use internal knowledge management systems, shared measurement systems, in-person presentations and meetings, newsletters, website postings, social media, or any other medium, we must be intentional and thoughtful about what and how we communicate our learning to others.

## **NEW APPROACHES TO EVALUATING POLICY AND SYSTEMS CHANGE**

I was quite pleased to see this trend mentioned in Brown's chapter. One would be hard pressed to think of a recent gathering of nonprofit and/or philanthropic organizations where people are not talking about evaluating advocacy and policy initiatives. While this is indeed a critically important issue, my particular interest is on evaluating systems change. This topic has been gathering steam in the past couple of years and, I think, has the potential for transforming community change evaluation practices.

In community change work, we often are dealing with multiple systems. These might include a community's information ecosystem, a family service system, a mental health system, an education system, or any other system where there are multiple actors and agencies that are semi-independent, diverse, unpredictable, and yet constantly interacting with one another.

For an evaluation to be most useful, it needs to understand and connect to the system in which the initiative exists. Evaluations that adopt a systems orientation

- Are sensitive to context and environment and understand that a small change can make a major difference;
- Look for big patterns as well as shifting contexts, practices, and outcomes;
- Emphasize the importance of feedback;
- Observe how things co-evolve, with an understanding of the both/and tension;
- Look for pattern formation and points of influence;

- Consider how the past influences the present but are not concerned with predicting the future; and
- Pay particular attention to the boundaries, differences, and relationships that exist in the system.

A systems-oriented evaluation not only allows for but is designed in ways that support learning from unexpected outcomes or unintended consequences. Therefore, in addition to looking at the initiative's component parts, attention is paid to how the parts interact, influence each other, and contribute to the initiative's overall impact. In addition, a systems-oriented evaluation evolves as the initiative changes in response to its internal and external conditions and the relationships between and among different actors. Consequently, an evaluation's design must be responsive to shifts in the initiative's focus, resources, needs, opportunities, and challenges (Coffman, 2007; Parsons, 2007; Williams & Iman, 2006; W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 2007).

Evaluating community change efforts with a systems orientation requires a somewhat different set of tools and practices. Michael Q. Patton (2008, in press) has offered evaluators an alternative for these situations: developmental evaluation. He explains that developmental evaluation is best used when there is no model to "test," when the program or initiative is in its development phase in which innovative and untried approaches are being experimented with, and when evaluation processes are used to help staff understand what is and isn't working and what needs to happen next.

In developmental evaluations, the evaluator is part of a team whose members collectively conceptualize, design, and experiment with new approaches in a long-term, ongoing process of continuous improvement and adaptation. The evaluator's primary function on the team is to (a) facilitate team discussions with evaluative questions, data, and logic, and facilitate data-based reflection and decision-making; and (b) provide feedback, generate learning, support direction, or affirm changes in direction in real time. Given the complex, dynamic, and emergent realities and conditions of community change efforts, developmental evaluation and other systems-oriented evaluation approaches offer the field new ways of designing and conducting useful evaluations.

Shared evaluation frameworks, intentional learning processes, and systems-oriented evaluation all suggest that we expand the ways in which community change initiatives are evaluated. We need to find ways, collectively and collaboratively, to develop new evaluation frameworks that show how different actors and organizations contribute to an initiative's progress and impact. We need to be more deliberate about embedding learning processes and practices into our evaluations. And we need to adopt a systems lens as we consider the range of interrelationships, effects, and outcomes of community change efforts. While the work will be hard and may put us out of our comfort zones, the potential benefits are beyond our imagination. ■

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## Response Essay

*By Katy Fels Smyth  
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The evolution of evaluation that Prudence Brown describes reflects the evolution of community change work itself. Today, both evaluation and the process or practice being evaluated tend to be more closely aligned than in the past around the following core principles:

- The creation and application of actionable knowledge are vital for change (within communities and within funding agencies).
- Understanding whether something contributes to change is a more useful, albeit messier, undertaking than searching for causality.
- Community change work requires many moving parts driving toward some cohesive goals, so the evaluation itself must involve multiple parts and approaches.

This evolution also reflects a larger trend of believing that results trump good intentions—a belief that extends to all types of government and philanthropic investment in communities. There is now a firmly established expectation that initiatives, organizations, projects, and programs should be data driven, accountable, and able to justify their continued existence based on documented results, whether or not an external or formal evaluation occurs.

With those trends in mind, I am intrigued by the potential for symbiosis between change efforts that start by ad-

ressing problems as they manifest in the individual (e.g., community-based services for mental health, job training, addiction services, youth development, etc.) and change efforts that start by addressing problems that manifest within the community context—the typical starting point for a community change initiative.

The social service angle matters because community change efforts tend to occur in places that have high concentrations of human service organizations, which provide much-needed but relatively circumscribed services and supports to individual residents. Few, if any, of these organizations are naïve enough to think that individual change will add up to lasting community change, but it is their chosen starting point. Community change efforts represent the flip side of the coin: They focus on changing the community context as the starting point for transformation, although without obscuring (usually) the need for additional change at the individual level.

The alignment of goals and evaluation philosophies between these two approaches, if it occurred at a high enough level to allow for multiple approaches and for adaptation and creativity on the ground, could create a value far exceeding what we have now. Instead, I fear there is increasing bifurcation between the evaluation philosophies guiding interventions focusing on individuals and those focusing on communities. The result complicates work that is already difficult and may actually limit the ultimate achievements of community change efforts.

## THE SOCIAL SERVICES SIDE OF THE COIN

In social services, the purpose of evaluation is, increasingly, to illuminate the critical steps in a model that lead to efficacy. While this may not always be true of evaluation writ large, as performed by external evaluators who know their stuff, it is, I believe, more and more true for the vast majority of social service interventions in which “evaluation” is generally a very important activity conducted internally without the partnership of external evaluators. It also is true of evaluations that seek to “prove” that a model works and can be replicated.

Social service agencies of all sizes are increasingly asked by donors, foundations, and government to identify a few clear outcomes that apply to their entire client base. Logic models and theories of change have been immensely helpful in this process, as they have been in community change efforts. Because they support planning, course correction, and evaluation, they help make evaluation “inseparable from the work itself,” as Brown notes. When well done, logic models and related tools have helped countless organizations clarify their purpose, strategy, scope, and dosing as well as their ability to achieve their intended impact.

Because social services are about individuals more than the complicated context that surrounds and influences these individuals, it is very easy for social service providers to find themselves judged *solely* on one or two results that are easily measured by program staff, rather than by the outcomes suggested by a community-level theory of change. The evaluation—whether conducted externally, internally, or both—usually holds the individual (or

sometimes the family) as the unit of analysis, and program impact is often seen as an aggregate of individual change within a specific domain.

This makes sense, at least at first. After all, social services of all stripes seek to fulfill some form of this pledge: “Participate in our program and you will be taught, changed, helped, transformed, empowered, etc.” The change may have to do with high school graduation, or sobriety, or criminal recidivism, or depression, or housing attainment. We should know whether the goal is in fact achieved, and if it is (and achieved efficiently), then we should want more of it. And so, for instance, if one is running a domestic violence program, it is hard to argue that it’s not of cardinal importance to know how many women are safer; if one is running a mental health program, it is important to know how many people’s depression is lifted; and so on.

Program leaders often kvetch, or at least mumble, about all this counting. Because the numbers “don’t really tell you what we do and who uses our program(s),” they supplement sheaves of data—not only about outputs and outcomes, but about participants’ demographic characteristics, length of stay, and more—with rich anecdotes. Since there is no way to differentiate between a great story in a larger pool of mediocre practice, or practice that is effective and actually has something to teach the field, these anecdotes are not very useful. Worse, they have historically masked a multitude of sins.

Over the past several years, however, I have been reflecting on the experiences I had with data while running an organization for women who were homeless or in crisis, facing addiction, violence, mental

and physical health challenges, and life histories of disenfranchisement. Since leaving that organization I have worked with a growing group of organizations and coalitions of service providers around the country who are committed to achieving better results for those who are in the deepest part of the deep end.

And I've come to hear something else in the stories of success told by the best of practitioners and by community residents. They are the stories that go beyond the individual to the contexts that shaped people and their options, and that shifted to enable personal change. They are the stories of partnership, not only with other community agencies but with unorganized community resources—the stuff of community change work. They often are stories of decreased isolation and increased mastery, safety, and stability—results that manifest differently for each person and so defy easy counting.

## **THE COMMUNITY CONTEXT SIDE OF THE COIN**

In community change work it is the broader context that is supposed to change, so community change efforts are themselves evolving and organic. Their evaluations are about documenting what happened, and what difference it made, perhaps more than whether an intervention worked. This is because we may not always know what it would mean for something to “work” in the beginning, or our understanding of what it means might evolve over time because not only does our understanding of the situation change, the situation itself—the context—changes, too.

As Brown notes, funders and others who engage in community change work recognize “contribution” as a meaningful

way to characterize effects for an effort in which it is impossible to disaggregate each component and link it to a specific result. Community change is not only about the individual ingredients, therefore, it's about the chemistry and reactions among them, and the momentum (or lack thereof) that is sparked and sustained within a community.

What has always interested me about community change efforts is their attention to the spaces in between individual and community-level change, and their explicit understanding that the answer to “Did it work?” is going to be complicated. That and other lessons of community change evaluation can and should inform the evaluation of social service programs. In so doing, we may begin to find the symbiosis between community change work and social services that is likely to create more than the sum of its parts.

## **FINDING “THE SPACE IN BETWEEN”**

Community-based programs and social services are different from community change efforts in many ways, but we would be well served if we allowed the answer to the question “Does it work?” to be a little more complicated than it now is. Programs that seek individual-level impact need support and frames and spaces for thinking about the larger efforts that they contribute to, efforts that are about changing the community.

Context matters. History matters. Partnership across traditional power strata matters. This, I think, is what so many anti-domestic-violence practitioners and scholars mean when they decry the professionalization of what began as a social justice movement and the resultant myopia

around outcomes. It is why mental health practices for people who live in entrenched poverty may need to be fundamentally different from what is generally studied.

In my work, I see organizations whose benefit to their participants comes from sitting in a place that straddles these worlds. These programs evolve and change with the community, and they are agents of change: One in New York was able to support a community's reclaiming of a playground (traditionally a community development effort) because it had relationships with the gang members who were making families feel unsafe there.

Programs that straddle the individual and contextual approaches have specific participants and target populations, to be sure, but their boundaries are also somewhat porous. One in Missouri understands that kids involved in juvenile justice have families that are sources of both strength and challenge, and that helping kids often means spending a lot of time with families on issues like housing and utility bills—a far cry from most juvenile justice work.

These programs hold themselves accountable for specific outcomes but also realize that their impact goes beyond the number of people housed, or battered women relocated, or mothers who have completed a child development program. Their role is sometimes that of a gathering place, a place where new social networks form and where self-efficacy and stability are enhanced because people show up and help build the organizations even as they obtain counseling or job training.

Current evaluation approaches reflect and reinforce differing ways of thinking about how we move the needle on poverty and its accompanying social ills. How often do we hear calls for more coordination among community efforts? We are far

more likely to have meaningful coordination, and also coordination that creates social good that is greater than the sum of its parts, if we stop positioning social services as static, proven constants and community change as dynamic, emergent, and deeply process oriented. The best services are some of both. And perhaps the best community change is, too.

Brown's clear-eyed assessment of the state of community change evaluation in this volume gives me hope that there is a space to blend the social services and community change approaches to evaluation. Evaluation of the great social services that must be part of any community change work is about results and context and history and partnership. In the same way that the major funders who support community change efforts are matching their evaluation principles to the principles that drive that change, perhaps they can also come together to examine how to make the evaluation of social services richer and more meaningful. It will take real work to adapt evaluation tools and approaches for meaningful use by a \$100,000 organization doing youth development work, for example, but it is important to do so.

So I close with a wish—that the community-based service providers, so prevalent in many low-income communities, are not only allowed but also encouraged to engage in evaluations that align with broader community goals, where they are held accountable for helping to create change beyond the bounds of their programs while also being understood for the value they deliver to individual participants. This is not about expanding their work. It is about creating spaces where evaluation philosophies can come together.

The space I suggest is not one of watered-down or diminished evaluative principles but, rather, the creation of something new. It is a hybrid of evaluation philosophies that can guide real, comprehensive community change work. In so doing, we can also begin to move away from false polarities of practice. Community change work is evolutionary but not chaotic. Social services are dynamic, too—not static. Both deal with the mess of real life from very different vantage points, in very different ways. For the people who live and work in these communities, however, individuals and contexts are not fundamentally different. Evaluation shouldn't be either. ■

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## Response Essay

By *Claudia J. Coulton*  
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**The impression I take away from Prudence** Brown's insightful account of evaluation and learning is that community change efforts have increasingly adopted evaluation methods that are participatory and practical. Their findings are informing partners and funders so they can make sound decisions and take effective action.

However, the chapter also suggests to me the importance of finding a balance between evaluation utilization and developing knowledge about important questions for the field. What more could evaluation tell us about how poor neighborhoods can become better places for the people who live there and the regions in which they are located? Are current investments in evaluation targeted correctly to contribute to the wider body of knowledge about policies and practices

that have potential to improve conditions in poor neighborhoods?

Drawing on Brown's analysis, I see several opportunities to increase the evaluation effort toward addressing this bigger picture. These include explicating models of community change; distinguishing methods and types of community change; measuring community outcomes as well as programmatic ones; understanding the larger context of community change; and evaluating for the bigger picture.

## MODELS OF COMMUNITY CHANGE

Sometimes the terms *logic models* and *theory of change* are used interchangeably in evaluation discussions, but this blurring has undermined potentially fruitful elements of earlier theory of change approaches (Weiss, 1995). Too often, the effort to make logic models palatable to many stakeholders has left the models undisciplined. By trying to serve dual functions of consensus organizing and getting buy-in to an evaluation framework, logic models often fail to surface assumptions about how and why activities should lead to positive community changes.

I recognize that the rigor required by strict application of the theory of change method often proved arduous and was not well tolerated by the broad range of stakeholders in community change initiatives. Nevertheless, the meticulous and skeptical questioning about why and how particular investments and processes could be expected to lead to desired community change helped to translate what was done on the ground into the potential for more general knowledge.

The logic models of today are often formulated on locally specific programs and actions, but their theoretical under-

pinnings are not sufficiently spelled out to link them to broader conceptualizations and measures. While localized logic models are useful for charting direction and checking progress, they tend to be idiosyncratic and difficult to compare from one neighborhood or project to another. A return to the critical thinking called for in theory of change approaches, at least in some of the larger and more ambitious community change initiatives, would help produce evaluations whose findings can be cumulated into knowledge capable of advancing the field.

## **METHODS AND TYPES OF COMMUNITY CHANGE**

The community change field is becoming a very big umbrella. On the positive side, this reflects the recognition that addressing the needs of individuals without attending to the policies, systems, and external conditions that affect their lives leaves some fundamental causes of their problems unresolved. However, inclusiveness needs to be coupled with the recognition that community change efforts represent disparate models and approaches. We need better methods of observation and classification of the change efforts themselves to leverage learning from the variation.

The challenge of learning what works (Brown refers to this as the impact question) is related to this unwieldy variation across many dimensions. While the challenge often is framed as the difficulty of designing evaluations with valid counterfactuals, it is just as important to correctly specify the variation on the intervention side (i.e., the independent variables). Recognition of this challenge led the New Communities Program evaluation, which

Brown cites, to invest a significant portion of its research effort in recording and comparing what was actually done in six of the communities where the initiative operates. Such analyses contribute to ways of classifying and quantifying community change work, eventually producing an ability to specify and replicate the promising approaches.

## **PROGRAM OUTCOMES OR COMMUNITY OUTCOMES**

The big-picture question is, How can communities change for the better?

Too often, however, evaluation's focus is on program outcomes, not really community outcomes. Program outcomes are easier to measure than community outcomes because data can be collected from participants more easily than from the community as a whole. Also, accountability for outcomes tends to be clearer at the program level. But community change initiatives are more than an assortment of programs in one place. Indeed, they strive to make positive changes in the social, economic, and physical context and to improve the well-being of community members as a collective.

Even though measurement of community outcomes can be difficult and expensive, such indicators are necessary if we want to build knowledge about how poor communities can change for the better and which community change strategies are able to achieve the improvements. Narrowly defined program outcomes may suffice for the accountability aims of evaluation, but if we hope to advance knowledge for the field we need investment in community-wide data collection methods that can actually tap into key community outcomes.

## THE LARGER CONTEXT OF COMMUNITY CHANGE

Most evaluations of community change initiatives look internally, trying to get a better handle on what is being done by those who receive funds to participate and the partners and collaborators they assemble. But all of these entities—along with the households, individuals, organizations, and places they try to engage or change—are part of a set of dynamic forces that seem not to be on many evaluators' radar screen. What works and how much progress can be made is apt to differ depending on certain features of the surrounding area, and these need to be distinguished so that evaluation findings can be usefully applied elsewhere.

Migration and residential mobility are among the most important dynamic forces that influence place-based change efforts. When evaluators have examined movement to, from, and within a community in the context of community change initiatives, these patterns are shown to influence the target outcomes. Poverty levels, health status changes, and community participation are all commonly specified results for community change efforts, but the ever-present movement of people and resources must be taken into account in order to understand how the effort is working (Coulton, Theodos, & Turner, 2009). Without methods of tracking influences such as mobility, it is difficult for community change efforts to understand their influence compared with other sources of community change.

Another contextual factor that has to be considered if evaluation is going to contribute knowledge to the field is the region in which the community change effort is located. Economic, geographic,

historical, and political forces in larger regions condition what happens in community change initiatives, but these effects can only be uncovered and comparisons made if evaluators measure pertinent regional characteristics and take them into account when interpreting findings.

The recent housing bubble and mortgage crisis are illustrative; they unfolded quite differently in different areas (Immergluck, 2010). Community change strategies that were under way in neighborhoods located in hot-market regions where the housing bubble burst, leaving many mortgage holders under water, may have quite different results from those in weak-market regions where subprime lending was a major cause of residents' losing their homes to foreclosure. This example brings into focus the need for a taxonomy of regional differences that are likely to condition whether and how community change initiatives can be successful.

## EVALUATION FOR THE BIGGER PICTURE

The balance between utilization-focused evaluation and evaluation for building knowledge about how to improve conditions in poor communities doesn't have to be changed across the board. Most community change efforts can be well served by current types of participatory research and evaluation for accountability. Knowledge building is unlikely to occur through evaluation of individual projects in isolation, anyway; it requires a more careful look at the field as a whole and selection of those instances in which additional knowledge building will pay off.

Brown suggests that entities engaged in community change work within

regions might usefully come together to form learning partnerships. I think that is a good idea, but I would push to go beyond the ambition of sharing ways to improve the way they work. Such regional collaborations could engage in planned examination of how variations in strategy and context relate to the type and amount of community change that can be achieved. Regional collaboration also could go a long way toward standardizing classification schemes, measurement, and evaluation methods and mining a wider array of data on program activities and community outcomes.

Additionally, it seems that multisite community change efforts have some of the greatest potential to be comparative and to invest in collecting comparable data across sites. Comparability may seem difficult to achieve because community change involves mobilizing many entities on the ground. While there may be pressure to defer choices about evaluation methods until each community builds capacity to plan, gather, and use evaluation data, a lot of change can be missed. Preexisting conditions and early strategies may have come and gone before tools are put in place.

Increased investment in addressing the question of how to improve poor neighborhoods is underscored by the fact that because its evaluation design is strong and comparative, the community change effort that has garnered the most recent attention in policy circles is Moving to Opportunity (MTO). But MTO is not about how poor communities can improve; it is about how poor people can be moved out of these places. Enthusiasm for such an approach is, in part, based on insufficient knowledge about how to strengthen poor communities in place and pessimism about demonstrating that strategies work in the bigger picture.

*After decades of community change efforts, we now have many prerequisites to address these questions and to identify how communities can change for the better—going beyond a collection of isolated instances to knowledge of how it can be done and under what circumstances various strategies are effective. We now need to invest a portion of our collective evaluation resources in systematically determining how to move forward and address the bigger picture. ■*

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# Part III

## Moving Forward: Lessons and Challenges

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*Previous sections focused on what community change efforts actually did, how they did it, and what they accomplished. Part III identifies broad lessons about designing and implementing community change and suggests topics that must be understood better to strengthen the next generation of work. Anne C. Kubisch's overview and analysis are followed by response essays from five experts, each of whom picks up on and elaborates some important challenges to the community change field.*

*As with all other parts of this volume, these lessons and conclusions are both informed and limited by the on-the-ground experience of the recent generation of community change efforts. Therefore, they do not cover the entire range of issues, only those about which there is adequate evidence to draw conclusions.*

# Lessons to Improve the Design and Implementation of Community Change Efforts

*By Anne C. Kubisch*

**T**his chapter turns to a discussion of lessons that can be gleaned from the work to date—lessons that should be taken into account by current community change efforts as well as new ones that are coming on line. It pays special attention to the reasons why some efforts fell short and suggests changes that could strengthen future endeavors.

## **Overarching Lesson 1: Be as Clear as Possible about Goals, Definition of Success, and Theory of Change**

The most fundamental question about community change efforts—what would “success” look like?—has been one of the hardest to answer. Too often, the goals sought by community change interventions are poorly specified at the outset and defined only at a broad or abstract level. What exactly do we mean by neighborhood revitalization, poverty alleviation, increased capacity, sustainability, or even something as seemingly straightforward as improved outcomes for children?

Sometimes the lack of clarity is intentional, so a variety of stakeholders will see themselves in the initiative and invest in it. If the planning process is designed to elicit broad participation, definitions of success might await the group’s decision. An effort that emphasizes capacity building might not settle on its desired outcomes without a clearer sense of what the community or lead organizations can accomplish when functioning at higher capacity. In other cases, as the challenges associated with implementing a community-driven reform become evident, the designers, sponsors, and managers might change their definition of

success, scale back their hopes, and focus on interim outcomes on the path to longer-term outcomes.

Lack of clarity about community change goals leads to technical and political problems. The technical problems reflect the old adage, “If you don’t know where you’re going, any path will take you there.” Clearly, intentionality is crucial to producing outcomes: Planners, managers, and funders must specify the condition that they intend to change, develop a feasible strategy (based on sound theory, or evidence from research or experience) for how to affect that condition, create an action plan, implement the plan well, and track progress toward the outcome. Lack of clarity about the desired goals or outcomes inevitably leads to the absence of a strong theory of change that can guide strategies and action.

Political problems occur because lack of clarity about goals leaves different stakeholders with different definitions of success. Consequently, as the intervention evolves one group might be satisfied with its achievements while another is disappointed, which undermines collective commitment to the endeavor. This rupture generally occurs when one set of constituents (commonly the board of a sponsoring foundation) becomes impatient about the slow progress toward tangible and quantifiable programmatic outcomes, while other constituents (such as initiative staff) value the capacity that is being built, the relationships that are being forged, and the platform that is being built to support longer-term program investments.

This is not to suggest that everything must be decided up front or that all decisions are immutable. After all, much of this work evolves as capacities develop, consensus emerges, and relationships mature. Rather, it means that there must be enough of a theory of change to get started and to know whether progress is occurring, but not so fixed an agenda that it can’t be adapted with experience. It also means that there must be deliberate, structured, and ongoing discussion about expectations for community change among board members, staff, public officials, funders, community residents, and other partners.

*HELPFUL GUIDELINES FOR GOAL SETTING INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:*

- ***Set outcomes that are achievable in five to ten years***, such as improving third-grade test scores for ten-year-olds who have been in high-quality, intensive educational and family support programs since birth (Harlem Children’s Zone); or constructing a community center, within five years, in a way that fully involves the community (Jacob Family Foundation’s Market Creek Initiative). Even when the long-term goal is community change, five to ten years seems to be the maximum amount of time stakeholders can tolerate before seeing tangible outcomes from the work.

- **Make sure there are clear milestones along the way** that everyone agrees on. The challenge of defining interim outcomes is as significant as defining long-term goals, but the time invested in specifying them and gaining consensus around them is well spent.
- **Define the population that will benefit as specifically as possible:** For example, all adult public housing residents (Jobs-Plus); every gang member in the community (Boston TenPoint Coalition; Columbia Heights/Shaw Family Support Collaborative); all of the blocks in the University City neighborhood (West Philadelphia Initiative).
- **Build in some quick wins**, such as a clean block, increased EITC receipts, a cultural celebration, or asthma screenings. These provide credibility and legitimacy and build momentum while also producing valuable results.
- **Revisit decisions about long-term goals, theory of change, and interim outcomes regularly.** There is always turnover, and these discussions help new stakeholders get on board. Even for original stakeholders who stay engaged, reminders are useful to ensure that quick wins don't become distracting, or when things don't go as planned and fatigue or frustration set in. For all participants, the discussions are a way to manage any lack of consensus that was ignored during the launch stages but resurfaces later.

## Overarching Lesson 2: Having Defined Goals Clearly, Invest in Intentional Strategies for Achieving Them

This review of community change efforts emphasizes the need for intentionality at all times and on every front. For example, better educational outcomes require work in schools; improvements in neighborhood conditions require investment in physical revitalization; increased community capacity requires direct investment in leadership, organizations, and access to power. Even interventions that aim to increase a less-tangible outcome, such as social capital, must act intentionally and not simply hope the outcome will be a by-product of other strategies.

Interventions that invested deliberate program effort have been able to count program successes, improve outcomes, and build capacities. Those that did not make deliberate or direct investments—or assumed that investments in one domain would spill over into other domains—do not have successes to show.

This lesson applies to all aspects of a community change effort but often can be seen most clearly through the lens of evaluation. Evaluators of community

change efforts are often asked to clarify the intervention's theory of change, and to identify and track the outcomes that can realistically be linked to specific investment strategies. But sometimes they are also asked to track long-term impacts in a wide range of related areas. An example is the evaluation of the San Francisco Beacons Initiative, which was designed as an after-school youth development and safety program—not, primarily, as an intervention to improve academic achievement. The evaluation tracked the quality of implementation, such as amount of exposure to adult support and opportunities for leadership, as well as certain youth development outcomes such as perceptions of self-efficacy. Some stakeholders also asked the evaluators to track the program's effect on participants' school outcomes. Throughout the design, implementation, and evaluation, the evaluators cautioned against expecting the intervention to improve educational performance. When educational performance showed no measurable change, the evaluators were able to point to the absence of direct educational investments as a major cause (Walker & Arbreton, 2004).

The lesson about intentionality is more relevant to the community change field than to traditional programmatic interventions. The challenge in most fields (such as health) is to encourage practitioners, funders, and policy makers to break out of the straitjackets of their disciplines, to overcome siloed programming, and to appreciate the systemic nature of the causes of so many of society's problems. Community change leaders are not typical of most program leaders, however. From the outset, they are much more likely to have a comprehensive understanding of the nature of the problems they are working on, and their approach is already likely to be systems oriented. As a result, the risk to community builders is at the other end of the spectrum. Based on the record of CCIs during the past 20 years, it appears that comprehensive community building approaches can invite such broad thinking that they lose focus and, perhaps, even rigor. The challenge for community builders is to be more focused, strategic, and intentional in their actions.

*GUIDELINES FOR PROMOTING INTENTIONALITY INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:*

- ***Make sure the initial theory of change uncovers all the implicit assumptions*** about how activities are expected to produce outcomes. The complexity and interrelatedness of the factors that produce community change often make it difficult to tease out the explicit strands of work that should produce specific outcomes. Experience shows that the process of querying assumptions in the theory of change is easily short-circuited because it is conceptually difficult, because evidence about how to produce outcomes is weak in many domains of this work, and because of ideological or political differences among stakeholders.

- ***Find strategic points of entry***, implement them well, and build out from there. It is possible to focus strands of work while still maintaining a broad community change orientation.
- ***Build in administrative, management, and governance procedures*** that facilitate ongoing internal feedback loops and assessment.
- ***Conduct periodic internal and external audits*** to ensure that goals, capacities, and investments are aligned and investments have a likelihood of producing outcomes.

Regardless of the starting point, the objective is to bring a comprehensive lens to the work while still implementing high-quality programs that have a high likelihood of producing desired outcomes. Finding the right balance between comprehensiveness and focus is the challenge, and the solution will vary depending on the starting point and orientation of the change effort's leaders and constituents. It is also likely to shift as the work unfolds so it is critical to reassess regularly.

### **Overarching Lesson 3: Have a Clear Theory of Scale, and Make Sure Investments Are Proportional to the Type and Scale of Desired Outcomes**

The general theory about how to achieve scale in community change efforts recognizes that the amount of funding available to produce the desired change is limited. Planners, leaders, and funders of community change must therefore identify types of investments that will unleash a series of events that will build on each other to create the momentum needed for widespread improvements in well-being. In this theory of change, derived in part from systems and complexity theories, a great deal of effort is expended thinking through interconnections and causal pathways to find precise, catalytic entry points. The classic CCIs that were started in the 1990s,<sup>1</sup> for example, might invest perhaps \$1 million to \$3 million per year, per site to develop local revitalization plans, undertake seed projects, fill service gaps, create partnerships and collaborations, develop capacity of individuals and organizations, produce data about the neighborhood or problem, mobilize residents, advocate for policy reform, and so on.

Community change efforts that focus on human development have generally followed one of two hypotheses for how population-level change would occur.

1. Including those initiated by Rockefeller, Ford, Annie E. Casey (Rebuilding Communities Initiative), Pew Charitable Trusts, Northwest Area Foundation, Hewlett, Edna McConnell Clark, and Surdna.

One is “saturation”—the idea that every resident in the neighborhood would be touched by and benefit from the intervention. The second involves a “tipping point”—the notion that reaching a threshold level of change among a threshold number of neighborhood residents will trigger neighborhood-wide change. For example, the Harlem Children’s Zone project covers 100 blocks and serves 8,000 children. The HCZ theory is that if 65 percent of the area’s children are touched, the entire population will be affected. The Urban Health Initiative of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation required communities to undertake a “denominator exercise” to calculate what it would take to achieve success at scale. This theory has its roots in the public health field, where “herd immunity” is created when a critical number of the herd’s members, but not all, are immunized.

In community change efforts that focus on the social services and human development, neither the saturation hypothesis nor the tipping point hypothesis for achieving population-level change has borne out. Nevertheless, policy makers and practitioners have not abandoned the goal, in large part because they believe there has not yet been a good enough test of the hypotheses. It is possible that more effective implementation (greater “dose”) for a larger number (greater “scale”) of residents might still achieve the sought-after level of change. This assumption is, as yet, untested.<sup>2</sup>

Community change efforts that emphasize physical revitalization and development of a geographic area are, by definition, working at a different scale of investment as they aim for major transformation of a place. They operate at the scale of tens or hundreds of millions of dollars, and they have made major changes in the housing, physical conditions, and commercial areas of neighborhoods. The University of Pennsylvania has invested \$150 million and leveraged an additional \$370 million in its West Philadelphia Initiative. Between 2000 and 2010, the MacArthur Foundation invested more than \$200 million in Chicago to promote both physical revitalization and human development in poor neighborhoods across the city. The East Baltimore Revitalization Project, the Camden Redevelopment efforts, and HOPE VI are other examples of efforts operating at or near this level of investment.

*GUIDELINES FOR ADDRESSING SCALE INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:*

- ***Define the term scale precisely***, specifying its meaning at the individual level and at the community level. Map out a clear theory for how the work is expected to achieve scale.

2. One domain of work in community change efforts that does have evidence to back up the tipping point theory is neighborhood safety. There is evidence that crime has been reduced as a result of physical development projects, community building activities, and youth development programs, and the resulting increase in neighborhood safety positively affects all residents.

- **Make sure that the amount of funding is proportional** to the effort's goals. Match ambitions with resources and align the dose and scale with anticipated outcomes.<sup>3</sup>
- **Consider the question of dose in the context** of the extreme disadvantage of the populations and communities that are the targets for this work.
- **If few resources are available, it makes most sense to provide high-quality programs to a well-defined population** of children, youth, or families; to make targeted investments in community building, policy and advocacy work, or community capacity; or to select sites where other investments have prepared the way for additional work in other sectors.
- **Neighborhood-wide change doesn't come cheap.** If large-scale resources can be mobilized, then physical revitalization is a possibility, and this can be the engine for significant neighborhood-wide change.
- **To date, no single funder has been able to invest enough resources to turn around a neighborhood,** so leveraging strategies are crucial. However, they must be examined and reexamined regularly to ensure that they're based on realistic assumptions about other investors.

## Overarching Lesson 4: Focus on Effective Implementation, Be Willing to Invest in Capacity Building, and Make Sure Capacities and Objectives Are Aligned

Community change efforts are complex and require significant capacity to implement. The theory behind many of them is based in systems thinking, which views the strands of community life as interconnected and interdependent. Community change efforts are designed to take these connections into account and exploit them to achieve significant improvements in local conditions. The challenge is that the resulting design requires different capacities from those for traditional

3. There are many examples of the mismatch between expectations regarding outcomes and the scale of funding. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Urban Health Initiative's investment of \$70 million for citywide initiatives translated to \$7 per child. As the UHI evaluators put it, "The question of how much change can result from an intervention of this size and scope, given larger economic and social trends, is critical to the final assessment of UHI. UHI was unusual in its long-term commitment and relatively large expenditures. Yet, the trends it was trying to reverse have persisted for at least 50 years, and the public budgets it was trying to leverage were thousands of times larger than the investment itself. Had it met original expectations, UHI would have been an enormously rewarding investment, the philanthropic world's equivalent to being a founding investor in Microsoft or Google. But one can argue that modest impacts in selected and targeted areas are reasonable returns for a cautious investor, if not a venture capitalist" (Weitzman et al., 2009).

programs—capacities that underresourced organizations in distressed neighborhoods rarely have.

In too many community change efforts, the theory of change was too elaborate to be realized in practice so the interventions stumbled on implementation. (Yogi Berra could have been talking about community change efforts when he said, “In theory, there is no difference between theory and practice. But in practice there is.”)

The lesson here is that goals must be assessed in light of capacity to implement, and if capacity is weak, there are two options: scale back the goals or invest in building capacity to do the work. Misalignment between goals and capacities seriously undermines the work. When ambitious time frames for change are overlaid on top of these highly complex interventions, some would say the efforts are set up for failure.

*GUIDELINES FOR ENSURING THAT CAPACITIES ARE ALIGNED WITH THE NATURE OF THE WORK INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:*

- **Identify who is accountable** for results and build in consequences for success and failure. Accountability is diffuse in complex initiatives with multiple partners and stakeholders, so when things go awry there is no one to blame. Leadership, governance, and programs can drift without clear accountability definitions.
- **Keep a sense of urgency and personal connection to the outcomes** of the work. Overemphasizing technical expertise and professionalism can create distance from the reality of the community.
- **Create a “learning culture”** at all levels of the work, from the funder’s board to community residents to staff. Build in open and honest formative feedback loops and communication vehicles. Position the evaluation as a tool for improving practice and nurturing the change process at each level of the work. This helps to balance the need for clarity and intentionality with a recognition of the organic, developmental, and emergent nature of this work.
- **Aim for a creative blending of philanthropic and public dollars.** Foundations are likely to provide the most flexible funding for capacity building activities, while public funds are likely to be more circumscribed for programmatic activities.

- ***If capacity building, leadership development, democratic decision-making, and the like are core parts of the community change effort, define them as outcomes*** and work with evaluators to establish measures of them. As stakeholders reflect on what community change efforts have left behind, they often point to increases in capacity and connections.

## **Overarching Lesson 5: Comprehensiveness Is Even More Elusive Than Previously Thought: Treat It as a Principle, Not a Goal**

The field of community change has matured with regard to the topic of comprehensiveness. In the early 1990s, initiatives took comprehensiveness quite literally; they aimed to cover all domains of work and achieve “synergy” as all the parts interacted. Today, practitioners and observers agree that comprehensiveness is a *lens* that should guide all work and that it is impractical to try to *do* everything simultaneously.

This is not just true at the local level but also at the field level. Despite years of trying to integrate the “sub-fields” of the antipoverty and community change arenas, the domains of work remain separate. In the 1990s, comprehensive community building initiatives were described as vehicles designed explicitly to integrate three strands of work: social services, physical/economic development, and community organizing.<sup>4</sup> The aim was to concentrate in one place “the best” of what had been learned through these three domains in order to achieve a whole that was greater than the sum of its parts. However, integration occurred in very few places or organizations.

Some initiatives managed to fill gaps and co-locate a number of different kinds of programs in a particular neighborhood, but very few, if any, are truly weaving together human, physical, and civic development at the individual and community levels. Single institutions with power and resources have proven able to co-locate various strands of work in one local area. Examples include some of the largest and most sophisticated CDCs and community-based organizations or anchor institutions. More recently, embedded funders have demonstrated an ability to blend the work (albeit in smaller geographic areas). The MacArthur/LISC New Communities Program in Chicago is attempting to co-locate a significant amount of community planning, economic development, physical development, school reform, prisoner reentry, and human services in its target neighborhoods.

For the most part, the programmatic foundation of an organization dictates the orientation of its community change work. We can categorize the best-known place-based change efforts by whether their orientation is toward children and family services (Harlem Children’s Zone), physical and economic development

4. See for example Kubisch, 1996; Bruner & Parachini, 1997; Kingsley, McNeely, & Gibson, 1997.

(HOPE VI), or community organizing (Lawrence CommunityWorks). The difficulty of integrating the three domains of work is compounded by the fact that each tends to look to its own sector for funding, infrastructure, expertise, and leadership: economic development tends toward the private sector; human development toward the public sector; and civic development toward the community/nonprofit/philanthropic sector.

*GUIDELINES FOR THINKING ABOUT COMPREHENSIVENESS ARE AS FOLLOWS:*

- ***Comprehensiveness is a principle that should guide the work and is not a goal.*** The analysis of community problems and assets should be systemic, and solutions must take into account the interconnections among various strands of work, but it is both impractical and overwhelming to try to do everything.
- ***Aim to co-locate lines of work*** and link up two or more complementary lines of work, such as employment assistance with child care, or improving nutrition with developing supermarket and recreation facilities, or community planning with design of new physical spaces. The need to link physical revitalization with school improvement has become increasingly clear. Build out from those starting points.
- ***All elements of the work need not and cannot exist within a single entity.*** Brokering and alignment among various actors on behalf of the entire community are crucial.
- ***Use flexible funds (usually philanthropic) to create linkages,*** coordinate investments, build capacity, and maintain an overall vision for a neighborhood.

## **Overarching Lesson 6: Embrace Community Building as Both a Guiding Principle and a Deliberate Set of Actions**

In community change efforts today, the role and purpose of “community building” are still contested and unresolved. The lack of consensus is not about *whether* community building should be a core element of community change efforts; the unanimous view on that question is, “yes.” The disagreement revolves around community building’s place in the overall theory of change guiding community interventions. Is it a means, an end, or both? Is it a principle that should guide the work or a definable set of actions? How much community building is needed?

The social services/human development arena can show examples of ways that community engagement has resulted in culturally appropriate service de-

sign and participant recruitment. For example, Latino Health Access's use of community members as *promotores* makes their services relevant and welcoming for community residents. In the Harlem Children's Zone, awareness of community norms and practices about parenting led to a program to teach parents about verbal communication and positive feedback in their interactions with their children. In Making Connections—San Antonio, leaders originally placed priority on homeownership but changed their strategy after learning from residents that car purchases had to come first, because transportation was critical to keeping a job.

Similarly, asking residents what kind of housing or commercial development is most needed has helped community change efforts focusing on physical development ensure that their product responds to community needs. In some cases, it may even have preempted opposition to new construction. Mobilizing residents around new physical development plans has led to community benefits agreements and enabled neighborhood leaders to make demands on public- and private-sector institutions.

The community change efforts with the strongest community building components see this dimension of the work as both a principle that guides all decision-making and as a set of actions that operationalize the principle. For example, most of the community change efforts reviewed here state that community engagement is a guiding principle for their work. To operationalize this principle, they might develop a governance structure that includes community representatives and outreach strategies to ensure resident input into their plans. Many go out of their way to structure in ongoing resident input. They might conduct "community listening" activities regularly, provide opportunities for residents to review and analyze data about the work, and encourage youth participation to develop the next generation of leadership. They also name community participation as one of their desired outcomes and make sure that evaluations measure progress on that front.

*GUIDELINES FOR COMMUNITY BUILDING ARE AS FOLLOWS:*

- ***Community building is a philosophy, value, and principle that undergirds all decision-making*** in a community change effort. It also is a set of actions that structure participation, capacity building, and connections. When values and actions are combined, the community building effect can be powerful.
- ***Be clear about the role and purpose of community building*** in the work. Not all community building is the same, and actions need to be tailored to the specific goals desired.

- ***Make sure that evaluation and learning value and attend to the community building dimensions*** of the work, tracking their results over the long run.
- ***Often, small grants or other modest amounts of support can unleash energy*** and talent that give momentum to community building.
- ***At its best, community building changes the nature of the relationship between a community and power brokers***, ensuring that neighborhood residents are at the table in corporate board meetings, city council meetings, and the like.
- ***Invest in individual community builders***. A retrospective look at the trajectory of leaders from community building efforts 10 to 20 years ago shows that many advanced and became change agents in various institutions and sectors.

Several big questions about investments in community building remain unanswered: Do increases in individual and community capacities and connections lead to longer-term impacts such as community resiliency or improvements in socioeconomic well-being for poor communities and their residents? Do they lead to fundamental, transformative shifts in power relations between the community and outside political and economic resources? We need to keep looking for ways to test these questions and build evidence about the links between community building and improvements in individual and community outcomes. Without this evidence, the debate about the value of community building continues, and decisions are based on anecdote, ideology, and speculation.

## **Overarching Lesson 7: Expand the Definition and Purpose of Evaluation to Assist in Planning, Managing, and Learning**

Community change efforts placed new demands on the field of evaluation. Fifteen years ago, evaluators focused primarily on the challenge of causal attribution in community initiatives and debated whether experimental and quasi-experimental approaches could be used. Today, while attributing causality is still a challenge, the major stakeholders realize that experimental designs are unrealistic for community change enterprises, and evaluators are more likely to define their work as “contribution analysis” rather than “attribution analysis.”

Now, evaluation serves many purposes beyond summative assessment. Evaluators are brought in at the early stages of planning to bring discipline and rigor to the process of developing and articulating the theory of change. Evaluation of-

ten is the vehicle through which community data are gathered and then used for planning, community mobilization, and advocacy on the neighborhood's behalf. Evaluation attempts to provide real-time feedback for management decisions and midcourse corrections. And evaluation is working to track the community building dimensions of the work. This represents a significant and important evolution in the field.

*GUIDELINES FOR EVALUATION ARE AS FOLLOWS:*

- ***Involve evaluators in the work up front.*** Their methods and ways of thinking can elucidate or strengthen a theory of change.
- ***Create the evaluation framework in-house.*** When this function is outsourced, it loses its constituency building potential and contributes to the perception of evaluation as an externally imposed accountability mechanism.
- ***Build in opportunities to involve residents*** as experts and participants in the evaluation and learning processes, especially in the analysis of community data.
- ***Ensure that all stakeholders understand and are comfortable*** with the challenge of causal attribution in community change efforts.
- ***Focus on interim outcomes or milestones*** along the way. Gain agreement on them at the beginning, even though they will be adjusted along the way.
- ***Look for opportunities for comparisons,*** time-series analyses, and other ways to help build a compelling case about whether the intervention produces desired outcomes. Seek creative, nontraditional methods for both collecting and presenting data about impact.
- ***Identify the outcomes of community capacity building*** (e.g., leadership, organizational capacity, social capital, civic capacity) as legitimate outcomes and identify appropriate indicators for them.
- ***Think of evaluation and learning as part of the work.*** Make the financial, personnel, and time investments required to ensure an effective learning cycle.

## **Overarching Lesson 8: Rethink the Comparative Advantage of Philanthropy in Community Change and Adapt Accordingly**

In most community change enterprises, it is foundations—almost exclusively—that support community planning, community building, community organizing, and community capacity strengthening strategies. Philanthropy also covers the costs of technical assistance and evaluation in most of these efforts.

The public, private, and philanthropic sectors each have different roles in funding the programmatic work. The public sector generally funds direct programs, whether it is oriented toward human development or toward physical/economic development. The private sector will invest when the profit is clear or when financial incentives help to subsidize costs. Foundations' contributions to programs generally take the form of planning, seed programs, start-up costs for new activities, gap filling, incentive financing, and so on.

Some foundations have expanded their funding strategies to include “mission-related investing”—that is, investing endowment funds in community development. Several foundations such as Ford and Heron have been philanthropic leaders in the work, modeling program-related and mission-related investing and helping to build a support system for interested foundations. Examples can be found through the Pilot Cities of the Living Cities network, in which the Annie E. Casey, MacArthur, McKnight, and Knight foundations all made significant financial and reputational investments in their local communities. Some corporate foundations, such as Prudential, and local foundations, such as Wachovia Regional and William Penn in Philadelphia, have also made significant contributions to program-related investments. Annie E. Casey has used the vehicle of “mission-related deposits” (opening accounts with significant sums in banks that operate in their sites) to create incentives for local banks to interact differently vis-à-vis their target neighborhoods.

As the field moves forward, public- and private-sector funders need to work together to understand and appreciate each other's constraints while also strategizing about how to cover the costs of all dimensions of community change work. By focusing on the ways in which community change efforts can catalyze public- and private-sector connections to low-income communities, philanthropic interventions can be the linchpin for much larger social and economic realignment.

This more expansive vision of the role of philanthropy in community change requires a shift in foundation thinking. Foundation leaders and staff need to move from asking, “What kind of grants will have the most direct and appreciable impact?” toward asking, “How can we use all of the resources at our disposal to leverage and improve the effectiveness of other public, private, and community investments in poor communities?” In the words of one family foundation

leader: “The question we always ask is, ‘What business are we in?’ Our business is community improvement, not grant making. Grants are just tools.”

This suggests a change in orientation from “grant maker” to “change maker”—or, in the words of Mark Kramer of FSG Social Impact Advisors, moving toward “catalytic philanthropy”—and a concomitant change in how resources are allocated. The Skillman Foundation, for example, estimates that its staff spends as much as one-third of its time on strategies for aligning various interests, leveraging, and brokering, oftentimes behind the scenes.

The more that foundations are willing to use the various resources at their disposal, the more powerful their non-grant-making roles become. James Joseph (2008) has written and spoken about the need for foundations to consider all of their capacities and bring them all to bear on the problems they address. Taking a page from Joseph, it is evident that foundations should consider using and leveraging the following resources and capacities:

- **Financial:** grants as well as investments and leveraging ability
- **Technical:** access to national research and best practices
- **Civic:** leading, convening, setting the agenda, taking on policy and systems change, helping to counter imbalances in power
- **Moral:** embracing racial equity, social justice, and self-determination
- **Reputational:** taking risks
- **Intellectual:** learning and creating a learning culture

One implication is that foundations should rethink the decision to structure place-based change in the form of an “initiative.” Initiatives generally have defined entry and exit points, predetermined time limits, and boundaries around the work; they often require new implementation processes or structures to carry out the work. In the words of Tom David (2008): “Foundations typically launch an initiative at a time which they believe is right for them. They may have completed a new strategic plan or their potential payout may have increased due to successful investments. But the timing is rarely, if ever, ideal for their potential grantees.”

The alternative is to work in a neighborhood for a while to learn about its capacities and needs and then develop a program of work organically based on what is already there and what can work most effectively to accelerate change. This allows careful and strategic assessment of the capacities and comparative

advantages of all actors and builds out from there. In this approach, foundations act more as partners and less as distant patrons, goal setters, check writers, and accountability clerks.

At the same time, not every foundation needs to be a partner in a community change enterprise, and not every foundation can be. For many foundations, the better strategy is to be a supporter of high-quality projects and programs that fit within the foundation's priorities. What is important is to be clear about the types of outcomes that can be expected as a result of different kinds of foundation action. As this review states, investments in good programs will yield different outcomes from those for investments in a community change strategy.

Finally, the experience of CCIs suggests that national foundations should revisit their comparative advantage in community change work. Whereas local funders have a long-term commitment to place that permits them to work in the organic way recommended here, national funders typically do not have such place-based relationships. Their contributions might be better directed to three main lines of work: field building, including leadership development, capacity building, improvement in data systems, and knowledge development; federal, regional, and state policy change to support community-level work; and providing leadership and support to local and regional foundations, intermediaries, and other place-based institutions in their community change work. Exceptions are the national foundations that have strong local ties, such as MacArthur in Chicago or Annie E. Casey in its headquarters town, Baltimore, and the headquarters of its parent corporation, United Parcel Service, in Atlanta.

*GUIDELINES FOR THE FUTURE ROLE OF FOUNDATIONS IN COMMUNITY CHANGE ARE AS FOLLOWS:*

- ***Don't do initiatives.*** The fact that initiatives are foundation sponsored, time limited, externally catalyzed, and require new implementation processes or structures in the context of ongoing neighborhood programs has worked against them. We can no longer support the premise that an initiative-driven infusion of a predetermined amount of foundation money—no matter how flexible or comparatively large and long-term by foundation standards—can significantly change the overall trajectory of a disinvested community over a relatively short period of time. This realization argues against relying on stand-alone, comprehensive community change initiatives.
- ***Place-based foundations are best positioned*** to do place-based work.
- ***Think creatively about how to use all of the foundation's assets*** and capacities, beyond grant-making, for the community change effort.

- ***Not every foundation should take on community change work.*** There are many other worthwhile grants and investments that foundations can pursue that are valuable in their own right and might better match the foundation's mission.
- ***National foundations should fund activities that support the field of community change,*** including knowledge development, policy reform, and infrastructure development. They can also work through the vehicles of intermediaries and support local and regional foundations or key institutions in their place-based work. National foundations' ability to sponsor local community change work is limited by the degree to which they can commit to local sites over the long haul.
- ***When there is government leadership and investment in place-based efforts, foundations should look for opportunities to enhance the public effort*** by covering such costs as capacity building to enable the effective use of government funds, wraparound or complementary funding to connect lines of work, technical assistance, and knowledge development.

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## THE CHANGING ROLE OF FOUNDATIONS IN COMMUNITY CHANGE WORK

**National foundations:** For the most part, the national and regional foundations that took the lead in the CCIs of the 1990s, such as Ford, Rockefeller, Pew, and Hewlett, no longer fund place-based work directly. The Annie E. Casey Foundation is an exception with its ten-year Making Connections initiative. Even as national foundations pull back from their investments in the CDC field or in CCIs, however, they are experimenting with new strategies for investing in place-based change. Many have chosen to join the consortium that funds Living Cities, formerly the National Community Development Initiative, a national intermediary addressing community change. Another trend has been the search for "regional" approaches to community revitalization. For example, Ford, Casey, and Rockefeller have collaborated in their grant-making to promote a regional strategy for revitalization of Camden, N.J.

**Local, state, and regional foundations:** Different kinds of local funders, such as Skillman, George Gund, Price, and Wean have entered the field. Many are taking on a wider range of roles in their place-based work, with the most innovative foundations experimenting with more of the resources at their disposal: investing their endowment capital in neighborhood projects (George

Gund), using their convening authority and political clout to engage a wide range of powerful public and private partners (Skillman), using their access to influence public systems (MacArthur), marrying local work with state-level advocacy (California Endowment), and taking advantage of their independence to invest in risky or controversial strategies such as organizing and advocacy (Woods, Needmor, Wean) or the self-determination of Native American nations (Bush). As a regional foundation, the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation has developed a strategy to support the programmatic and policy “infrastructure” that is focusing on poverty reduction in the Southeast.

**Social investors and venture philanthropies:** In the past ten years, the philanthropic sector has undergone some important shifts that brought new actors and new thinking into the world of place-based initiatives. The explosion of new funds resulting from high profits in information technology, entertainment, and private investment introduced a new set of donors driven by social investing values, or “philanthrocapitalism” (Bishop & Green, 2008). They are willing to make large investments but require business plans and outcomes accountability in return. Funds like the Robin Hood Foundation in New York serve as collaborative vehicles for these philanthropists, although some also invest directly in place-based efforts such as the Harlem Children’s Zone and charter schools. Intermediary or advisory groups, such as Arabella and New Profit, often work with these new funders to help them develop grant-making strategies. These funders also contract with business consulting firms, such as McKinsey and Bridgespan, to advise on nonprofit organizational development. This is a very new group of actors to the philanthropic scene, and they have potential to have a significant impact on this field.

**Embedded funders:** These funders, also relatively new, are more organically linked to the community change world. Their commitment to a particular place is long term (Sojourner et al., 2004). They are creative in their use of grants, investment funds, leverage, civic capacity, board members, and staff. The Jacobs Family Foundation, for example, used its capital to purchase land for a commercial center and a neighborhood center, and its staff developed expertise in using new tax credits for development. The Lyndhurst Foundation in Chattanooga, Tenn., targeted a disinvested neighborhood for investment for roughly a decade, first funding a community organization and later taking on a more direct role as a strategic developer, acquiring property for affordable housing and coordinating projects.

**Health conversion foundations:** These foundations are created with proceeds from the sale or for-profit conversion of nonprofit hospitals, insurance companies, and other health organizations. They operate locally or at the state level and have potential to be important leaders in community change philanthropy because they often define *health* broadly in ways that include preventive, public, and community health. The California Endowment and the California Wellness Foundations were initial leaders in this new generation of health foundations, but smaller foundations, such as the Connecticut Health Foundation and the Danville Regional Foundation, are also emphasizing social justice, racial equity, and civic capacity development as part of their philanthropic strategies.

# Strengthening Future Work on Community Change

*By Anne C. Kubisch*

**W**here to from here? This chapter identifies themes around which the community change field needs to structure future work and organize learning. The success of the next generation of community change efforts depends on understanding these issues better and building a stronger knowledge base that can answer key questions and guide action.

### **Theme 1: Redefining Place**

How should policy makers and practitioners think about “place” in future place-based efforts? Defining the *place* targeted by a community change effort has been a persistent problem for practitioners and researchers. The boundaries recognized by the Census Bureau, school districts, postal service, and police rarely map well onto each other or onto the boundaries that residents identify as their neighborhood. By and large, practitioners have dealt with this dilemma by avoiding rigid definitions of their neighborhoods, while researchers have become increasingly sophisticated in their use of different kinds of local area data to describe neighborhoods and track change.

Two more challenges have been added recently to the problem of defining place. The first is an awareness of the importance of metropolitan and regional influences on neighborhoods’ status and trajectory. The past decade has seen major growth in the study of metropolitanism, regionalism, smart growth, and equitable development, shedding light on how neighborhoods interact with the geographies and economies that surround them. This growing appreciation of neighborhoods as complex systems that are continually adapting to their sur-

rounding circumstances, rather than static places, challenges traditional ways of thinking about the purpose and design of place-based interventions. The implications for action that these analyses suggest are at a very early stage of development, however.

For example, Weissbourd, Bodini, and He (2009) found that one-third of neighborhood change depends on regional trends. They conclude:

*Community and economic development should aim at maximizing the connections and transactions that link the neighborhood, its assets, and residents to the larger systems. . . . One could imagine an enhanced comprehensive neighborhood planning approach which brings more business planning principles to community and economic development. . . . [G]iven a detailed analysis of neighborhood assets, challenges and opportunities, a comprehensive planning process could identify a vision and goals for development of those assets in the larger regional context and strategies, programs, products, and services to address barriers and facilitate connections, transactions and investment. In this approach, interventions would be tailored and driven by the functions the neighborhood serves, what types of people and investment it seeks to attract or retain, and what it takes to engage the larger systems to create the right balance of amenities to attract the desired investments and demographics.*

The second challenge emerges out of a growing awareness that residents of poor communities move frequently and a recognition of the powerful effect that migration into and out of neighborhoods has on efforts to change and track residents' well-being. Coulton, Theodos, and Turner (2009) found that roughly half of the families in neighborhoods that they studied changed residences in a three-year period, with these implications:

*We find that neighborhood change is often the result of mobility—differences between the characteristics of movers and newcomers. In contrast, changes among stayers over a three-year period are generally small. Efforts to strengthen neighborhoods should acknowledge both the slow pace of change among stayers and the role played by the continuous flow of households into and out of the neighborhood. . . . [T]he goal of place-based initiatives should be to strengthen neighborhoods' performance for all their residents: supporting up-and-out movers while reducing churning, supporting the attached stayers while improving the choices available to dissatisfied stayers, and engaging with both positive and dissatisfied newcomers to draw them into neighborhood networks and supports.*

Thus, while our current understanding of neighborhood dynamics is more sophisticated than in the past, the field is only just beginning to figure out how that knowledge should be translated into community change strategies. The next generation of community change efforts must take up the challenge of developing good theories of change that reflect this new understanding of regional and mobility dynamics, as well as good ways to operationalize the knowledge.

## **Theme 2: Demonstrating the Value of Community Building**

How can the field do a better job of demonstrating the added value of a “community building” approach to neighborhood change? All of the community change efforts reviewed here work according to community building principles, although they vary in terms of how central community building is to their mission and operations. An important challenge to the field is to “prove” that a community building approach to planning and implementing neighborhood change is better than simply putting high-quality human, physical, and economic development programs into place in the neighborhood. Are better outcomes produced as a result of investing the time, money, and capacity to house them in a broader community building effort? Which outcomes are enhanced? Over what time period?

For some, community building outcomes are ends in themselves. Fortunately, evidence is mounting that community building outcomes such as increased social capital and a more mobilized community can be produced by commonly employed strategies such as outreach, organizing, community planning, and cultural events. The harder nut to crack is to demonstrate that those enhanced community building outcomes then lead to improved social and economic well-being for residents and a stronger, more resilient community over the long run.

Stakeholders in the field have made several assumptions about how community building approaches might enhance outcomes for individuals and neighborhoods. For instance, they hypothesize that community building approaches help ensure more effective links and interactions among human, economic, and physical development activities; build greater community investment in the work and therefore ensure that the effort is more sustainable over time; or create a “sense of community” and relationships that can be tapped over the long run to improve the community. These are strongly held beliefs by many who work in the field, but they are still hypotheses that need to be systematically tested and backed up with evidence.

One obstacle is that it is almost considered heretical to challenge assumptions about the purpose and value of community building. Many actors are ideologically committed to concepts of participation, empowerment, democracy, and community ownership, so raising questions about the instrumental value and payoff of community building is taboo. This hesitance has not served the field well: many who

would benefit from better knowledge about community building have not made demands on the academic community and funders to undertake rigorous research on this set of questions. The time has come to make better progress on understanding community building's contribution to community well-being.

This is an important area for the field to focus on for three reasons:

- There are always trade-offs in decisions about how to use funds. This is especially true with the relatively flexible funding that philanthropy provides. It is crucial to be able to make a compelling case that community building is a priority use of precious resources.
- One goal of community change efforts should be to build better theories for how to make significant improvements in the conditions of distressed neighborhoods. The community building hypothesis is so central to this work that leaders must place priority on understanding its role in the theory of change: What does it produce? When is it critical? For which purposes? In which contexts? It is important to move this discussion out of the realm of values, ideology, and political correctness so we can build an evidence base. Some progress has been made in unpacking and specifying community building strategies and outcomes. The challenge is to organize that knowledge and develop systematic learning opportunities as we go forward.
- If the purpose of community building is to strengthen local, civic, democratic, and social justice institutions, then the field needs to be able to declare that with confidence, rather than judge community building by whether tangible outcomes can be ascribed to it.

### **Theme 3: Defining *Sustainability* and How to Achieve It**

What does *sustainability* mean in the context of community change? The problems associated with keeping worthwhile organizations or programs alive in the antipoverty, social services, and community development fields are not new. Philanthropic dollars will never cover all of the costs, and public funding is categorical, prescriptive, and subject to political and economic vagaries.

In some ways, the question of how to sustain the work of a community change effort mirrors the familiar problems of traditional community-based organizations because it is, in part, about ongoing support for basic programs. At the same time, it also has some elements that are unique, including covering the costs of community building activities, managing complex working partnerships, build-

ing capacity, promoting systems change, and building a system of ongoing learning and feedback to guide work that is developmental. These activities are typically covered by foundations in the context of a community change effort, and they are difficult to continue once the sponsoring foundation ends its support.

The theory of sustainability for community change efforts over the past 20 years has assumed that, although philanthropic investments in community building might wane over time, their payoff in terms of enhanced organizational and community performance should position the change effort to attract new support over the long run. Or they might instill new ways of working that continue to yield benefits beyond the term of foundation grants. Experience from community change efforts, and from CCIs in particular, shows that although sponsoring foundations have expected local entities to find the means to sustain both programmatic and nonprogrammatic activities initiated by the foundation, this has been extremely difficult. In his 2002 report on CCIs' sustainability issues, Ira Cutler made the following observation:

*The common view is that, after a time, a community-driven effort should show enough promise or have made enough progress to attract new funders. Ultimately, the original sponsoring foundation can withdraw or greatly lessen its support, and the effort will continue. This simple model—design, demonstrate, evaluate, disseminate, and wait for large-scale public and private funding to underwrite continued operation or even expansion—is the “sustainability theory” behind most community-based initiatives. Many people believe the model does not work, at least in the short term. Others believe the model is fine if the product under consideration is a direct service. Coordinating, community-building, or other collaborative efforts are another problem altogether.*

Experience also suggests that when an initiative is heavily identified with the sponsoring foundation, it is particularly difficult to get buy-in from other funders. In the words of one observer, “Every funder is trying to leverage every other funder.”

It is rare to find an organization that has a sufficient endowment or independent revenue streams to sustain community building and similar functions after a time-limited initiative ends. Some exceptions might be found among universities, foundations, CDFIs, and large CDCs whose housing and commercial projects generate unencumbered revenue. However, the public sector generally funds only direct programmatic work, whether it is oriented toward human, physical, or economic development.

Terms such as *exit strategy* or *sustainability plan* are used more often when referring to foundation-sponsored initiatives that have start and end dates than

to the work of traditional social service agencies and community-based organizations. All too often, the terms are code for “winding down the work.” In some cases, organizations have folded because they cannot keep the work funded (e.g., DC Agenda). In others, organizations that were founded to perform some of the local community building, convening, and policy work take on contracts to provide direct services or technical assistance and use them to sustain activities (e.g., Urban Strategies Council). The Annie E. Casey Foundation is paying considerable attention to ways to maintain the work of Making Connections beyond the end of its full-scale support in 2011, including strategies for matching Casey dollars with local funds and using Casey dollars to leverage public funds. It will be important for the field to observe, assess, and learn from this experience.

## **Theme 4: Promoting Mixed-Income Communities and Avoiding Displacement**

How can the field strengthen its knowledge about how to promote mixed-income communities and development without displacement? Mixed-income communities have become a priority for the community change field, based on abundant evidence that concentrated poverty has had devastating consequences for residents of poor neighborhoods. There is strong theory that low-income residents should benefit from living in mixed-income communities (Joseph, 2006), but the evidence base is only emerging. For example, there is some evidence that targeted income mixing produces benefits for the poor as a result of reductions in crime and improvements in neighborhood services (Turner & Briggs, 2008).

To date, the field lacks experience in developing mixed-income neighborhoods intentionally and in ways that truly benefit the full range of residents, especially those who are most disadvantaged. Most income mixing in poor neighborhoods has come about through gentrification, which often leads to displacement of low-income residents—usually to other poor neighborhoods. In several of the HOPE VI sites, for example, few public housing residents returned to the neighborhood to benefit from the redevelopment. It is clear that next-generation public housing development, especially the Choice Neighborhoods initiative proposed by the current administration, must place priority on carrying out development without displacing current residents.

Themes of “responsible redevelopment” or “development without displacement” are becoming more common in the community development arena, but knowledge about best practices and how to create situations where successful win-win arrangements occur is still minimal. Core elements of responsible redevelopment are likely to include engagement of community stakeholders; community benefits, such as jobs and affordable housing; “responsible relocation” when

necessary; responsible demolition; building high-quality schools and supports; and building in strategies for mixed-income communities, housing affordability, and wealth creation for residents (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2010).

One strategy for ensuring that low-income residents benefit from development is to strengthen their voice, participation, and power in the development planning process. This is where a role for philanthropy is clear. In the Camden Redevelopment plans, foundations supported the work of organizers and civic groups to ensure that residents who would otherwise have been displaced were included and informed as plans developed. In this case, the community voices actually stopped the development, and much effort had to be invested in aligning the interests of the community, the public sector, and developers. In the East Baltimore Revitalization Project, the Annie E. Casey Foundation provided funding to ensure that the housing needs of displaced residents were met, although the outcome from this development is still to be determined.

Community benefits agreements are an increasingly common approach to responsible redevelopment. The first major community benefits agreement was negotiated in 2001 by the Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE), when the Staples Center was being developed. The strategy took hold, and a national network called the Partnership for Working Families now provides technical assistance on this matter to local groups across the country. Most community benefits agreements focus on ensuring that residents obtain good jobs at the redeveloped site, but many also address affordable housing and health issues.

Questions that should guide future learning about responsible redevelopment include the following:

- What needs to be mixed in order to produce a healthy neighborhood: Income? Class? Race? Rental and owned units? Residents in different life stages, such as families and the elderly?
- How much mixing is required? What is the optimal proportion?
- What would constitute success: Neighborhood stability? Class mobility for residents? Wealth accumulation? Improved services?

The challenge here is both strategic and operational. It is to test and evaluate strategies that succeed in promoting mixed-income neighborhoods and to discern what works best for which outcomes under different neighborhood contexts.

## **Theme 5: Working Effectively in Weak Markets and Communities with Weak Civic Infrastructure**

What can be done for poor communities in weak market cities? What can be done when the economy, the public sector, and the civic infrastructure are all weak? There is no consensus about the best strategies for places where the principal economic engine is in decline or has disappeared through economic restructuring, or where the housing crisis has caused rapid neighborhood abandonment. Very often, these are the cities where civic infrastructure has also frayed.

The community change field is beginning to experiment creatively on this front. Leaders in the community change field are testing arts- and transit-oriented development, farmers' markets, green building and renewable energy enterprises, community forestry in rural areas, and niche marketing. For instance, the Rural Learning Center in Miner County, S.D., helps communities throughout the state rethink their economic future and generate innovative development plans that take advantage of emerging technologies like wind power turbines. Because the field is not mature, and there is no evidence to assess whether these efforts are powerful enough engines to spur economic development, this is an area where deliberate and systematic cross-site learning should be created. The economic crisis of 2008–2010 adds urgency to this question.

Only the boldest of communities have been able to step back and ask what kind of fundamental restructuring is needed to lay the groundwork for long-term stability in their physical and economic infrastructure. For example, residents of Youngstown, Ohio, went through an ambitious visioning and planning process that began with a recognition that the city was originally built for a population of 170,000 but is now at 80,000. Rather than trying to compete with neighbors such as Pittsburgh or Cleveland to attract industries, community change leaders deliberately planned for “creative shrinkage” and are changing land and infrastructure uses. Other cities in the Midwest are beginning to ask similar questions, and it is becoming clear that the political challenges associated with moving in this direction are significant and that progress requires leadership and constituency building. In Detroit, a consortium of funders has joined forces to create the New Economy Initiative, testing a new model of how philanthropy can provide such leadership and build collaboration around economic development in a city with a weak economy and weak infrastructure.

## **Theme 6: Uniting Systems Reform with Place-Based Change**

What is the theory of change about systems reform in the context of place-based work? Implicit in the theories guiding some community change efforts is an assumption that community-level actions will trigger significant change in large

and entrenched systems. This line of reasoning expects that a successful neighborhood-based effort would model new types of service delivery or community development arrangements that would, in turn, infuse or catalyze change in larger public systems at the city, county, or state level. There is no evidence to support assumptions that successful neighborhood-level work alone can “bubble up” and trigger larger system reforms. For example, the evaluation of Yes We Can! found that, although organizing efforts led to “improved relationships between residents on several neighborhood blocks and the local police department, this win was not sufficient to make the police department more responsible to all poor residents in all poor neighborhoods” (Foster-Fishman & Long, 2009). One observer describes this perspective on reform as expecting community initiatives being to be the tail wagging the dog of systems change.

Another hypothesis underlying these efforts has been that service integration—long a goal of systems reformers in the social services field—might be more easily achieved in the context of a comprehensive community effort. Has that proven true? The flexibility that accompanies philanthropic investment in these efforts does allow for a fuller array of services, co-location of services, and “filling gaps” in services. The Harlem Children’s Zone, for example, has implemented the notion of a conveyor belt of services from birth to graduation by combining public and philanthropic funds. There is no evidence, however, that any of these efforts has sparked seamless integration of public social services.

Community change efforts can compensate for but not solve the problems of siloed public funding for services because the successful blending of public funds depends on local government taking the lead. In the Communities of Opportunity program, for example, the city of San Francisco developed its own pooled fund of government money to work in a particular community. Similarly, San Antonio’s Department of Community Initiatives blended funding from various public and private sources to rationalize community change work on the ground.

A core theme in all community change work going forward will be to position disadvantaged communities to engage effectively with the forces of change operating outside the community. Based on experience, this will require action both inside and outside the community. Place-based work can arm community residents, organizations, and advocates with the capacities and power they need to make demands on outside systems. Place-based actors can forge partnership with powerful brokering actors, such as foundations and intermediaries. But that is not enough. Outside powers must be incentivized, constrained, leveraged, and held accountable to ensure that they work on behalf of the communities.

Where local governments have a strong tradition of accountability to communities, such as Minneapolis, strategies and structures exist that might serve as examples to other places, such as the Gulf Coast, where those traditions do not historically exist. Where the new generation of developers attentive to the triple bottom line are demonstrating how to work effectively with communities, there

might be lessons for other private-sector actors. Where advocates have had success in catalyzing changes in the behavior of powerful actors, their experiences should be captured and transferred. Finally, where communities and public systems have developed effective and mature working relationships, the actions and capacities that led them there should be analyzed. This must be a priority for the next generation.

## **Theme 7: Addressing Power Imbalances**

How can community-based work redress power imbalances that are historically and structurally determined, especially the tenacious links among poverty, race, and place? Critics have faulted the community change field for not challenging entrenched power structures that maintain and reproduce advantage and disadvantage in the country. They argue that there are biases built into this approach to poverty reduction and social justice that virtually guarantee its marginality. These include the emphasis on technical and programmatic interventions as opposed to political action; the collaborative and cooperative nature of community building strategies; and the highly localized changes that place-based efforts aim to achieve. These critics see the “romanticization of community” as a distraction from fundamental reform, and they ask how place-based efforts can ever be expected to make real change in poor communities when policies and systems are stacked against them.

Efforts over the past few years to understand and articulate the dynamics of structural racism have provided insights for community change leaders to rethink and reconsider some of these entrenched power dynamics. The concentrated poverty that most community change efforts address is, in fact, racially concentrated poverty that developed because of racialized public policies. Few poor whites live in concentrated poverty, while most poor blacks live in poor and near-poor neighborhoods. Community builders have always been in tune with the racial, ethnic, and cultural makeup of their communities, and they place priority on ensuring that programs and practices are meaningful, given the racial and ethnic context of their community. The challenge to the field is to move beyond a focus on diversity and cultural appropriateness to address the institutional and structural dimensions of racism.

Even when structural inequities are considered, there is no clear consensus about how to respond to them. The challenge can be described as follows: Some people see the association between race and disparate social outcomes as descriptive—something that should be accounted for and responded to in the work—while others see it as mutually reinforcing and essential to the maintenance of privilege and disadvantage. On the whole, the former group tends to accept the basic outlines of the political economy. Its members bring a more functionalist outlook to community building and want to build local capacities (of organiza-

tions, individuals, families, service networks) to engage and participate more effectively in the economy, the job market, the service delivery system, and so on.

The second group can be described as those who work from a structural racism perspective. They agree that increasing local capacity is important but also focus on the systems that allocate, or misallocate, resources. Thus, while they also want low-income communities to have more functional capacity, they put more emphasis on work that aims to change societal power arrangements—by, for example, providing a bigger stake in governance and more influence in local planning and policy making. Their larger aspiration is to decouple race from poverty, opportunity, and place, and ultimately to move the political system in a more equitable direction.

While many community builders might describe their work in these terms, their actions and strategies are designed in ways that may not get them to that place of structural change. In this domain, the work that remains includes both conceptual groundwork and testing of alternatives to address institutional and structural sources of inequity. The community change field has many attributes that could position it to take more leadership on this front.

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## Response Essay

*By Thomas Burns  
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The time has come for a different phase of philanthropic investment in community change efforts, one that encompasses a broader “scaling-up” strategy and rethinks some of the concepts and practices that have limited growth and impact thus far. This essay suggests ways in which funders and proponents of community change can work better by building on the substantial base of knowledge developed over the past two decades.

### THE CORE CONCERN: WHERE NEXT?

There is more readiness today than ever before to look candidly at what has worked and what has not. There also is

a recognition that, after years of experimentation with investment approaches, the time has come to consider questions about how to expand the work and better position it to have broader influence on policies and practices.

The field’s maturation converges with an interest in best practices and in better understanding the new directions that some pace-setting foundations have taken to redefine their roles as place-based investors—away from traditional, initiative-focused grant-making and toward a variety of innovative strategies that position funders as more than capacity builders and conveners. We now have numerous examples of change strategies in which philanthropic organizations are visibly engaged as thought leaders, joint venture partners, political strategists, and policy advocates. These broader roles are greatly expanding the sector’s potential for influence, but they also pose many

new questions about how to navigate among the many options for investment and how to measure impact and efficacy.

The particular vantage point from which I view these changes is as a research-minded practitioner who was closely connected to several first-generation initiatives (the Comprehensive Community Revitalization Program in the South Bronx and the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s Rebuilding Communities Initiative, among others) and has helped frame newer change efforts that build on earlier experiences (notably the Sustainable Communities strategy being implemented nationally by LISC). I have occasionally written about the subject of comprehensive community change and thus have stayed abreast of how the thinking in the field has evolved.

My experience has been mostly linked with efforts to broaden the scope of physical community development strategies. However, I have observed that many key innovations in practice have been informed by lessons from across the spectrum of community change, ranging from physical and economic revitalization to human and social capital development. Like others, my main concerns now are with where this work may be heading and what can be done collectively to ensure its efficacy.

## **THE CASE FOR TRANSITIONING TO A DIFFERENT PHASE OF INVESTMENT**

The time has come to reach beyond an extended “proof-of-concept” phase, during which we saw successive waves of investment in one-off philanthropic initiatives, with varied purposes and designs, produce quite mixed results. As this book points out, much was learned from these

approaches. Ultimately, however, such an open-ended and loosely focused investment approach has inherent constraints. If place-based community change work is ever to produce the broader social and economic realignment that most philanthropic investors hope for, the sector will need to come to terms with the limitations of an approach that consists of discrete and disconnected initiatives.

If we accept that the time has come for comprehensive community change work to shift toward another phase of investment, then a new agenda is needed to guide that transition. Such an agenda should clearly set out what must change about how this work is being carried out, and it should frame where more emphasis is now needed to bring this work to greater scale. Few would argue that the road forward should simply involve another wave of investments in community-specific initiatives.

The new agenda should include some more thoughtful, higher-impact strategies for linking community-based and other collaborative efforts together to encourage broader institutional shifts in how public resources are deployed to address chronic issues of poverty and disinvestment in lower-income communities. Just as different investment strategies are called for at different phases of product development, the field of comprehensive community change now requires a distinct new bundle of philanthropic investments to help move the work to a more dominant position in the broader marketplace of poverty-alleviation approaches.

Some key components of this next-level strategy are relatively clear:

- We need to concentrate more on clarifying, consolidating, and com-

municating the practices that we now believe work.

- We need to attract and deploy more significant philanthropic and public dollars from a broader range of sources—nationally, regionally, and locally.
- We need to focus more on linking investments together, breaking down programmatic silos, and moving from very small to broader geographies.
- We need to be more deliberate in tying this work to the policy and institutional supports required to achieve broader and more convincing results.

But how do we encourage a more coherent and integrated investment approach within a community of practice where there still is so much diversity of thinking and where funder investment decisions are so decentralized? This is a daunting challenge in a field filled with independent thinkers who may acknowledge a shared interest in the potential of place-based community change but are also protective of their autonomy, somewhat wary of formalized collaborations and partnerships, and generally comfortable following their own lights when it comes to the details of program design.

A more coherent, broadly endorsed scaling-up strategy would have to be “roomy” enough to allow for considerable variation in execution. And it would have to ensure that players from the funding community’s many subsectors—from national to locally based, large to small, broad-missioned to narrowly focused—can see clear roles for themselves and recognize payoffs from the work. These practical requirements should not be viewed as impossible design constraints but, rather, as the necessary attributes of

a robust, multilayered investment strategy with great potential for benefiting the entire field.

It is difficult to imagine that the comprehensive community change field could ever muster the influence needed to move a broader antipoverty agenda without more agreement on where the field is now. The publication of this third *Voices from the Field* volume provides a timely opportunity for those who are deeply invested in this work to frame the current situation and take up the challenge of guiding the transition toward a field-wide strategy with potential for broader impact.

The writings in this volume provide an excellent and well-grounded point of departure for the conceptual work needed to transform current place-based efforts into something more ambitious. Part I of this volume traces how the field has evolved from efforts spread across programmatic sectors and involving varied sponsoring institutions toward a progressively broader and more interconnected array of efforts that draw strength from each other and can more easily be seen as related. This volume also summarizes the outcomes these efforts have produced, while analyzing why so many initiatives have not realized results of the scale and persuasiveness imagined by their designers. It considers several aspects of the work—including the roles of sponsoring institutions, areas of programmatic focus, priorities for capacity building, and relationships within and outside target neighborhoods—that help frame the debate about where additional investments may be most needed to achieve larger gains.

## ADDRESSING CONCEPTUAL AND IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

The significant limitations in how many community-based change strategies are framed presents an important challenge for the philanthropic community, which as the principal advocate for the approach bears responsibility for attracting broader interest to it. Some of the limitations are conceptual and can be addressed through a disciplined, evidence-based review of the premises and change theories associated with the strategic initiatives that shaped the field. Other limitations have more to do with the capacity available on the ground to implement chosen strategies and the institutional roles that funders and their implementation partners play to advance particular initiatives.

Critics of comprehensive place-based change have long pointed to these limitations as significant flaws in the approach. For those who have criticized this type of investment from the start, the mixed results of numerous initiatives offer proof of the limited potential for place-based community initiatives to address, on a large scale, the issues of poverty and disinvestment that plague lower-income populations. For the field to move forward and build on the positive work documented here, more must be done to refine conceptual underpinnings and firm up the principles behind implementation. This conceptual cleanup is an integral part of the work needed to frame a new developmental phase.

There are at least four challenges to moving beyond the pattern of individualized initiatives and toward a more coherent field-wide strategy for broadening the impact of place-based community change.

### *Rethinking the notion of “community” as a bounded target population for the purposes of measuring the impacts of a comprehensive community change strategy.*

The theories and logic models that have guided numerous community-based initiatives have overlooked the degree of complexity and openness that exists in communities. The prevailing idea has been that the communities selected as focal points for a comprehensive strategy are isolated enough from their surrounding environments that their resident populations can serve as appropriate units of analysis for measuring impacts. We know, however, that communities are highly complex and open systems characterized by enormous mobility of residents; continual shifts in the influence of internal actors on the community and one another; very significant external political, economic, and market influences on conditions within the community; dynamic interplays of ethnic and cultural factors within diverse subcommunities that live in relatively small geographic areas; and so on.

For the field to advance, more realistic frameworks are needed to describe work in communities and to capture the positive results. There has been a tendency to frame ambitious change initiatives using an overly prescriptive, outcome-based funding approach. Too many change efforts have been “sold” based on a well-articulated but utterly unrealistic set of results that bear no possible relationship to the actual program interventions made or the scale of resources invested.

This kind of wrong thinking does little to advance the credibility of the work and can lead program designers and evaluators to overlook the more subtle but important impacts that community-based interventions can have on intracommunity

relationships and social capital, new and enduring institutional partnerships and program collaborations, service quality improvements, and even broader political and economic realignments that yield benefits long after the formal initiative has ended. Community stakeholders and practitioners on the ground often see these benefits, but they are easily overlooked in how place-based work is documented and assessed.

***Rethinking the scope and time frame of philanthropic investments in community capacity and change.*** Critics of comprehensive change initiatives often point to unrealistic assumptions about the strategies and the scale and duration of investments needed to make a difference. Typically, such strategies involve multiyear work plans that progress from engaging residents and other community stakeholders to formulating community-based plans, building organizational capacity and relationships, attracting additional investors and resources, and implementing programs aimed at improving quality of life and/or outcomes for individuals involved in the change process.

A crippling drawback of such logic frameworks is their assumption that work can proceed linearly and, worse, that all stages of the process can be accomplished within a typical two-phase funding cycle of five to six years. The notion that communities that have experienced two or more generations of disinvestment and decline can be stabilized and improved in such a short time, using modest levels of resources, is simply naïve. Moreover, the tendency to conceive of complex change processes as relatively temporary interventions involving modest levels of investment designed to yield well-specified,

near-term outcomes weakens the credibility of the approach and undercuts support for this work over the long term.

Looking ahead, the process of community engagement and change needs to be framed as an investment whose results are measured over decades—similar to the long-term democratic institution building strategies found in international development. The work of foundations also must shift from well-bounded interventions to partnership building strategies aimed at establishing platforms of financial and technical support that are anchored within a community and built to last. Such a strategy would compel funders to think beyond the grant resources at their own disposal and encourage them to draw on a broader repertoire of resources, including convening authority, political clout, persuasion, and policy advocacy.

***Framing the issue of “scalability” in a way that helps funders to transition from individual initiatives to broader, system building work.*** The field needs to become more explicit about what it takes to move from a network of relatively isolated, time-limited experiments to a broader-based strategy with potential to achieve greater scale and impact. Most place-based change strategies largely ignored this fundamental scalability problem, but we will make little progress in the future unless we bring this problem into better focus. And because the philanthropic sector created this area of work, the burden falls squarely on philanthropy to incorporate lessons learned about what happens when funder-sponsored initiatives wind down.

For example: What is the value of a multiyear philanthropic investment in a target community without a strategy for

sustaining and growing the work after the funding spree is over? What are realistic expectations for how significant investments in plans, programs, capacity, and relationships are sustained and deployed to carry the change work forward? What obligations do funders have to establish (and perhaps fund) the broader-based investment partnerships needed to aggregate public and private dollars to create sustainable streams of investment in places where a change process has been launched?

The burden on the philanthropic sector increases to the degree that the foundation investments made over the past two decades have now begun to influence emerging public-sector responses, both locally and now at the federal level. For the future viability of this work, funders need to be more explicit about their assumptions for where investments will lead—and perhaps more accountable for using their dollars and other types of influence to ensure the sustainability of this approach.

***Broadening the range of options that funders consider for investing in the field.***

Mainstream funding for comprehensive community change still centers on traditional grant-making. To be sure, we now have numerous examples of individual funders choosing to supplement grant strategies with other activities intended to stimulate complementary community investments. Typically, these include acting as brokers and connectors to public and private actors who can expand the flow of resources and investments into a target community, or serving as policy advocates and champions for place-based investment. However, most of the thinking about how to advance this work is

still relatively narrow and constrained. A strategy for growing the field must expand the ways in which the philanthropic sector uses resources and influence to broaden the scope of current efforts and help the field acquire greater relevance and impact.

In fact, as this review of community change efforts shows, several high-profile innovations (e.g., Annie E. Casey's work in East Baltimore and the Jacobs Family Foundation's work in San Diego) have exposed the potential for much broader investment approaches. Currently, these are interesting exceptions rather than accepted tools for achieving impact and attracting a sustainable flow of resources. Thinking more broadly still, there are other ways that members of the philanthropic community who are committed to place-base community change could harness their collective might to advance a field building agenda. Options include strategies for information sharing and peer learning, funding for a network of intermediaries and support organizations focused on growing the field, more financial incentives and inducements for local and regional foundations to consider long-term investments in community change, and more focused policy advocacy on behalf of supportive legislation and permanent funding streams. The options are many, but the likelihood of their coming into being is small, absent a more coherent, broadly supported agenda for scaling up the work.

**Comprehensive community change is an approach with far more potential than has yet been realized. We are now at an important juncture in the field's development. The challenge is to move this approach to a more central position in the**

arsenal of approaches to poverty alleviation and community revitalization. This challenge calls for a more purposeful, field-wide agenda to guide a new phase of philanthropic investments that are explicitly focused on scaling up the work. Meeting this challenge will require disciplined thinking, increased investment, and bold leadership. With those ingredients, this field has a good chance of increasing its relevance and impact. ■

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## Response Essay

By Mark L. Joseph  
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**Don't do initiatives.** Tucked away, almost innocuously, deep within this volume's excellent overview of the community change field, is this provocative statement: "One implication is that foundations should rethink the assumptions underlying a decision to structure place-based change work in the form of an 'initiative.'"

Has the time truly come to boldly move beyond the initiative as the accepted model through which to generate comprehensive community change? I believe the answer is yes, and I believe that this conclusion reached by the Aspen Roundtable team deserves serious reflection, debate, and action by those who will craft the next generation of community change work. If we believe that comprehensive community change is required to dramatically alter social conditions, but we realize that initiatives are a fundamentally flawed and limited mechanism to achieve it, how do we, as a field, move ahead? The great news is that the alternative is already emerging under our very noses, and in

one case (Dudley Street), it was ironically there from the very beginning.

After almost two decades of working with dozens of community change initiatives, I had grown overly comfortable with the practical approach of using an "initiative"—despite its flaws—as the obvious and rational way to implement a complex, multifaceted concept such as comprehensive community change. It was a helpful wake-up call a few years ago when I launched into a lecture on CCIs at my university and was ready to dive deep into their characteristics, accomplishments, and challenges when a student stopped me to ask a basic question I had overlooked: "What's an initiative?"

Over the years, as I have taken more time at the start of lectures on CCIs to describe the benefits and peculiarities of initiatives as a general model for supporting local action, students have raised concerns about why this approach makes sense. Single sponsor? Externally generated guiding ideas and principles? Time limited? And this is meant to generate sustainable community change?

The authors of this volume reach the same conclusion:

*The fact that they are foundation sponsored, time limited, externally catalyzed, and require new implementation processes or structures in the context of ongoing neighborhood programs has worked against them. The premise that an initiative-driven infusion of a predetermined amount of foundation's funds—no matter how flexible or how comparatively large and long-term by foundation standards—can significantly change the overall trajectory of a disinvested community over a relatively short*

*period of time can no longer be supported. This argues against relying on stand-alone, comprehensive, community change initiatives.*

It is definitely time to confront this question, especially as the federal government and prospective applicants around the country gear up for the launch of two new, major community change initiatives, Choice Neighborhoods and Promise Neighborhoods. The failed promise of Empowerment Zones is a not-so-distant memory. Too many major initiatives have come and gone with too little sustained benefit to show for all the time, energy, and financial investment. Too little has been made of initiatives that ended quietly after falling obviously short of their aspirations, too much has been made of program-level outputs, and there has been too much allowance for the intangible, unmeasured benefits that we are convinced have been generated.

We can always point to implementation mistakes and contextual challenges that got in the way of initiatives' full success. While there is no doubt that initiatives have had an impact on individuals, families, and neighborhoods, as a field we don't have a confident answer to whether the same level of impact could have been achieved through more direct, targeted investment in existing programs and organizations.

What are the implications for existing initiatives? Besides Choice and Promise Neighborhoods, the Aspen Roundtable's helpful catalog of community change initiatives in Appendix 1 lists several initiatives that were launched in just the past year or two. In particular, the New Communities Program in Chicago, a comprehensive community initiative recently re-funded for a second five-year phase by its

sponsors the MacArthur Foundation and Local Initiatives Support Corporation, has a great deal of promising momentum and local support. A useful strategic exercise for the sponsors and implementers of current and planned initiatives would be to identify ways in which their initiatives will avoid and overcome the pitfalls faced by the conventional initiative model. Perhaps there are useful insights to be gleaned about ways in which the latest generation of CCIs are circumventing the flaws and limitations I discuss below. My own advice to current initiative leaders would be to make an immediate, focused effort to develop plans for transitioning to a more organic, open-ended, internally championed, and sustained mode of operating.

I don't believe that this line of thinking suggests there is no future role at all for initiative-type investments. An external, sole sponsor could use a time-limited investment and design to strategically jump-start local action. Rather than making a five- to ten-year commitment to launching and funding an "initiative," however, funders should aim within a two- to three-year period to transition explicitly and intentionally to a less circumscribed, more locally driven and broad-based effort, with the sponsor shifting to a more open-ended strategic partner role.

Taking up the challenge set by this volume's authors, I will first explore the pros and cons of the initiative model in more detail. I will propose some key elements of a possible alternative approach to community change, including implications for the sponsor's role, and provide some promising examples that are emerging in the field. I will consider what could be lost by moving away from the long-term initiative model and suggest ways to retain the benefits while avoiding the limitations. I'll

conclude with some thoughts about moving forward as a field.

## **THE INITIATIVE MODEL: THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY**

There are many benefits to structuring a community change effort as an initiative. External sponsors are well positioned to have a broad view of trends in the field, emerging best practices, and compelling elements for new theories of change. It is much easier for an external sponsor to generate a short-term shift in local practice among multiple players, in order to test a new strategy, than for a local actor to do so. Initiatives allow innovations in practice to be implemented (or at least initiated) relatively quickly by local actors. Initiatives attract attention, gain a high profile, and generate energy and action, even among players who are busy with other commitments.

A new initiative can help focus investment and energy in the midst of a fragmented, multisector local environment that encompasses disparate efforts to improve conditions through physical revitalization, human service delivery, and economic development. An initiative can help saturate the investments and efforts in a particular target area using selected strategies for a concerted period of time. An initiative can also highlight, and hold local actors accountable to, particular principles for how the work should be conducted: comprehensive, integrated, collaborative, community building, and results oriented.

The initiative approach also has built-in challenges, however. The same artificiality that enables initiatives to gain quick attention and galvanize efforts to cut through the status quo generates sev-

eral obstacles. Initiatives distort reality in ways that are not (and are not intended to be) sustainable but, nonetheless, generate dependence on the initiative as a source of momentum and structure for the change effort. Like the overcaffeinated office worker who has a morning burst of energy and productivity only to crash hard a few hours later, initiatives can generate action and a sense of momentum that is only sustained by the external resource and accountability.

Because some of the key ideas that frame an initiative are, most often, generated externally and not locally derived, genuine local ownership and belief in the supremacy of those ideas may be limited. Often, initiatives generate a great deal of hype and expectation—more than is warranted—which leads to inevitable disappointment as stakeholders grapple with the reality of local barriers and the enduring influence of forces beyond local control.

A new initiative sets off a scramble for positioning and funding among local actors, all the more fierce in today's era of shrinking public and private resources for social change work. This always results in winners and losers, as some are anointed and some are not. Then local actors end up working with each other, not necessarily because they share a mission and values or have established trust and mutual dependence, but because the initiative's sponsor requires it.

CCIs have learned the hard way that creating a new governance structure for the initiative holds the promise of a clean slate and fidelity to the initiative design, but it also drains significant time and energy away from the work of implementing the initiative. While the most recent generation of CCIs has favored the use of

proven organizations as lead governance entities, we have not resolved the downsides of this strategic choice, including the repercussions of external “anointing” and how preexisting reputations, proclivities, and limitations act for and against local organizations.

Initiative time frames distort reality. Proposal deadlines, reporting due dates, foundation board meeting schedules (and, with public-sector sponsorship, election cycles) suddenly become all-important drivers of local action. Of course, external deadlines are a fact of life in a field fueled by grant funding. But the launch of an initiative sets in motion a set of timelines, big and small, that can easily trump the more natural rhythms of local implementation. And the biggest timeline that hangs over the heads of local implementers from day one of an initiative is how long the initiative will last. If there is a planning grant, then the first order of business is to secure an implementation grant. Next is the imperative to be positioned for renewal after the initial grant ends. Then the goal becomes to keep the external sponsor’s satisfaction, attention, and expectations high enough to delay that inevitable moment when talk of an exit strategy and closeout grants enters the conversation.

The most problematic aspect of the initiative model is this: The most important factor in an initiative’s existence—the power and influence of an external sponsor interested in catalyzing and supporting local action to test a specific approach to community change—often runs directly counter to the key determinant of whether the effort will continue and achieve long-term impact, namely, the authentic empowerment and capacity of local stakeholders to own the change strategy and hold each other accountable to its suc-

cess. The power dynamics of community change initiatives are at the heart of their ultimate fragility.

Willingly or unwillingly, local implementers become focused on and influenced by the sponsor’s priorities, modes of operation, and time frames. Given that sponsors are continually exposed to other big ideas, trends, and best practices during the course of an initiative, attention can drift away from what was a new, fresh focus just a few years earlier. This attention shift can result in less effort to keep resources flowing at a certain level, less entrepreneurial activity to leverage other sources of support, and less help breaking through local and regional barriers to the initiative’s progress. Local implementers must focus on maintaining their sponsors’ attention, and they can become overly dependent on the guidance and resources of the primary sponsor.

Staff turnover within sponsoring organizations (both private and public) also poses a problem. Initiatives rely on their direct liaisons at the sponsor organization, and grantees must learn to work within those individuals’ vision, competencies, preferred networks, and ways of doing business. Over the course of a ten-year initiative, however, the liaison at the sponsoring organization may well change several times. With each change, local implementers must recalibrate the relationship, even as the new liaison is trying to figure out the internal dynamics at the sponsoring organization. And this usually happens in the context of a fading commitment to the initiative, precipitated by the departure of the initiative’s original champions.

Two other dimensions of the power dynamic between foundations and their initiatives deserve mention. Foundation

boards hold the ultimate decision-making power over the scale and longevity of an initiative. However, for a change approach built on collaboration and mutual learning, boards often remain distant, black-box entities with limited, if any, direct channels for communication about thinking and action on the initiative. Moreover, as this volume's authors note, foundations are notoriously reluctant to collaborate with each other, so the relationship with a primary sponsor can make it difficult for local leaders to secure substantial sponsorship from other major institutions.

## BEYOND INITIATIVES: A NEW APPROACH TO COMMUNITY CHANGE

What are the possible elements of a new approach to community change? This review offers a starting point:

*The alternative is to work in a neighborhood for a while to learn about its capacities and needs and then develop a program of work organically based on what is already there and what can work most effectively to accelerate change. . . . In this approach, foundations act more as partners and less as distant patrons, goal setters, check writers, and accountability clerks.*

This brief statement makes some important points. The new approach should be more "organic" and less artificial and should strive to build on existing strategic action. The would-be sponsor (which I will now call "external partner") needs to enter without fanfare, "working in a neighborhood for a while," and then incrementally help expand the current efforts—all the while layering the new activities into

existing processes and structures. The listening and learning process should focus on assets and capacities, not just needs and deficits. As the authors of this book suggest, what was formerly a sponsor's role would now be much more in line with that of a partner rather than a driver or benefactor or monitor.

There isn't space in this essay to distinguish more carefully between the benefits and limitations of local versus national sponsors. I do think that local sponsors are more likely to already play a more grounded, open-ended role. However, by *external partner* I mean external to the target area (e.g., neighborhood), and thus most sponsors fall into this category.

I would add several things to the starting point given by this book's authors. They refer to "accelerating change," but I suggest that this is less about speed and more about deepening, enhancing, and strengthening the change so that, above all, it can be sustained long enough to be transformative. Relationships are implicit in the Aspen statement, but I think it important to specify that this new approach should enable external partners to build more "authentic" relationships with local actors. These relationships would not be based on positioning for funding or reflecting back whatever the local actor thinks the external partner wants to hear, but on genuine agreement and mutual learning about how to promote meaningful change.

Beyond learning about "capacities and needs," it is crucial that the external partner take time to become deeply immersed in local context—the history, dynamics, trends, and culture that will shape any change efforts. "Working in a neighborhood for a while" does not need to mean just listening. The external partner should also begin to share ideas and

offer connections to knowledge resources elsewhere. The key here is to see what ideas take hold and which local partners are genuinely open to learning and growing. The external partner is also looking for local partners who have initiated and sustained effective partnerships, are engaging residents and other stakeholders in authentic ways, and have demonstrated staying power.

Let's flesh out this new notion of "external partner" a bit. Key elements of this role could include

- Collecting and synthesizing the best available information about what works;
  - Identifying promising local efforts to enhance with knowledge and resources;
  - Building the capacity of individuals and organizations;
  - Facilitating connections between individuals and among organizations, with a special focus on supporting processes that engage residents and other stakeholders of target communities;
  - Supporting strategic thinking, learning and evaluation, and course correction;
  - Endowing local organizations and coalitions with funding pools for operations, capacity building, and learning costs that are hard to fund;
  - Recruiting other local and national external partners and helping to hold them accountable for local capacity building;
  - Supporting succession planning and talent spotting;
  - Supporting the institutionalization of community building principles and practices within local partners, the public sector, and anchor institutions; and
- Focusing aggressively on broader structural and systemic issues, directly and indirectly, through advocacy organizations.

Many of these roles are, of course, already played to great effect by sponsors in the current CCI model. The overarching difference here is the responsive, incremental, open-ended way in which these roles are played, and the relative proportion of attention and priority dedicated to maximizing sustainability. It is not only sponsoring organizations that would have modified roles in the new model. Other key actors as well—intermediaries, technical assistance providers, learning and evaluation partners, local governments, and anchor institutions—would all need to recalibrate their support roles.

Some of the key differences between the structure and relationships of traditional community change initiatives and this alternative model are as follows:

- The change effort begins with emerging activity in the target area, not with a concept developed by an external sponsor.
- The single external sponsor is replaced by multiple external partners.
- The external partner's commitment is open ended and evolving, not time limited.
- No local organization is anointed or created by an external sponsor to unilaterally design and manage the initiative and maintain the primary channel to external partners.
- Comprehensiveness is achieved not by a single organization expanding its activities but through a coalition of organizations, each specializing and deepening areas of strength.

- Technical assistance is ongoing and evolves to match the developmental stage and needs of local actors; it is provided through peer-to-peer exchanges and by local and national providers.

## **EXAMPLES OF AN ALTERNATIVE MODEL ALREADY EXIST**

It is intriguing and comforting to realize that, across the country, efforts to use another approach for community change already exist. Indeed, the decision to pursue a different path and process in these instances can be seen as evidence that other people have, more or less consciously, concluded that there is a better way to catalyze and support community change. All of the examples I have in mind are discussed in this book as members of the CCI family, but upon closer examination I believe they are structured differently in some key ways that offer a way to avoid the pitfalls of initiatives discussed above.

We start with the granddaddy of them all, the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative. Dudley Street is celebrating its 25th anniversary while dozens of initiatives that followed have come and gone. How could an “initiative” have lasted so long? There’s a simple answer: It was not really an initiative. The attempt to launch an “initiative” ended in those very early days when community members rejected the plan that the Riley Foundation and its handpicked social service agencies had developed. The capitulation of the original external sponsor and the radical reformulation of the change effort fundamentally changed the “initiative” into something that was much more organic, open-ended, and locally driven.

Dudley Street remains the only community change effort of which I am aware

to hold elections for all of its governance board members. Dudley Street also remains the only community-based effort to have been granted the powers of eminent domain over the vacant land in its community, which I believe forged a unique level of self-efficacy and empowerment at the community level. And how many “initiatives” can trace the path of their current executive director from a beginning as a youth resident bold enough to vie for a seat on the governance board?

Other community change efforts discussed in this book have similarly diverged from the initiative model. These also happen to be some of the most exciting and often-referenced community change efforts that are currently active: the Harlem Children’s Zone in New York, Lawrence CommunityWorks in Massachusetts, the Market Creek Project in San Diego, and Youngstown Revitalization in Ohio. To my knowledge, none of these efforts has an explicit time frame. While there are sponsors involved in the latter two, their commitments to the local partnership to promote comprehensive change are open-ended, and rather than having a defined and circumscribed initiative plan these efforts build incrementally toward more comprehensive action, gradually adding new strategic components over time.

The Harlem Children’s Zone (HCZ) is especially noteworthy for, among many reasons, its selection as the model to be replicated in the federal government’s place-based educational initiative, Promise Neighborhoods. HCZ is not a time-bound, externally generated initiative but was built incrementally and organically on the emerging successes and learning of a community-based organization, the Rheedlen Centers for Children and Fami-

lies. This raises an intriguing question: Can an organic change effort be replicated through externally sponsored initiatives in other locations? Many people applaud the aspirations of Promise Neighborhoods but have concerns about how fully HCZ can be replicated, including the challenges of replicating its \$70 million annual budget and the dynamic leadership of Geoffrey Canada.

### **WHAT IS LOST WITHOUT AN INITIATIVE STRUCTURE?**

*Does the initiative structure have characteristics and benefits that are essential for promoting community change? To the extent that there are such elements, is there a way to retain them within a more organic, open-ended form?*

Among the benefits listed earlier, the least problematic is the value that an external sponsor brings in terms of broad-based knowledge about what works and what could work. Clearly, this knowledge could be made available to local actors whether or not the external partner is a visible, exclusive sponsor of the effort. The challenging issue here is whether external partners would commit the same levels of resources, attention, and institutional capital if they are not also recognized as the sole or primary sponsor of the effort and, therefore, can claim at least partial credit for its success. Given the questions about CCIs' success and questionable returns on initiative investments raised by this volume's authors, it seems that would-be sponsors should be receptive to other ways of achieving transformative results, even if it means sharing the credit and control.

How about an initiative's ability to quickly focus local attention on an issue

and respond strategically, galvanizing multiple players into collective action to implement a new mode of practice with a burst of time, energy, and resources and saturating the target area with a specific strategy? This may be the toughest element to replace. With the quieter, more incremental and developmental change building process advocated here, there are no shortcuts for attracting quick attention, buy-in, and action. Of course, asking a national foundation to enter a community quietly is like asking an elephant to tiptoe into a tea party. But one of the implications of this argument is that foundations and the public sector need to get much better at doing just that, and the rest of us need to get better at going about business as usual with an external partner in listening and learning mode alongside us.

Let's say that there is no fanfare announcement of a new initiative and no anointed governance entity. How would the change effort build attention and action? Key approaches will involve lifting up ideas that are relevant, compelling, and timely; identifying and promoting both well-known and unknown local actors with a gift for motivating others; using resources as strategically and flexibly as possible to boost and expand activities at key junctures of development; and exposing local players to more mature efforts elsewhere that stimulate inspiration and aspiration.

A final important benefit of the initiative structure is the sponsor's ability to hold local actors accountable for fidelity to a set of principles that undergird the effort and the theory of change. It seems that this role could still be played by a trusted external partner. However, a key shift here would be from reliance on an external entity to

be the accountability monitor to an expectation that fidelity to key principles will be upheld and sustained by local actors.

## LOOKING AHEAD

As described in this volume, the Annie E. Casey Foundation's ten-year Making Connections initiative is drawing to a close. That initiative was the third multicity CCI for the foundation, after New Futures and the Rebuilding Communities Initiative. Much has been accomplished and much has been learned by the foundation and its local partners and by the broader field from these initiatives. The foundation is now engaged in deep reflection, based on these experiences and several others, about how best to continue its mission to promote strong communities that support strong families and children. The first step has been an internal restructuring that integrated the several units that support place-based efforts into a single center within the foundation. The foundation has also affirmed its open-ended commitment to those "civic sites" with which it has a multifaceted and enduring relationship. The next step is to formulate the processes and structures through which the foundation can continue to seek transformative change in communities across the country.

This seems to me an excellent example of the kind of rethinking, restructuring, and repositioning on which all supporters of comprehensive community change must embark. Would-be sponsors of community change efforts are not the only organizations that must rethink their roles. It will be especially important for the knowledge building and dissemination organizations that have played such important roles in shaping our understanding of this

field to also adapt to this new phase of community change implementation. The Aspen Roundtable, PolicyLink, Chapin Hall Center for Children, Center for the Study of Social Policy, and Urban Institute, among several others, will be called upon to help guide, inform, and connect those national and local actors who seek to generate a more organic, sustainable form of community change.

Above all, these organizations must continue to develop ways to systematically assess promising approaches to transformative place-based change, as a way to promote a new level of impact and sustainability through a fundamentally different generation of community change efforts. ■

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## Response Essay

*By Angela Glover Blackwell  
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Community change work requires more than what happens in community. Certainly, producing important innovations in communities is hard, all-consuming work. But developing the innovation, or even vastly improving a community, cannot be the end of the endeavor. The problems in communities represent larger societal ills, and addressing those ills requires analysis, frameworks for change, and new policies. It requires an approach that incorporates both a big-picture vision for change and knowledge of how good work being done at the local level can add up to a large-scale movement. And it requires working for change on multiple levels. For illustration, consider these two examples involving the Fresh

Food Financing Initiative and Promise Neighborhoods Initiative.

## **THE FRESH FOOD FINANCING INITIATIVE**

Pennsylvania's inner city and some underserved rural communities have been emblematic of the "food deserts" that have proliferated across America over the past 40 years: largely bereft of supermarkets and grocery stores that sell the fresh produce, lean meats, and wholesome grains that serve as the cornerstones of good health. Fast-food outlets and convenience stores filled the void by selling fatty, processed, and sugary foods that have been linked to diabetes, heart disease, and other chronic illnesses. In rural areas, sometimes there were no nearby food options at all. Low-income residents of these areas—especially African Americans and Latinos—who often lack access to cars or reliable public transportation, found that a healthy diet was sometimes simply out of reach.

At least, they did until the Fresh Food Financing Initiative was created in 2004. Philadelphia-based nonprofits—the Food Trust, the Reinvestment Fund, and the Greater Philadelphia Urban Affairs Coalition—worked with policy makers, grassroots activists, and grocery industry representatives to design and implement this collaborative, public-private effort to stimulate healthy food retail investment in disadvantaged communities throughout the state. Pennsylvania invested \$30 million in the initiative, leading to \$190 million in total investments. The effort produced 83 healthy food retail projects spanning over 1.5 million square feet of retail space, serving more than 400,000 customers, and creating or preserving more than 5,000 jobs.

In early 2009, PolicyLink sensed that this grocery initiative was, so to speak, low-hanging fruit: a creative, successful effort that combined jobs, healthy food access, and economic development. With the country gripped by the worst financial crisis of the postwar era, and a new federal administration looking for innovation, the stars seemed aligned and the nation ready for promising ideas.

The opening of grocery retailers improves a community's health and its local economy by providing living-wage jobs, attracting significant foot traffic and thereby stimulating consumer demand for a variety of goods and services, and serving as a hub for additional commercial development. With help to cover higher start-up costs in locating, preparing, and acquiring sites, developers can open stores and turn a profit in neighborhoods they had written off as unprofitable. "Why not make Pennsylvania's Fresh Food Financing Initiative the model for a nationwide, federally funded project?" we asked the Food Trust and the Reinvestment Fund.

After an initial meeting in January 2009, the Food Trust, the Reinvestment Fund, and PolicyLink worked together to become strong advocates for a national initiative that could take the Pennsylvania model to underserved areas across the country. We pressed the case at the White House and on Capitol Hill, wrote memos, compiled data, and used computer-generated mapping to demonstrate both the need and the potential of grocery retailing across the nation. The effort paid off in February 2010, when President Obama issued a proposed budget for 2011 that included \$345 million for a Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI) modeled after the Pennsylvania effort. The budget proposal is now being considered by Congress, and

First Lady Michelle Obama is promoting HFFI as one of the pillars of her Let's Move initiative to address childhood obesity.

## THE PROMISE NEIGHBORHOODS INITIATIVE

While we were meeting with representatives from the Food Trust and the Reinvestment Fund, Geoffrey Canada, founder of the Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ), was making a pitch for us to help replicate HCZ nationwide. As a presidential candidate, Barack Obama had pledged to create 20 nationwide initiatives modeled on HCZ, and Canada turned to PolicyLink to help design what this federal Initiative, called Promise Neighborhoods, might look like.

I have worked with Canada on a number of projects over the years and have watched the extraordinary success of HCZ. Throughout 97 blocks in central Harlem, Canada and his amazing team have narrowed the achievement gap between black and white students and are recalibrating the trajectory of young lives that, too often, are squandered and lost in low-income neighborhoods. Supporting children from the womb through college, and providing whatever it takes to overcome barriers to a child's successful development—child care, better schools, tutoring, health clinics, counseling and adult literacy programs for parents—the HCZ is a perfect distillation of what has worked for generations in middle-class neighborhoods to create broad opportunity for all.

But developing the policy framework for Promise Neighborhoods required more than a successful model; it required identification of core principles, hard data, tools to evaluate the program, and a process for selecting and supporting sites,

which we compiled to inform the policy discussions.

The idea continued to gain momentum, with President Obama including \$10 million in seed money in his 2010 budget. In November 2009, to capture demand for the initiative and help local actors learn what successful implementation would require, HCZ and PolicyLink sponsored a two-day conference attended by U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, other high-level White House officials, and more than 1,500 nonprofit, community, government, and philanthropic leaders. The workshops focused on critical issues in developing local initiatives, including strategic planning, creating collaborations, evaluating programs, fund-raising, engaging the community, and developing a pipeline of best-practice programs.

PolicyLink and our partners (HCZ, the Center for the Study of Social Policy, and Child Trends) also produced two research papers to help inform community building efforts modeled on HCZ. The first, *Focusing on Results in Promise Neighborhoods: Recommendations for the Federal Initiative*, explains how a focus on results would contribute to the Promise Neighborhoods Initiative, from the planning and design phase through start-up activities, program implementation, and evaluation. The second, *Outcomes and Indicators for Children: An Analysis to Inform Discussions about Promise Neighborhoods*, synthesizes research on the factors that contribute to children's healthy development, academic success, and college graduation.

Ultimately, the President's 2011 budget proposal for the Department of Education included \$210 million for the Promise Neighborhoods program, added to the \$10 million already allotted for planning grants in fiscal year 2010.

For change to endure there must be a way to get to a transformative, strategic melding of the wide-angle and zoom views of community building. This is the role played by PolicyLink and other national institutions that are as committed to community-level change as any local agency. Having spent nearly a quarter century working at community change—as an organizer, public-interest lawyer, the founder of a local community building intermediary, and senior vice president of a large national foundation—I had come to recognize, as the authors of this volume note, the fragmented nature of antipov-erty work across the country. There is a lot of remarkable community-change work going on throughout the nation, but too often it occurs in piecemeal fashion. Efforts are isolated from one another, with nothing to connect the work, build momentum, and fashion a movement. And nothing short of a movement will achieve the goals we seek; change must happen at scale and be bolstered by national recognition and support.

Organizations like PolicyLink support this process by sifting through the mountains of information, experiences, and data that compose the nationwide patchwork quilt of community change efforts to showcase the most effective practices, campaigns, and policies. We use that information like a multipurpose tool, to break down the silos that often encase community building institutions and to build bridges linking housing to education to public health to workforce training to transportation and more. Ultimately, we connect all of those elements to a big vision for change. The rather delicate balancing act we have tried to carve out for ourselves at PolicyLink is to reimagine America without reinventing the wheel, to

lift up what works in one community as a means of shining a light on the path from hope to change in another. At PolicyLink, we call that path equity. What is equity? It means just and fair inclusion in a society in which all can participate and prosper. Without the principles of equity to guide us through this complicated and congested field of research and policy prescriptions, we would be rudderless.

This volume is powerful as it disaggregates the work of local change agents and offers insights into what works and what doesn't. But to achieve the goal of community change we will have to have as our goal societal change, and it takes many actors and organizations, operating on many levels, to achieve that goal. First and foremost, we must "make no small plans," as the architect Daniel Burnham famously said, for "they have no magic to stir men's blood." ■

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## Response Essay

*By Margery Austin Turner  
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Community change initiatives recognize that place matters in the lives of families and children. Their ultimate goal is not simply to make neighborhoods more attractive, or affluent, or amenity rich, but to improve the well-being of residents. Unfortunately, our understanding of *how* neighborhoods actually function to support low-income families and improve their life chances is still woefully limited. Researchers and practitioners need to think harder and learn more about the dynamic mechanisms through which neighborhood-based investments can improve outcomes for

low-income families, especially given the fact that families move a lot.

This essay comments on the dynamics of neighborhood distress and explores several alternative “models” of constructive (rather than destructive) neighborhood functioning, suggesting implications for policy and practice in the field of community change.<sup>1</sup>

## **DYNAMICS OF NEIGHBORHOOD DISTRESS**

Decades of observation and analysis provide a rich understanding of the dynamic processes of neighborhood disinvestment and distress, and the consequences for low-income (mostly minority) families. First, racial prejudice and discrimination historically excluded blacks and other minorities from neighborhoods that offer high-quality housing, schools, and other public services and deprived predominantly minority neighborhoods of essential public services and private investments. These market and policy distortions fueled the geographic concentration of poverty and the severe distress of very high-poverty neighborhoods. As Massey and Denton demonstrated in *American Apartheid* (1993), discriminatory policies and practices confining urban blacks—for whom the incidence of poverty was markedly higher than for whites—to a limited selection of city neighborhoods produced much higher poverty rates than in white neighborhoods.

Subsequent job losses and rising unemployment pushed poverty and isolation in many central-city black neighborhoods even higher. Nonpoor households under-

standably fled, further raising the poverty rate. Neighborhoods where poverty is widespread and institutional supports are lacking also suffer from the loss of social capital and informal supports. And living in these profoundly poor neighborhoods seriously undermines people’s well-being and long-term life chances.

The fundamental drivers behind this tragic story aren’t found within the boundaries of the affected communities. Severe distress within a neighborhood ultimately stems from the interaction of market forces and public policies at the regional level, which constrain opportunities for poor minorities and disinvest from the neighborhoods in which they live. Moreover, neighborhood distress is a dynamic process, sustained by the inflow of poor minorities (who have few other alternatives) and the outflow of nonpoor households (seeking better environments).

Today, although blacks and other minorities are less starkly segregated than in the past, virtually all high-poverty neighborhoods are majority-minority. Poor white households are much more geographically dispersed than poor black or Latino households.

## **ALTERNATIVE VISIONS FOR “HIGH-PERFORMING” NEIGHBORHOODS**

Most community change initiatives reflect an implicit vision that a neighborhood should function as an “incubator” for its residents, especially those who are poor or otherwise vulnerable. Investments in neighborhood programs and services will provide the supports that low-income

1. This paper draws heavily on a recent analysis of family mobility and neighborhood change in the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s Making Connections initiative (Coulton, Theodos, & Turner, 2009) as well as a recent paper on “place-conscious” antipoverty policy (Pastor & Turner, 2010). Both publications provide more detailed evidence and references.

families need to thrive as well as the amenities that make them want to remain as their circumstances improve. Simultaneous investments in community building will strengthen social capital and civic capacity, further enhancing the well-being of individual residents and the vitality of the neighborhood. Gradual improvements in well-being among residents will reduce neighborhood poverty and distress levels.

Some policy makers and practitioners argue that this vision can't realistically be achieved without the influx of some middle- or upper-income residents. According to this view, neither markets nor public agencies can be relied upon to deliver high-quality services and amenities to a mostly poor, minority community. In effect, poor minorities still lack the political and economic power to overcome entrenched patterns of discrimination. Furthermore, income-mixing advocates argue that low-income residents benefit from the networks and norms that higher-income households bring to a neighborhood; in that sense, higher-income newcomers are thought to strengthen the community's social capital.

The income-mixing argument has generated plenty of debate. Big questions remain about whether upper-income newcomers really do attract the services and amenities that low-income families need, such as affordable grocery stores and high-performing public schools. The jury is still out on whether residents enjoy meaningful, constructive interactions across lines of class (and sometimes race). And some evidence points to the risk that higher-income residents push up housing prices and rents, ultimately displacing low-income families from the improving neighborhood.

Income mixing aside, however, the incubator vision doesn't fully address the realities of residential mobility. About 12 percent of the U.S. population moves to a new address each year, and mobility rates are higher among low-income households and renters. As a result, distressed neighborhoods frequently experience rates of mobility that exceed the national average. In the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Making Connections initiative, neighborhood residents were surveyed at three-year intervals to track changes in family and community well-being. Between the first and second survey periods, more than half (57 percent) of households living in ten target neighborhoods left their original housing units.<sup>2</sup> Three-year mobility rates ranged from a low of 43 percent (in San Antonio) to a high of 65 percent (in Milwaukee). And in all but two neighborhoods, more than half the households had moved. As a consequence, more than half the neighborhood residents at any point in time were relative newcomers.

Residential mobility can reflect positive changes in a family's circumstances, such as buying a home for the first time, moving to be close to a new job, or trading up to a larger or better-quality house or apartment. But mobility also can be a symptom of instability and insecurity, with many low-income households making short-distance moves because of problems with landlords, creditors, or housing conditions. Similarly, staying in place sometimes reflects a family's security, satisfaction, and stability with its home and neighborhood surroundings, but in other cases may mean that a family lacks the resources to move to better housing or to a preferred neighborhood.

2. Some of these movers remained within the boundaries of the neighborhood, changing their address but not neighborhood.

High levels of mobility complicate the mechanisms that are intended to improve outcomes in an incubator neighborhood. Many families may move before they've had time to benefit fully from neighborhood-based services and supports. And if they do benefit from services delivered in the neighborhood, the positive consequences may occur in some other neighborhood. For example, suppose a terrific preschool program serves a big share of a neighborhood's youngsters, significantly boosting their school readiness. By the time a payoff is measured in terms of third-grade reading scores, at least half these children will live somewhere else and half the neighborhood's third-graders will arrive without benefit of the preschool program. This dynamic helps explain why the Jobs-Plus Initiative could be so successful in boosting individual employment and income without generating any measurable change in neighborhood conditions.

High rates of turnover also may undermine community building efforts. If neighborhood newcomers aren't constantly drawn into neighborhood associations, social networks, and civic activities, a community's leadership may represent only the relatively small segment of the population that remains in place over time. And if efforts to attract higher-income households succeed, a neighborhood could appear to be improving dramatically when, in fact, low-income residents are realizing no benefit and may even be destabilized and displaced by rising housing costs.

What about an alternative vision: that neighborhoods can serve not as incubators but as launch pads for their residents? Like an incubator neighborhood, a launch pad offers needed services and supports,

enabling residents to advance economically. But as residents achieve greater economic security, they move on to more desirable neighborhoods and are replaced by a new cohort of needy households. Launch pad neighborhoods would experience high mobility, and, even though many residents make significant individual progress, the neighborhood as a whole would not show any improvement on indicators such as employment, income, or wealth. Past research suggests that neighborhoods that serve as entry points for successive waves of immigrants may function this way, and it may be fruitful to view these places as highly successful neighborhoods even though they remain very poor over time.

It's also possible that a neighborhood might perform quite well as a comfort zone—neither incubating nor launching but also not undermining family well-being or damaging children's prospects for the future. Such neighborhoods would provide safety, affordable housing, and needed cultural and social supports for families struggling to get by under difficult economic circumstances. Adult residents might not achieve significant gains economically, but if the neighborhood provided a safe and stable environment for families, outcomes for the next generation could be positive.

## **IMPLICATIONS FOR ACTION**

The alternative models of well-functioning neighborhoods sketched here are obviously stylized and oversimplified. No neighborhood works one way all the time or for all its residents. But recognizing the potential impact of mobility and imagining multiple visions of successful neighborhood performance offer

several insights for policy and practice, as follows.

***Neighborhood-based programs and services for residents should recognize that few families stay put.*** Limiting participation to the people who live within a neighborhood's defined boundaries will truncate services for many and may severely reduce programs' effectiveness. High-quality preschool programs, adult education, employment training, financial counseling, and after-school tutoring, for example, are less likely to achieve their full potential for those who only participate for a short time or leave in the middle of a planned intervention.

One possible strategy for addressing this problem is to continue providing services to participants who leave the neighborhood, essentially blurring the importance of neighborhood boundary lines. Another is to network with effective programs in other neighborhoods and help residents transfer to these programs when they move. In either case, neighborhood-based programs should monitor turnover among their participants and prepare for continuous inflow of previously unserved residents from other neighborhoods. Efforts to measure outcomes for participants should take into account how long someone has actually received services.

***Investments in affordable housing should acknowledge and address both the positive and negative potential of mobility.*** Much of the mobility among low-income households reflects instability: Families have problems with the landlord, or the quality of their apartment deteriorates, or they can't afford the rent, or they are evicted (possibly because the landlord is foreclosed upon). Neighborhood service

providers who work with vulnerable families could, potentially, help prevent some of this unproductive churning, especially if resources were available for short-term housing assistance.

For example, an employment counselor working with a young mother might learn from her that her latest layoff has made it impossible to pay the rent and she is planning to move in with her sister's family until she gets a new job. A short-term rent subsidy (a few hundred dollars for a month or two) would enable the family to stay in place—and the children to remain in their preschool program—while the mother continues to work with her employment counselor.

Proponents of the incubator model typically argue that when neighborhood conditions improve, families will *want* to stay in place, even if their individual circumstances improve, and thus mobility rates will decline. But if a neighborhood improves enough to attract nonpoor families, property values and rents will rise, and low-income residents may not be able to remain. The solution to this challenge is relatively straightforward, but not inexpensive. It requires the intentional preservation of affordable housing from the very first day of a transformation initiative, along with funding to help residents (especially homeowners) improve the quality of their housing without leaving the neighborhood.

But community change practitioners should embrace mobility when it represents a positive step for a family. If some of the low-cost (and probably low-quality) housing in a neighborhood has to be demolished as part of the revitalization plan, helping residents choose and move to opportunity-rich neighborhoods should be part of the vision. Neighborhood-based

housing counseling programs should support and assist families that want to make up-and-out moves as well as those that want to stay in place. If housing and neighborhood quality improve for original residents of a distressed neighborhood, we should count it as a success, whether it happened inside the boundaries of the neighborhood or elsewhere.

***Not everything that families need has to be delivered within the neighborhood's boundaries.*** Community-based initiatives can also strengthen ties to high-quality services and supports located elsewhere. Again, this reflects some blurring of neighborhood boundary lines and an emphasis on individual choice. Magnet and charter schools are examples of strategies for loosening the connection between residential location and access to opportunity. If a community change initiative aims to improve school quality for neighborhood children, it could provide information and counseling about high-quality programs throughout the school district at the same time that it works to improve the quality of neighborhood schools. Similarly, it may make more sense for neighborhood-based programs to connect residents to the most effective job-training programs in the region rather than trying to deliver training within the boundaries of the neighborhood.

***Community builders should think explicitly about how to engage the continuous flow of newcomers and whether to sustain connections with residents who move out.*** Engaging low-income residents in social and civic activities is a difficult undertaking, made all the more challenging if roughly half the residents move away and are replaced by newcomers ev-

ery three years. Given the realities of residential mobility, community building efforts have to include intentional outreach to welcome and engage newcomers. Civic and community organizations might want to begin thinking in new ways about how to sustain connections with participants who move away from the neighborhood. The Lawrence CommunityWorks initiative has developed a network model that nurtures and sustains loose but meaningful relationships among families currently living both inside and outside the primary target neighborhood.

We also have to acknowledge the heightened challenge and importance of community building in neighborhoods where newcomers differ, either ethnically or economically, from the current population. This includes neighborhoods experiencing an inflow of foreign-born immigrants for the first time as well as neighborhoods that are beginning to attract higher-income residents. Figuring out how to engage the newcomers, connect them to longer-term residents, identify new and shared priorities for the community, and resolve miscommunications and tensions are critical steps in overcoming the legacies of segregation and exclusion in American cities and realizing the benefits of diversity.

***Too often, those of us working to reverse the terrible legacy of segregation and poverty concentration confront each other with either/or choices about how best to proceed: neighborhood revitalization versus mobility assistance; income mixing versus community building; place-based investments versus regional systems change; incubators versus launch pads.*** But these choices—and the arguments surrounding them—ultimately detract

from our effectiveness. Perhaps a better understanding of the prevalence of residential mobility, the differing reasons families move, and the profound effects of mobility patterns on neighborhood outcomes can lead us to a more nuanced, hybrid vision of neighborhoods that perform well through multiple mechanisms, enhancing quality of life and life chances in different ways for residents with differing needs and preferences.

Such a neighborhood would offer services and amenities that simultaneously help low-income people get ahead and attract nonpoor residents—things like great schools, high-quality grocery stores, and safe parks. It would also connect residents to services, supports, and opportunities outside neighborhood boundaries, such as a bilingual magnet school or a program to train and place workers in “green” jobs throughout the region. Residents would be bound together by social networks that strengthen individual and community well-being, building relationships across lines of class and race. But they would also have access to choices and opportunities for advancement in the larger regional economy.

Many low- and moderate-income families would choose to stay in this neighborhood as they progressed toward greater economic security, and investments in affordable housing would enable them to do so. But for other successful families who choose to move, mobility counseling and housing search assistance would help them make the most of the opportunity while also encouraging them to maintain their relationships with old neighbors. Services targeted to the neighborhood’s most vulnerable households would help reduce instability and residential churning. And newcomers of all income levels would be

welcomed and drawn into community activities and relationships. ■

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## Response Essay

*By Charles Bruner  
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The community change initiatives described in this volume, spanning 1990 to 2010, represent a significant chapter in this country’s overall efforts to improve the life prospects of residents in disadvantaged neighborhoods. It is important, however, to place the community change initiatives of the past two decades in the context of earlier efforts, especially the War on Poverty and Great Society efforts of the 1960s. Looking backward as well as forward helps address four questions that are pertinent to the next round of community change initiatives:

- Are place-based approaches needed to close gaps and inequities?
- Are there different worldviews that must be addressed and resolved?
- Are comprehensive community initiatives necessary to address and resolve them?
- What could the next iteration of initiatives do better?

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The War on Poverty and Great Society efforts are an important backdrop to the later iteration of community initiatives because they took on issues of race, class, and power more squarely and explicitly. Although some of the Office of Economic Opportunity’s antipoverty programs from

the 1960s continue today—including Head Start and the Community Action Agency administrative structure—many place-based efforts to change communities were short-lived because they failed to successfully navigate those issues.

The Johnson administration’s War on Poverty and Great Society efforts, established during the civil rights movement, emphasized the “maximum feasible participation” of people living within distressed neighborhoods and communities. Further, by establishing community action agencies as an organizational structure for community building investments and Model Cities as a flagship program, the federal government often bypassed state and local governmental structures.

Daniel Patrick Moynihan, an Undersecretary of Labor during the start of this federal activity, believed that this approach produced unacceptable turmoil in many communities and dubbed the approach “Maximum Feasible Misunderstanding.” While his conclusion was widely critiqued at the time and to this day, federal efforts ultimately moved away from resident engagement and organizing. Social scientists have since argued that the problem lay with the incomplete application of resident engagement, with efforts that co-opted resident leadership, or with differences between community betterment and community empowerment. Questions remain, however, about what the concepts of *maximum*, *feasible*, and *participation* really mean, and those meanings are crucial for funders and designers of community change initiatives.

For the most part, comprehensive community initiatives of the past two decades did not place issues of power imbalance, institutional racism, and social equity front and center in their work. They

used other language: strengthening “authentic demand,” facilitating “shared decision making,” catalyzing “community capacity building,” and establishing “family-centered and ecological, asset-based service systems.” They generally sought a collaborative approach with community and state power holders, as well as people within the neighborhoods and communities they targeted, based on some overarching vision that did not raise underlying issues of race, class, and power. They often viewed themselves as providing a trusted bridge between the two worlds.

In the absence of hard evidence of success from the comprehensive community initiatives of the 1990s, it might be comfortable to conclude that the focus on community building was misplaced. Instead, as Moynihan did in the 1960s, we could argue that employment or education initiatives—efforts that enable more residents to buy into the American dream—are better ways to close the gaps that exist in places. To do so, however, would be to risk repeating and not learning from the community building efforts of both the 1960s and 1990s.

## **ARE PLACE-BASED STRATEGIES NEEDED TO CLOSE GAPS AND INEQUITIES?**

Much has been written about the globalization of the economy and its professional community, with community identity increasingly defined by professional and associational ties that are not geographically bound. This is a view largely from the top, however.

The concentration of disadvantage and distress remains geographic, and it is evident in the profound differences in outcomes experienced by low-income chil-

dren and children of color across a range of health, safety, social, educational, and economic outcomes. An analysis by the Child & Family Policy Center (Bruner et al., 2007), for example, highlights two types of geographic places with special relevance for the conversation about community change: places with high rates of “child-raising vulnerability” and places with low rates. Using the 2000 U.S. Census, researchers categorized all Census tracts in the United States according to ten indicators of vulnerability. The more vulnerable tracts have profoundly different social, education, income, and wealth characteristics, with rates of adverse child and family outcomes from two to eight times greater in high-vulnerability Census tracts than in low-vulnerability ones. The analysis also revealed sharp racial and ethnic segregation. Over 80 percent of residents in places with low-vulnerability rates are non-Hispanic whites, while over 80 percent in places with high rates of vulnerability are African American, Hispanic, Asian or Pacific Islander, or Native American.

Similarly, *The Clustering of America* (Weiss, 1988) identified a number of geographic enclaves that represent distinct political, social, and economic cultures. While there may be a great deal of mobility within these enclaves, there is much less across them. Thus, whether or not community building initiatives are the solution, at a minimum the residents of these geographic areas must be the disproportionate focus of attention.

### **ARE THERE DIFFERENT WORLDVIEWS THAT MUST BE ADDRESSED AND RESOLVED?**

**Absolutely.** Opinion research shows that the vast majority of white Americans

would like to put issues of racial discrimination behind; they articulate the need for an egalitarian, postracial society and nondiscriminatory policies. Certainly, the election of President Barack Obama was evidence of shifts in white America’s attitudes toward issues of race.

People of color, however, see the world very differently; they see themselves exposed to the vestiges of formal discrimination every day in the form of institutional racism and an unwillingness by white society to create real egalitarianism. While Obama may be the president, it is still white America that holds most of the nation’s wealth and power.

It seems important to understand and reconcile the differences in worldviews, especially since most of the comprehensive community initiatives described in this volume sought to work both with neighborhood residents and with leaders outside the neighborhoods that controlled funding and allocation decisions. Rarely, however, did community change initiatives explicitly commit to reconciling competing views. Differences in worldview were often left unspoken, with initiative managers navigating around them rather than raising them and providing a forum for resolution. The unresolved questions include matters of legitimate community leadership, resident participation and decision making, roles for professional “experts,” accountability, racism and classism, discrimination, and personal initiative and responsibility.

In addition, power holders in community change initiatives often enforced a higher standard of legitimacy for neighborhood resident leaders than for themselves. This sometimes led them to nurture the leaders who bought into the initiative’s goals rather than those who

held their own views, and to dismiss some resident leaders as biased or self-promoting while not challenging power holders who were just as potentially biased or self-promoting.

Identifying and addressing these differences can be painful, explosive, and counterproductive if there is no structure and process for moving forward. The question for community initiatives, however, is whether it is possible to achieve success at all without identifying and resolving them.

### **ARE COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY INITIATIVES NECESSARY?**

There are options for improving the lives of residents in disinvested neighborhoods that do not entail comprehensive community building. In “The Myth of Community Development” (1994), Nicholas Lehman argues for giving residents a way out of these disinvested communities, not trying to rebuild them. There continue to be efforts to create functional oases within neighborhoods that provide avenues for upward mobility—a charter school to improve educational opportunity, a youth engagement program to serving disconnected youth, an early childhood initiative to get children to school healthy and equipped for success, a pipeline initiative to link residents with regional job opportunities, and so on—and these efforts often do provide upward mobility for some participants.

At the same time, these approaches usually do not set their sights on closing the gap in health, education, income, and wealth outcomes on a neighborhood level rather than an individual level.

If we hope to improve the collective lives of people who live in disinvested

neighborhoods, I do **not** know of any answer that does not involve community building, with attention to human, social, physical, and economic capital development. Moreover, there are some transformations that only comprehensive community initiatives can help to achieve. Small-scale, targeted interventions in these neighborhoods may succeed in helping select residents grow (and perhaps escape the neighborhood), but these successes may simply be the result of getting scarce resources to these residents and displacing the disadvantage to others. Targeted initiatives may provide opportunities for outward mobility but create a cognitive dissonance as those who can move up must choose whether to advance at the expense of leaving their relatives, friends, and social ties behind. And simply investing in services (generally provided by professionals from outside the neighborhood), and not in the support and development of human and social capital within disinvested neighborhoods, runs the risk of perpetuating the self-defeating myth that residents of these neighborhoods cannot contribute to their own change.

Alternatively, comprehensive community initiatives may help create the critical mass or tipping point needed for community growth that does not isolate successful residents but, instead, gives them opportunities to lead and to grow the community itself. Comprehensive community initiatives offer opportunities to identify what investments are needed to rebuild neighborhoods, thereby answering questions of scale, community impact, and returns on investment that Peter Edelman and Beryl Radin (1991), and Michael Porter (1995) have raised. And community change initiatives can generate the tools

and evidence of success that the advocacy community needs to transcend individually focused reform strategies and speak to a larger state and national role in community building—one that begins to address our nation’s larger geographic imbalances in opportunity and distress.

In short, my answer is to consider not whether we need a new round of comprehensive community initiatives but whether we can learn from the experiences of prior rounds to develop a truly improved strategy for achieving success.

### **WHAT COULD THE NEXT ITERATION OF INITIATIVES DO BETTER?**

***Be frank with residents and power holders about what is on the table, and don’t expand or restructure without agreement.*** In their eagerness to start initiatives, funders often embrace a broad vision for success that skirts issues of power and control. The rhetorical loftiness leaves people in the neighborhoods and the larger community with different impressions of what is on the table, where decision-making authority lies, and how the concepts behind “maximum feasible participation” might be defined. When funders, their technical assistance providers, and project managers discover these points of difference and dissension, they may rework their theories, expectations, and goals—usually to maintain the involvement of community authority structures and to further educate resident leaders (or find a new set of leaders).

Being clearer in the beginning would place the initiative on more solid ground and make it easier to address subsequent issues of race, class, and power as they emerge.

***Ensure maximum feasible participation of the residents’ worldview in overall initiative planning, oversight, and technical assistance.*** Foundations and their grantee organizations have many smart staff dedicated to comprehensive community initiatives and to producing results. Usually, however, the people ultimately in charge of initiatives have a particular worldview that comes from being successful in the dominant culture. They may emphasize resident participation at the community level, but their own planning and decision-making processes for allocating resources, offering technical assistance, and revising strategies often are not as directly informed by people who share neighborhood residents’ worldviews.

Initiative developers may view themselves as “catalytic” agents but they also need to undergo change and be changed by the process as they work within communities. Restructuring the overall management of comprehensive community initiatives to incorporate resident voices in planning and decision-making would be a step toward ensuring that those worldviews are solicited and heard—as well as modeling what the initiative itself is trying to achieve.

***Establish outcome expectations commensurate with available resources.*** The emphasis on results accountability in all aspects of grant-making and public funding for social programs has grown.

By their nature, comprehensive community initiatives aim to affect important child and family outcomes on multiple levels—ultimately on a place and population as well as on the individual level. The amount of investment needed to transform disinvested communities—in terms of developing human, social, physical, and eco-

conomic capital—is to some extent calculable simply by examining the gaps in outcomes, the changes needed, and the logical investments in closing them. The societal costs of doing nothing are similarly calculable. If the goal is to achieve such transformation, initiatives need to commit to securing the investments necessary to achieve their goals and, from the outset, pay attention to the economic scope of their undertaking. If their ability to commit resources is circumscribed, that should be acknowledged and the goals reduced accordingly.

***Focus on multiple avenues for community leaders' growth and development.*** Inevitably, comprehensive community initiatives seek to strengthen political leadership in the community. Many have sought to identify and nurture new leaders by focusing on the initiative's needs for participation in planning, community education, and "authentic" community representation. This tends to generate leadership programs, board recruitment, and training efforts. But the practice of seeking a single, community-wide type of leadership and representation in disinvested neighborhoods ignores the fact that leaders generally emerge organically, after first playing a supportive or contributing role.

Affluent communities rarely have leaders that combine charisma, management expertise, and the ability to mobilize multiple constituencies—the talents of Mother Teresa, Machiavelli, and a certified public accountant. Instead, they provide multiple avenues and channels for individuals to exert effort, take on new roles and responsibilities, and gain credit and credibility in their own areas of interest and spheres of influence.

To expect or require individuals from disinvested neighborhoods to have all

these leadership attributes is both unrealistic and unfair. The same multiple avenues for taking on leadership roles need to exist in disinvested communities as they do in affluent ones.

Even if one finds an individual from the community with a talent for community-wide leadership, putting that person in a governance structure without letting him or her first acquire a representational base within the community denies the leader part of his or her legitimacy. Leadership comes through opportunity, not training. It requires explicit efforts to establish multiple opportunities for leadership, particularly through mutual assistance and self-help groups, and the time and space for new leaders to emerge.

***Be partners in the sense of a marriage and not a business relationship.*** Despite the long time frames and protestations of partnership by some community change initiatives, by definition initiatives eventually end. The funder may provide help developing a sustainability plan, but responsibility for sustaining the work ultimately rests with the grantee. If funders of community initiatives are to be more than catalysts and actually expect to be changed by the process, however, marriage is a better analogy than a business partnership. This does not mean that there cannot be divorces; there likely will be. It does mean that each of the partners has certain rights and responsibilities that involve accepting and working out differences and continuing to grow and develop together.

***Work locally, advocate globally.*** Low-income communities have innate human capital and the ability to develop social capital if given the time, space, and opportunity to do so. By definition, however, the

disinvested communities that are subject to comprehensive community initiatives lack adequate economic capital needed to build physical, human, and social capital.

At the state and federal levels, funding and taxing streams for education, economic development, and infrastructure disproportionately benefit the geographic “haves” and disadvantage the “have-nots.” (Programs to ameliorate poverty or provide for social control are disproportionately directed to residents of disinvested communities, but the employment and economic opportunities they generate often go to professionals outside the neighborhoods.) If America is to become more economically egalitarian, advocacy will be needed at all levels of government. Investment in state and federal public education and advocacy is also needed to create shared power beyond the community level.

Undoubtedly, some people who have worked in comprehensive community initiatives will take issue with some of these observations and recommendations. They may have tried some of these approaches and failed or tried other approaches that achieved equivalent ends. Hopefully, however, they will be stimulated in some

way that causes self-reflection. I know that I learn most when I am challenged, even when it is uncomfortable.

My commentary offers more unresolved questions than answers, even tentative ones. I believe, however, that our country needs a new round of comprehensive community initiatives that start with an honest reflection of what worked and what didn't in the past—particularly what worked and what didn't in securing “maximum feasible participation.”

We cannot change communities for the better in spite of the people who live there. We cannot change communities for the better by ignoring the imbalances of power and the different worldviews that exist. We cannot change communities without a willingness and pressure to share some of the power that we hold.

Comprehensive community building holds a moral imperative for at least a critical mass of advocates and scholars, but we need to learn from the past in shaping the future. If, in outcome accountability terms, “trying hard is not good enough,” then we professional planners of comprehensive community initiatives must work to change our current grade of “incomplete” to at least a passing mark. ■

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## Concluding Message

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By Anne C. Kubisch, Patricia Auspos,  
Prudence Brown, and Tom Dewar

The contributors to this volume call for a fundamental shift in the way that stakeholders in this field think about efforts to promote community change. To achieve significant improvements in community outcomes, we must move beyond bounded, time-limited initiatives toward more open-ended approaches that seek opportunities to align and leverage assets in the context of a community's broader ecology. We must emphasize developing capacities that will position a community strategically over time to take effective action, build resources, make connections, and sustain an ongoing process of community improvement on an ever-widening number of fronts. We must attend as much to the social and political dimensions of the change process as to the technical and programmatic dimensions.

As Thomas Burns writes in his commentary, we need to move the field toward a different approach that looks more like “long-term democratic institution building.” This means that the field should “shift from well-bounded interventions to partnership building strategies aimed at establishing platforms of financial and technical support that are anchored within a community and built to last.”

The first steps toward this broader community change agenda began in the 1990s when the two core guiding principles of comprehensiveness and community building gained prominence in CCIs. A comprehensive lens frees practitioners from narrow programmatic thinking and appreciates interactions in a *complex* community system. A community building approach embraces a wide array of actors in an *open* community system that allows stakeholders to participate in many different ways at different times depending on circumstances.

The mistake of the intervening decades has been to try to put boundaries around those concepts and train them on prespecified outcomes. We have trouble tolerating the discomfort associated with not being certain at the start about our strategies and results. As a result, we keep trying to rationalize, simplify, and force linearity on the complexity of the community change process. As

Mark Joseph explains in his commentary, there are advantages in structuring certain interventions as “initiatives” because they can “strategically jump-start local action.” Or, they might be useful if they are focused on a narrow and specific goal, such as increasing the high school graduation rate in a target school. But, as Joseph concludes, if the goal is changing social and economic conditions in a community, the field must transition “to a more organic, open-ended, internally championed, and sustained mode of operating.”

We have to give up the idea that putting comforting boundaries on neighborhoods, time periods, outcomes, and investments—or merely ratcheting up accountability for results—will make community change more likely to happen. Instead, we need to increase our comfort level with the notion of developing many different vehicles through which to align people and organizations to promote change. This means that we should emphasize helping individuals and institutions to be good diagnosticians, become entrepreneurial, and identify strategic action points that have the potential to build momentum. These actors must make connections across activities and build alliances with partners. They need to learn as they go and incorporate lessons into the next stage of work. And they need to have the power, trust, and legitimacy to take leadership and hold collaborators accountable.

Thus, community change work calls for managing the tension between intentionality and complexity. As this volume has emphasized, leaders of community change efforts must commit to a direction and act intentionally in order to produce outcomes. At the same time, they must be prepared for the unpredictable and emerging nature of how community change occurs:

*Control is replaced by a toleration of ambiguity and the “can-do” mentality of “making things happen” is modified by an attitude that is simultaneously visionary and responsive to the unpredictable unfolding of events. The successful social innovator is, intentionally or not, a part of the dynamics of transformation rather than the heroic figure leading the charge. . . . Social activists can use the insights that come from complexity theory to increase the likelihood of success. Not guarantee success. There are no guarantees, no certainties. . . . We’re about tipping the scales in favour of successful social innovations in the face of seemingly overwhelming odds. (Westley, Zimmerman, & Patton, 2006)*

During the past two decades, we have learned many lessons that can serve as our building blocks for this new approach to place-based work, whether the goal is broad community change or a more focused set of programmatic outcomes. This volume identifies three major categories of lessons: internal alignment and management; external alignment and brokering; and evaluating, learning, and adapting along the way. These are the three legs that stabilize the stool of inten-

tional but unpredictable community change. They are the disciplining mechanisms that permit the work to be maximally effective but still proceed in the only way that it can: organically, responsively, entrepreneurially, and developmentally.

## **Internal Alignment and Effective Management**

Patricia Auspos states that “the efforts that progress most smoothly have some internal consistency in how to approach the work—that is, some core values or philosophy or an overarching goal that guides practice and decision-making and helps to maintain focus and momentum.” These focus points can differ from place to place. They typically revolve around one of four things: a clear organizational or community mission; a particular programmatic outcome; a commitment to building capacity in the community; or a community building value such as resident ownership of the process. The focal point then provides a keel that stabilizes all decision-making, and, as Mark Joseph states, progress depends on whether “fidelity to key principles will be upheld and sustained by local actors.” Doris Koo describes two cases where the process for determining those guiding concepts was the key to success, where “investing significant time and achieving trust made it possible to build a common vision and core values, two fundamental, transformative factors.”

If there are too many of these focal points—a strong temptation when many stakeholders are involved—then programmatic, governance, and management structures are diffused and may even compete with each other. The ideal number of core drivers could well be just one.

General goals must be agreed on up front and then filled in as the work unfolds. Early signs of progress also need to be decided quickly in order to gain credibility and momentum. Interim and longer-term outcomes are the hardest part of the work. As Prudence Brown states, “It is often in the process of defining both short- and longer-term outcomes and identifying how they will be measured that stakeholders ultimately agree upon the nature of the work and their own roles in it.” This does not happen at the beginning; it evolves as experience is gained, capacity is built, and working relationships mature. Interestingly, as Brown also notes, evaluation often is the vehicle through which these issues are clarified: “The development of an evaluation framework can engage key stakeholders, discipline strategic thinking, specify accountabilities, and establish shared expectations and realistic timelines.” It is important to have enough of a theory of change to get started and to know whether progress is occurring, but not so fixed an agenda that it can’t be adapted with experience.

Creating high-quality tracking, accountability, and learning mechanisms is critical in broad-based, multipartner community change efforts. Because the work is dispersed across various governance and implementing entities, there

is often no central place where the responsibility for success or failure can be located. Moreover, as Robert J. O'Neill Jr. and Ron Carlee put it, "So many individuals and groups today can veto public decisions that it sometimes becomes impossible to know who can say yes." (The exceptions are when the work is centrally managed by what Alan Okagaki calls a "big dog," a single high-capacity institution in a community.)

Lessons have been learned on this front that we can apply to next-generation work. For example, Hallie Preskill describes "shared measurement platforms" and "comparative performance systems," and Frank Farrow describes how to establish the tools and processes for "results management." Both focus on collecting performance data and creating mechanisms for key stakeholders to review the data regularly and analyze the performance vis-à-vis expected outcomes. As Farrow concludes, "To the mantra that community change is about 'relationships, relationships, relationships,' these managers add, 'but it doesn't count unless it's *also* about results.'"

Capacity is key. The lack of capacity in distressed communities makes it difficult to implement traditional programs effectively and virtually impossible to move from business-as-usual to something more ambitious. Deliberate investments must be made in building capacity to carry out community change work where the definition of *capacity* is wide, ranging from ability to implement high-quality programs well, to ability to hold collaborators and systems accountable to the community, to ability to take advantage of opportunities and mitigate threats as they occur. Thus, the capacity that community change efforts aim to build is the capacity of an entire community to strengthen its assets and develop solutions for its problems. In his essay, Joel Ratner poignantly describes how people in Youngstown learned that they had to *build* resources so they could *win* resources: "A community must always be creating local resources for itself and always be increasing local commitment and capacity, even if the only tools available are bubble gum and Scotch tape. Only when the structure is steady and complete enough to stand on its own can local partners effectively reach out for help from beyond their community borders."

## External Alignment and Brokering

Over the years, community change initiatives have been criticized for "romanticizing" the community, focusing too much on intracommunity resources and capacities, and underattending to the power and influence of extracommunity actors. But, as Tom Dewar notes, "Powerful outside systems often aren't set up to align naturally with communities." He concludes that, "To overcome the obstacles, a range of actors must expend significant time and political, social, and economic capital to broker relationships between communities and external

powers. They must literally and metaphorically ‘subsidize’ alignment between sectors and interests until new habits of thinking, acting, and collaborating enable these alignments to occur more naturally.” The function of building and maintaining relationships among community actors and between the community and external actors—especially businesses and public agencies—is one that needs to be lifted up as a key component of community change work.

The institutional form that this brokering and mediating role takes is highly varied and should depend on local circumstances, history, and resources. In one example, Elwood Hopkins describes creating “a new, bifurcated structure, one that could become an insider in both the community and the banking industry while building bridges that would span the two worlds.” Other potential institutional brokers include intermediaries, foundations, anchor institutions, local elected officials, government agencies, and strong community organizations. We can be agnostic about the form these brokers take, but we must be clear and deliberate about their functions.

As this volume has shown, strategies to promote systems and policy changes in support of communities are different from strategies to promote community change. The priorities for public sector system reform that would best support a community change agenda, notably decategorizing funding streams and breaking down programmatic silos, must be done by leaders of those systems. Place-based work alone is not sufficient to stimulate systemic reforms that ensure that residents of low-income communities gain access to the opportunity structures that can change their life outcomes. The field must develop the capacity to work at both levels. As Angela Glover Blackwell puts it, “There must be a way to get to the transformative, strategic melding of the wide-angle and zoom views of community building.” She describes how the Fresh Food Financing Initiative and Promise Neighborhoods Initiative have both built community-to-national policy connections.

What should be the scope of this externally oriented work? At the very least, place-based efforts must undertake a power analysis of the sources of public, private, technical, and other resources that could and should be drawn upon to provide direct support for the community agenda. Brokers and mediators in the community change field are now learning how to make those kinds of connections. At the same time, awareness about the range of possible community-to-outside connections continues to widen to encompass new, potentially catalytic opportunities at the regional and national level.

Finally, the strategies for broader policy reform that would focus on resource allocation policies or reforms in the structures that reproduce inequity in America need action beyond the community level. Charles Bruner’s analysis concludes that “for the most part, comprehensive community initiatives of the past two decades did not place issues of power imbalance, institutional racism, and social

equity front and center in their work.” Angela Glover Blackwell suggests that the way forward is “to connect the work, build momentum, and fashion a movement. And nothing short of a movement will achieve the goals we seek; change must happen at scale and be bolstered by national recognition and support.”

## Assessing, Learning, and Adapting

The third leg that stabilizes the stool of community change work is intentional learning. Because community change efforts can so easily meander or become diffused, they must be accompanied by a concomitant investment in feedback on performance and progress at every step along the way. The call to create a “culture of learning” is becoming louder in the field, but it is rare to find a true and effective learning culture in community change efforts. This learning must occur both within community change efforts themselves and across sites at the field level.

The first audience for measurement and evaluation in community change efforts must be internal, not external. The primary aim of tracking performance and outcomes should be for managers and implementers of community change efforts to determine how to improve on their work. Alan Okagaki warns that when the first audience is external stakeholders, notably funders, the assessment process becomes all about accountability. Only when it is embraced and owned by the internal constituents is it truly effective:

*Externally driven performance measurement can change the conversations that are so crucial for learning, because the relationship between learning and accountability is delicate. Measurement for the purpose of accountability leads to defensiveness and “spinning” of the numbers for public relations purposes, especially when funding decisions are at stake. In contrast, learning requires openness and honesty, which only happen in an environment of trust. High-performance organizations have to manage this tension between trust, accountability, and learning.*

Almost all community change efforts include some kind of evaluation. Despite the relative abundance of data that are produced through such evaluations, our knowledge base about how to produce community change remains thin and anecdotal. This is because each evaluation attaches to its own particular initiative and looks inwardly. The information is difficult to aggregate across sites to field-level knowledge building about the core questions of community change.

Claudia J. Coulton calls for “planned examination of how variations in strategy and context relate to the type and amount of community change that can be achieved.” In other words, we should make sure that evaluation and community

research endeavors shed light on the question of what works best, in different contexts, with special attention to why and how. Coulton challenges researchers to work “toward standardizing classification schemes, measurement, and evaluation methods and mining a wider array of data on program activities and community outcomes.”

Margery Austin Turner describes how important such an approach to knowledge development can be for community change efforts. She points to research that identifies typologies of low-income neighborhoods that, in turn, can guide more sophisticated policy and practice decisions. For example, some neighborhoods are “incubators” where people stay and build a family and community life, while others are “launch pads” where people move out as their family circumstances improve. She demonstrates how policy could be more effective with “a more nuanced, hybrid vision of neighborhoods that perform well through multiple mechanisms, enhancing quality of life and life chances in different ways for residents with differing needs and preferences.” This is the type of systematic knowledge building that the field needs.

*Working in the more organic way recommended here that builds trust, capacity, and experience over time does not mean working sloppily. As Katya Fels Smyth notes in her essay, “community change work is evolutionary but not chaotic.” It is still possible to set clear goals and create effective management and accountability structures, but not in the old-style ways that were developed in a world of externally stimulated change along programmatic lines in delimited neighborhoods over specified time periods.*

We must live in the world as it is, not in a world that makes it easy for us to apply the tools we honed in the hothouse of planned interventions aiming for more focused outcomes. Our challenge now is to apply what we have learned about the importance of a clear mission, good management, effective partnerships, and results accountability within the more fluid ecology of a distressed neighborhood located in a porous region. We need new ways of managing the work when we have to interact with so many actors. We need new ways of being strategic when we are working in a complex adaptive system. We need new ways of defining success when we control so little. We need new ways of learning when causal connections are difficult to establish. This is the charge to the next generation of community change work.

## Appendix 1

# Chronological Description of Major Community Change Efforts

INITIATIVE (by start date)	PRIMARY FUNDERS	DESCRIPTION
<b>Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (1984)</b>	Multiple funders, including Riley Foundation, Annie E. Casey Foundation, and Ford Foundation	DSNI is a quarter-century-old community-based organization in Roxbury, Mass., focused on economic development and resident leadership, with programs in affordable housing construction, vacant lot management, daycare, financial education, and community asset building.
<b>Chattanooga Revitalization (mid-1980s)</b>	Lyndhurst Foundation	The Lyndhurst Foundation invests in urban revitalization in Chattanooga through grants to the city and community-based organizations for green development, retail expansion, affordable housing construction, homeless shelters, public education systems reform, arts programming, and other local projects.
<b>Lawrence CommunityWorks (1986)</b>	Multiple funders, including Annie E. Casey Foundation, Enterprise Bank, Living Cities, Surdna Foundation, State of Massachusetts, City of Lawrence	LCW is a membership-based community development corporation in Lawrence, Mass., focusing on network-based community organizing, affordable housing and physical revitalization, family asset building and workforce development, and youth development.
<b>New Futures (1987)</b>	Annie E. Casey Foundation	New Futures was a seven-year, multi-site initiative that aimed to improve youth-serving agencies and institutions by making them more efficient, less siloed, more accountable, and more responsive to community needs.

*Voices from the Field III*

INITIATIVE (by start date)	PRIMARY FUNDERS	DESCRIPTION
<b>Agenda for Children Tomorrow (1988)</b>	City of New York and private philanthropies	Agenda for Children Tomorrow is a public-private partnership that aims to integrate and coordinate community service delivery structures to improve the well-being of children, families, and neighborhoods throughout New York City.
<b>New Song Urban Ministries (1988)</b>	Multiple funders and congregations	New Song Urban Ministries is a member of the Christian community development movement. Its focus is a 15-block radius in West Baltimore, where it works to build housing, promote homeownership, and offer various programs in the areas of education, health, employment, arts and culture, and addiction services.
<b>Community Planning and Action Program (1989)</b>	Rockefeller Foundation	CPAP was a national, multisite initiative to address persistent poverty, in which the Rockefeller Foundation designated local organizations to design and implement antipoverty strategies, such as grassroots leadership development and organizational capacity building, as well as programming in health, education, physical and economic revitalization, and workforce development.
<b>Neighborhood and Family Initiative (1990)</b>	Ford Foundation	The Neighborhood and Family Initiative was a multisite, comprehensive community development initiative in which community foundations worked with residents and other local stakeholders to conceive and implement revitalization projects, such as affordable housing commercial real estate development, neighborhood beautification, and services for children and families.
<b>Sandtown–Winchester Neighborhood Transformation Initiative (1990)</b>	Enterprise Foundation and the City of Baltimore	The Neighborhood Transformation Initiative aimed to systematically address the complex social, economic, and physical conditions affecting Sandtown–Winchester, an impoverished area of Baltimore, that encompassed 72 square blocks.

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INITIATIVE (by start date)	PRIMARY FUNDERS	DESCRIPTION
<b>The Atlanta Project (1991)</b>	The Carter Center, and multiple corporations and foundations	The Atlanta Project was spearheaded by Jimmy Carter. It brought corporations, universities, local government, and foundations together to work in 20 Atlanta neighborhoods to address issues and conditions involving children and families, education, health, safety, housing, and employment. In 1999, the Carter Center awarded a grant to Georgia State University for the Neighborhood Collaborative to carry on the Atlanta Project's work.
<b>Comprehensive Community Revitalization Program (1992)</b>	Surdna Foundation	CCRP sought to build the capacity of community development corporations in the South Bronx to provide employment, health care, child care, and financial services and develop affordable housing and commercial real estate.
<b>Housing Opportunity for People Everywhere (HOPE VI, 1992)</b>	U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development	HOPE VI is a public housing revitalization program focused on physical improvement of existing stock, development of mixed-income and affordable housing projects, and improved social and community services for public housing residents.
<b>Los Angeles Urban Funders (1992)</b>	Approximately 30 foundations in the Los Angeles region	LAUF is a funders' collaborative focused on community change that was formed as a direct result of the Los Angeles civil unrest in 1992. LAUF was created to attract new industry, encourage local businesses, and connect residents to the workforce in the poorest communities of Los Angeles.
<b>Neighborhood Preservation Initiative (1993)</b>	Pew Charitable Trusts	The Neighborhood Preservation Initiative was a three-year, multisite initiative to strengthen existing assets in diverse, working-class neighborhoods through youth development, physical revitalization, economic opportunity, and crime prevention programs.
<b>Empowerment Zones (1994)</b>	U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development	HUD's 30 Empowerment Zones provide \$5.3 billion in tax incentives for businesses located within the zones to increase employment and encourage economic development.

*Voices from the Field III*

INITIATIVE (by start date)	PRIMARY FUNDERS	DESCRIPTION
<b>Local Initiatives Support Corporation's Community Building Initiative (1994)</b>	Multiple funders, including Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Ford Foundation, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Pew Charitable Trusts, Annie E. Casey Foundation, and HUD	CBI provided financial and technical assistance to multiple community development corporations in various cities to support community organizing; social service provision and coordination; youth development; workforce development; and crime, violence, and drug-use prevention.
<b>Neighborhood Strategies Project (1994)</b>	New York Community Trust	The Neighborhood Strategies Project was an eight-year, multisite initiative to create economic opportunities in poor neighborhoods by linking three core strategies: workforce preparation, economic development, and community organizing.
<b>San Francisco Beacon Initiative (1994)</b>	Multiple public and philanthropic funders	Eight centers offered a broad range of enrichment opportunities to youth in five core programming areas: education, career development, arts and recreation, leadership, and health.
<b>Shorebank Enterprise Cleveland (1994)</b>	Multiple funders, including Cleveland Foundation, Ford Foundation, George Gund Foundation, and U.S. Treasury CDFI Fund	This triple-bottom-line, nonprofit lender and technical assistance provider specializes in financing early-stage and growing minority-owned small businesses in targeted Cleveland neighborhoods.
<b>Community Change for Youth Development (1995)</b>	Consortium of funders coordinated through Public/Private Ventures	CCYD was a seven-year, multisite initiative that provided financial and technical support to lead agencies implementing a "core strategy" to reach youth ages 12–20. It involved after-school programming, adult support, work-based learning, and youth input in programmatic decision-making.
<b>Harlem Children's Zone (1996)</b>	Multiple funders, including Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, Robin Hood Foundation, Starr Foundation, City of New York	HCZ seeks to improve children's well-being in a high-poverty, majority-minority area spanning 100 blocks of Upper Manhattan. It includes a comprehensive network of services and programs focused on community building, education, housing, after-school and family services, child care, and health.

Appendix 1: *Chronological Description of Major Community Change Efforts*

INITIATIVE (by start date)	PRIMARY FUNDERS	DESCRIPTION
<b>Jobs-Plus Community Revitalization Initiative for Public Housing Residents (1996)</b>	U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and Rockefeller Foundation	Jobs-Plus was a multisite employment and training initiative targeting public housing residents, which coupled employment services with changes in rent rules and community support for work.
<b>Neighborhood Improvement Initiative (1996)</b>	William and Flora Hewlett Foundation	NII was a ten-year, multisite poverty reduction initiative in California, in which community foundations managed local partnerships that implemented programs in youth development, education, and public safety.
<b>Neighborhood Partners Initiative (1996)</b>	Edna McConnell Clark Foundation	NPI designated lead organizations in several neighborhoods of South Bronx and Harlem to implement programs for community organizing, leadership development, youth development, education, and child and family services.
<b>West Philadelphia Initiatives (1996)</b>	University of Pennsylvania	The West Philadelphia Initiatives are a series of community development programs coordinated through the University of Pennsylvania. They aim to improve the quality of life in the neighborhoods that surround the university and to build the school's economic and civic relationship with West Philadelphia.
<b>Hope Community, Inc. (1997)</b>	Multiple funders, including the public sector, more than 25 foundations, and 500 individuals	Hope Community blends housing and revitalization of public spaces with extensive community engagement. It engages more than 500 youth and adults every year in learning, leadership, art, community dialogue, and organizing and builds extensive community networks and partnerships to serve the broader community.
<b>New Communities Program (1998)</b>	MacArthur Foundation, Local Initiatives Support Corporation	NCP is a comprehensive community development initiative aiming to improve quality of life in 16 low-income Chicago neighborhoods. It supports community building, business development, employment, financial assistance, education, community policing, and diversity promotion programs.

*Voices from the Field III*

INITIATIVE (by start date)	PRIMARY FUNDERS	DESCRIPTION
<b>Making Connections Initiative (1999/2000)</b>	Annie E. Casey Foundation	Making Connections is a ten-year, multisite initiative to improve outcomes for children and families in low-income communities. Its “two-generation attack on poverty” sought to improve families’ economic success by connecting parents with jobs, building families’ assets, and ensuring that children are healthy and prepared to succeed in school.
<b>Market Creek Project (1999)</b>	Jacobs Family Foundation	Market Creek is a commercial real estate development initiative that builds community, fosters economic vitality, and supports resident ownership of property in an underinvested San Diego neighborhood.
<b>California Works for Better Health (2000)</b>	California Endowment, Rockefeller Foundation	California Works for Better Health was a multisite initiative to improve the health of low-income people by increasing their access to economic opportunity. Strategies included policy advocacy, community organizing, and workforce development.
<b>Communities Organizing Resources to Advance Learning (2001)</b>	James Irvine Foundation	CORAL was a multisite after-school initiative in California in which a lead agency worked with schools and community-based organizations to provide education-oriented out-of-school programming, such as homework help and balanced literacy instruction.
<b>Camden Redevelopment (2002)</b>	State of New Jersey, Annie E. Casey Foundation, Ford Foundation, Campbell Soup Foundation, Reinvestment Fund	Following a state takeover of Camden’s government in 2002, Redevelopment focused on residential, commercial, and industrial development; infrastructure improvement; and investments in education and health care.
<b>Children’s Futures (2002)</b>	Robert Wood Johnson Foundation	Children’s Futures is a ten-year, community-based early childhood initiative that aims to improve children’s health, well-being, and school readiness in Trenton, N.J., through home visits, substance abuse treatment, and support for child care service providers.

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INITIATIVE (by start date)	PRIMARY FUNDERS	DESCRIPTION
<b>Redwood Coast Rural Action (2002)</b>	Humboldt Area Foundation, College of the Redwoods, Humboldt State University	This regional, community capacity building network in Humboldt County, Calif., involves economic revitalization, technological and infrastructural enhancement, environmental conservation, and health care.
<b>Vibrant Communities (2002)</b>	Multiple funders, including Tamarack, J. W. McConnell Family Foundation, Caledon Institute of Social Policy, Human Resources and Social Development Canada	Vibrant Communities is a multisite, community-based poverty reduction initiative in Canada. Participating communities test strategies such as living wage campaigns, asset building, and affordable housing development and share lessons and best practices with each other.
<b>Yes We Can! (2002)</b>	W.K. Kellogg Foundation	Yes We Can! is a comprehensive community initiative in Battle Creek, Mich., that enhances the capacity of residents and local organization to change policies and systems as a way to reduce disparities in educational achievement and economic opportunity.
<b>Youngstown Revitalization (2002)</b>	Raymond John Wean Foundation, City of Youngstown, Youngstown State University	The City of Youngstown and its residents developed a revitalization plan that takes into account a reduced population due to the steel industry's collapse. The plan calls for converting surplus housing into park space, rezoning for green industries, and rehabilitating the downtown area.
<b>East Baltimore Revitalization Project (2003)</b>	Johns Hopkins University, Annie E. Casey Foundation, State of Maryland, City of Baltimore	The East Baltimore redevelopment effort, aided by a nonprofit called East Baltimore Development, Inc., combines economic, community, and human development strategies to improve residents' employment and housing opportunities in conjunction with the development of a science and technology park and new residential, commercial, and retail space on 88 acres.

*Voices from the Field III*

<b>INITIATIVE</b> (by start date)	<b>PRIMARY FUNDERS</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
<b>Step Up Savannah (2004)</b>	City of Savannah	Step Up Savannah is an antipoverty collaboration involving more than 80 organizations representing the business, social services, and government sectors. It implements strategies for workforce development, wealth building, and work supports, including education, dependent care, health care, transportation, and affordable housing.
<b>Communities of Opportunity (2005)</b>	City and County of San Francisco and a consortium of eight private funders	Communities of Opportunity, based in the mayor's office, aims to improve the well-being of 2,600 families in distressed neighborhoods by reforming social services and connecting them to other economic, housing, safety, and human development resources.
<b>Great Communities Collaborative (2005)</b>	Reconnecting America, East Bay Community Foundation, San Francisco Foundation, Silicon Valley Community Foundation, and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission	The Great Communities Collaborative is an alliance of Bay Area nonprofits that promotes the expansion of public transportation to ensure that half of all homes created over the next 20 years in the Bay Area will be located in walkable neighborhoods near public transit.
<b>Great Indy Neighborhoods Initiative (2005)</b>	Multiple funders, including the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Eli Lilly Foundation, and Local Initiative Support Corporation	GINI is a community and economic development initiative that targets six Indianapolis neighborhoods. It aims to build the capacity of neighborhood leaders and organizations.
<b>Good Neighborhoods Initiative (2006)</b>	Skillman Foundation	Good Neighborhoods aims to create healthy environments for children in six distressed Detroit neighborhoods through youth development, school improvement, and systems change strategies. It engages public and private partners, residents, and other stakeholders.

Appendix 1: *Chronological Description of Major Community Change Efforts*

INITIATIVE (by start date)	PRIMARY FUNDERS	DESCRIPTION
<b>LISC Sustainable Communities Initiative (2006)</b>	LISC aggregates funds from a wide range of public, private, and philanthropic sources	LISC launched Sustainable Communities to promote comprehensive neighborhood development in its 30 sites. The five goals are physical development, building family assets, stimulating economic activity, improving education, and promoting healthy lifestyles.
<b>Building Healthy Communities (2008)</b>	California Endowment	Building Healthy Communities is a ten-year, multisite initiative that seeks to improve child and youth health, safety, and education through a combination of place-based investments and state-wide policy and systems change.
<b>New Economy Initiative (2008)</b>	Consortium of nine Michigan foundations and the Ford Foundation	Ten foundations came together to create a \$100 million fund for five to seven years aimed at recalibrating the economy of Southeastern Michigan primarily through entrepreneurialism and workforce development.
<b>Zilber Neighborhood Initiative (2008)</b>	Joseph Zilber	The Zilber Neighborhood Initiative is a ten-year initiative to improve the quality of life in ten Milwaukee neighborhoods. Launched with a \$50 million grant from Zilber, the initiative aims to leverage an additional \$150 from businesses and foundations.
<b>Living Cities Local Integration Initiative (2010)</b>	Living Cities is a consortium of 20 funders	The Local Integration Initiative will award a pool of \$75–\$80 million in grants, program-related investments, and senior debt to up to five initiatives that are committed to integrative, sustainable, and systemic approaches to revitalizing neighborhoods and connecting low-income people to the opportunities in their region.

# Meeting Participants and Others Interviewed

**Mary Achatz**

*Westat*

**Baye Adofo-Wilson**

*Lincoln Park/Coast Cultural District*

**Josefina Alvarado-Mena**

*Safe Passages*

**Greg Ballard**

*Mayor*

*City of Indianapolis*

**Sara Barrow**

*Northwest Area Foundation*

**Renee Berger**

*Teamworks*

**Emily Blank**

*Cypress Hills Local Development*

*Corporation*

**Eileen Briggs**

*Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe*

**Xavier Briggs**

*Office of Management and Budget*

*The White House*

**Ruth Brousseau**

*Learning Partnerships*

**Thomas Burns**

*Urban Ventures Group*

**Malcolm Bush**

*Chapin Hall, University of Chicago*

**Ben Butler**

*Community Development Associates, Inc.*

**Mark Cabaj**

*Tamarack Institute*

**Dennis Campa**

*Department of Community Initiatives*

*City of San Antonio*

**Jim Capraro**

*Greater Southwest Development*

*Corporation*

**David Casey**

*BRIDGE (Building Regional Initiative*

*Developing Genuine Equality)*

**David Chavis**

*Community Science*

**Mike Christenson**

*Office of Community Planning*

*City of Minneapolis*

**Wendy Chun-Hoon**

*Making Connections Providence*

**Zoe Clayson**

*Abundantia Consulting*

**Bert Cooper**

*Making Connections Providence*

**Pat Costigan**

*The Community Builders*

**Claudia J. Coulton**

*Case Western Reserve University*

**Tom David**

*Independent Consultant, TIDES*

**Frank DeGiovanni**

*Ford Foundation*

**Jim Diers**

*Independent Consultant, formerly*

*Office of Neighborhoods, City of Seattle*

**Leila Fiester**

*Independent Consultant*

**Janis Foster**

*Grassroots Grantmakers*

**Theresa Fujiwara**

*White Center Community Development*

*Association*

Appendix 2: Meeting Participants and Others Interviewed

**Salin Geevarghese**  
*Annie E. Casey Foundation*

**Jim Gibson**  
*Center for the Study of Social Policy*

**Bob Giloth**  
*Annie E. Casey Foundation*

**William Goldsmith**  
*Mercy Housing/Mercy Portfolio Services, Inc.*

**Kirstin Gorham**  
*formerly Northwest Area Foundation*

**David Greenberg**  
*MDRC*

**Bill Grinker**  
*Seedco*

**Paul Harder**  
*Harder + Company: Community Research*

**Maria Hibbs**  
*Partnership for New Communities*

**Craig Howard**  
*John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation*

**Betina Jean-Louis**  
*Harlem Children's Zone*

**Michele Kahane**  
*Clinton Global Initiative*

**Mary Keefe**  
*Hope Community*

**Tom Kelly**  
*Annie E. Casey Foundation*

**Lucy Kerman**  
*Greater Philadelphia Urban Affairs Coalition*

**Tom Kingsley**  
*Urban Institute*

**Robin Kniech**  
*FRESC*

**Melanie Moore Kubo**  
*See Change*

**Frances Kunreuther**  
*Building Movement Project*

**Steven LaFrance**  
*LFA Group*

**Rene Levecque**  
*Vibrant Communities*

**Rasuli Lewis**  
*Harlem Children's Zone*

**Susan Lloyd**  
*Lloyd Consulting*

**Wendy MacDermott**  
*Vibrant Communities*

**Peter McLaughlin**  
*Hennepin County Commissioner*

**Karla Miller**  
*Northwest Area Foundation*

**Andrew Mooney**  
*Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) Chicago*

**Tom Mosgaller**  
*University of Wisconsin Health System*

**Andy Mott**  
*Community Learning Partnership*

**Beth Newkirk**  
*Organizing Apprenticeship Project*

**Kirk Noden**  
*Mahoning Valley Organizing Collaborative*

**Tom O'Brien**  
*Cleveland Foundation*

**Alan Okagaki**  
*Independent Consultant*

**Randy Parry**  
*Rural Learning Center*

**Colette Pichon-Battle**  
*Gulf Coast Fellowship for Community Transformation*

**Rip Rapson**  
*Kresge Foundation*

**Joel Ratner**  
*Raymond John Wean Foundation*

**Harold Richman**  
*Chapin Hall, University of Chicago*

**Cormac Russell**

*Ballymun Regeneration Limited*

**Susan Saegart**

*Center for Community Studies  
Vanderbilt Peabody College*

**Lisbeth Schorr**

*Center for the Study of Social Policy*

**Bob Schwartz**

*Juvenile Law Center*

**Kate Shoemaker**

*Harlem Children's Zone*

**Pat Smith**

*The Reinvestment Fund*

**Scot Spencer**

*Annie E. Casey Foundation*

**Stacey Sutton**

*Columbia University*

**Allan Tibbles**

*New Song Urban Ministries*

**Susan Tibbles**

*New Song Academy*

**Kate Tilney**

*Hope Community*

**Bill Traynor**

*Lawrence CommunityWorks*

**Marion Urquilla**

*Living Cities*

**Jennifer Vanica**

*Jacobs Family Foundation*

**Susana Vasquez**

*Local Initiatives Support Corporation  
(LISC) Chicago*

**Nandita Verma**

*MDRC*

**Chris Walker**

*Sustainable Communities, Local Initiatives  
Support Corporation (LISC)*

**Gary Walker**

*Walker Consulting*

**Kevin Walker**

*Northwest Area Foundation*

**Julia Watt-Rosenfeld**

*Cypress Hills Local Development  
Corporation*

**John Weiser**

*Brody, Weiser, Burns*

**Byron White**

*Xavier University and Community  
Building Institute*

**Kimberly Wicoff**

*San Francisco Mayor's Office*

**Gayle Williams**

*Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation*

**Paul Williams**

*Sustainable Communities, Local Initiatives  
Support Corporation (LISC)*

**Roger Williams**

*Annie E. Casey Foundation*

**Sylvia Yee**

*Evelyn and Walter Haas Jr. Fund*

**Hanh Cao Yu**

*Social Policy Research Associates*

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