COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN THE STEEL CITY

Democracy, Justice and Power in Pittsburgh
Edited by Akwugo Emejulu
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EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

Akwugo Emejulu

In May 2011 the University of Pittsburgh’s School of Social Work, the European Union Centre of Excellence, the European Studies Centre and the University Centre for International Studies organised a three-day conference entitled *Community and Social Development: A Transatlantic Dialogue on Comparative Perspectives on the State of Community Work and Social Inclusion*. With participants from across Europe and the United States, the aim of the conference was to bring together community-based practitioners and engaged academics to discuss the relationship between a diverse range of community development work and the social inclusion of marginalised groups in a number of local contexts. I was invited to speak at the conference and Tracy Soska, the conference organiser and a professor of Social Work at Pitt, arranged for me to meet fieldwork practitioners and visit a variety of community organisations in order to understand how community development is named, claimed and practised in Pittsburgh. Indeed, the irrepressible enthusiasm of the Hill District’s Terri Baltimore, my guide for most of my time in the city, sparked the initial discussions about the possibility of this publication.

The huge amount of work taking place to make Pittsburgh a more equal, fair and liveable city is the inspiration behind this edited collection of articles. The goal of this publication is to examine the nature of social justice, power and community change in post-industrial Pittsburgh. Whilst in the city, I was struck by the scope of activity seeking to combat poverty, expand democratic decision-making and regenerate the physical fabric of neighbourhoods. Pittsburgh is typically considered a positive example of urban regeneration because it has successfully, albeit painfully, transformed itself from an industrial city of steel mills and allied manufacturing to a service and knowledge-led economic center specializing in higher education and medical services. Given these significant economic and social upheavals over the last 35 years, this publication seeks to explore how local people have been affected by and responded to this economic restructuring, the processes by which communities have self-organised for democracy and justice and the ways in which power operates in this changed urban landscape.

Despite being voted one of the United States’ most liveable cities, Pittsburgh, a city of about 310,000 people with a metropolitan area of approximately 2.3 million people, has one of the highest rates of poverty among African Americans in the country with about one-third of this population living below the poverty line (US Census 2010). The poverty line is set at $23,350 for a four-person household. The poverty rate among the total population of Pittsburgh is 12.2%, which is slightly lower than the national average of 15.1% (ibid 2010). The story of poverty among Black Pittsburghers, who make up about one-quarter of the city’s population, is a familiar one: almost 40% of Black workers are unemployed and of those who are working, 20% are concentrated in insecure, low-skilled and low-waged jobs (Miller 2012). Part of the reason for this astonishingly high poverty rate among Pittsburgh’s minority population is because of the process of deindustrialisation and suburbanisation. Those secure, trade union-backed, relatively well-paid jobs in the heavy industries have disappeared only to be replaced with, on the one hand, highly specialised jobs in the knowledge economy and on the other, insecure, low-waged service sector employment.
In addition, the creation of relatively stable and decent waged jobs in the region has not been concentrated in the city of Pittsburgh but in its affluent, car dependent suburbs – far from many African-American households. Unfortunately, these poverty and unemployment statistics are set to worsen given America’s sluggish economy resulting from the 2008 financial crisis and the on-going Eurozone crisis.

What role might community development play in these tough economic times in Pittsburgh? From the nine articles in this collection, we can see that the focus of much of the work in the city has been determinedly micro-focused. From the comprehensive cradle to college development work of the Homewood Children’s Village to the arts-led regeneration activities in the city’s Penn Avenue district, it seems that the community development response is one of creative improvements block-by-block and individual-by-individual. The small-scale, human focus of much of the work evidenced in this collection is impressive. The ability of practitioners, activists, city officials, local businesses and charitable foundations to work together for positive change is heartening. However, over the months of editing these articles I was continually struck by the absence of a systematic analysis of the state or the free market by several of the authors. I think because we Americans have had the ideals (or perhaps clichés) of ‘rugged individualism’, Tocquevillian community associations and a reflexive hostility to the state (or ‘the government’ as my fellow Americans tend to say) promoted and constantly re-enforced by the discourse of the ‘American Dream’, many seem to demand little and expect even less from the state or those people who are not kin or immediate neighbors. I think this lack of fulfilment of many Americans’ social citizenship rights can undermine the broader goals of community development because, as many of the contributors demonstrate, community development works best when a collective of dogged and critical people come together to make a difference. However, I remain sceptical of the ability of community development to be effective if it is not clearly linked to a broader movement for social and political transformation. During my time in Pittsburgh I was simultaneously impressed by the intense on the ground activity and concerned by the greater need for political action. The introduction of voter identification laws in the state of Pennsylvania, which if upheld in the federal courts, will most certainly disenfranchise large groups of poor people and minorities ahead of the 2012 Presidential election in November, is just but one example of how the tireless micro-level work on the ground in Pittsburgh must be more effectively linked to broader political struggles for economic and social justice.

This collection begins with a ‘view from above’. Drawing on documentary analysis and recent interviews with key actors in local government and the non-profit sector, David Feehan explores the city of Pittsburgh’s changing approaches to economic regeneration and development since the so-called ‘Renaissance’ of the 1950s and offers some critical insights into successful strategies for economic re-investment in urban neighborhoods. Tracy Soska examines the long tradition of community-university partnerships in the city and maps how these now fruitful relationships between higher education institutions and the communities in which they are based have evolved from conflict to more mutually
beneficial relations. Adrienne Walnoha, Genevieve Barbee, Jessica Burke, Kamden Hoffman and Michael Yonas offer a practical example of how community-based organisations and universities can work together to democratize the research process while simultaneously developing better strategies for tackling key social problems. The history of the ambitious Homewood Children’s Village, as told by John Wallace and Derrick Lopez, is an important illustration of how comprehensive community initiatives can make lasting change by working with families, schools and communities in holistic ways. Bob Feikema, in a sobering article, maps breakthroughs and setbacks in trying to support and expand the democratic deliberations and participation of people living in poverty in Pittsburgh. In a similar vein, Carl Redwood and Bonnie Young Laing recount the long-running and successful grassroots campaign for a community benefits agreement that ensures inward investment for the Hill District community in exchange for a city-backed development in the neighborhood. In stark contrast to the conflicts in the Hill District, Matthew Galluzzo demonstrates how arts-led regeneration, supported by all key stakeholders, can help to transform a neighborhood. Denys Candy takes us outside the city boundaries of Pittsburgh to explore how asset-based community development approaches can be used to support the positive development of at-risk young people in Wilkinsburg. Finally, Terri Baltimore explains how the rediscovery of green spaces in an urban community can spark new ways of thinking about community development and regeneration.

Community Development in the Steel City is the fourth in an international series of publications critically examining the histories, theories and practices of community development around the globe. To read the Community Development Journal go to www.cdj.oxfordjournals.org and to connect to the wider community development world, with links to relevant organizations, academic journals and free content go to the Community Development Journal’s Editorial Board site, CDJ Plus: www.oxfordjournals.org/cdj.c.

[1] I would like to thank Richard Freeman and Denys Candy for introducing me to my colleagues in Pittsburgh. Many thanks also go to Jo Howard and Tracy Soska for their help in the development of this publication.

References


COMMUNITY RE-INVESTMENT: EXPLORING PITTSBURGH’S HISTORY OF REBUILDING THE LOCAL ECONOMY

David Feehan
COMMUNITY RE-INVESTMENT

David Feehan

Introduction

Many residents of Pittsburgh today have only a foggy recollection of what the city was like in the 1950s and 1960s, when steel was king. The air often reeked of sulphur-laced, rotten-egg-smelling smoke and the rivers were heavily polluted. Yet jobs in the mills were plentiful, many inner-city neighborhoods were stable and well maintained, and commercial corridors provided most of the goods and services neighborhood residents needed. In fact, Pittsburgh’s neighborhoods were a strong source of pride and even those neighborhoods whose residents were lower-income had commercial corridors that often teemed with life. Contributing significantly to the city’s neighborhood disinvestment and decline from the 1950s was the migration of employment and middle class residents from the central city to the suburbs. Pittsburgh’s community and civic leaders recognized this trend, and at this time took action to strengthen downtown and city neighborhoods through the creation of the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) and the Allegheny Conference on Community Development (ACCD). Then, with the decline of the steel industry in the 1970s, some of Pittsburgh’s neighborhoods experienced accelerated disinvestment and wrenching changes in demographics through the on-going suburbanization of key population groups—and their tax base. (Lubove 1996: 145-162). Throughout this period, Pittsburgh has experimented with a variety of strategies for community reinvestment and rebuilding of the local economy with varying degrees of success.

From the 1950s to today, many programs and policies involving municipal, county, state and federal government agencies, corporations and foundations and a broad range of community groups were created and implemented. These groups came together, planned, partnered, and fought with one another. Questions of legitimacy and social justice arose, as on one hand elected officials, chosen by the citizens of Pittsburgh, engaged in a variety of actions with people who often had no official sanction, but simply chose to speak and act for certain interests or represent certain geographically defined areas. The purpose of this paper is to examine the history of some of Pittsburgh’s strategies for community economic development, regeneration and revitalisation and explore some of the challenges elected officials and community practitioners faced and the beliefs and principles that guided their actions in relation to community reinvestment and community revitalisation. In addition to a review of the pertinent literature for this article, the author conducted interviews with a number of former and current Pittsburgh community leaders who offered insights into the processes of community revitalization and reinvestment, how power relationships influenced these processes and to what degree traditional human service and social justice organizations participated in this process. Every interviewee agreed to be listed, though some requested comments not be attributed directly to them due to the sensitivity of some of the topics discussed. What emerges from these interviews and the literature review is a fascinating description of Pittsburgh’s strategies for promoting community reinvestment and for strengthening the local economy within the context of a globalised economy.
Rethinking regeneration: 1950s to 1980s

The early approach to community reinvestment pioneered by Pittsburgh, and replicated to varying degrees in other cities, was to establish or work with citywide agencies of government and non-profit, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), notably the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh (URA) created in 1946 and ACTION-Housing established in 1957. Although these early efforts constituted a centralised and top-down approach to community economic development by the city government, even in these early years citizen participation was recognized as important although it was not seen as vital to local development. By 1977, this strategy took a dramatic turn with the election of Richard Caliguiri as mayor. Caliguiri appointed Paul Brophy as director of the Housing Department in the Mayor’s office. Caliguiri, who had served on the City Council and in the Parks Department, understood the vital nature of Pittsburgh’s communities, and empowered Brophy and URA to strengthen community organizations and give local NGOs and community development corporations (CDCs) more power and authority for planning, directing and implementing community regeneration activities and programs. It is hard to overstate the importance of this shift in approach, from a centralised, top-down approach to a decentralised, bottom-up approach. Until this time, it had been the accepted practice in almost all US cities for government to approach community regeneration as a task that government had the unique knowledge and skills to undertake. Local residents were sometimes involved in an advisory way, but almost never given the responsibility and authority to determine what projects to undertake, how to allocate resources and how to evaluate success.

The organisational infrastructure in the late 1970s was beginning to take shape in Pittsburgh for a transformational shift in terms of community regeneration. In addition to ACTION-Housing and the URA, Pittsburgh leaders created a number of other public and private non-profit entities to spur reinvestment in its neighborhoods, such as the Pittsburgh Neighborhood Alliance (PNA), Neighborhoods for Living Center, the Pittsburgh Partnership for Neighborhood Development (PPND) and somewhat later, the Advisory Commission on Community-Based Organizations (ACCBO). These organizations sometimes but not always worked with the more established community and social service organizations like Hill House, Kingsley Association, and the Brashear Association, and voluntary neighborhood associations. The emerging shift during the early 1980s, under the administration of Caliguiri, from the centralized, citywide approach to a more decentralized community-based approach, empowering CDCs and CBOs not only through substantial increases in funding but through changes in staffing and policies in City departments and at URA, proved to be successful, at least in some communities. The article will now turn to explore the nature of some of the successes and challenges of community reinvestment in the context of social and neighbourhood change since the 1980s.
The challenges of community change: 1980s to the present

Various neighborhoods in Pittsburgh have undergone extensive social and demographic changes due to the changing fortunes of the urban economy. During the so-called “urban renewal” years after World War II, many low-income, inner city communities that were considered “marginalized” were oftentimes earmarked for demolition and population relocation (Perlman, p 15). Today, many Pittsburgh communities have become areas of opportunity—places where housing is suitable but less expensive, locations where business opportunities are growing—and areas where the population is much more racially and ethnically heterogeneous. Given these changes in the demographics of Pittsburgh’s neighbourhoods, this has shifted approaches to community reinvestment and development.

The South Side Flats are one example of a neighborhood in transition. This community was once populated mainly by families of Eastern European descent whose men worked in the steel mills. Today several NGOs are attempting to wrestle with changing populations (students, young professionals and newer racial minorities), as well as a dramatically changing economy, as traditional retailers disappear and are replaced by businesses catering to younger residents. The Mexican War Streets is a neighborhood on Pittsburgh’s North Side that was once a white working class neighborhood but is now a racially mixed community that is trending toward upscale. East Liberty, once Pittsburgh’s “silk stocking” neighborhood, populated by wealthy industrialists, then a Jewish, Irish and Italian middle class area, and is now a predominantly lower income African American community.

There is no one economic development approach that has worked in the above neighborhoods, however, several common elements seem to be extremely important:

*Leadership and human capital.* Foundation executives, supporting the formation of the Pittsburgh Partnership for Neighborhood Development (PPND), recognized the importance of leadership at the staff and board level of the city’s most effective CDCs. These foundation executives insisted that CDCs not only hire and compensate adequately an experienced executive director, they also urged the hiring of a competent “second in command” based on a belief that the initial CDC directors would one day leave for higher positions (Lubove 1996: 109-111) Their belief was vindicated, as each of the initial group of CDC executive directors went on to positions of greater responsibility. There is considerable evidence that without skilful and highly motivated leadership at both the staff and board levels, these CDCs would not have achieved what they have been able to achieve.

*Technical assistance.* One major element in the creation and success of CDCs in Pittsburgh was the Community Technical Assistance Center, a joint venture of the foundation community and the City of Pittsburgh (Lubove 1996: 104). Founded in 1981, this organisation provided legal, accounting, organizational development, fundraising, and communications services to CDCs and other neighborhood-based organizations in Pittsburgh. CDCs also relied on expertise from the Urban Redevelopment Authority and
the City (help with use of funds for real estate development), from the Community Design Center (architectural and planning assistance), and the Baltimore-based Development Training Institute (training staff in how real estate deals are structured). None of the CDCs could afford to hire, either as staff or as consultants, the tremendous expertise these support organizations provided (Lubove 1996: 324).

Funding. A core group of officials from the public sector and foundations believed strongly that without sufficient funding, CDCs could not hire and retain competent staff and carry out programs that would have a meaningful impact on the communities that they served. As a result, both the City and foundations made significant, multi-year funding commitments. Some of the CDCs also began to partner in real estate developments, deriving some income from these activities as well as from sponsorships and events.

While initially there was great scepticism initially about CDCs (Faux 1971: 25) the belief that these new entities could succeed where other efforts had failed began to take root in the 1980s and continued for the next three decades.

Academics began to take note of the change in attitude and approach as early as the late 1970s. Ahlbrandt and Cunningham (1979), in their landmark book A New Public Policy for Neighborhood Preservation, identified and described how an empowerment strategy, encouraging community-based organisations to take on greater responsibility and authority, could allow local residents a significant measure of self-determination. In Organizing for Community Controlled Development, Murphy and Cunningham (2003: 6) argue for a comprehensive and collaborative approach: one that encompasses economic, residential and social development and reinvestment and that involves a broad range of community stakeholders, such as residents, business owners, religious, educational and health institutions, and others. Strengthening a neighborhood requires more than bricks and mortar, more than attracting businesses and new residents. It also means, as Rothman, Erlich and Tropman (2001) describe in Strategies of Community Intervention, an examination of the possible roles of clinical social work and social justice in a community empowerment milieu. In many communities, part of regeneration is dealing with the social problems brought about by family dysfunction, substance abuse and mental illness. Social justice strategies might involve improving local schools and health services. All of these are part of the comprehensive approach noted above.

But a concentration on communities was only a part of rebuilding Pittsburgh’s post-industrial economy. Pittsburgh also became famous for massive regeneration projects like the Gateway project in downtown, the East Liberty Mall, and the Allegheny Center Mall, three early urban regeneration projects that involved major demolition and clearance. In each case, large areas were cleared, and new office, retail and parking developments were built. The downtown Gateway project is generally considered a success and was a model for many other cities. The other two projects have primarily been considered minimally successful.
Interviewees said that when Tom Murphy was elected mayor in 1994, he realized that CDC efforts, while sometimes successful in terms of limited residential and commercial development, were not stemming the outflow of middle-income residents to the suburbs. His strategy was to reassert city leadership and undertake big projects that he saw as vital to maintaining the city’s tax base. Under Murphy’s leadership, two huge sports facilities – PNC Park for the Pirates baseball team and Heinz Field for the Steelers football team and University of Pittsburgh Panthers, were constructed. He also pushed forward the construction of the new convention center and more than 1,000 acres of industrial redevelopment. He subsidized (albeit unsuccessfully) two downtown department stores and undertook to remake downtown Pittsburgh’s historic commercial corridor, know as Fifth and Forbes. This represented a clear departure from the Caliguiri-era emphasis on CDCs and community-led regeneration.

While there have been few if any empirical studies to determine whether Mayor Murphy’s change in strategy was the right course of action, most observers would give the Mayor high marks for his leadership in building the two sports facilities and keeping the professional sports teams in Pittsburgh. The consensus is that the loss of the Pirates would have been a blow to the community because this franchise was one of the earliest baseball franchises in the history of the sport; but the loss of the Steelers football team would have been unthinkable. Murphy also showed strong leadership in industrial redevelopment, and Pittsburgh is benefiting today from that leadership. Many new companies have located in the old industrial sites that were acquired and prepared for redevelopment.

Praise, however, is not universal. Murphy is criticized for adhering to a dated and outmoded strategy in terms of downtown regeneration. His support for department stores as anchors demonstrated a lack of understanding of retail trends. At the time the City was pouring millions of dollars into subsidizing two downtown department stores, the country was moving away from department stores as a preferred way to shop. The department store industry was in the midst of a contraction and consolidation, and one of the stores Murphy’s administration attracted failed a few years after occupying a prime site in a City-financed building on downtown. That building, incidentally, has been converted to upscale housing, a use that is proving to be a new “anchor” in many downtowns.

On balance, Murphy accomplished much, but was widely regarded as having a “tin ear” – unwilling to listen to those who differed with him and unwilling to allow dissidents into the process. Still, he must be given credit for accomplishing things that few others could have accomplished.

Murphy’s successors took different approaches. Bob O’Connor (who died shortly after taking office) apparently wanted to rebuild the relationships with various non-profit organisations that had become frayed and broken under the Murphy administration; and Luke Ravenstahl, the current mayor, has only begun to reassess the City’s approach to
neighborhoods and establish a clear and coherent policy, taking what many interviewees described as a tactical rather than strategic or vision-driven approach. But according to more than one interviewee, the URA has moved from a strong focus on bricks and mortar to a new focus on planning, working with community partners, and conducting market analyses. This approach is based on an examination of past practices and policies. There has also been a change in the City Planning Department. In past years, community planners were heavily engaged in capacity building, functioning as organizers, advocates, facilitators and engagers; but now the emphasis is back on planning and technical assistance. This is reflective of the background of the new planning director, Noor Ismail, who comes from a technical planning background.

For many years, there has been debate in Pittsburgh with regard to the role planning staff should play. However skilled and well-meaning, city planning staff are always viewed by community organizers and advocates as having “mixed allegiances.” Some have overcome this problem by being clear, transparent consistent in what they say and do. Nevertheless, the level of sophistication on the part of those employed by community-based organizations has increased, and this may mean that planners who bring technical skills and information to the neighborhood are now more valuable than ones who attempted to serve as advocates and organizers.

The picture that emerges in contemporary economic development and revitalization in the city is one of shifting priorities and agendas, from a concentration on citywide approaches and big projects to an emphasis on community empowerment and self-determination, and even more tweaking and fine-tuning within both citywide and community empowerment approaches. More than one interviewee saw this shifting as detrimental to the development and reinvestment process – changing signals in the middle of the game.

So what has been learned from examining the admirable, if not always successful, efforts at community regeneration in Pittsburgh? Some of these lessons, or guiding principles, might include:

An on-going commitment of the public sector is essential. City government has recognized, and must continue to recognize, that neighborhoods are essential – a precious resource that, once lost, is extremely hard to rebuild. Even if a new neighborhood is built where one existed but disappeared due to blight and neglect, the social fabric that once existed is gone forever.

Government must be willing to partner with, listen to, and financially support community-based organizations and CDCs. Even though some of these are less than successful at times, they can function as the essential partner government needs to accomplish its mission of community regeneration.
Community-based organizations and CDCs must work hard and unceasingly to stay in touch with and represent fairly the various constituencies in the communities they serve. There are many examples of failure when a community organization becomes detached from local people and loses its legitimacy.

Government and foundations must look to a combination of citywide mechanisms and local organisations as the most effective and potent strategy over time. Some functions – for example, large-scale housing and real estate developments – are better undertaken by well-staffed citywide organisations with sufficient funding. However, these initiatives should always begin with a great degree of consultation with local organisations. In the end, the community should have the final say as to any large-scale development, whether initiated by the public sector or private sector.

Community-based organisations, government officials, and foundation staff should jointly determine the vision, mission, goals and measurable objectives for any project or program designed to improve or revitalize neighborhoods. Only by determining the ultimate destination and the “mileposts” along the way can real measurements of success be determined.

Given these guiding principles, there still appears to be an absence of any consistent way to measure and evaluate success. How does one measure “empowerment” or “social justice”? Is success measured by inputs (dollars invested, staff hours spent); outputs (buildings renovated, streets rebuilt); or results and impacts (positive changes in community demographics, number of jobs and new enterprises created)?

To some degree, there also appears to be “silo” phenomenon at work – one silo being development professionals at the URA, allied with staff in the mayor’s office, business owners and developers, and with some development-oriented CDCs; a second silo centered in the Planning Department, focused on comprehensive or master plans and technical planning; and a third silo residing in a loose coalition of human service professionals, academics, and community activists. While these “silo” groups have some common goals and occasionally talk with one another, they also seem to view the world of community reinvestment and economic rebuilding from very different perspectives and have decidedly different ways of measuring and evaluating success. The guiding principles listed above might serve as a framework for the various actors to come together and determine what constitutes success.

While Pittsburgh has gone through a painful transition, there have been some constants in terms of community development – URA, City Planning, the mayor’s office, and PPND have over the years generally supported (though with a few exceptions) the empowerment of CDCs and CBOs since the early 1980s, and the results in several neighborhoods have been positive, despite the wrenching changes brought about by the demise of Pittsburgh’s
backbone industry, steelmaking, and by shifting strategies and funding levels. East Liberty, South Side, Lawrenceville, and the Strip District have all become magnets for reinvestment. Mount Washington, Bloomfield, Manchester, and other communities have largely been stabilized. Solid neighborhoods like Squirrel Hill, Shadyside, Highland Park and Regent Square have held their own and continue to benefit from market forces. On the other hand, communities like Homewood, Lincoln, Lemington, Beltzhoover, and Hazelwood have declined over the past few decades and are in need of major attention.

Conclusion

Pittsburgh’s approach to community reinvestment and rebuilding the local economy has been one that has shown success in spite of many challenges. Some of these have been the result of economic, political and social forces beyond the city’s control; some have been the result of changing philosophies, leadership, and an ever-expanding knowledge of what works and what does not. Much can be learned from the experience of Pittsburgh as it continues on a journey to rebuild its economy and revitalize its neighborhoods.

References


Interviewees (in alphabetical order)

Stephen Branca, former City Planner and Project Director, Allegheny Conference on Community Development (ACCD); currently Community, Natural Resource, and Economic Development Educator at University of Wisconsin Extension Karen Brean, Executive Director of the Community Technical Assistance Center (CTAC), 2008-present; former City Planner and consultant to the Planning Department Paul Brophy, Executive Director of the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh, 1981-1986; currently a private consultant Dr. Morton Coleman, Professor Emeritus, University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work; founder of the Institute of Politics Matthew Galluzzo, Executive Director, Lawrenceville Corporation Shelley Harnett, staff member, Community Technical Assistance Center 2002-present; former staff member, Mount Washington Community Development Corporation
COMMUNITY-UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIPS FOR SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Tracy Soska
COMMUNITY-UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIPS FOR SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Tracy Soska

Introduction

In The University and the City: From Medieval Origins to Present Thomas Bender (1988) underscores the history of the university as an urban history, and as cities have dominated political, economic and cultural life in industrialized countries, the influence of universities have been felt through their cities. This campus and community connection is no less vital today, and in Pittsburgh, as in many cities, this link has served in moving Pittsburgh from an industrial past to a post-industrial future. In this transformation of university and city, we must also look at community transformation and development shaped by university growth and institutional influence but, also, how communities have shaped institutions, especially higher education. Community-university partnership lessons from the Steel City have been exemplary of this transformation and influence.

With “eds and meds” (universities and hospitals) acknowledged as regional economic development drivers in many cities (CEO for Cities 2002; Appleseed 2003; Coalition of Urban Serving Universities 2010), their importance as “anchor institutions” (Vey 2005; Murphy 2011) and as “economic engines” (Rooney and Gittleman 2005; Freedland and Minehan 2008) is vital to any discussion of community development in this former Steel City. In 2002, while touring a bio-medical building at the University of Pittsburgh, then President George W. Bush remarked, “while Pittsburgh used to be called ‘Steel Town’, they need to call it ‘Knowledge Town’” (Hammonds 12 November 2002). This remark certainly underscores the higher education industry, along with the often closely allied medical industry, as driving economic growth in Pittsburgh and other urban areas. Former Pittsburgh Mayor, Tom Murphy, noted (2011: 2) “At the heart of these local economic development challenges lie the often overlooked anchor institutions of hospitals and universities that are the heavy-weights of local employment and globally competitive innovation.” With their substantial, fixed facilities they are tied or “anchored” in their local communities.

As important as this economic impact is to university-community partnership in Pittsburgh or any urban region with thriving education and medical institutions, it is in the civic engagement of faculty and students working with community partners on local issues and needs (Soska and Butterfield 2004; Axelroth and Dubb 2010) that the real and lasting measure of community and social development is found. While Pitt, as the University of Pittsburgh is commonly known, stands out for its development work in the city, many universities also share in regional impact and partnership work. Pitt, however, is notable as the leading U.S. public university for its level of community impact as ranked by the Saviors of Our Cities Survey through its community-university partnerships (Dobelle 2009).

City and campus relations, from their earliest days, have been fraught with conflict (Perry and Weiwel 2004). For example, the city and university relationship helped advance Pittsburgh’s Oakland neighborhood – home to many institutions, including the University of Pittsburgh, Carnegie-Mellon University, and the Carnegie Museums and Concert Hall—and served as the hub of civic, sports, and cultural life in the late 19th and early
20th centuries (Alberts 1986). College attendance increased in the second-half of the last century and Oakland’s expanding universities aggravated an oftentimes uneasy relationship with the community. As city leaders clamored for greater tax support from the nonprofit universities and residents felt the press of the campus footprint and the influx of off-campus student housing, tensions and conflict persisted for much of the second half of the 20th century. Turning this conflict to collaboration required a larger social development in higher education and a greater development capacity in community organizations.

While Pitt, Carnegie-Mellon, Carlow, Duquesne and Point Park Universities have all faced community issues about their growth along a common corridor over the last 50 years, the emergence of a national civic engagement movement in higher education provided a pathway to partnership with cities and neighbourhoods.

**University community engagement**

Several developments spurred a resurgence of campus-community engagement: the emergence of the Campus Compact in 1985 as a defining statement of university civic responsibility (Campus Compact 2012), the work of Ernest Boyer at the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement and Teaching and Learning and his treatise on “the scholarship of engagement” (Boyer 1990; 1994), and important higher education associational reports, such as those from the Kellogg Commission of the Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges (Spanier 1999) that proposed revisiting the historic roots of university civic engagement (Bok 1982; Fisher, Fabricant and Simmons 2004). This “engagement” movement in higher education further challenged universities to pose the rhetorical question: “What is our knowledge for, if not in service to our community?” Others questioned whether the American research university had become disconnected from community realities and need to be “reinvented” (Checkoway 1998).

This movement also fostered an important government initiative germinating in the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in the 1980s that blossomed with HUD establishing the Office of University Partnerships (www.oup.org; 2012) and its Community Outreach Partnership Center (COPC) grant program (Victor 1998; Wachter 2000). Since the mid-1980s, over 200 colleges and universities across the country have enhanced their community-university partnership work through COPC or other Office of University Partnership grants.

COPCs aimed at mobilizing university resources to address community-identified issues and problems (Cisneros 1995; Harkavy and Weivel 1995; Maurrasse 2001). Just as the American Land Grant Universities were established to develop and advance the agricultural and industrial capacity of states and rural regions (Hoeverel 1997), this initiative targeted the urban region and the capacity of community-based organizations that might gain from the knowledge, skills and resources of America’s universities. Community capacity is built by enhancing community leadership, organizing communities,
strengthening organizations and fostering alliances (Chaskin et al. 2001). An underlying focus of successful COPCs was on community development through community organizational development and community capacity building.

Beyond directing university faculty, staff, and student resources to support community partners, these grants sought to institutionalize community outreach, service learning (a pedagogy using community service to apply curricular knowledge and skills to mutually benefit college students and the community) and applied research that sustained higher education community engagement in universities (Vidal et al. 2002). During COPC’s heyday Pittsburgh fortunately had four university COPCs.

Community-university partnerships
An early COPC grant (1994) went to Pittsburgh’s Duquesne University, which partnered with its bordering Hill District and Uptown neighbourhoods to mobilize health, business, education and other disciplines for employment development, healthcare for the elderly, youth computer literacy, community revitalization and neighbourhood beautification of vacant lots. Duquesne University established an Office of Service Learning and its Pharmacy School operates a pharmacy serving the Hill, which previously lacked this critical health resource. Point Park University worked in partnership with Focus on Renewal (FOR) in McKees Rocks, a distressed industrial river town to grow cultural and youth arts programs and helped establish the Father Ryan Arts Centre through which its faculty and students remain connected. Currently, Point Park University is expanding its downtown campus with new student housing, recreational, and other facilities that have spurring revitalization by increasing downtown residency. Another COPC grantee, Robert Morris University, partnered with the distressed Duquesne community in the former Steel Valley area to promote academic achievement in local schools. Although not COPC funded, Carlow University maintains connections to West Oakland and Hill neighbourhoods and, since 1983, has operated its Hill College for educational enrichment in this largely low-income, African American neighbourhood, as well as an outreach centre for youth tutoring and mentoring programs in West Oakland.

Oakland and the University of Pittsburgh
Perhaps the most extensive community-university partnership work in the Steel City has emerged between the University of Pittsburgh and the Oakland neighborhood and slowly Pitt and its Oakland neighbors have transitioned from “conflict to collaboration” (Deitrick and Soska 2004). The Oakland neighborhood is Pennsylvania’s third busiest commercial hub and one of its most diverse. Pitt’s upper campus borders the predominantly African American Hill District neighborhood and a former public housing community, now called Oak Hill, and its lower campus is near the former industrial neighbourhood of Hazelwood. Pitt lies in the heart of this second downtown, where the fates of campus and community are intertwined. (See Figure 1: Oakland Map)
As Deitrick and Soska note (2004), Pitt’s emergence as a major public research university in the 1960s has had both positive and negative impacts on its Oakland neighbours. Town-gown tensions festered for years as private homes were increasingly transformed into student accommodation. Pitt’s earliest community partnerships were more negotiated arrangements than mutually beneficial collaborations. For example, the Community Leisure Learn Program was devised after the university’s expanded upper campus athletic facilities were made available for use by nearby residents and the institution’s health institution expansion led to establishing a university-sponsored low-income health clinic in a nearby public housing community.

Despite the contested Oakland space, local residents and university officials were able to build on their uneasy truce to support community-led housing development in the 1970s and 1980s and the establishment of the Oakland Community Council as a ongoing forum for residents and community organizations to work with Pitt and other institutions on mutual issues. University master plans for the 1990s and beyond began coordinating with community and business plans, which led to a revitalizing commercial corridor and public investment in street redesign for pedestrian safety and parking improvement.

Within this rekindled base of cooperation and common planning Pitt established its Community Outreach Partnership Center (COPC). Co-led from its Schools of Social Work and Public and International Affairs, it engaged academics in Business, Education, Medicine, Public Health, Urban Studies and Law to partner with community organizations to address critical issues in areas of housing, small business development and entrepreneurship, school-to-work and welfare-to-work, health and wellness, and environmental and public safety. Later COPC initiatives spurred new partnerships with athletics and physical education for resident fitness and wellness, neighbourhood business corridor development, and a city-wide geographic information database for planning and development – the Pittsburgh Neighbourhood/Community Information System (PNCIS).

Dozens of student interns from a variety of academic disciplines were matched with communities to staff existing and new projects and to develop community partner organizational capacities. Faculty and students worked with community partner organizations on housing and neighbourhood studies through service-learning courses and community-based participatory research projects that produced plans and supported funding proposals for community partner initiatives. Community organizing and planning interns co-located in COPC neighbourhoods to augment community development staff, which also helped to build a community development career ladder for these young professionals, many of whom now work for community partners. Sustaining community-university partnership work requires leadership engagement linking institutional missions of teaching, research and service (Rubin 1998; Wachter 2000; Ross 2002).
Community takes the lead

Campus and community partners fostered new revitalization projects through a renewed forum called the Oakland Task Force, bringing together resident organizations, institutional representations, and city leadership to collaboratively plan and develop institutional and community facilities and spaces for mutual benefit and take on challenging issues like absentee landlords, property code violations, and green-space development - to improve the living environment of Oakland.

While COPC funding ended by 2008, it served as a catalyst for partnership work that continues with renewed leadership in both the university and in the community. Perhaps the most significant impact of this initiative can be found in the capacity building of community partner organization and their staff – many of whom were former COPC interns - who are now leading Oakland’s revitalization agenda with their institutional partners. A community-university dialogue on “The Future of Oakland” spurred Oakland 2025, a neighbourhood visioning and strategic planning process led by Oakland Planning and Development Corporation, a key COPC community partner. Community partners have also formed Oakland Neighbours Engaged (ONE), a community service collaborative among Oakland community organizations, which is now funding the projects, interns, and community-based research that were once university sustained. It is this strong community leadership that now shapes and drives community and social development in Oakland.

Conclusion

Pittsburgh has established a notable reputation for universities partnering with neighbouring communities. These lessons from the Steel City are as much about the transformation of its universities as it is about the city and its communities. In Pittsburgh, as in many other cities across the United States, "eds and meds" will continue to drive the regional economic engine. However, community and social development must be found at a deeper level than that of institutional economic impact. It must build upon and advance the collaboration between communities and their universities.

As Pitt continues it mutually beneficial partnership work in Oakland, it is extending civic engagement to nearby, distressed neighbourhoods where other community partners face challenging community and social development issues. The university has been invited to again mobilize its resources to help empower people, grow communities and strengthen organizations with its neighbours across the City of Pittsburgh and beyond. The foundation of community-university partnership laid over the past decade now sustains a culture of civic engagement at the university and a stronger community-base with which to partner.

Building community capacity is a critical challenge in community development and the community-university partnership model and the lessons offered herein provide an important opportunity for communities and their community-based organizations to build capacity while addressing the myriad of issues and problems that confront them. In this
collaborative approach, the university’s partner role is to add value to the community-level work carried out by community organizations and their stakeholders, not to supplant them. In effective community-university partnerships, the university mutually benefits by using its community service mission to enhance its academic missions of teaching and research. Community and social development in community-university partnerships should always strive for such win-win outcomes.

References
CREATING SYNERGIES:
PARTNERSHIPS FOR
PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION
IN HUMAN SERVICES

Adrienne Walnoha, Genevieve Barbee, Jessica Burke, Kamden Hoffman and Michael Yonas
Introduction
Throughout history we have seen the locus of blame for social problems shift from the individual to the family to society and back again. Despite where problems begin, a sense persists throughout some parts of academia that only professionals working within organizations and institutions can solve these problems. Doctors cure disease, social workers treat family problems and urban planners fix the ills of our cities. Research and program evaluation have left a rich body of work on how to address a myriad of social issues and improve the human condition. However, in our quest for answers and solutions, something critical has been lost. Communities are made up of people with unique talents, gifts, capacities and challenges. They bring each of those to their relationships and to the communities in which they live. In order to promote individual and community well being, our work must start with people. Pittsburgh creates the perfect stage on which to explore how partnership working can help individuals, groups and communities flourish in the post industrial city. In 2009, a Pittsburgh based provider of homeless services found the perfect public health research partners at the University of Pittsburgh. That collaboration changed the partners in ways they could not have imagined. That journey will be outlined in this article. However, it is critical to first understand the city of Pittsburgh and how its unique history made this successful partnership possible.

The fall and rise of Pittsburgh
In the 1970s, Pittsburgh began the downward slide from a manufacturing giant to a landscape of empty mills, plants and manufacturing sites. The economy that had prospered in the age of steel, earning Pittsburgh the moniker of the Steel City, predominantly employed skilled laborers in a variety of manufacturing industries. As new markets outside the United States emerged that could produce the same products for less, the Steel City experienced mass closures of its mills, factories and allied industries. With devastating levels of unemployment, local housing stock fell into disrepair and foreclosure. Homelessness became a visible condition on the streets of the city and crime rates spiked. Many who could afford to leave the city migrated to other areas for new jobs and opportunities. Pittsburgh was down but not out. Citizens, government leaders and organizers began to strategize ways in which Pittsburgh could reinvent itself and find a place in the ‘post steel’ economy. These efforts focused on the assets the community held in its geography, in its people and its civic commitment. Working together, Pittsburgh created re-employment strategies, new housing opportunities, new protocols for the delivery of health and human services and elaborate plans for economic development. Within 30 years, Pittsburgh had reasserted itself as a technology hub, a livable city, a top ten city for fine arts and a leader in green technology.

Dire economic and social times called for drastic and creative approaches to redevelopment. Service providers and community workers were in the forefront of Pittsburgh’s rebirth. These workers focused on the skills and talents possessed by the people living there and what assets their communities possessed including quality housing...
stock, good public schools, a sense of neighborhood connection and a desire to rebuild their community. Social service providers located offices and outreach centers in these communities to identify how these strengths and assets could tie into new economic opportunities in the region. Providers worked hand in hand with local governments to create economic strategies that capitalized on the human capital in the region and its community assets. Pittsburgh began retraining its workforce looking forward to new industries and its social service sector began redesigning its traditional services to address emergent needs in employment, housing and childcare.

Harnessing the power of collaboration

Community Human Services (CHS) was founded in Pittsburgh during the economic downturn of the 1970s. The agency began when neighbors came together to confront the decline of their community. Crime, abandoned properties, children left at home alone and feelings of isolation brought them from their homes to central locations to share food, resources and talents. From those early informal meetings, the neighbors raised funds to buy a small building. In that building, they housed a nurse and a volunteer doctor. They had programs after school for youth in the neighborhood and provided childcare during the day for parents to work or receive training. Over the next forty years, the organization has grown to over 100 professional staff providing community meals, transportation, housing, residential supports, early childhood development services, and in home health supports.

Throughout its history, the organization held onto its belief that community members and users of the agency’s services are critical to designing, evaluating and creating programs that will be appropriate, accessible and responsive. In addition, over the last twenty years, the agency, like many others, faced a critical shift in funding. Original programs at the organization were judged primarily by anecdotal information about the individuals using services. Over time, this storytelling about service benefits has given way to demands for formal outcome evaluations of programs using public and private funding. While more stringent expectations for measurable outcomes ensure service providers are evaluating the success of their work and demonstrating the value of specific program designs, they often miss the human elements of service provision and metrics of human change are hard to define. These formal evaluations require nonprofits to justify the efficacy of their program designs and to quantify outcomes achieved using the funds they receive. Historically, many nonprofit organizations developed directly in response to community identified needs. This development was not necessarily driven by scientific study or evaluation and outcomes were assessed through on the ground observation of programs. Therefore, organizations faced a new and challenging era of program design and needed to cultivate additional planning and evaluation expertise within their organizations. Simultaneously, local colleges and universities began to see that traditional modes of scientific inquiry and laboratory based clinical trials do not tell the complete story. Communities are the fertile ground where all research faces its ultimate test and provide
unique information that cannot be acquired solely through clinical research. In addition, all research needs participants. Unfortunately, many communities see research facilities and academic institutions through a lens of suspicion. Marginalized groups and communities are regularly the focus of research but institutions have not typically worked with communities to gain their trust. Some researchers, eager to explore more participatory options, found themselves in need of gatekeepers to give them access to communities and their members. These factors created the conditions for academic researchers and nonprofit service organizations to engage each other in a new way.

The central role of the individual in research and service provision

Once the organization and the university found each other, a framework to conduct their work was needed. Community Human Services was looking for an approach that kept service users at the center of the process and could provide real time information on the effectiveness and accessibility of services. The University of Pittsburgh wanted to identify health disparities that existed for low-income users of primary health services and how community partners could be engaged to create service and policy protocols to ameliorate those disparities. The use of Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) techniques was the perfect match to accommodate both agendas and create genuine opportunities for engagement of service users. "CBPR in public health is a partnership approach to research that equitably involves, for example, community members, organizational representatives and researchers in all aspects of the research process" (Israel et al 1998: 173-202). This partnership allowed service users, CHS and the University of Pittsburgh to come together to identify what approaches to homeless services were respectful, accessible and effective.

The project began with the University of Pittsburgh researchers coming to CHS to meet clients and observe service sites dedicated to providing housing services. The observation phase lasted for months until the research partners felt they understood the issue of homelessness. Once the research partners felt comfortable in the service setting, recruitment of individuals using housing services began. CBPR has been identified as an effective strategy for increasing the buy-in of marginalized communities, thereby increasing the likelihood of both successful research and subsequent uptake of intervention practices (Israel et al 1998). Part of that success is the reliance on respecting the needs of those participating. Recruitment sessions took place at accessible service sites and were held at times service users felt they could be available. To ensure that the well-being of each participant was honored, everyone had equal status in the process: individual views were valued and unique expertise was acknowledged. Members of the group enjoyed meals together and were compensated for their time. The partners were able to adjust the process as it was happening to accommodate new information, changing circumstances and resources available. More detail on this participatory process will be provided in the following sections. Using CBPR methodologies aligned beautifully with the organizational philosophy of CHS, provided a rigorous research protocol on which to evaluate.
programming, and provided timely data on which to evaluate program decisions. Most importantly, CBPR approaches put community members and users of services in the center of the research design, implementation and interpretation of findings. Their engagement provided not only a richer opportunity to pose research questions but also facilitated the translation of the findings into real and immediate community based intervention.

**Growing the partnership**

The early successes of the CHS-University of Pittsburgh partnership created a synergy between the institutions and as additional funding opportunities presented themselves, the partners naturally looked to each other to grow their work. Following the economic crisis in 2008, the 2009 American Reinvestment and Recovery Act had special provisions for new community research projects. The University believed that it not only had internal capacity to apply and secure these funds but it could also strengthen its application for funding if it included community partners. The natural choice would be CHS and the proposed project would be facilitating the development of academic-community partnerships. The purpose of the project was to expand and strengthen CBPR structures to conduct research addressing health in two urban sites, Pittsburgh and Baltimore, Maryland. Specifically, the partnership aimed to:

- increase community members’ knowledge and comfort in research participation through adoption of CBPR principles
- identify, hire and train community research partners as lay health advocates capable of facilitating and conducting CBPR activities
- engage community members through the use of mixed-methods approaches in issue identification sessions designed to identify and document community health disparity priority issues
- develop a long-term CBPR agenda to address health priority issues in the community

CHS and the University of Pittsburgh expanded their partnership to include Baltimore-based Johns Hopkins University and the House of Ruth, a service organization dedicated to serving victims of intimate partner violence. Like in Pittsburgh, the House of Ruth has a long tenure in the community and ties to its local university. This introduction of new members into the collaboration provided a challenge. The new team would have to establish a positive working relationship based on trust and shared expertise. However, with two established partners in the lead on the project, new members could be introduced and endorsed by them. This allowed the group to establish cohesion more quickly. Distance also created a new dynamic for the team. Since two cities were participating, the partners first met via phone and email. The partners then began traveling between the two cities to facilitate the research process and to deepen their relationships. By engaging in these activities, the partner relationship strengthened and new relationships with other colleagues in Pittsburgh and Baltimore were established.
**Keys to successful participatory research partnerships**
The CHS-University of Pittsburgh/ House of Ruth-Johns Hopkins University collaboration highlights the following critical ingredients to a successful partnership:

Each partner has unique and equal expertise. Community organizations possess valuable knowledge related to the groups they serve and their service provision. University based researchers have the ability to design the research methodologies and execute them. Both partners brought their expertise to the interpretation of the data. At all times, the partners respected each other’s knowledge and embraced the belief that they were equals. It is also critical for partners to describe themselves as equals to external audiences. At each public forum where research findings were presented, each partner was introduced as an expert in his or her field and each partner participated equally.

Each partner trusts the partnership and the process. In order to build trust, the partners took time to build meaningful relationships. A community-academic partnership does not arise over night. Each partner needs to understand the work and the expectations connected to it. The community partners learned about the universities and their academic partners’ passions and priorities for research. The university partners learned about the work done by the community organizations, the people they serve, their information needs and the expectation of their funders. The success of the members individually was seen as a success for the group and the challenges each member faced were burdens felt for the entire partnership.

The partnership has transparency. It is critical that each member of the project knows and understands how the partnership is developing and how the shared work generated from the project is being represented and made use of by the partners. Not only did the project set ground rules before starting but those were revisited throughout the project. Each member discussed their needs openly and how resources would be used.

Communication must be open, honest and consistent. The partners were in direct contact at least once a week to ensure everyone was aware of the status of joint work, any problems that may have occurred, where the project was on its time line and next steps.

Conflict is inevitable as any group works towards its shared goal. Disconnections and conflict do not have to be negative or create an adversarial relationship. If partners are committed to the final goal and to the collaborative process then problems and disagreements can be articulated, debated and resolved.

**Community Building Community**
A key realization from the Pittsburgh partnership was that all of the individuals involved were part of the community. As such, they held both personal and organizational commitments to collaboration and to ensuring local services were responsive to members of the community. For example, researchers from University of Pittsburgh and case
workers from CHS participated in sessions with individuals living in the CHS homeless shelter. For those sessions, shelter residents decided where the group would meet, the topics that would be discussed and the formats for discussion. In those sessions, the academics and practitioners were following the residents’ lead instead of determining the research protocol or the residents’ service plan. By reversing roles and deferring to the expertise of the residents, the partnership learned critical lessons related to leadership and followership and the critical synergy that exists between service users, service providers and researchers.

In the Pittsburgh collaboration, one of the key lessons learned was that the process can be more powerful and productive than the outcome you originally envisioned. A relationship that began with one staff member from CHS and one faculty member of the University of Pittsburgh quickly became a broad network of individuals who were passionate about public health. This happened because the two original members of the team not only took the time to understand each other’s work but also to develop a sense of each other personally. That sense of understanding allowed them to invite new members into the group who were immediately trusted and seen as allies. This gate keeping role also applied to recruitment of service users. CHS had an existing relationship with participants that allowed them to bring the faculty members to the group without fear or mistrust. As the faculty members built their own unique relationships with participants, they were able to help them build trust with each other. Four participants, two faculty members, six CHS staff became a team by the end of the first collaborative project. That team prepared a manuscript on their project, presented their findings to local funders and service providers, displayed their work at two special events and secured funding to continue the project. CHS was able to use the findings to inform their service provision and develop more avenues for peer support. Participants who had felt they were overlooked by society stood at the heads of tables discussing community approaches to address homelessness. Faculty members were introduced to new partners and new funders. Concretely, tangible resources for everyone had increased and their social capital had been expanded.

In addition, the use of partnered research created opportunities for real world exploration of health and social problems. The partnership itself opened new doors for research, resource development and improved programming. The time and energy devoted to the partnership created lasting relationships. The mutual understanding and commitment allowed the partners to move quickly to secure and embrace new opportunities. CHS was able to make their services more responsive to the needs of people using them and to continue to work with service advisors to develop new and innovative services.

References
THE HOMEWOOD CHILDREN’S VILLAGE:
A CHILD-CENTERED NEXT GENERATION COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY INITIATIVE

John Wallace and Derrick Lopez
The Homewood Children’s Village

John Wallace and Derrick Lopez

Introduction
Comprehensive community initiatives (CCIs) attempt to holistically address the challenges of neighborhood level poverty and to transform communities through human, economic and community development efforts. Arguably, this type of work began with the Settlement House Movement at the turn of the twentieth century and continues today, most visibly, through two distinct yet interrelated federal policy initiatives, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s Choice Neighborhood Program and the U.S. Department of Education’s Promise Neighborhood Program. In their third, and most recent, state-of-the-field review, the Aspen Institute provides an excellent overview and summary of comprehensive community initiatives (CCIs) over the past twenty years (see Kubisch et. al, 2010). According to the review, the “classic” comprehensive community initiatives (CCIs) of the past shared several key 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” (ibid p. 9). The goals of these initiatives focused on positive change at the individual and family, neighborhood and systems levels (ibid 2010). Another commonality of past community change work has been that as “initiatives” these change strategies often emerged as time and funding limited projects initiated by national philanthropic foundations (e.g., Ford, MacArthur, Annie E. Casey, W.K. Kellogg) and by federal, state and local governments. Over time, however, new funding sources, additional institutional actors and different approaches to community change work have emerged through so-called “next generation” CCIs.

Although next generation CCIs vary by the organizations and institutions that sponsor them (e.g., national or local foundations, government or community-based organizations); by the primary focus of their work (e.g., human development and social services or physical development and economic development); and by how centrally they place the roles of “community” and community engagement or community building in their work; they also continue to share a number of key characteristics with classic CCIs. Shared characteristics include that they are “place-based” (i.e., focused a specific geographic area, often a neighborhood); they prioritize “community building” (i.e., resident and key stakeholder engagement and ownership of change efforts); and they view their work through a “comprehensive lens” that recognizes and attempts to develop connections between individuals, organizations and systems and between human, economic, social, physical and community development (Kubisch et. al, 2010). The purpose of this article is to describe a relatively new next generation place-based community change effort in Pittsburgh called the Homewood Children’s Village (HCV).
The Homewood Children’s Village

The Homewood Children’s Village (HCV) is a child-centered, place-based comprehensive community initiative whose mission is, “to simultaneously improve the lives of Homewood’s children and reweave the fabric of the community in which they live.” The HCV is inspired by Geoffrey Canada’s internationally acclaimed Harlem Children’s Zone. The vision to adapt the Harlem Children’s Zone model to Homewood was born in the Spring of 2007. The idea emerged out of a search to identify an evidence-based replicable strategy to address the myriad problems that confront the children and families who live and learn in Homewood.

At its peak, in 1940, Homewood was an ethnically and racially diverse middle-income community of more than 31,000 residents, with a thriving business district, strong public schools, tree-lined streets and well-maintained homes. Today, Homewood is a racially segregated neighborhood (94% African American) whose population has decreased by nearly 80 percent to only 6,442 residents of whom 1,798 are children under 18 years of age (United States Census, 2010). Demographically, 32% of Homewood families (and more than 60% of its children) live below the federal poverty level; nearly 90% of its public school students are eligible for free or reduced lunch; 26% of adults have not earned a high school diploma; only 45% of working-aged adults are in the workforce; and, 72% of Homewood’s children are being raised by one parent (A+ Schools, 2011). Based upon their performance on the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) standardized test scores, Homewood’s schools are among the lowest performing in the state of Pennsylvania (www.greatschools.com).

Beyond its demographic and academic conditions, Homewood is also plagued with other social problems, including violence. More specifically, Homewood has among the highest violent crime rates in the city (i.e., drug, gun and overall violent crime rates are, respectively, 1.7, 4.0 and 2.5 times those of the city taken as a whole) and has had Pittsburgh’s largest number of homicides over the last decade (N=76 between 1997 and 2009) (Dalton, et al, 2009). Physically, 51% of Homewood’s 4,364 taxable properties are vacant and abandoned lots, 57% are tax delinquent, 28% of its residential properties are unoccupied and the average non-vacant residential home sale price in 2009 was $9,152, compared to a city average of $90,491 (University Center on Social and Urban Research, 2011).

In spite of its demographic, economic, academic and other social challenges, Homewood, like many other urban neighborhoods in the United States, is also replete with significant relational, organizational and physical assets. These assets include Pittsburgh’s largest population of senior citizen homeowners, numerous faith-and community-based organizations and social service providers, recently constructed and remodeled public school buildings, active YMCA and YWCAs, a recently renovated Carnegie Library, a
branch of the Community College of Allegheny County, a nationally recognized music school and numerous other assets and resources. These assets, combined with sustained coordination and development, present a real opportunity to make lasting neighborhood change and improve the lives of Homewood residents.

The Homewood Children’s Village (HCV) was initially conceived as a community-based participatory demonstration partnership project between the University of Pittsburgh’s School of Social Work and Operation Better Block (OBB), a Homewood non-profit organization that uses community organizing and the development of block clubs as primary strategies to improve the neighborhood. The research and planning for the HCV began in 2008 and in 2009 it was formally incorporated as a 501c(3) (a non-profit organization) and a project manager was appointed to help establish the foundation of the new organization. Significant fundraising and relationship building with the Pittsburgh Public Schools, the Allegheny County Department of Human Services, the Mayor’s Office, local community-based non-profits, universities and foundations, took place throughout 2009-2010. The first President/CEO was hired in July 2011 and the HCV launched its first programmatic work in the Fall of 2011 with students in the Academy at Westinghouse—Homewood’s local school—which serves students aged 12 to 18 years.

Consistent with the strategy of the Harlem Children’s Zone, the HCV seeks to provide children an integrated cradle-to-college-to-career pipeline of evidence-based programs (see Figure 1), undergirded by a full range of health, mental health, social service and community-building programs that target children’s families, peer networks and neighborhood.

Unlike the Harlem Children’s Zone, the Homewood Children’s Village does not deliver all the programs and services on the pipeline itself; rather, the HCV convenes existing services providers, coordinates their services along the cradle-to-college-to-career developmental continuum, builds partners’ capacity to deliver and evaluate evidence-based interventions, at scale, with fidelity and collaborates with other non-profit organizations, government, and businesses to address issues that directly or indirectly impact children and the neighborhood in which they live and learn.

The HCV’s collaborative approach to service delivery is, of necessity different than that of the Harlem Children’s Zone, in which they are the primary service provider. The Harlem Children’s Zone’s annual budget exceeds $90M, it hires over 2,000 people and it serves over 10,000 children each year. Given the magnitude of its resources, the HCZ is able to be the sole-provider of services in its continuum of cradle to college pipeline. As a relatively new organization, the HCV lacks the size or capacity to single-handedly deliver a comprehensive pipeline of services. And while the effort required to create and
sustain partnerships takes significant time, the HCV’s collaborative approach to service delivery increases buy-in across organizations and leverages the experience, expertise and human, physical and financial resources of its partner organizations to serve children. Given Homewood’s relatively small size (i.e., one square mile), the manageable numbers of children to be served (about 2,200) and the limited pool of funds available for social services, the HCV’s collaborative model is probably the most practical approach to attempt meet the needs of children who live and learn in Homewood.

Theoretical Frameworks
Two theoretical models provide the conceptual underpinning for the work of the Homewood Children’s Village. The first model, focused on the contexts in which child development takes place, is Urie Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; 2005). According to this theory, child development occurs in five nested intersecting contexts: microsystems—contexts most proximate to children and that affect them directly (e.g., peer networks, families, classrooms); mesosystems—the linkages between two or more settings in which the child is nested (e.g., school and the family); exosystems—contexts in which the child is not physically present but that indirectly affect him or her (e.g., parents’ workplaces); macrosystems—the broader cultural, social, belief systems and opportunity structures; and the chronosystem—change or consistency over the life course of individuals and across historical time (Brofenbrenner and Ceci, 1994). As a comprehensive community change effort, the HCV recognizes the importance of each of these systems, attempts to influence them, particularly as they impact children, but focuses its primary efforts at the microsystem and mesosystem and it secondary efforts as the exo- and macro-systems levels.

The second model, James Comer’s theory of child development, focuses on the developmental pathways along which children need to grow to be holistically healthy. Comer’s theory highlights the importance of children’s holistic—physical, ethical, social, psychological, linguistic and cognitive—well-being as critical to their “availability” to learn and to be academically successful (Comer, Joyner and Ben-Avie, 2004). Comer’s work emphasizes the importance of children’s development, nested in their social contexts, with a particular focus on their primary relationships (i.e., parents, peers, school faculty, staff and administrators). Underpinned by bioecological systems theory and Comer’s theory of child development, the HCV identifies and integrates the best evidence-based practices and practice-based evidence to design, implement and rigorously evaluate its cradle-to college-to career developmental continuum for Homewood’s children.
HCV Offices
The internal organization of the HCV includes the Office of the President/CEO, the Office of Evaluation and the Office of Community Affairs. The Office of the President/CEO clarifies mission and vision; ensures that the organization maintains its focus upon its defined objectives; engages partner organizations at the leadership level; and negotiates and executes memoranda of understanding that clarify the roles that each partner plays in the work of the Village. The Office of Evaluation underpins and supports everything that the Village undertakes. The Director of Evaluation is tasked with building an evaluation system to be used by all HCV staff members and organizational partners to document the work of the Village and track the outcomes for children and families. The Office of Community Affairs works to engage community members in constant dialogue to assess their individual and collective needs; supports partner organizations through the coordination of events; and plans social and informational gatherings for children, families, and HCV partner organizations to build community.

HCV Initiatives
The HCV seeks to ensure that all of the necessary programs and services for Homewood’s children are seamlessly integrated and effectively delivered, along the developmental continuum (see Figure 1). The HCV provides two of these services itself, through its Full Service Community School Office and the Office of Promise Fulfillment. The HCV Full Service Community School uses a nationally recognized model (Dryfoos, 1994) to deliver services to students in Homewood’s public combined middle and high school, Westinghouse, and eventually in each of the public schools in Homewood. Within the Full Service Community School model, schools become community centers that provide educational, enrichment, social services and health and wellness programs for children, their families and the community-at-large. The HCV Full-Service Community School Initiative, currently in its first year of operation, employs over twenty staff, including social work and education interns and AmeriCorps volunteers, who monitor students’ attendance, behavior and grades and provide them with tutoring, mentoring and other support services. The Full Service Community School also provides programs for the dozen teenage mothers and their infant children who attend the early childhood center at Westinghouse.

The HCV Office of Promise Fulfillment works closely within the Full Service Community School Office, to provide educational support services to Westinghouse students and increase their ability to take advantage of the city of Pittsburgh’s college scholarship program, the Pittsburgh Promise. The Promise provides students up to $40,000 to attend any accredited post-secondary institution in the state of Pennsylvania. Receipt of the scholarship requires students to attend a public school in the city, have a minimum grade point average of 2.5 and 90% attendance. In 2011, only 25% of Westinghouse’s seniors were eligible to receive the Promise. The goals of the Office of Promise Fulfillment are to increase Promise eligibility, college enrollment, and retention and graduation rates among Homewood students.
HCV Networks
In addition to the services that it provides directly, the HCV convenes and helps to coordinate and manage three networks of service and program providers for Homewood’s children and their families. These networks engage key existing service providers, government agencies and funders to design, implement and evaluate the interventions included in the HCV services pipeline. For example, based upon its needs assessment of the neighborhood, the HCV discovered that 60% of Homewood’s preschool children are in kin and neighbor care, do not enroll in any formal educational program prior to kindergarten and often are behind in their academic preparedness when they arrive at school. In an effort to address these realities, the HCV convened an Early Learning Network (ELN). The ELN includes representatives from the Pennsylvania Association for the Education of Young Children, Healthy Start, the Pittsburgh Public Schools, the United Way, the YMCA and YWCA, the University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development, the Greater Pittsburgh Literacy Council, Reading is Fundamental, the Richard King Mellon Foundation and PNC Bank and the PNC Foundation. The Early Learning Network has begun to coordinate the broad range of care and services for Homewood’s preschool children and beginning in the spring and summer of 2012, will convene all of Homewood’s childcare providers, provide professional development programs for kin and neighbor care providers and deliver an educational summer camp for students preparing to enter kindergarten in the Fall of 2012.

In addition to the Early Learning Network, the HCV is planning to convene two more networks to coordinate and deliver services on the HCV pipeline. These two networks are the Health and Wellness Network and the Faith, Family and Out-of-School Time Network. The Health and Wellness Network will convene medical, mental health and social service professionals and organizations to devise specific strategies to address the physical, psychological, and behavioral health and wellness needs of the children and families of Homewood. The Faith, Family and Out-of-School Time Network will consist of representatives from Homewood’s faith- and community-based organizations, recreation centers, and other agencies that provide support services, enrichment activities and non-school hour programs for Homewood’s children, youth and families.

HCV Collaboratives
In addition to improving the lives of Homewood’s children, the second part of the HCV’s mission is to, “rewave the fabric of the community in which they live”. And so, although the primary work of the HCV focuses on human development, the leaders of the HCV recognize that “place matters” for children’s healthy development and thus, the organization is actively involved in various strategic efforts and relationships (i.e., collaboratives) focused explicitly on community and economic development and social policy issues that impact children in Homewood. To date, HCV leaders and board members have been involved in a variety of community engagement and development
planning processes in Homewood, including a project that focuses on using Homewood’s public transportation hub, the Martin Luther King Eastbusway, as focus area for business development, the adaptive re-use of a former post office for a community coffeehouse, the demolition of vacant and abandoned properties surrounding Homewood’s schools and several projects with students and faculty from the University of Pittsburgh and Carnegie Mellon University to identify and create “safe passages” to for students who walk to school in Homewood.

The HCV is also a member of two emerging collaboratives focusing on economic development and research and public policy. The Economic Development and Community Revitalization Collaborative focuses upon the built environment of Homewood and connecting the Homewood community to the regional economy of the city of Pittsburgh. The Research and Policy Collaborative brings together the HCV and local universities to provide research support, to strengthen the internal capacity of the HCV, to provide insight into emerging best practices in service delivery, program evaluation and collaboration needed to continue to build and refine the HCV pipeline. The Research and Policy Collaborative will also help the HCV to be informed about, and to help inform social policy, that can improve the lives of children in Homewood and beyond.

**Conclusion**

Across the nation, poverty, school failure, high crime rates, disinvestment, home foreclosures and myriad other social and economic problems plague a growing number of urban and inner-ring suburban communities. In spite of, and often in response to, these challenges, communities have in the past, and will continue in the future to mobilize themselves to positively transform their neighborhoods for themselves, their families and children. In Pittsburgh, the HCV seeks to transform the Homewood neighborhood for children and develop a model that is scalable, that can be replicated and that produces lessons, insights and strategies that can be immediately transferred to other communities in Pittsburgh and beyond.
References
COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT:
BRINGING NEW VOICES TO THE CIVIC TABLE

Bob Feikema
The history of the United States is one of marginalized groups of people successfully organizing to gain rights and opportunities from which they had been excluded. In the last century alone movements led by women, laborers, racial minorities, and people with disabilities have achieved landmark policy and legislative change, even if their full promise is yet to be realized in daily life.

Unfortunately, efforts to organize poor people have been sporadic and have made little headway since the heyday of the War on Poverty. Launched by President Lyndon Johnson in 1964, the War on Poverty made poverty a national priority. It created a range of programs that still exist today: the Head Start program to promote early child development; Food Stamps (now the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program) to help buy food; the Job Corps to train low-income youth for employment; AmeriCorps to recruit volunteers to work in low-income communities; and Medicare and Medicaid to provide health insurance for the poor and the elderly. These programs brought about real results, reducing the poverty rate from 19% in 1964 to 11.1% in 1973.

Since then poverty has largely been absent from the public policy agenda, except for the 1996 Welfare Reform Act. This bipartisan legislation, aimed largely at families headed by single parent women, marked a dramatic change in social welfare policy. Recipients were required to work in exchange for financial assistance, with a lifetime limit of five years. Federal dollars were packaged into block grants to the states, which were free to design programs to support recipients’ transition from welfare to work. By 2004 welfare caseloads had declined by almost 60% and the incomes of these families had increased by 25% (Haskins, 2006). Four years after enactment child poverty had declined by 20%.

The early success of welfare reform occurred during a time of economic prosperity. However, during the 2000-01 recession the poverty rate began a steady rise during the Bush Administration. Following the 2008 economic crisis the poverty rate hit 15.1% in 2010. 46 million Americans were living in poverty, the highest number in 52 years of Census Bureau tracking. Yet, the plight of the poor was obscured by concerns about the decline of a middle class reeling from job losses, stagnant wages, and underwater mortgages. Progressive organizations like Rebuild the Dream, a new group co-founded by Van Jones and MoveOn, focused on “rebuilding the middle class” (Pollitt, 2011). The dream referred to is the “American Dream” rather than the dream envisioned by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. when he launched the Poor People’s Campaign in 1967. Forty-four years later, President Obama’s 2011 State of the Union address would not include a single mention of poverty or the plight of the poor.
Agencies Organize to Advocate (2005-06)

The results of the 2004 national election awakened a group of human services leaders in Pittsburgh to the need to directly address poverty through advocacy. With the reelection of George W. Bush and Republican control of both Houses of Congress it was clear that funding for poverty alleviation would shrink. Federal programs – including Medicaid, income assistance, employment training, and a range of community services - were projected to be cut by between $40 billion and $71.5 billion over a five-year period. The future looked grim. “While the proposed reductions would almost certainly increase demand for nonprofit services, they would simultaneously reduce the funding many nonprofits have available to meet even previous demands. These shortfalls will leave many community groups scrambling to serve those in greatest need, particularly in times of crisis” (Abramson and Salamon, 2005).

The Pittsburgh nonprofit leaders – all of whom were executives of United Way funded agencies - decided to organize themselves and the people their agencies served to attack poverty. They held a symposium in the spring of 2006 to bring nonprofits and poor people together to share perspectives and develop strategy. The symposium was attended by 140 professionals from 90 different organizations in the Pittsburgh area including agency directors and staff, community advocates, public officials, and foundation officers. During a full day of facilitated conversations attendees explored the impact of poverty in relation to families and children, housing, employment, race, healthcare, aging, and public policy. The energy generated during the gathering “felt like the Sixties” for those who could remember them.

Symposium organizers had set a goal of having at least thirty poor people in attendance. However, despite the recruitment efforts of several community-based organizations, only two individuals who were living in poverty attended. This miniscule turnout was disappointing but not surprising. This was alien territory. Many nonprofit organizations have little experience with the people they serve outside of the practitioner/client relationship. To ask clients to participate with service providers as ordinary citizens was a new experience for both parties.

The nonprofit sector has become increasingly marketized over the thirty-year period of neoliberal political ascendancy that began in 1980 (Elkannberry and Kluver, 2004; Young and Salamon, 2002). The sector is compelled to deliver highly professionalized, commodified services to its “consumers” and “customers,” as if the adoption of market terminology somehow elevates their status. The anti-poverty sector has moved a long way from the requirement for the “maximum feasible participation of the poor” that was the cornerstone of the War on Poverty. The absence of poor people from a gathering designed to empower poor people reflects the contemporary constriction of the relationship between nonprofit agencies and the people they serve.
The empty places at the center of the symposium prompted agency leaders to devise a way to directly engage the people they serve as citizens - not as clients, consumers, or customers – capable of advocating on their own behalf. Thus began a four-year adventure known as the Citizens Leadership Initiative.

**Planning to Develop Citizen Leaders (2007)**

The Citizens Leadership Initiative (CLI) was designed to promote civic engagement among individuals from low-income communities. The project was launched and coordinated by the Parental Stress Center, a child abuse prevention agency that was subsequently acquired in 2010 by Family Resources, another child abuse prevention agency. The CLI model was developed through a year-long planning process involving the organizers of the poverty symposium, Pittsburgh’s Coro Center for Civic Leadership, and the University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work. This group continued to meet as a coordinating committee throughout the implementation of the three CLI cohorts.

The CLI aimed to provide emerging community leaders from poor neighborhoods with the skills and support needed to have an impact on poverty. Participants would learn how to convene residents of low income neighborhoods for community conversations about issues of concern to them. They would present what they learned to civic leaders and elected officials who would be brought to the table by the sponsoring agencies. In sum, the CLI would provide people who are poor with a way to participate in the public sphere. The sponsoring agencies would join them in advocating for an agenda developed by the people they serve.

Each sponsoring agency identified one or more individuals from among its clients, volunteers, or employees to become “CLI Fellows.” They were called “fellows” to honor their lay expertise on the issue of poverty; they also received a modest stipend. Candidates were required to have an interest in community improvement and incomes below 200% of the federal poverty level. Each agency assigned a staff person to support their fellow(s) throughout course of the CLI. In the tradition of participatory action research, agency professionals and the fellows were considered to be co-learners.

The CLI covered three phases: a series of twelve weekly, three-hour leadership training sessions conducted by Coro, followed by a six-month period of civic engagement – holding community forums, conducting surveys, interviewing key informants – culminating in the preparation and presentation of a formal report of findings and recommendations to civic leaders and elected officials. Working with the participating agencies, Coro created a training curriculum that emphasized the personal development of each fellow, the esprit de corps of the group, and the skills required to conduct civic engagement activities.
Cohort One (2008) - Advocacy for policy change

Nine human service agencies sponsored the first (2008) CLI cohort, consisting of twenty fellows: 14 women and 6 men (13 were African-American and seven were white) from nine different low-income neighborhoods in the Pittsburgh area. The fellows ranged in age from 27 to 72 - with the majority over the age of 45. They began the leadership training sessions in February 2008. All twenty would complete the twelve-week program (as would all but 1 of the 34 fellows in 2009 and 2010 cohorts).

During the leadership training sessions the fellows selected “Second Chances” for individuals with criminal records or poor credit histories as the issue they wanted to address. Studies have shown that these practices disproportionately affect the poor and minorities (Klein 2007). Most of the fellows had personal experiences with these circumstances. They knew of employers that had used criminal and/or credit background checks to screen out applicants for employment, denying jobs to otherwise qualified candidates.

Following completion of their leadership training, the fellows organized and conducted three “community conversations” about Second Chances, attended by a total of 120 residents from low income neighborhoods. In November 2008 they prepared a twelve-page report documenting their experience as CLI fellows. The report urged the adoption of policies to 1) eliminate the item on employment applications requiring applicants to disclose having a criminal record (often referred to as "ban the box"), and 2) to limit credit checks by employers to jobs where a credit record is relevant to work performance, e.g., a cashier, bookkeeper, or accountant.

The fellows presented their findings and recommendations at a community conversation in December attended by representatives of federal and state legislators, the warden of the county jail, and officers from two local foundations – all of whom indicated a willingness to work with the fellows on these policy matters. At this meeting the chief of staff from a U.S. Senator’s office first learned about the growing practice of doing credit background checks of job applicants.

The CLI had accomplished its stated goals. A committed and engaged group of low-income citizens had come together with training and support from a group of nonprofit agencies to identify a poverty issue, gather input from fellow citizens, and present their findings to community leaders. But ensuing attempts over the next several months by a subgroup of fellows to organize a Second Chances advocacy campaign faltered. While three of the fellows did meet with other elected officials, most of the fellows either lost interest or no longer had time to commit to the process. Meetings were irregularly scheduled and poorly attended. The sponsoring agencies had not anticipated the extent to which the fellows would require ongoing support to continue their advocacy activities once the CLI process was completed. It became clear that the fellows were not ready to take the lead.
Finally, in the fall of 2009 staff from the Parental Stress Center formed a coalition that included several sponsoring agencies, three fellows, and a foundation president who had funded the CLI. The coalition pursued Second Chances issues with a primary focus on removing obstacles encountered by ex-offenders seeking employment. The coalition eventually joined with other criminal justice organizations to address the “ban the box” issue. Their efforts led to the introduction of legislation in Pittsburgh’s City Council in early 2012 to eliminate the criminal background question on city job applications.

**Cohort Two (2009) – Preventing youth violence**

The 2009 CLI cohort consisted of 14 low-income individuals sponsored by eight agencies. The fellows selected Preventing Violence among Youth as their issue. While individual fellows were able to enhance their leadership skills, the 2009 CLI was hindered by structural weaknesses in the program that had become evident with the 2008 group: a protracted period of indecision followed the completion of the training sessions during which the fellows struggled to organize their civic engagement activities, and the lack of agency support sufficient to enable the fellows to continue their advocacy activities upon completion of the CLI.

To correct the first problem, after the training sessions ended staff from Coro and the Parental Stress Center sat in on weekly meetings to assist the 2009 fellows with planning their civic engagement activities. Still, it took three months before the group was able to organize its first community event. However, the fellows did conclude their civic engagement activities on a high note with a community conversation on youth violence attended by thirty troubled adolescents and a similar number of adults. The meeting, organized and conducted by the fellows, became a rare, open, honest and moving sharing of concerns between the generations.

After completing the CLI the fellows did not continue their advocacy activities. They had not achieved the level of group solidarity needed to go forward. And the sponsoring agencies – many of which were not youth-serving organizations - were not prepared to commit the resources needed to sustain the group.

**Cohort Three (2010) – Neighborhood-based community building**

Homewood is one of Pittsburgh’s most distressed neighborhoods as indicated by its poverty, crime, child abuse, and dropout rates. Over half the lots in the neighborhood are vacant or are the site of abandoned, deteriorating buildings, though some residential streets remain intact.

Community leaders determined to revitalize the neighborhood found inspiration in the success of the Harlem Children’s Zone (HCZ). The HCZ has been touted as the most effective, state-of-the art anti-poverty program in the United States. Over a twenty-year period the HCZ has grown from a one-block pilot to encompass a 100 block area with 10,000 children in the Harlem neighborhood of New York City. Its overarching goal is
for every child to graduate from college and succeed in the job market. The HCZ has organized tenant and block associations, offers parenting workshops, runs pre-school and after school programs, operates three public charter schools, and provides health programs for children and families. The HCZ became the model for federally-funded replication efforts now underway in twenty cities. It was featured as the exemplar of successful school reform in the controversial 2010 documentary Waiting for Superman.

Having visited the Harlem Children’s Zone in 2008, Homewood community leaders formed a steering committee that included officials from some of Pittsburgh’s leading corporate, philanthropic, governmental, and educational institutions to begin planning a Homewood Children’s Village (HCV). The HCV would focus on improving the educational performance of Homewood’s children while also addressing a range of neighborhood concerns including crime, business development, neighborhood beautification, and vacant land use (see Wallace and Lopez’s chapter for a detailed analysis of the HCV). A comprehensive community planning process was envisioned that would lead to the implementation of educational programs and community services by the end of 2011.

Following Harlem’s example, the steering committee recognized that grassroots community participation would be essential for the success of their efforts. The committee looked to the CLI as a means of encouraging resident involvement. Two Homewood agencies involved in planning the HCV – the Greater Pittsburgh YMCA and Operation Better Block (OBB) – had been sponsors of the first two CLIs. Staff from these two agencies and Family Resources joined with the HCV’s newly-hired project manager to sponsor twenty fellows who would be trained to involve neighborhood residents in planning, developing and, ultimately, participating in the HCV.

The following strategies were adopted in Homewood to overcome the structural problems of the previous CLIs:

• The purpose of the CLI was established from the outset and fellows would be selected based on their commitment to that purpose.

• The CLI would be place-based, focusing on the concerns of a designated low-income neighborhood, rather than being a city-wide effort.

• Residence in Homewood was the only demographic requirement for becoming a CLI fellow; a candidate did not need to be poor to qualify. As a result, the Homewood fellows had a broader set of competencies than previous cohorts with backgrounds in business, nursing, the performing arts, teaching, and journalism.

• Once the training phase of the CLI was completed, the fellows would be supported and supervised in their ongoing civic engagement activities by OBB, thereby providing the organizational structure that had heretofore been missing.
With a clear, compelling purpose, fellows strongly committed to their neighborhood and a community-based organization prepared to provide continuing direction and support, what could possibly go wrong? Despite the revisions to the program model, the route from CLI fellow to Homewood citizen leader was beset by difficulties comparable to those that had hindered the first two CLI cohorts. As the leadership training program passed the midpoint, confusion reigned:

- The HCV steering committee had not yet defined the community planning process for which the fellows were being prepared to assist.
- OBB’s role in providing guidance for the fellows remained ambiguous. By the end of the training sessions the OBB staff person assigned to the CLI had left the agency.
- The fellows became increasingly unclear about their identity, allegiance, and function – were they CLI fellows, OBB volunteers, or HCV organizers?
- The Coro trainer was uncertain about how to address the fellows’ mounting complaints as they began questioning the purpose of the training.

The fellows’ confusion – induced by the professionals around them – was undermining the training as the training phase moved toward its conclusion in July. CLI and Coro staff were able to address the issue with the chair of the HCV steering committee, who until then had not been directly involved with the CLI. He brought some clarity to role the fellows were expected to play, enabling the Coro trainer to modify the CLI curriculum and largely resolve the fellows’ discontent.

When it came time to transition from leadership training to the civic engagement phase, OBB had been displaced as the home base for the fellows. However, the HCV community planning process was finally adopted and the fellows were assigned to be the co-leaders of several work groups formed to involve neighborhood residents in developing the HCV. However, once this work concluded in early 2011, there were no plans for continuing their involvement with HCV or OBB. At the same time Family Resources terminated its programmatic commitment to the CLI. One-by-one, the agencies that had trained, supported and worked with this cohort of strongly motivated citizen leaders abandoned them.

In an effort to address the structural weaknesses encountered during the preceding CLIs, partners were enlisted that could provide the organizational support needed to sustain the involvement of the fellows during the civic engagement phase and beyond. Nonetheless, this conscious and collaborative construction broke down at the same points as before due to unanticipated shifts in the priorities and roles of the sponsoring organizations.
Lessons Learned (2011)

The CLI was created to bring everyday citizens from low-income communities together with nonprofit organizations to work as equal partners in alleviating poverty-related policies and/or conditions. The University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work evaluation of the CLI found that, with few exceptions, the fellows were able to acquire and practice civic leadership skills. Each CLI cohort could point to specific accomplishments. However, the CLI organizers did not anticipate the kind of support and structure the fellows would need in order to sustain the efforts of a group of citizen leaders. The CLI succeeded as a process for training and motivating ordinary citizens, but failed as a vehicle for enabling them to accomplish lasting results.

A more results-oriented CLI would require more intensive agency involvement. Instead of doing three sequential CLIs, a single, three-year CLI could have been conducted. A single agency, whose mission would be advanced by the CLI, would have been responsible for all phases of the project. A three-year CLI would allow for more experience in applying the skills learned during the training, a more thorough analysis of the information learned from the community, and the development and implementation of results-oriented, long-term action plans.

This paper has purposefully emphasized the limitations of the CLI model. However, many constructive elements emerged that can be applied to creating effective agency-citizen partnerships:

1) Residents of low-income communities are eager to be involved in social change and community improvement activities.

2) Change efforts are more effective when people from low-income communities with varied socioeconomic and occupational backgrounds are involved. A wider mix of experiences, skills, knowledge, and social networks produces a stronger group.

3) Intensive leadership training can impart skills, build teamwork, and develop the self confidence that galvanizes citizens’ belief in their ability to achieve social change.

4) Involvement in community change activities is personally transformative for the participants. It enhances their sense of identity and self-efficacy.

5) A sponsoring agency should assign a community organizer to support the ongoing activities of a group of volunteer citizen leaders. The organizer’s knowledge of group process, community dynamics, systemic issues, and practical methods for engaging the community would contribute to the group’s effectiveness.

6) Nonprofit organizations can help connect citizen leaders with local civic and political elites to the degree that they have already established such relationships in advance.

7) The distribution of power in the relationship between professionals and citizen leaders requires constant monitoring and open discussion among the parties.

8) Human service organizations currently have an extremely limited capacity to support civic engagement activities by the people they serve, due to financial and organizational priorities that privilege services to clients over engagement by citizens.
9) The institutional infrastructure for civic engagement is poorly developed. This poses the dual challenge of having to create the structures that make civic engagement possible while at the same time attempting to engage the community in making change.

10) Individuals who participate in an intensive civic leadership program go on to use their acquired skills on projects for which they have a passion. Follow-up evaluation of the CLI fellows found a solid majority putting their CLI experience to work on projects in their own neighborhoods, community organizations, and workplaces.

11) Gathering citizens together for authentic conversations about matters of deep concern in which everyone's participation is invited and respected stimulates democratic discourse, generates innovative ideas, and motivates political action. The CLI demonstrated that the power of an “ideal speech situation” is more than just a philosopher's dream (Braaten, 1991).

References
ORGANIZING FOR ECONOMIC JUSTICE: A MODEL

Carl Redwood and Bonnie Young Laing
ORGANIZING FOR ECONOMIC JUSTICE
Carl Redwood and Bonnie Young Laing

Introduction
Organizing for economic justice within a neighborhood context means thoughtfully preparing residents and other community stakeholders to actively shape local community development agendas so that development efforts achieve shared prosperity across diverse economic and demographic groups. One form of economic justice organizing is mobilizing community power to prevent market forces from developing land in neighborhoods that will likely cause residential displacement, gentrification and other forms of economic oppression. These market forces are often channeled through and supported by local redevelopment authorities and community based development corporations, thus making these entities key targets for neighborhood level struggles for economic justice (Stoecker, 1996; Fainstein, 2010).

Economic justice organizing seeks to counter the ‘money power’ of organizations challenging free market forces with the ‘people power’ of mobilized groups. It also works to ensure that residents and stakeholders are informed and savvy participants at decision making tables where economic development strategies are formed. This entails helping community members gain access to the people, knowledge and resources that can move their ideas for equitable community development from conceptualization to implementation and/or enforcement. Economic justice organizing calls for using tactics such as broad coalition building, defining community wants and needs then codifying those wants and needs into principles that can be translated into law and/or social policy such as master planning documents, zoning law and/or local development plan approval processes (Damewood and Young Laing, 2011).

Based on our work over the past two decades, the Hill District Consensus Group has developed a model for such organizing that includes four key components: Engagement, Education, Codification and Enforcement (See figure 1). This paper provides a case example from the community context in which this model has been developed and applied.

Figure 1. Hill Consensus Group Economic Justice Organizing Model

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Engagement</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Codification</th>
<th>Enforcement</th>
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<td>Mobilize community residents, businesses and groups. Help them connect with others working toward community revitalization and to build strong organizational governance.</td>
<td>Conduct training sessions to help residents understand the terms, policies, process, players and the range of strategies/best practices for equitable/economic development.</td>
<td>Garner then document community wants and dreams for equitable development. Can take the form of planks, principles or other community approved statements.</td>
<td>Ensure that community members have a formal and consistent ‘yard stick’ for measuring whether proposed community development projects met their principles.</td>
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The following sections of the paper will discuss the community benefits campaign in which this model was both developed and applied. Our discussion begins by giving a brief description of the history of the Hill District neighborhood in which the economic justice campaign took place, followed by a synopsis of the community benefits campaign and its connection to each aspect of the community organizing model as detailed in Figure 1. The paper concludes with lessons learned from this particular community organizing experience.

The Community Context

The Hill District community of Pittsburgh is located on valuable land situated between the 2nd and 3rd largest central business districts (Downtown and Oakland) in the state of Pennsylvania. By 1940, the Hill District transitioned from a multi-ethnic neighborhood to a majority African American community that became a center for black entertainment and black business (Sasaki & Associates, 2011). The history of the Hill District is shaped by its strategic location and racial composition, in that it has been a principle target of gentrification and the displacement of African American families in Western Pennsylvania since the early 1940s (Fullilove, 2004). Urban renewal efforts, labeled Renaissance I, began in 1943, when the City of Pittsburgh deemed the neighborhood as overcrowded and full of dilapidated structures (Cain, 2009). At that time a plan to raze the entire Hill District was proposed by George Evans (1943, p. 15), a member of Pittsburgh City Council. His oft quoted perception of the Hill is given below:

The Hill District of Pittsburgh is probably one of the most outstanding examples in Pittsburgh of neighborhood deterioration. Approximately 90 per cent of the buildings in the area are sub-standard and have long outlived their usefulness, and so there would be no social loss if they were all destroyed. The area is crisscrossed with streets running every which way, which absorb at least one-third of the area. These streets should all be vacated and a new street pattern overlaid. This would effect a saving of probably 100 acres now used for unnecessary streets.

The attitude expressed by the Councilman about “no social loss” is a key way of thinking that produces gentrification and displacement—structures seem to be more valuable than people. “Demolition [of parts of the Hill District] began in 1956…By the time the arena opened in 1961, 413 businesses and 8,000 residents in a 100-acre area were displaced” (Ferman 1996). The majority of those displaced were 1,240 African-American families (Pittsburgh Neighborhood Alliance, 1977; Toker, 1986). These residents were predominantly renters and received little relocation compensation, with minimal benefits coming from the federal government, in part because a large number of them left the area before the project was approved, in anticipation of displacement (Cain, 2008 p. 6).
Residents of the Hill District have faced approximately seventy years of displacement pressure. Thus, our economic justice organizing model is based on lessons learned from past and present day economic justice campaigns and illustrates the need to prepare long-term strategies. Just as governmental re-development efforts are based on long-term and cumulative efforts that might span decades, organizing efforts designed to prevent the economic exploitation of people in a particular place must be equally long-term and tenacious. Our most recent campaign for economic justice is a case study representing only a part of a wider set of strategies and tactics for achieving a measure of economic justice for local people via community organizing. We will now turn to discuss the organizing model that developed from this on-going campaign against displacement.

**Engagement**

As stated in Figure 1, engagement is the act of pulling people and organizations directly impacted by an issue together to clarify needs and to develop strategies for addressing their concerns. Current efforts by the Hill District Consensus Group and other organizations to fight displacement are the legacy of leaders such as Ms. Frankie Pace who founded the Citizens Committee for Hill District Renewal in 1963. The Citizen’s Committee organized local business owners, residents and other stakeholders to stop additional displacement of residents (Glasco, 2010). The Citizens Committee for Hill District Renewal, an umbrella group representing 40 organizations, was formed to oppose the “top-down” planning process - public officials deciding what’s good for a neighborhood - that had so critically wounded the Hill. The group opposed the cultural center, saying it would further isolate the Hill from Downtown. Instead, it proposed new apartment buildings and rehabilitating much of the housing already there (Fuoco, 1999). The historic efforts of Ms. Pace to end the displacement of Black people framed later efforts by successor organizations including the Hill District Consensus Group.

The current campaign was sparked by a land dispute. Since 1967, the Pittsburgh Penguins hockey team was the main tenant in the downtown Civic Arena. In 2000, however, the sports team began to complain about the age of the arena and threatened to leave Pittsburgh if the City did not help subsidize the Penguins in securing a new arena in a new location tentatively earmarked for the Lower Hill area of the Hill District. Negotiations between city officials and the team were slow and by 2007, the Penguins threatened to leave Pittsburgh and move the sports franchise to Kansas City, Missouri. The Governor of Pennsylvania, the Allegheny County Executive and the Mayor of Pittsburgh agreed to provide the majority of funding for a new arena and other subsidies to the Penguins to get them to agree to stay in Pittsburgh. The prime support offered by the City was the gift of public land located within the Hill District and a large subsidy to the Penguins Corporation to help build a new arena. This agreement provided more that $750 million in public subsidies for the sports team. It included the public paying more than $500 million to build the new arena, allowing the Penguins to operate the new arena, keep all revenue from parking and retain future development rights for the area even though the arena is owned by a public authority. At this same time, the Hill District, like many other urban neighborhoods, was experiencing the cumulative effects of benign neglect in the form of limited resources allocated to
the neighborhood to foster economic development, address rampant drug crime and failing schools and local leaders were looking for ways to bring greater resources into the neighborhood. Hill District leaders having recognized the gross inequity represented in what would amount to the city government’s multi-million dollar investment in a private corporation, while the needs of Hill District residents were unmet, began community engagement efforts. Their aim was to prevent the Penguins from receiving a multi-million dollar package of subsidies unless the residents to the Hill District had effective and meaningful input into the development process and that the new development provided tangible and lasting community defined public benefits.

In July 2007, the Hill District Consensus Group began to mobilize a broad coalition of Hill District organizations and residents to formulate positions/questions to be investigated surrounding all economic development and housing proposals. At the same time, Pittsburgh United (Unions and Neighborhoods Transforming Economic Development) received funding from the Dream Fund (a network of local and national charitable foundations) to provide organizing, research and legal support for Pittsburgh area community benefit agreement campaigns. Pittsburgh United was a coalition of unions, churches and community activist groups which included: ACORN, Mon Valley Unemployed Committee, Service Employees International Union, the Sierra Club, PA Housing Alliance, PA League of Young Voters, Pittsburgh Interfaith Impact Network and Unite Here. Members of Pittsburgh United were allies in the Hill District struggle who brought support and resource from outside the Hill District.

The other coalition formed was a Hill District Consensus staffed coalition called One Hill. The first meeting of One Hill was in April of 2007 and recruitment of Hill District community organizations was the main task. After this first meeting 6 organizations joined One Hill by July 2007 over 100 organizations had joined the coalition. These organizations were recruited by knocking on doors, phone calls, surveys, and using direct mail. The organizations that joined included block clubs and neighborhood groups, faith based organizations, social service agencies, businesses, Democratic Party committees and regional groups.

**Education**

The education portion of the organizing model entails making sure that community residents and other stakeholders are aware of relevant terminology, processes, policies and leverage points rated to the target economic justice issue. As Hill District stakeholders began the effort to ensure the neighborhood would benefit from the new Penguins’ arena, a new model was emerging to address such issues, so-called “community benefits agreements”. Community benefits agreements (CBAs) are legally enforceable tools used by community residents and organizations to ensure that public dollars invested in privately owned development projects would return benefits to the communities in which those developments are located. The Hill Community Development Corporation (CDC) began the process of educating neighborhood leaders on community benefits agreements as a mechanism to ensure that any new developments in the Lower Hill District would also aid
the community. A small group of Hill District community leaders looked at examples from Los Angeles and other cities to prepare a local campaign in the Hill District. The models reviewed varied in terms of how broad a CBA coalition should be and in what types of benefits were sought. Based on varied notions of what kinds of community benefits should be sought, how broad the coalition should be and how much community input should be solicited, tensions began to develop between the lead campaign partners: the Hill CDC and the Hill Consensus Group.

**Codification**

Over the course of many public meetings local people provided their ideas on what type of development they wanted to see for the Hill District. These ideas were then developed into planks or potential negotiating points. At the end of July 2007 a community town hall meeting was held for the purpose of prioritizing the planks and the highest priorities for local people were the targeted hiring of Hill District residents at the new arena and the construction of a new grocery store (also with targeted hiring of local residents) located within the neighborhood (Cain, 2008, p. 10).

By August, One Hill held an election to select a 9 member Negotiating Committee to represent the Hill District in bargaining with the City, County and the Penguins. The Negotiating Committee worked with the priorities developed through the community process to develop the One Hill Negotiating Platform which was called “Blueprint for a Livable Hill”.

This Blueprint included 7 major areas:

- Master Plan to Build a Livable Community
- Livable Hill Community Improvement Fund
- Family Sustaining Jobs & First Source Job Opportunities (hiring people from the local neighborhood first for all jobs)
- A Community Grocery Store / Economic Anchor
- Community / Multi-Purpose Center
- Historic Preservation & Green Space
- Policy Commitments for a Livable Hill

The One Hill Negotiating Committee set up the first negotiating session to begin the process to secure the CBA. The meeting was held at the Sports and Exhibition Authority offices and when the negotiating committee arrived at the conference room, there was a separate group of Hill residents in the room who claimed they represented the Hill Community for the CBA negotiations. Because of this split in the community, the County Executive, the Mayor and Penguins took advantage and refused to negotiate claiming they did not know with whom to negotiate and as a result this community split stopped all negotiations from October 2007 to January 2008. By December 2007, the Penguins were
ready to seek City Planning approval for their plan for the new arena. This public approval process at City Planning was one of the main leverage points that the community could use to fight for the CBA. At the first City Planning Commission hearing on the Arena master plan, One Hill members and community residents called on the Planning Commission to delay its approval of the Arena plans until a CBA was in place.

In January 2008, the City and County declared a CBA with the community by releasing their proposed agreement to the media without discussing it with the community. One Hill held a press conference and gave a statement rejecting the proposal. With cameras rolling they burned the proposed agreement, making local headlines. After the community rejected the proposal the City and County returned to the negotiating table, but the Penguins did not.

One Hill attended the January City Planning meeting demanding “NO CBA, NO MASTER PLAN!” and coalition partners mobilized more than 100 people to attend. The meeting lasted more than seven hours. The community response was overwhelming in opposing the plan without a CBA. In spite of this, the Mayor and the Director of the Urban Redevelopment Authority urged the Commission members to vote in favor of the plan. The Commission voted 5-3 in favor of the Penguins plan (Boren 2008; Lord 2008).

One Hill filed an appeal to overturn the planning commission’s approval of the Arena plan without a CBA in February 2008. This legal appeal became a leverage point for the eventual settling of the CBA. On the negotiations front, the Penguins had not been at the negotiating table for months so One Hill planned to protest the Penguins’ Spring Playoff games to gain national media coverage to pressure the team to negotiate. This protest would highlight the large amount of “corporate welfare” received by the hockey team and their refusal to give back to the community. Just prior to the protest the team returned to the negotiating table, some progress was made and as a result, the planned protest was called off (Prine, 2008).

By May, the One Hill Negotiations Committee felt the CBA was ready to bring to the rest of the Coalition for ratification. The CBA was endorsed by One Hill, however, months had gone by without approval from the public officials and the Penguins. Without signing the agreement, the Penguins and the City were moving forward with demolition and construction plans to build the new arena. In August, One Hill planned to block the entrance to the construction site because the agreement was being stalled. In response to this planned protest, the City signed an “intent to sign” letter and set a date for the formal CBA signing.

On August 19, 2008 the CBA was signed. One Hill agreed to drop the appeal of the Planning Commission approval and to publicly support the new arena project. One Hill also pledged not to block or litigate against the Arena development or Lower Hill development as long as it is consistent with Master Plan (Cain, 2008).
The One Hill Coalition negotiated the first ever CBA in Pennsylvania. This agreement comes after nearly a year of negotiations with the Penguins, the Sports and Exhibition Authority (SEA), the Pittsburgh Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA), the City of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County. This historic first step began the process of ensuring that major economic development projects provide concrete benefits to the communities where they are located.

The Hill District CBA includes $8.3 million in financial resources for neighborhood improvement efforts in the Hill District, plus numerous non-financial benefits, such as a community-driven Master Development Plan, initial funds to develop a grocery store, a commitment that Hill District residents will have first priority for jobs that are created in connection with the development of the Arena and adjoining area, and a commitment that those jobs will pay a living wage. (One Hill CBA 2007)

**Enforcement**

Even though the first Pennsylvania CBA was a great victory it must be placed in proper context. The community fought long and hard to secure approximately $10 million in benefits for the community, but this is a small percentage of the more than $750 million public subsidy given to the Penguins. In addition to the public subsidy, the owners of the Penguins corporation will continue to profit from the ongoing arena and parking revenue and the sale and development of the Lower Hill. Despite this agreement, the Hill District and other Pittsburgh neighborhoods are not being developed to meet the needs and interests of the majority of people who live in these communities or in the city of Pittsburgh. Although the local community was successful in securing the CBA, community organizations continue to fight for the enforcement of the CBA. Developments like the arena and Lower Hill may produce some benefits, but they also may be counter-productive in the long run.

As Gilda Haas (2010) of Strategic Actions for a Just Economy argues:

> The fact remains that the same projects that will provide our members with hard-won benefits, effectively produce the market conditions that are pushing our members out of the neighborhoods where they have lived for decades. For this reason...community benefits agreements are tactical maneuvers in a strategic offense to take back our city. We want to take it back from historic redlining and absentee owners that have stripped our neighborhoods of their equity. To take it back from slumlords and speculators. To take it back from people who do not even see the beauty of our members, relationships, and children—who do not, in fact, see our communities at all. This is not an indictment of community benefits agreements. It is, rather, a placement of these agreements in the big scheme of things...The goal is to make the content of community benefits agreements the norm, not the exception. We have our eyes on a much bigger prize – a right to the city for all.
The implementation and enforcement of a CBA depends upon the continued organizing strength of the CBA coalition and its partners. The long, often mundane, process of implementation depends upon the continued efforts of community residents and the maintenance of the CBA coalition. This sustained engagement becomes more possible when CBAs come out of organizing efforts driven by coalitions that view a CBA not as a strategy in and of itself, but as one tactic within a broader strategy for economic justice. For example, our effort now is to push public agencies such as Pittsburgh’s Urban Redevelopment Authorities and City Planning Department to introduce policy that requires public benefit in exchange for public subsidy.

Ultimately, CBA campaigns cannot be a one-time organizing drive. The real success of a CBA lies not in winning a defined set of benefits. It is in how it helps the community to become better organized to increase its power overall. Via CBA campaigns, the complex macro issues of structural inequality are clarified in ways that are closer to home and become more personalized. In addition, the alliances community organizations build with labor, environmental and other social justice groups help them to be better prepared to build broader coalitions that may be able to more effectively address the power differentials that promote economic inequality and injustice.
References


PENN AVENUE:
AN ARTS-BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT INTERVENTION
Matthew Galluzzo
PENN AVENUE
Matthew Galluzzo

Introduction
Local neighborhood commercial districts are common in Pittsburgh’s East End. Topography, historical employment centers, and retail business models of a bygone era have heavily influenced how the neighborhoods developed. Many neighborhoods feature stately and ornate buildings within discrete business districts surrounded by expansive and densely packed residential communities. During the 1960s and 1970s, jobs in locality-based employment centers that supported these districts, primarily local mills and foundries, disappeared. Household purchasing power diminished. The number of retail businesses that once lined commercial corridors drastically decreased. Out-migration to other cities and suburban neighborhoods further weakened the vitality of the shops and services that remained. With few exceptions, by 1980 many of the traditional neighborhood commercial districts no longer served as attractive or competitive destination point for shoppers.

For over a decade thereafter, vacancy rates rose as traditional business recruitment and development efforts were thwarted by a changes in consumption patterns that favored larger-scaled destination shopping centers and malls—the so-called ‘big box’ shopping centers oftentimes located outside of the central city. The significant proportion of remaining residents who lacked the necessary spending power to support a neighborhood business district reinforced the process of economic decline in these communities. Several neighborhoods in Pittsburgh’s East End developed alternative business district recruitment/retention/marketing models during this time, including the highly successful 16:62 Design Zone in the city’s Lawrenceville and the Strip District neighborhoods (see: http://www.1662designzone.com).

Another, the Penn Avenue Arts District, grew out of discussions in the mid-1990s led by Artists & Cities, Inc., with two local community development organizations, Bloomfield Garfield Corporation (BGC) and Friendship Development Associates (FDA). Founded in 1994, Artists &Cities, Inc. existed as a non-profit real estate development and resource organization that worked to foster community development and economic growth by helping to ensure an integral place for artists in Pittsburgh’s future. Artist & Cities, Inc. had commissioned a survey of artists living in the city of Pittsburgh in the mid-1990s and their research revealed that nearly one-tenth of all the artists living in the city of Pittsburgh resided in the three zip codes that border Penn Avenue in the East End. The two neighborhood development corporations worked over the subsequent years to develop what became the Penn Avenue Arts Initiative.

The Penn Avenue Arts Initiative: Creative Regeneration
As a project of the BGC and FDA, the Penn Avenue Arts Initiative (PAAI) aimed to revitalize the Penn Avenue corridor by using the arts to enhance public perception of the district, instill pride in the neighborhood, foster inter and intra community ties, and establish a substantial artists’ niche. The PAAI was also designed to act as a springboard for attracting
and enticing artists to live and work in the neighborhoods along the Penn Avenue corridor. At its height, the PAAI could be best visualized as embodying a circle, comprised of four distinct components, each critical to the success of the program and buoyancy of the community: Technical Assistance, Marketing, the Building Intervention Strategy, and the Artist Loan and Grant Fund. These four components will be discussed in depth later in this article.

The efforts of the PAAI were transformative and yielded impressive results. The district now boasts one of the most unique and successful models for revitalizing commercial corridors in the country. By offering incentives to private investors, undertaking transformative real estate projects, and carrying out a comprehensive and innovative marketing campaign, the PAAI reduced the building vacancy rate from over 45% to below 20% in less than 10 years. Over one-fifth of all the spaces on the avenue were converted for use by artists, arts organizations, and related businesses. And, with thousands of people coming to the Avenue each month, Penn Avenue moved from fledgling arts enclave to a recognized contributor to the regional cultural fabric. PAAI Artist Loan and Grant Fund Committee provided eight loans totaling $96,500 and twenty-three matching grants totaling $137,000, leveraging nearly $20,000,000 for investment along Penn Avenue. PAAI provided marketing and technical assistance by hosting nine artist homeowner workshops for nearly 175 artists, all of which resulted in at least one artist-buyer per workshop. PAAI has coordinated six summer festivals and hosted over one hundred Unblurred: First Fridays on Penn events. The PAAI organized over fifty professional tours of the Penn Avenue Corridor, and also produced two 15-minute professional documentary DVDs of which over 8,000 copies were distributed at conferences, to prospective tenants/buyers, and the public at-large.

A Neighborhood Reborn

A pedestrian in 2012 on Penn Avenue in Pittsburgh’s East End may be struck by the paradoxical building conditions. Layers of graffiti cover some blighted, vacant, and abandoned buildings. But a continued walk reveals a stark contrast to this blight that dominated nearly all of the Penn Avenue Corridor just a few years ago. Newly constructed lofts and townhouses, renovated residences, businesses and organizational venues are situated throughout the corridor – many of which are owned or rented by artists. An even closer look reveals robust and vital economic activity—artists producing work, audiences being entertained, people enjoying ethnic food after an art exhibit. Many of the buildings are occupied by the life of a community again, spilling out into the sidewalks and inviting that pedestrian to explore a bustling arts district that did not exist just a few years ago.

This exploration may reveal a unique building with a glass terrace overlooking Penn Avenue. Shadowy figures - artists blowing glass - are backlit by the fiery furnaces within. Juxtaposing this visual phenomenon is the Glass Lofts, a one-of-a-kind ultra modern mixed-use development that replaced vacant and dilapidated buildings. And just up the street,
the Quiet Storm serves up coffee and vegetarian fare in a building that formerly housed a notorious nuisance bar. Once the most dangerous corner in the district, this redeveloped corner is now home to the Quiet Storm’s large glass storefront, a colorfully decorated interior, and local art hanging on the walls. Patrons come and go with coffee and desserts and the corner feels functional again.

From Negley to Mathilda, Penn Avenue currently houses over 100 businesses, providing an eclectic mix of goods and services to a local and regional client base. It is multicultural in the truest sense, with African-American, Caucasian, Asian, Vietnamese and Indian residents and business owners. The coalescence of an arts district has emerged with businesses like the Pittsburgh Glass Center, Dance Alloy, Most Wanted Fine Art, the C-SPACE Collective, Irma Freeman Center, the Cotton Factory, Modernformations, the Clay Penn, Artica, Garfield Artworks, and over 60 artists calling Penn Avenue home. Moreover, district’s greatest marketing tool, Unblurred: First Fridays on Penn, introduces (or re-introduces) thousands of visitors to the avenue each month. At its essence, Penn Avenue is once again a bona fide destination.

The Secret of Success
It was agreed upon early in the PAAI’s development that a full-time Arts District Manager (ADM) would be hired to implement programming. The ADM served as the conduit between artists, businesses, banks, community development corporations, the city’s Urban Regeneration Agency, other stakeholders and neighborhood residents. Key responsibilities for the position included providing technical assistance to artist tenants/buyers, marketing the district, managing the Artist Loan and Grant Fund, liaising with real estate staff in each partner organization in order to implement the Building Intervention Strategy, facilitating all design and planning activities along the corridor, and fundraising for all aspects of the PAAI.

Technical Assistance
For twelve years the PAAI served as a clearinghouse for individual artists and arts organizations seeking to locate in affordable space in Pittsburgh’s East End. For some clients, the PAAI Artist Home Owner workshop served as a first step in locating to the area. An annual event that typically attracted 25-30 prospective buyers, the workshop featured a ‘walk-through’ of at least one available building, presentations by representatives of public and private lending institutions and technical assistance providers, as well as a step-by-step introduction to building analysis and ownership. The workshop served a number of functions:

1. It demystified the process, providing an overview of the typical development process, informing prospective buyers about how the PAAI could assist, introducing on-going projects in the neighborhood, making financing options available, and then having a frank discussions about development pitfalls that usually prompted attendees to think seriously about the responsibilities inherent in scaled building renovation.
2) It “connected the dots,” allowing attendees to build personal relationships with the people they would need to know in the financing and technical assistance worlds.

3) It “created buzz”. At its essence, the workshop generated excitement about what was going on in the corridor. Each workshop translated into at least one sale of property on the Avenue.

Participants in the workshop process represented a broad range of individuals interested in the community’s revitalization efforts. Individual artists, arts organizations and related services, and community-minded developers keen on creating space for artists were all interested in both the process and prospect of securing a building for themselves. The buildings that were sold subsequent to the workshops were developed for a variety of uses. For example, some artists purchased buildings and established living quarters for themselves on the 2nd and 3rd floors, and developed their first floors as studios/gallery spaces. In other cases, small developers purchased buildings with the explicit condition that they would make space available for artists or arts organizations.

Marketing

Early in the evolution of the Arts District, several venues, with support from the PAAI, agreed to coordinate and promote a First Friday “happening” that would highlight the work of individual artists within the district, allow networks of people to mix, and present a new expectation for activity in the District. Over time the First Friday event became more popular among artists and sympathetic businesses. Soon, the event progressed from a semi-annual occurrence to a monthly staple in the event calendar for the city. As frequency of the event increased, the Arts Initiative developed a comprehensive monthly listing and map for each Unblurred. The process was quite simple: the venue would provide the PAAI with an email by the 15th of the month that would include an event title, a paragraph describing the event, and the venue’s contact information. The PAAI would edit and collate information from each participant at no cost, print 3500 handbills, and distribute them to individual venues, coffee shops, and restaurants. By coordinating Unblurred and encouraging each venue to control and coordinate their own individual shows, it eliminated the need for the PAAI to devote staff time to organizing large-scale centralized community festivals. Unblurred became a monthly special event throughout the corridor.

Visitor data collected as a part of Unblurred served as the key indicator for the changing perception of the District. Each quarter, volunteers were dispatched throughout the corridor, collecting demographic, geographic, and other baseline information about attendees. Venue operators conducted informal surveys as well. Data was then analyzed for changes in attendee profile and the regional reach of the event. For example, increased numbers of visitors from outside the immediate local area was viewed as a substantive indication of how the District was being perceived. This information was vital in determining whether the programming was effective in changing public perceptions of the area.
**Building Intervention Strategy**

The partner community development corporations’ (CDCs) involvement in the acquisition and disposition of difficult properties proved essential for the Penn Avenue Arts District. The organizations had the capacity to navigate the complex world of urban real estate, including managing the city’s Treasurer’s sale and land reserve process, negotiating with lien holders, mortgage holders and owners, and understanding the lending and appraisal community. In addition, the organizations were staffed with the project management professionals, who could make necessary improvements to some properties prior to resale.

Beginning with a 16 building intervention strategy, the PAAI partners were primarily interested in encouraging and supporting artists in the pursuit of real estate ownership on the Avenue for the following reasons:

1) Seeding the avenue with vested financial stakeholders would provide community leadership opportunities.

2) The partnering community development corporations were not interested in owning more property than absolutely necessary.

3) Enabling property ownership among artists with varying socioeconomic statuses ensured diversity of income mix on the street. And, as property values rose, these individuals, unlike renters in the neighborhood, would be less likely to be displaced.

4) Since owner/developers are often the best decision makers in prioritizing expenditures and phasing renovation efforts, this strategy enabled buyers to complete projects more affordably than CDC-driven ones. Private owners could decide which improvements are necessary for their comfort and basic needs and which ones can be postponed or undertaken at a later date.

The PAAI partner organizations formulated a development strategy with a mix of intervention activities to deal with this complex set of issues. Historically, the building intervention activities followed several patterns:

1) Acquire, re-sell

2) Acquire, stabilize, re-sell (Note: some structures required significant cleaning, new roofs, and other structural improvements before being marketed. And, in some cases, when prospective buyers had been identified, they wished to complete their own renovations.)

3) Acquire, fully renovate, resell in order to create model projects in their design, financing strategies, and set appraisal high-water marks.

4) Acquire, fully renovate, lease as part of stability-inducing property management portfolio

5) Acquire, demolish, design and construct newly-constructed units for artists and sympathetic uses
Fifteen of the original sixteen buildings were brought into use. It is important to acknowledge that sometimes simply taking title to Penn Avenue properties was an onerous task. Tax, water & sewer and other liens encumbered many of these properties. In most instances the total of these liens exceeded the value of the real estate. On others, banks held mortgages with balances in excess of the property value. In a few cases, actually locating a property owner could be daunting. Some owners had abandoned their properties altogether, while others had passed away and left their estates to out-of-town heirs or executors. If these issues were not confronted head-on by the PAAI partner organizations, the vacant properties would have continued to decay as persistent indicators of blight.

**Artist Loan and Grant Fund**

The PAAI Artist Loan and Grant Fund (ALGF) served as a key tool for the redevelopment work on Penn Avenue. The ALGF began as a mechanism to promote artist occupancy in the Penn Avenue Corridor, providing critical funding to artists who had identified a building to purchase or improve, but who required financial assistance. The ALGF was designed to assist artists who were often seen as ‘high risk’ by the traditional financial sector due to decent (but not great) credit or an unsteady pattern of income for the purposes of purchasing or renting a live/work space. The ALGF, a unique program for any Pittsburgh neighborhood, served as a competitive incentive for the Arts District, allowing the PAAI to court and retain artists who may look at purchasing buildings elsewhere.

In examining this program it is important to first acknowledge whom it impacted. Primary beneficiaries of the Artist Loan and Grant Fund included:

1) The community at-large: a well-kept and vibrant commercial district serves as a vital amenity for residents, businesses, and visitors. The ALGF served as a key tool for creating and enhancing Penn Avenue as a “place” through the rehabilitation and reuse of the built environment.

2) Developers/Artists: the ALGF served as a crucial and accessible funding source for projects with tight margins, and for attracting developers/artists who might be considering multiple locations in the city. Grant and loan funds offset high development costs and made projects more feasible.

3) The community organizations: requiring modest investments of time and resources, the ALGF leveraged considerable private investment for each property, thereby mitigating risk for the organizations. This additional development activity on the Avenue enabled the community development corporations to focus on other catalytic (and often more difficult) projects.
Qualifying proposals to the program included a range of activities including: façade improvement, down payment assistance, funds to create usable raw space with working mechanicals, and purchase of materials. An artist could apply for a 1%-5% loan up to $15,000 and a façade match grant up to $5,000. The required dollar-for-dollar match could come from a variety of sources including public grants, sweat equity in the value of $5,000 or more, or $5,000 of the artist’s own equity.

The fund served as the District’s calling card for prospective buyers, with many artists contacting the PAAI in order to inquire exclusively about the fund. In addition, the fund was the one tool that allowed the neighborhood to influence design aesthetics on the Avenue. A volunteer committee (comprised of architects, designers and neighborhood residents) was charged with reviewing and approving the designs. Staff managed the projects and ensured that the completed façade corresponded to the original design.

Measurement
The Penn Avenue Arts Initiative created and managed the Penn Avenue Survey, a detailed property database that enabled the monitoring of property use patterns and occupancy rates on the Avenue for both traditional and arts-based uses. The Survey included a “dashboard” feature that provided real-time snapshots of real estate activity on the Avenue at any point throughout the year. Information pulled from the Survey served as a primary reporting source for funding entities.

Conclusions
It is important to remember that the ability of community development organizations to make change is intimately linked to their ability to rely and build upon existing community assets. So, as we discuss solving urban challenges, our focus should not look to the arts as the panacea for every neighborhood that may have “issues”. The success of the PAAI represents a fortuitous time in the community development field in the city of Pittsburgh, where a broad-based amalgam of interested parties agreed to create and support an asset-based strategy through innovative and risky programming, which hinged on four basic pieces: organizational capacity, a good idea, assets upon which to build, flexible and significant funding.

Comprehensive support from the local community, the municipality and elected representatives, residents, public safety officials and a variety of other networks were the backbone of the PAAI’s successful efforts in revitalizing the Penn Avenue corridor. The Penn Avenue Arts Initiative succeeded in redefining the neighborhoods in which it is based by bringing in and supporting new arts-based businesses, stabilizing existing traditional businesses, and injecting new life and vibrancy into the business district. Yet, significant work remains in building the eclectic and complementary mix of commercial uses we believe to be crucial for District viability. Interest by new non-arts related neighborhood-serving businesses to locating in the corridor has just recently developed. Furthermore, while the newly opened Children’s Hospital will likely bring ancillary uses in the coming years, there is a definite need to harness and steer the momentum of this newly created arts market in order to create a mix of destinations and neighborhood serving businesses to create sustainable long-term change.
REFRAMING POWER
Denys Candy
**REFRAMING POWER**

Denys Candy

**Background: Post Industrial Wilkinsburg, Pennsylvania**

In the USA during the second half of the 1990s unemployment hovered below 5%, while tax revenues increased by 4.1% and median household income grew 7.1%. (Singer, Suro and Wilson, 2011; Frey, Berube and Singer, 2011). However, one could not assume that a growing national economy led to improved health in marginalized communities throughout the country. Wilkinsburg, Pennsylvania, is a case in point. An inner-ring suburb of the Pittsburgh region sharing a boundary with the city at its Eastern edge, Wilkinsburg's evolution was driven by industrialization during the twentieth century. It grew as a largely residential town, a self-styled “City of Churches,” so called because of its numerous religious congregations.

The collapse of big steel in the early 1980s accelerated changes in Wilkinsburg that may have already been underway due to national urban policy favoring expanded suburbanization. Despite massive population loss in the Pittsburgh region due to rapid de-industrialization, the trend toward car-dependent suburbs continued unabated into the 1990s and beyond. A reduced regional population spread out to take up more and more space, a wasteful approach to land use that contributed to the decline of urban areas throughout Pennsylvania (Katz and Muro 2003). By the mid 1990s with Wilkinsburg’s physical fabric having frayed due to regional job losses and suburbanization, its social fabric—the network of positive interactions and relationships that flows between individuals and groups—followed suit. As the population declined, parts of Wilkinsburg looked increasingly disordered, as if being slowly ground down by poverty.

The disorder of the local area slowly began impacting on residents—especially the children in the city. The struggling school district in Wilkinsburg had a high proportion of low-income students. Alarmed parents and teachers observed children as young as twelve begin enacting anti-social gang-like behavior involving petty theft and the adoption of problematic signs and symbols denoting loyalty to a particular gang. From the decline of the local area to the increase of anti-social behavior by some residents, one could reasonably conclude that conventional economic and political power, what I term “hard” power—a combination of economic and military clout, from which political power is in turn derived—resided outside Wilkinsburg and was concentrated elsewhere in the region.

**Accentuating the Positive**

Environmental artist Reiko Goto (2011) frames the issue succinctly, “How do you make a positive metaphor out of a picture like that [of urban decline]?” Such a question can form a basis for discussion and reflection about what strategies of community organization and development might be applied in post-industrial settings. To Goto’s question, I add a further two: How does a community heal from current and ongoing trauma caused by economic and social dislocation? In the face of structural inequalities and imbalances of “hard” power, are there “softer” forms of communal power that can be mobilized to make a difference? In 1995, having been invited by community leaders to support them in tackling

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1 Wilkinsburg’s 2000 population (19,196) had declined by 17% to 15,930 by 2010. www.census.gov
youth alienation and anti-social behavior, I proposed that we work together in order to better understand the issues young people are facing in the broader community context of Wilkinsburg. The assumption I proposed was that groups of young people would benefit from mending breaches in Wilkinsburg’s social fabric. It followed that increasing civic participation among young people would be a key priority and that program interventions would be designed with two goals: to strengthen social networks in the community at large and to increase incidents demonstrating positive attitudes and behaviors among youth.2

To examine current conditions and encourage creative thinking, I invited community leaders and activists to look beyond obvious negative youth behaviors to consider the question, “What’s right about gangs?” After initial hesitation, and having re-iterated their negative aspects, a stream of qualities was identified including a sense of belonging and identity, mutual support and caring, outlets for creative and entrepreneurial verve and so on. The task at hand, I suggested, was for local organizations to craft experiences for young people that would be at least as interesting as gangs and therefore provide an alternative to them.3

The most immediate need identified was to enable sixth graders (twelve and thirteen year-olds) to expand their behavioral repertoire so as to reduce interpersonal conflicts resulting in disciplinary action and to improve their classroom learning environments. Taking inspiration from a series of popular books entitled Random Acts of Kindness, I proposed we facilitate the organization of Kindness Gangs, to use the power of basic human caring to effect positive change.4 In 1994, a small public grant was secured to pilot this project in schools. Following initial success, the program received charitable foundation funding to extend the life of the project for a further two years. In the first three years, the Wilkinsburg Acts of Kindness initiative served four hundred sixth graders in three elementary schools. It then expanded to include three after-school and summer program sites. Over five years, twelve hundred children and youth and two hundred and fifty adults participated.

Program Implementation
While the emerging program model had three components, specific activities were planned and implemented in direct consultation with the participating youth, teachers and after-school staff:

Creating Community, in which youth gained skills for expanding behavioral choices when challenged, strengthening internal locus of control and connecting with each other and the wider community. Without fail, when sixth graders were asked, “What should you do when someone pushes you around?” they gave the “correct” answer, namely, “I should use words not fists, tell an adult and walk away.” However, when asked, “What did you do the last time someone pushed you around?” they shed accepted norms, saying things like, “I knocked her down;” or “I hit him hard because my Dad told me to hit first or get hit.”

2 Local participating organizations included the Wilkinsburg School District and Borough Council, Hosanna House (a multi-purpose community center), Boys and Girls Clubs (after school centers for youth) and Wilkinsburg Intra Community Network (WIN), a coalition of local businesses, not-for-profits and related organizations.

3 This approach is consistent with what McKnight and Kretzmann (1993) call asset-based community organizing.

Two tools were offered to students so that, rather than losing self control and ending up in trouble, they might exercise more choice about how to react to perceived provocations. Though not labeled as such in the program, the practice of ‘conscious breathing’ to develop more awareness of the moment and strengthen internal locus of control is commonly referred to as mindfulness (Nhat Hanh 1987; Kabat Zinn 1994). Students were taught how practicing conscious breathing could assist them in noticing where they had freedom of action in challenging situations they identified. Brief periods of silence were introduced in classroom and, later, after-school settings, by using a musical instrument – a rain stick – at the sound of which pauses in activity ensued. Periodic ‘guided meditations’ were offered. For example, students were invited to sit in silence with eyes closed or gazing softly downwards; notice the in-breath and out-breath, bring awareness to the body by sensing the rise and fall of the abdomen and feeling feet rooted on the ground; notice thoughts coming and going; offer a smile of appreciation for something positive they had done. Teachers found the resulting calm beneficial in enhancing the classroom learning environment.

Children do not relish sitting still very long. The second tool, Physical Thinking, based on the work of Bryner and Markova (1995), supported the practice of mindfulness through reflexive movement. It is akin to an indoor version of outdoor challenges such as ropes courses where a physical challenge becomes a metaphor for a real-life conundrum. For example, instead of discussing how to set personal goals in the abstract, students were asked to meet a specific goal, by, for example, picking a given spot in the classroom and getting to it through a series of physical obstacles set up by their gleeful classmates. They were coached to notice habitual fight or flight responses to obstacles and to expand their options for action through conscious breathing coupled with increased body awareness. In the process, they learned to expand options for action in the moment, accept challenges without rancor and enjoy setting and reaching a clear goal. Periods of writing and discussion ensued to apply these tools to life challenges at home and school.

For eight weeks during each of two school terms, students were exposed to the tools for one class period weekly. Activities were linked to their academic work in reading, science and mathematics and they were encouraged to experiment with breathing practices at home and in school. Mindfulness and Physical Thinking skills learned in this component were essential to successful collaboration between young people and the wider community in subsequent components.

Creative Expression, in which self-awareness, the articulation individual and group identity and the development of artistic skills formed the basis of a vision for improved environments through photography, writing, theatre and art projects. Visiting artists were invited into school and after-school settings to work with students, leading to completed visual art projects and community exhibitions. For example, in 1997 one hundred disposable cameras were distributed to youth and adult teams with basic instructions and
an invitation to document life in Wilkinsburg as they viewed it. The resulting exhibition, *A Day in the Life of Wilkinsburg*, was held in a local bakery as part of a community festival and featured images professionally printed, mounted and framed by local businesses that had volunteered their services.

*Community Service*, in which young people expanded their participation in civic life through collaborative service projects including playground and neighborhood clean ups, art exhibitions, food drives, recycling, gardening and hosting town meetings. Because of understandable concerns about anti-social activity, adults were expressing increased fear of youth at community meetings even though many adults had little regular contact with young people. To address this, more links between youth and adult networks were created. For example, the University of Pittsburgh Theatre Department was recruited and over two years assisted participating youth in regularly visiting and interviewing adults and elders in Wilkinsburg. Scripts were then written by the youth, assisted by college students. The resulting productions, *Growing Up in Wilkinsburg* (1998) and *The Spirit of Wilkinsburg* (2000) were performed at community venues and a professional theatre. A series of joint adult/youth service projects was also initiated, including gardening and afternoon teas hosted in turn by adults and youth at the local Senior Center.

**Evidence of Success**

Evidence of the strengthening of adult/youth networks and of an increasing sense of connection to the community on the part of youth was observed in the following two examples of youth-led initiatives. In 1999, youth participants organized and facilitated a town hall meeting with their parents, the Mayor and Borough Council members about the future of Wilkinsburg. The Mayor appeared to be taking the event seriously by assiduously “working” the room-- shaking hands with all seventy-five participants, youth and adults alike. Essays about the future of Wilkinsburg were read by their young authors and a heated discussion ensued, during which the Mayor invited greater participation by young people in civic affairs. The issues raised – lack of recreation opportunities, personal safety, job opportunities and the physical state of the community – mirrored those typically raised by adults in Wilkinsburg. What was atypical was that the this meeting was being led by young people.

This project about fostering community connections was tested in the most dramatic way when, in March 2000, a mentally ill man walked through central Wilkinsburg randomly shooting people, killing two. *The Pittsburgh Post Gazette* (March 2000) carried extensive coverage which included an article entitled “Acts of Kindness,” about impromptu school meetings of program participants in which they comforted each other when fearful during a “lockdown” of the community. They asked themselves hard questions about whether their efforts had any value and ended up renewing their determination not to let the incident shake their faith in their ability to continue getting positive things done in Wilkinsburg. The ability of the Acts of Kindness network to respond spontaneously to an unforeseeable crisis...
suggested that participating youth had developed new skills and become increasingly connected to social networks in Wilkinsburg. The University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development affirmed this finding in an evaluation of the project (Farber, 2001).

**Conclusion: Community Worker as Post Industrial Catalyst**

“Wilkinsburg Acts of Kindness” was developed in response to community concerns about the attraction of youth toward anti-social behavior at a young age. The approach taken was to look beyond the immediate problem to wider causes and conditions and to ask open-ended questions that led to a re-framing of key issues. While the immediate challenge manifested as anti-social behavior among youth, the main focus of the program was giving youth a role in strengthening social fabric in the community at large. Moreover, while not sugar-coating or ignoring real imbalances of economic and political power, the program was designed to unleash the potential of “soft” power, the innate capacity of a community to ameliorate difficult conditions through kindness, collaboration and relationship-building.

The practice of mindfulness emerged as a powerful tool in that regard. According to Brown and Ryan (2003) cited in Black et al (2011), benefits of mindfulness to young people include improved impulse control and classroom learning environments. The Wilkinsburg initiative suggests that mindfulness also shows promise as a tool through which young people can: increase their ability to discern expanded options for action when challenged and apply the skills gained to creative expression and community service instead of anti-social activities. The resulting sense of interconnectedness, the feeling that one is part of a productive community, is a vital resource, renewable even in times of economic austerity or distress.

It would be incorrect to substitute this model for actions that seek to mobilize people to change imbalances in “hard” economic and political power. Rather, it complements such efforts by building peoples’ capacities and strengthening local networks that, if skillfully nurtured, can support broader political movements. What, then, is the role of the community organizer in catalyzing positive initiative in post-industrial places? It is first and foremost to be artful - to identify, work with and strengthen softer forms of power – for example, commitment, compassion, resilience, leadership, relationships, skills and capacities for positive action – and to bolster existing or facilitate new communal networks that embody such qualities. Secondly, to craft strategies based on the assumption that many negative conditions can be viewed not simply as individual pathologies but also as manifestations of collective stress brought on by disinvestment and minimal political clout. Thirdly, to seek openings for simultaneously addressing interrelated aspects of community health and well-being, rather than adopt a myopic focus on a single problem such as perceived negative youth behaviors.

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5 The community organizing strategies discussed here evolved to include not only attention to social fabric but also awareness of local ecology, landscape and buildings in Find the Rivers! a project I co-founded in 2002 with community organizer Terri Baltimore in Pittsburgh’s Hill District.
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FIND THE RIVERS!
HOW AN URBAN NEIGHBORHOOD EMBRACED ITS BEAUTY

Terri Baltimore
FIND THE RIVERS
Terri Baltimore

Introduction
The Hill District is a community that is the literal and cultural heart of the city of Pittsburgh. It lies between the second and third largest business districts in Pennsylvania with the central downtown business district to the west and the university center to the east. The landscape of the neighborhood—hills, valleys, and wooded hillsides—was forged by the flow of the city’s three rivers. Waves of immigrants have called this place home. African-Americans have lived here for centuries to escape the racial discrimination and violence of the American south. The Scots and the Irish worked in the mines. This area was once a refuge for a large Jewish community from Russia while Syrians and Lebanese also had an enclave here. Scattered around the Hill are buildings and spaces that are testaments to the groups who once lived here --- the Hebrew above the door of a Yeshiva, the names on headstones in an old cemetery, an Orthodox church and a shuttered jazz club. Pulitzer Prize winning playwright August Wilson grew up here. Nine of his ten plays depicted life in the Hill District over the course of the 20th century. Photographer Charles “Teenie” Harris lived in the Hill and worked for the Pittsburgh Courier, once the premiere black newspaper in America. His collection of nearly 80,000 images, housed at the Carnegie Museum of Art, captured the vibrancy and complexity life of black Pittsburgh. Music played a huge part of the Hill’s legacy. In the segregated 1940s and 1950s, blacks and whites crammed into famous clubs like the Hurricane to hear famous jazz musicians and singers. The neighborhood was populated with small businesses. Long-time residents remember the Hill as place that was self-contained. Everything they needed or wanted was available from neighborhood merchants.

The 1950s ushered in policies that would impact the neighborhood for decades to come. Suburban developments lured white residents away from urban centers. Urban renewal policies made it possible for areas labeled as “blighted” to be cleared to make way for new developments. Part of the neighborhood, called the Lower Hill, was the object of an urban renewal project. City and civic leaders envisioned a new cultural center with high rise apartment buildings, theaters, a new street grid and a civic arena, with a retractable roof. The arena originally served as a new venue for the Civic Light Opera and later became the home of the Pittsburgh Penguins hockey team. In order for the development to proceed, the Lower Hill was razed. In the process, 8,000 people were displaced, 1,300 buildings demolished and 400 businesses disappeared. Gone were the streets where homes, churches, old buildings, businesses, ethnic shops and bars co-existed. Social and familial ties were broken. Deals were struck with some community leaders. Most of the inhabitants of the Lower Hill moved to large public housing communities within the community or to other neighborhoods. Persistent disinvestment and neglect continued. The Hill was redlined—meaning bank loans and other forms of investment for home and business purchases, maintenance and renewal were drastically limited. The commercial corridors in the neighborhood shrank. The economic activities along Wylie and Herron Avenues, two key area of economic activity, disappeared. The riots following the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr in 1968 destroyed a number of businesses. Given this level of decline in the area, some merchants stayed, but many chose to close their stores and leave the Hill.
In the face of such difficulty however, several institutions offered the community options for rebuilding the local area. Over the past 25 years, community-based development corporations worked independently and in partnership with outside developers to create new housing, office buildings and businesses.

In 1991, the Hill District Consensus Group (HDCG) created a “community table,” where issues affecting the neighborhood would be discussed and resolved. The group’s agenda included: elimination of alcohol and tobacco billboards in the Hill, public safety, community beautification, affordable housing, public art and public health. The Consensus Group produced a community plan and updates. They fought against a casino on the neighborhood’s western edge. When the Pittsburgh Penguins wanted a new hockey arena, the HDCG organized to secure a Community Benefits Agreement (CBA). The CBA, a legally binding document, provided support for: a full service grocery store, a state of the art recreation center, a first source job center, a community development fund and a master plan for neighborhood redevelopment (See Redwood and Young Laing’s chapter for further details on the community organizing campaign for the CBA). The Consensus Group established the Hill District Planning Forum. The forum offered developers a place to share their projects and get feedback from forum members and the community. The HDCG worked diligently on the Hill District master plan, making sure the document contained anti-gentrification principles and affordable housing.

Today, the Hill District is a predominantly an African-American community, with some of the most attractive real estate in the city because of its views and central location. New housing and the redevelopment of older housing complexes have once again raised the specter of displacement and gentrification. However, the HDCG and its partners developed a plan to prevent further displacement of local residents.

**Find The Rivers!**

Two events converged to spark the formation of the Find the River project (FTR) in 2002. First was the visit of French urbanist, Michal Cantal DuPart to the Hill. He came at the invitation of Drs. Robert and Mindy Fullilove, scholars from Columbia University, who were Falk Fellows at the University of Pittsburgh. Cantal walked the streets and marveled at the views of the Allegheny and Monongahela Rivers from a variety of vantage points around the neighborhood, took hundreds of pictures and viewed the Hill from other Pittsburgh communities. Cantal posited that the Hill was purposefully isolated. He cited three examples. First, the advent of the Civic Arena changed that the way Pittsburgh related to the Hill. The building, with its parking lots and fence, cut off three main streets that connected the Hill to downtown — the main hub for business, shopping and transportation. Second, the Penn Incline, a funicular railway that was dismantled in 1952, eliminated the direct connection between the Hill and the Strip District, a center for fresh food and other goods. Third, the Crosstown Boulevard made it convenient to travel around the city without driving through the Hill. He believed it was easy for Pittsburghers to ignore the Hill because they did not have to travel to or through the neighborhood. The Hill was not part of their consciousness or experience thus it was easier to ignore the people and the places here.
In considering the future development of the Hill, Cantal posed three questions:

1) Why doesn’t everyone in Pittsburgh come to the Hill?

2) Why doesn’t everyone in France come to the Hill?

3) How do you get to the river from the Hill?

At the time, that last question seemed to be a rhetorical one.

At around the same time, the then Mayor, Tom Murphy, established the Riverlife Task Force to examine how the rivers could serve as regional assets. The Task Force included the obvious participants – property owners, politicians and communities contiguous to the rivers, but the dialogue did not include a landlocked place like the Hill. In 2002, Denys Candy and I thought the Hill should be part of the river conversation. Denys and I were friends and colleagues for a long time. He, an Irish transplant, operated an organizational consulting business and I ran a program that served women in Hill District who had substance abuse issues. Together, we defined the Find the River (FTR) project as “a partnership to support river development activities by engaging communities and neighborhoods in river-related planning and development...The Find The Rivers pilot partnership is in the Hill District with the goal of expanding economic, social and cultural opportunities by linking residents and Hill-based organizations to Pittsburgh’s rivers.”

For a decade, the Hill District Consensus Group provided a platform for FTR. They gave us a venue to talk about the rivers and views. Their members supported us by attending meetings and events. Elders from HDCG shared their stories and memories of how they got to the rivers. The elders encouraged us even as skeptics asked derisively if we “had found the rivers yet”. HDCG stood by us when some wondered if the community didn’t have more important issues to face. Didn’t the community need jobs? Didn’t the Hill need safer streets? Of course, the Hill needed to tackle those issues. Our response was simple – a community of color had the capacity to face economic and social disparities and embrace environmental issues simultaneously. FTR arranged boat rides to look at the community from the rivers and mapping expeditions that pinpointed overlooks and views of the rivers from the neighborhood. Our partnerships grew to the Hill House Association, Carnegie Mellon University and the Riverlife Task. FTR received funding to develop a series of conceptual plans that focused on key areas of the neighborhood. In 2007, we partnered with the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy, an organization that managed the four regional parks in the city. The Conservancy added value to our efforts by bringing their expertise in fundraising, project development, construction and maintenance. Our first major undertaking with the conservancy was the Greenprint, a plan for parks, open spaces, city steps, overlooks, playgrounds and fields in the Hill District.
The Greenprint

In 2009, we hired landscape architect Walter Hood, a professor at University of California-Berkeley, to undertake the first phase of the Greenprint which examined land use, water passages, stair connections, vegetation and woodlands in the neighborhood. His team included the Studio for Spatial Practice, a Pittsburgh design firm. Community members, politicians, planners, artists, environmentalists and other stakeholders served on an advisory committee. Phase two of the Greenprint was completed in 2010. Hood subtitled this edition “The Village In The Woods” because he proposed that the five miles of wooded hillsides surrounding the Hill could be incorporated into the heart of the community where the houses and businesses are situated. The plan was vetted and approved by the Hill District Consensus Group and the Greenprint was inserted into the Hill Master Plan. The Greenprint was made possible by the years of ground worked laid by the Find the Rivers project. The events, the boat rides, the exploration of green spaces, clean-ups, visits to river overlooks, mapping, collecting stories, getting feedback on conceptual plans, development of affinity groups, reaching out to universities, city planners, environmental groups and constant contact with stakeholders in the Hill made the plan possible.

Denys and I were deliberate about our work. In a world where everything has to be done quickly, we took pride in slow, patient interactions. When folks in the community were concentrating on the development of the commercial corridor, we purposefully aimed our sights on the oftentimes ignored edges of the neighborhood. We concentrated on Kirkpatrick Street—a wide tree lined boulevard at one end and a two-lane road at the other. Kirkpatrick crosses the neighborhood, connecting with the Allegheny River on the north and the Monongahela River on the south. On Arcena Street we discovered a wonderful vantage point—the best kept secret in the Hill—from which to see the city. FTR proposed a formal overlook there. We explored the idea and promised the neighbors that we would not pursue it if they did not agree. They said no and the idea was dropped. We explored opportunities around the Herron Avenue by working with the local community organization. All of the meetings included anyone who wanted to participate. And we sought counsel from many. Because of our ethos, urban planners, the redevelopment authority and charitable foundations have asked all those interested in green development in the Hill one key question: “How does the idea fit into the Greenprint?” Other Pittsburgh communities have seen the plan as a model. Today, because of this work environmental sustainability, the Hill District is seen as a place from which the world can learn—not a place to be ignored or avoided.
The first project to spring from the Greenprint is Cliffside Park. The Park represents the Greenprint’s model for development. The park, on the northern edge of the Hill, was designed with the assistance from the immediate neighbors and the HDCG. For the past two years, in preparation for the park development, volunteers from the neighborhood, local universities and corporations descended on Cliffside planting flowers, picking up garbage, and painting fences. Funding for the park was secured from local foundations, corporations and the state and construction is scheduled to begin in Spring 2013. The park is nestled in an area where other green projects are developing such as the conversion of an old high school into a center for green technology and green business development, the restoration of the August Wilson family home into the Daisy Wilson Artists’ Community and the plans for an urban boy scout camp.

Conclusion
In this short article, I have tried to provide an overview of some of the innovative community development work taking place in the Hill District. Urban communities facing a range of social and economic disparities should not have to choose between economic and environmental justice. Part of the fight against poverty is the struggle for a high quality, livable and safe urban environment. For the Hill District, finding the rivers helps us to secure a better future for all.

References
AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES
**Terri Baltimore** is vice president of Neighborhood Development at the Hill House Association in Pittsburgh and oversees the agency’s arts programs and manages its interests in a variety of community settings. She also directs the Hill House Community Collaborative, a program that assists recovering women and their children. She is the co-founder of an initiative called “Find The River!” which works on green space planning and connecting the Hill District neighborhood with Pittsburgh’s rivers. She is a member of the neighborhood’s network of “green” organizations working on environmental initiatives.

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**Denys Candy** is a community builder who co-designs and facilitates, with stakeholders, entrepreneurial programs that respond to complex issues and challenges at the community level. His work includes facilitating peace-making programs with youth across cultural divides in Pittsburgh and Northern Ireland, and community wide dialogue on education and economic development in Syracuse, NY.

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Bob Feikema has been executive director of an AIDS service organization; has administered mental health, substance abuse, family service, and child abuse prevention programs; and has created innovative civic engagement projects and community building projects involving low income citizens. He has a master’s degree in psychology from Duquesne University in Pittsburgh.

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Adrienne Walnoha is the CEO of Community Human Services (CHS). Under Adrienne’s leadership, CHS has expanded its housing assistance programs to include atypical shelter, housing first, eviction prevention and rapid re-housing programs which previously had not been available in Allegheny County. She serves as an advisor on the Allegheny County Homeless Advisory Board and the Emergency Food and Shelter Program Board. Adrienne is also a therapist and licensed Social Worker who is part of the adjunct faculty at the University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work.
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Bonnie Young Laing is an associate professor of social work at Youngstown State University. She is a native of the Hill District and has served as a community organizer with One Hill Community Benefits Coalition and the Hill District Consensus Group. Her current work centers on equitable and inclusionary community planning and development in the Hill District. She has published work in the areas of African centered community organizing, labor/community partnerships, community development in African American communities and culturally competent macro practice.