

Partners

Part One Neighborhood Revitalization through Partnership

Part Two Whittier Neighborhood a Minneapolis Case Study



About This Book

This book is an attempt to give neighborhoods and public and private support groups the tools they need to carry out revitalization projects. It includes both a step-by-step, how-to guide and an extended case study illustrating Whittier Neighborhood's successful revitalization efforts.

In 1976 the Whittier Neighborhood in Minneapolis and the Dayton Hudson Corporation, through a \$1 million, five year commitment from its foundation, became partners in a community-based neighborhood revitalization project. Both have gained from the partnership.

Whittier now has an active, successful, nonprofit community development corporation with an office and full-time staff who help organize neighborhood image improvement and security programs, stage community public relations and social events, plan and manage housing rehabilitation and economic development projects, facilitate the conversion of apartment buildings into cooperative housing, and plan new housing development projects. The neighborhood looks better; many of its people have an increased sense of community; and it is no longer considered a deteriorating section of Minneapolis.

Dayton Hudson people have the satisfaction of knowing that money they have contributed has gone to a truly worthwhile community-controlled project, one that is likely to continue. They have learned how to work effectively with neighborhood groups and how to use their clout to further neighborhood revitalization. Dayton Hudson has been encouraged enough to consider participation in similar projects in other locations.

Minneapolis has also gained from the neighborhood/corporate partnership set up in the Whittier Neighborhood. Both the city and the federal government have spent large sums of money in Whittier during the project; they have had the benefit of seeing how much their efforts could accomplish when they were joined by a supporting private corporation. Neither the public nor the private sectors could have done as much alone as they have been able to do in a cooperative effort led by the community.

Since every neighborhood and each partnership is unique, every group of people will have to adapt this book to its own needs and purposes. Therefore, it has been written to provide general guidelines, not specific rules.

Each chapter has two sections, the first giving a general how-to-do-it approach to the topic and the second illustrating that topic with the Whittier Neighborhood's experiences. Some readers may find it helpful to switch that order, reading the Whittier example before the general how-to.

Similarly, the chapters need not be read in the order in which they are presented. Readers from the private sector who are interested in assisting a neighborhood in its revitalization endeavors may, for example, want to begin with Chapter Two, "Partnership." Urban planners and designers entering the work of neighborhood revitalization may want to begin with Chapter Three, "Planning."

Neighborhood people and corporate executives are the primary audiences for whom this book is intended. The project team hopes the book will encourage neighborhoods and businesses to plan and carry out successful community-based revitalization projects in cities and towns all over the country.

Partners is a book to be used. Its "notes" columns invite the active participation of its readers. Persons involved in neighborhood revitalization may excerpt and copy selections of the book for use in their work; they are asked only to acknowledge the source.

Neighborhood people will find it particularly helpful to compare their experiences with other neighborhood groups, many of which are listed with other resources at the end of the book. The resources include pamphlets, books, organizations, and agencies that can help neighborhoods through each step of the revitalization process.

Neighborhood revitalization is a team effort. It cannot be accomplished by any one group working alone; but as public and private groups join with neighborhood people and as various neighborhoods share their knowledge, the work can be done. This book is one attempt to encourage that partnership.

Ranae Hanson
John McNamara, AIA, AICP

Prologue

This book is about the end of an era and the beginning of a new possibility.

The era it leaves behind was "on the road," mobile, going anywhere, celebrating space.

The possibility it welcomes is "coming home," rooting, creating a stake, celebrating place.

Neighborhood is about *place*. It declares that one special place is the foundation for life's living. America "on the move" was hard on places, whether prairies or forests or older cities. This is the story of a new generation that came home and found a way to recover a place that had been misused by old-fashioned Americans. It is about a beginning, a possibility, a way people act when place really matters.

As they proceed to make a place in the city, they learn a thousand things about what works and what doesn't. This book attempts to share that learning with other citysteaders.

I am especially impressed with the central themes, the basic knowings that are so similar to the experience of other community builders in urban America.

There is first the knowing about power. The authors note that it is only when "two are equal that partnership is possible." Most older urban neighborhoods have been badly abused. Many are weak, and unequal. They are probably not ready for a partnership.

Their first task is to grow strong in spirit, will, determination. That is a political task. It can't be achieved by depending on some new technology, able professionals, or skilled managers. It is the responsibility of tough-minded neighbors gaining the strength to stop the abuse of their place. Throughout America you see neighborhood people going through the same process over and over. Before they can make a neighborhood vital, they must grow strong enough to stop those who have exploited the neighborhood. That is why the first knowing is about power.

The second is about the nature of partners. In a marriage we think of idealized partners as equals with the same goal. The potential partners of neighborhoods may be equals but they will *never* have the same goals. No bank, municipal government, business, or system is primarily dedicated to a place for living that is not their business. In that sense, they can never be neighbors or even partners in the family sense. But they can become useful allies of

neighborhoods across America we see successful revitalization as a result of these clear-minded alliances where a deal has been struck. There are also some bitter failures where neighbors had the illusion that major institutions had the same interest as they.

A third theme is the necessity for neighbors to invent a tool to craft their homesteads. If you want to make a business, you use a corporation. If you want to make a service, you use an agency. But if you want to make a neighborhood, there is no proper tool to use. Therefore, all over America neighborhood people are experimenting with old tools and inventing new ones in order to rebuild America at the frontiers of city life. Some of the tools are neighborhood associations, some are community development corporations, others are local energy management cooperatives, a few are neighborhood governments. Each tool is being perfected through neighborhood use that constantly tests its potential to help make a place for people. Neighborhood inventors are typically suspicious of building tools that look like systems, because they were so often the devices that misused neighborhoods and became tools that used people instead of the other way around.

The last of these basic learnings is the most difficult and the most

traditionally divided its space by race and class. Neighborhoods are often described as rich or poor, black or white. The new neighborhood movement described in this book is learning how to create a place for living that celebrates ethnicity, religion, and diversity. In fact, America has not been successful in making a living place where race and income are less important than neighbor and citizen. However, in the struggle of neighborhood people to overcome the systems that have misused their neighborhoods, we frequently see unusual American coalitions of color and class. They are a new breed making an open, powerful, inventive place for people called neighborhood.

That is why this book is about the beginning of an old American dream.

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