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PARTNER

Community Organizing in the Eighties: Toward a Post-Alinsky Agenda

By John McKnight and John Kretzmann*

The legacy of community organizing giant Saul Alinsky has been central to the continuing emergence of a diverse "Neighborhood movement" during the last two decades. While skilled and inventive organizers have seldom regarded Alinsky's approaches as divinely inspired, many have continued to work in communities as if the master's most basic assumptions about the nature of neighborhoods and the logic of organizing strategies were more or less immutable.

Reflecting on the actual experience of activist neighborhood organizations in recent years, we want to suggest that the structure of poor and working class urban neighborhoods has changed since Alinsky first began organizing in Chicago's Back of the Yards nearly 50 years ago; and that, given these changes in neighborhoods, a number of the classic Alinsky strategies and tactics are in need of critical revision.

• THE LEGACY

For Alinsky and his disciples, city reality was reducible to two basic units, neighborhood and the "enemy" outside the neighborhood. **Poor and working class neighborhoods continually suffered because external decision-makers controlled the internal distribution of services and goods.**

Two further assumptions about the nature of neighborhoods and of their "enemies" or "targets" shaped the basic Alinsky strategy:

1. The neighborhood contained within it a number of vital organizations, even though it was not "organized" to act as a unit. Four basic cornerstones of association were particularly important — churches, ethnic groupings, political organizations, and labor. The organizer's task was to forge a coalition of leaders from these groups. Preexisting constituencies would then follow as the "organization of organizations" model took shape. Because of this existing pattern of organizations, organizers could concentrate on pulling

together their leaders, a very small percentage of the neighborhood's residents and could plausibly claim representative community status for their new group.

2. The second set of assumptions concerned the enemy or target, and focused on three interrelated characteristics. A target, the strategically defined embodiment of the causes of a neighborhood problem, was thought to be: a) **visible**, and therefore concretely definable; b) **local**, and therefore accessible; and c) **capable**, and therefore possessed of the resources and authority to correct the problem.

In summary, then, **the basic Alinsky approach emphasized organizing in the consumer mode by assembling pre-existing organizations into a kind of dense pack, and propelling this aggregate toward a visible, local decision-making structure to force it to do what the neighborhood wanted.** For many years, this model of Alinsky-type organizing reflected accurately the nature of city neighborhoods. More importantly, it got results.

• TODAY'S REALITY

Today, however, conditions have changed dramatically in most working class and poor urban neighborhoods. Within most, the rates of active participation of residents in at least three of the four organizational building blocks appear to have declined. Local identification with and participation in political parties is diminishing. The shrinkage of the older industrial labor unions, combined with the general centralization and professionalization of their operations, has blunted local union influence. In many cities, the dispersion of families' second and third generations from their neighborhoods of origin has significantly loosened bonds of ethnic solidarity. In the context of these changes, the fact that a number of neighborhood organizing networks depend increasingly on local churches for their base becomes totally understandable.

*This is a slightly shortened version of an article first appearing in *Social Policy*, Summer 1985. It appears here with permission of the senior author, John McKnight, who is Associate Director, Center for Urban Affairs and Policy Research, Northwestern University. John Kretzmann is Director, Urban Studies Program, Associated Colleges of the Midwest.

• INVISIBLE "TARGETS"

If neighborhoods themselves have changed significantly, so too have the "targets" of community organizations. Simply put, **it has become nearly impossible to identify targets which are visible, local and capable.**

First, targets are not visible and tangible in poor and working class neighborhoods because they are no longer there. On the entire West Side of Chicago, as well as in old Alinsky-organized neighborhoods like Woodlawn, almost no banking institutions remain. Nor do many plants, factories, retailing or wholesaling operations. This is, of course, precisely what is meant by disinvestment.

Second, in those neighborhoods where major economic institutions do remain visible, they are clearly not local. Instead, they are local expressions of large corporations. Accelerating centralization and consolidation of control across economic sectors has left local managers marginal pawns in the high stakes games run from headquarters in a few rebuilt downtowns. Effects of economic decisions on neighborhoods themselves are not even a part of the headquarters calculations. As one midwest banker put it, "I can't do a thing locally. Now we're just a branch city."

Third, those institutions which remain both visible and local in poor and working class neighborhoods are precisely those publically funded service agencies which are least capable of producing results no matter how hard a community organization confronts them. More and more organizers have come to recognize that neighborhood security, for example, is no longer a function of the numbers of police present. Others have seen that large school bureaucracies are often ineffective in improving education no matter what their intention.

Therefore, today's community organizers cannot assume that either their assumptions about local structures or the tactics handed down from earlier generations are appropriate to the kinds of neighborhoods in which they work today. **What is needed is a heightened commitment to exploration and invention at the neighborhood level — experiments which adapt the classic Alinsky model to drastically changed conditions.**

• NEW STRATEGIES

What might these experiments look like? To this question we can offer some tentative responses — new directions based primarily on conversations with organizers themselves, and grown out of their own

probes and experiments in the neighborhoods.

In the kinds of neighborhoods we are concerned about, it becomes less and less likely that strategies stressing either the consolidation of existing association or the confrontation of an outside enemy make much sense.

It seems clear that **new strategies must stress an organizing process that enhances and builds community rather than assuming it.** Strategies must focus on developing a neighborhood's own capacities to do for itself what outsiders will or can no longer do. Taking neighborhoods seriously in their current condition means building social, political and economic structures at the local level which recreate a space in which marginalized people can act and decide.

This shift involves a **reconceptualization of the neighborhood as a locus for production as well as for consumption.** Organizations originally oriented to the goal of equalizing consumption patterns between and within neighborhoods are increasingly turning toward an agenda which centers on building internal neighborhood productive capacities. With this shift comes a parallel reorientation of strategy — **from organizing confrontation over service distribution issues to organizing confrontation over production issues** and the resources necessary to produce.

Experimenting with this new agenda for community building has focused some organizers on three different centers of activity — the local neighborhood, the public sector and the private sector.

• NEW NEIGHBORHOOD AGENDA

Within the neighborhood itself, taking production and community building seriously involves:

1. Continuing to push the good work in commercial, industrial and housing development already begun by large numbers of local development corporations in the last decade.

2. Expanding greatly the number of cooperative, neighborhood-owned, worker-owned and joint-venture enterprises for the production of both exportable and locally useful goods. As technologies develop and economies of scale reach and surpass their limits, food and energy production, waste management, and other **enterprises dealing with the basics of life may in fact be more usefully efficient and economically pursued at the local level.**

3. Similarly, community-based and owned enterprises in the still expanding services and communications areas need further exploration. Neither service contracts nor the implements of the "wired community,"

"THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS AND NEIGHBORHOODS SMALL GRANTS PROGRAM" is a three-year pilot program which links C.S. Mott Foundation's long-time interests in neighborhoods with community foundations. The program, now in its second year, is designed to encourage community foundations to take a focused approach to strengthening low-income neighborhoods in their com-

munities through a series of minigrants financed by a combination of Mott Foundation funds and community foundation funds. The program links the participating foundations in a national network through a common evaluation plan, technical assistance, periodic meetings on neighborhood issues, and a newsletter."

Suzanne Feurt — Program Associate, C.S. Mott Foundation

replete with cable TV and interactive micro-computers, need be owned and controlled by outsiders.

• NEW RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PUBLIC SECTOR

Without increased local authority, neighborhood strategies will be forced to remain primarily reactive. An agenda centered on building local productive capacities requires **new relationships with public sector bodies so that resources and real authority are transferred to the neighborhood.** Such an approach involves:

1. Taking a thorough look at the public dollars already being spent in the neighborhood, and devising strategies aimed at shifting their uses away from traditional transfer and maintenance functions toward investment approaches.

2. Developing strategies designed to direct public resources to neighborhood development groups. For instance, organizations might work toward a version of a "neighborhood checkoff" program, in which the city is persuaded to return a small percentage of a neighborhood's taxes to the local neighborhood organization. Each household would be entitled to a "chit" which could be expended with the neighborhood organization of its choice.

3. A variety of neighborhood-based forms of governance carrying significant local authority. Such bodies are emerging in a variety of shapes in a number of cities.

• NEW ROLES FOR THE PRIVATE SECTOR

Any serious approach to community building must devise ways to re-root business, **to insert locality into the equations by which business makes decisions.** This is a national, even international, policy agenda calling for a coalition politics which we have not seen in the last 15 years. The directions in which this agenda might move are already emerging from a variety of networks across the country, and might be seen as embracing two connected strategies:

1. Organizations might agree on the basic outlines of a "Corporate Accountability Act" which provided a variety of incentives and penalties related to the needs of communities for jobs and location commitments as well as local representation on boards or regulatory bodies. Such an act could model itself on the organizational groundwork laid by the Community Reinvestment Act campaign.

2. Concurrently, organizations might agree to pursue something like a "Community Banking Act," designed to define the obligations of financial institutions for local credit allocation. It has become dismayingly clear that the local availability of low interest, long term money from local savings institutions and other sources has all but dried up in most neighborhoods. **Local borrowers now compete directly with the United States government, United States Steel, and the government of Brazil for investment capital.** Reestablishing the very existence of a local credit market is essential for the community building agenda.

• ECONOMICS WITH POLITICS

Taken together, these initial suggestions define the emerging shape of a post-Alinsky agenda for urban neighborhoods. They argue for an organizing approach aimed at building community through the restoration of localized political economies.

To join politics and economics at the neighborhood level is to do both an old and a new thing. Analyzing "political economy," after all, was what both Adam Smith and Karl Marx thought they were about. But reigning orthodoxies have succeeded in segregating economics from politics in both theory and practice. **In our neighborhoods we have often practiced politics as if economics didn't exist, and economics as if politics didn't matter.**

Effective organizers are learning quickly that restoring the practice of an economics in which place matters, and in which production is rooted in and builds, rather than destroys, community, involves a major political challenge. We can only imagine that **if Saul Alinsky himself were still around to growl his advice at us, he would admonish us to take up that challenge while we still have neighborhoods left to build.**

FORUM

We requested comment on "Community Organizing in the Eighties: Toward a Post-Alinsky Agenda" from the eight participating community foundations. We were especially interested in how they think the McKnight/Kretzmann view fits with the neighborhoods in their programs.

(FORUM continued next page)

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contribute to program quality and impact.

Steven E. Mayer, Ph.D. — Executive Director
Steven Gray — Project Coordinator
Grace Jordan McGinniss — Project Associate
Maria Mazzara — Graphic Designer

1406 West Lake Street, Minneapolis, MN 55408 (612) 824-0724



Arizona Community Foundation

Arizona Community Foundation, 4350 East Camelback Road, Suite 216C,
Phoenix, Arizona 85018, (602) 952-9954

Stephen Mittenthal — President and Executive Director

McKnight's article is certainly thoughtful, and I enjoyed reading it. I agreed with most of the elements of a post-Alinsky agenda as he drew them up, but I think it's too simplistic to say that these elements should replace Alinsky tactics. I'd rather see them supplement those tactics.

There will probably always be a role for confrontation, which we know can work, especially with problems of unequal service or resource distribution. Also, the traditional enemies of neighborhoods still do exist, and while they may no longer be quartered down the street, they are still sensitive to community relations.

So I suggest that we put the production orientation that McKnight introduces alongside the traditional Alinsky approach, and discover how best to use each one.

The production orientation doesn't happen with just a wave of a wand. A neighborhood has to develop an organization with the capacity to create a production strategy. Our grants help neighborhood organizations build that capacity, often using the older Alinsky strategies to secure the resources and strength to pave the way for more sophisticated improvement strategies.

SAN DIEGO COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

San Diego Community Foundation, 625 Broadway, Suite 1105,
San Diego, California 92101, (619) 239-8815

Jeff Hale — Program Officer

The article might be more appropriate to cities other than San Diego because San Diego neighborhoods do not look like the kind facing Alinsky in the 1940's. Our best example of Alinsky style organizing is a group that is advocating against the completion of a highway corridor. They are doing mass mobilization, pulling different organizations and institutions together in the fight and they were successful in dissuading the public decision makers from going through with the highway. Yet, they weren't conscious that their approach was an Alinsky approach.

In San Diego, the institutions that McKnight talked

about are no longer there or maybe were never there. There is an emergence of neighborhood business associations here being organized by neighborhood organizations. This trend will probably continue with special business assessment districts being created to help merchants rehabilitate their shops and streets.

I think that groups need to go through the phase of finding an enemy. Without that they won't be able to learn how to influence some entity with power over their lives. Others have gone through that phase and have moved on to more of the self-help community improvement type of issues.



The Oregon Community Foundation

Oregon Community Foundation, 1110 Yeon Building, 522 Southwest Fifth Ave.,
Portland, Oregon 97204, (503) 227-6846

Greg Chaille — Senior Program Officer

The article was extremely valuable because it offered insight into making grants as an investment in our neighborhoods rather than for temporary solutions or activities. It highlighted the importance of resident participation in the development process and provided strategies for linking temporary surface issues with the more long range goals of reinvestment in industrial and participatory infrastructure.

No one in Portland has been using the Alinsky approach by the book. Our biggest problem here is that our neighborhood associations are on a treadmill to keep participation up. Institutions, like the church and organized labor, are playing less of a role and that means that an inordinate amount of time is devoted to keeping resident participation up.



THE GREATER KANSAS CITY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Greater Kansas City Community Foundation, One Ward Parkway, Suite 145,
Kansas City, Missouri 64112, (816) 753-5995

Johnnie Henson — Vice-President

The article was well thought out. I agree with the need to have an impact on corporate accountability, but I am not sure that a law such as the Corporate Accountability Act is the way to go. We should be working towards a spirit of cooperation between business and neighborhoods.

It seems that corporate consciousness raising has to

happen in more informal ways than passing new laws. Community 2% Clubs, organized by community conscious business leaders, that influence corporations to give 2% of their pre-tax earnings to non-profits are a good example of constructive peer pressure. The press can be used to influence corporations too.

Neighborhood groups need to become more sophisticated in influencing corporations. They might want to provide city officials with information that could be used in negotiations with corporations. They might want to form coalitions with other neighborhood groups. That's the way it has been done here in Kansas City.



Community Foundation of New Jersey

Community Foundation of New Jersey, 439 Main Street,
Orange, New Jersey 07050, (201) 676-3552

Sheila Williamson — Executive Director

We find that it's hard enough to get a small, emerging organization to hold meetings and develop a set of objectives for themselves — starting a business is beyond their capacity. Economic development is just too sophisticated an activity for our groups to handle.

Confrontational tactics against corporations will be counter-productive in urban New Jersey. They feel penalized enough just by being in the inner city — confrontation would only send them to the suburbs. With corporations, you can get more with honey than with vinegar. The Newark Collaboration, with which we're involved, is pulling people and institutions together to develop a more collaborative approach.

It might be different with politicians. Almost all of our grantees are having to take on city hall in one way or another. And as McKnight noted, there is less and less money in our inner-cities. In our case, New Jersey banks are being taken over by New York banks.



The Dayton Foundation

Dayton Foundation, 1395 Kettering Tower, Dayton, Ohio 45423,
(513) 222-0410

Fred Bartenstein — Director

The McKnight article was excellent. I absolutely agree that any new strategy has to include public dollars. We

have to re-think the classic vision of the neighborhood organization. We know that neighborhood organizations are exciting viable entities in home-owning communities. But, we are not targeting home-owners in this program. What do you do in low-income neighborhoods? These are neighborhoods with high mobility.

As America becomes increasingly mobile, a day might come when a neighborhood is not the identifiable unit in the community. Other ways of identifying the community might be more accurate. We might describe community in terms of demographic distinctions like race, or labor affiliation or something else.

The real failure is that neighborhood organizations have failed to identify replacements for the school, church, and other institutions that used to be partners to the neighborhood group. The replacements could be hospitals, universities, corporations and other institutions whose destinies are linked to theirs. These institutions need good looking neighborhoods and good workers. They have a vested interest in helping neighborhoods rebuild themselves.

FOUNDATION FOR THE CAROLINAS

(formerly Greater Charlotte Foundation, Inc.)

Foundation for the Carolinas, 301 South Brevard Street,
Charlotte, North Carolina 28202, (704) 376-9541

Barbara Hautau — Associate Director

None of the neighborhoods that we fund has much similarity to the kind that Alinsky worked with, I would say. If they were as focused around union, church, or ethnicity as those urban neighborhoods of Alinsky's time, it would be easier to discover or develop neighborhood leadership than it is.

Leadership development at the neighborhood level is the biggest item on our agenda, as determined at the Neighborhood Grants Committee's year-end retreat. Each neighborhood grant this year will have a leadership training component.

Our neighborhoods are so small, it's difficult even to imagine applying the term "neighborhood economy." The Alinsky model seems to apply to other types of cities more than Charlotte. At the Foundation, we like to see neighborhoods as "human support systems," places where people can get together and say "Hey, let's DO something about this vacant lot."

(FORUM continued next page)



Greater Worcester Community Foundation, Inc.

Greater Worcester Community Foundation, 332 Main Street,
Worcester, Massachusetts 01608, (617) 755-0980

Kay M. Seivard — Executive Director

The Alinsky approach as McKnight describes it is outdated in Worcester as well. Ethnic identification and union affiliation are not the rallying points that they once were — our neighborhoods are no longer identified that way.

Many of our public institutions, such as the Housing Authority or Police Department are both enemies and part of the solution for neighborhoods, so simple labels like “enemy” leave out too much of the story.

Now, our neighborhoods organize around specific issues and solutions in an effort to create something, rather than organize against a common enemy.

The gist of the article, that confrontation is less relevant these days than constructive action that builds something, fits our situation in Worcester.

Neighborhoods Show Their Stuff

Editor's Note: For this issue we are highlighting one project in each of the eight sites participating in the Community Foundations and Neighborhoods Small Grants Program.

Each project serves as an example of initiatives taken by neighborhood-based organizations to act in behalf of people. Such initiatives differentiate neighborhood organizations from more traditional forms of nonprofit organizations.

The eight examples illustrate some of the principles by which neighborhood-based organizations can be effective instruments for improving the quality of life for urban residents. In these examples, we see:

- Neighborhood residents working together constructively to develop solutions to the problems and issues facing them;
- Neighborhoods taking on the task of creating, or saving from destruction, the institutions needed to support productive lives in the city;
- Neighborhood groups developing a base of support and legitimate authority within the neighborhood;

- Neighborhood organizations developing partnerships with other organizations to maximize resources and influence;

- Neighborhood groups learning the organization-building skills to advocate the legitimate “quality of life” interests of their residents with larger institutions.

Worcester, Massachusetts

Green Island is so named for its isolation from the rest of the city of Worcester by man-made barriers: highways and railroad lines. An old, ethnic neighborhood of single-family homes, it was scheduled for destruction by the highway construction of the 1960's. Other engineering projects in the early '80s that threatened the remaining vitality of the neighborhood led the Green Island Residents Group to organize a “Save the Island” campaign. At this time, we could say they're winning.

The bank, about to leave the neighborhood, was persuaded to stay. The City was persuaded to repave the streets. Housing agencies were persuaded to preserve the housing stock. The Parks Commission was persuaded to make the park more accessible and enjoyable. The neighborhood was featured on Boston TV. And now, a 43-unit elderly apartment complex has been authorized, critically important in a neighborhood that is disproportionately elderly.

The organization is known for its broad-based support. Members pay \$1/year, and most residents belong. A part-time organizer spends half her time encouraging resident participation and the other half seeking visibility with City Hall and city agencies, and local and national elected officials. As Kay Seivard said, “The results of their activities speak for themselves.”

Charlotte, North Carolina

The Brookhill/Southside/Wilmore Association is a federation of three adjoining neighborhoods near downtown Charlotte. While each neighborhood looks quite different, the housing stock of each is primarily old and often in need of repair. Several large vacant lots exist that attract garbage, litter, and transients.

The three neighborhoods formed an ad hoc federation and applied for support from the Mott/Carolina Neighborhoods Small Grants Program, using the Bethlehem Center, a large community center and service agency centrally located for each of the three, to coordinate the three groups. Together, they have done clean-up campaigns, trained teenagers to train others on housing maintenance, secured City help in park improvements, and landed a coveted “demonstration site” designation for a housing rehab project.

Spokespeople for the federation agree that together they were able to accomplish more than they could working solo.

Ms. Barbara Hautau, Associate Director of the Foundation for the Carolinas, attributes the success of this federation to good cooperation among the three groups. Noting that cooperation can be hard to come by, she said that "cooperation was aided by two major factors: the three neighborhoods share a political history (with a city council member in common), and they benefit from the deliberate coordinating efforts of Bethlehem Center staff."

Camden, New Jersey

The Camdentown Civic Association represents a lower-to middle-income neighborhood with many abandoned vacant lots, burned out homes, and poorly maintained property along the Delaware River in Camden. In the first year of this program, they developed enthusiasm but not as much movement as they would have liked. Rather than give up on them, Community Foundation of New Jersey staff led them through a planning and goal-setting process that allowed the group to come together with clearer priorities.

Their goal direction paid off, and they have since been able to tick off significant accomplishments. They persuaded the City to modify its plans for a new prison in the neighborhood, involved kids in a garden project and a trashcan painting project, persuaded a neighboring college to reverse its plan to demolish three buildings, and entered into discussions with City officials that will bring more resources into the neighborhood.

Sheila Williamson, Executive Director of the Community Foundation for New Jersey, noted that "this is a classic case in which a small amount of money coupled with a sense of purpose let something big happen."

Phoenix, Arizona

Nuestro Barrio ("Our Neighborhood") is a Mexican neighborhood of 4,400 people, adjacent to Phoenix's main airport. In its first year of support, Nuestro Barrio developed a tool bank, which became an effective organizing vehicle (use of the tools requires joining the Association and paying dues), a nucleus around which a program can be built, and a tangible benefit provided to residents — close to 200 households have borrowed tools to fix up their homes.

Also in its first year, Nuestro Barrio was able to stop the Airport Commission's plans to develop an office park that would encroach on the neighborhood, and to persuade the office developers to include employment of neighborhood residents by building contractors and future tenants in their plans. In Year 2 of this program, the Arizona Community Foundation supported staff

work to inventory residents' job skills. Door-to-door inventorying has the further advantage of providing contact with residents for further development of neighborhood participation.

As Stephen Mittenthal told us, "Nuestro Barrio is a good example of fast footwork by a neighborhood organization, seizing the opportunity of an adjacent economic development project to connect a service-oriented strategy for community improvement (through repair and fix-up of substandard housing) into a job development strategy. The Community Foundation's minigrants provided the means to accomplish this strategic switch."

Portland, Oregon

The Brooklyn Neighborhood in Southeast Portland has recently seen a resurgence in resident activity due to the energies of the Brooklyn Action Corps. Brooklyn is a low to moderate income interracial neighborhood that was experiencing a decline in the number of families and homeowners and an increase in more transient renters.

The Brooklyn Action Corps has taken the highly visible issue of the potential closing of the neighborhood elementary school (due to a decrease in school-aged children) and turned that issue into an organizing tool. Their vehicle for increased visibility and interest was a neighborhood marketing campaign entitled "Come Home to Brooklyn."

The campaign teamed up with realtors and the city to attract more families to buy homes in Brooklyn and so increase the number of school-aged children in the neighborhood. The Brooklyn Action Corps took a holistic view of the neighborhood realizing that if the neighborhood school closed down, a strong piece of neighborhood identity would be lost.

As Greg Chaille of the Oregon Community Foundation stated, "The thing that impresses me the most, is the unique coalition the Brooklyn Action Corps has formed. They have low-income families, realtors, property owners, minorities, and city officials all interested in helping them. The marketing plan caught the imagination of the community as an upbeat effort. It is a visible example of residents exercising local control and maintaining the livability of their neighborhood."

In the past eight months, the effort has increased the number of residents in the organization, convinced the school board to keep the school open and resulted in at least two new families moving into the neighborhood. It has helped arrest neighborhood decline and increase neighborhood pride.

Dayton, Ohio

The South Park Improvement Council in Dayton represents 15,000 residents in the part of town

populated by migrants from Appalachia. The Council is the oldest neighborhood organization in the city although it was recently revived after a long period of dormancy. The neighborhood was declared a National Historic district which, without the Council's efforts, could have put undue development pressure on the neighborhood.

The South Park Improvement Council formed a Community Development Corporation and then negotiated a sophisticated line of credit with several banks and savings and loans so they could help rehabilitate historic homes in the neighborhood. They have been able to acquire residential property and then sell it, below cost, to residents.

Fred Bartenstein sees this group as a model because "they have time to get control over the neighborhood. They have linked nicely with the large hospital in the neighborhood by putting a representative on their development corporation board. The Hospital is in turn providing financial services to the corporation. They also opened the community center with help from the YMCA and a daycare provider. They are becoming more and more sophisticated."

For South Park, the resurgent Improvement Council has meant community control over residential redevelopment and the increase in community provided services such as daycare.

Kansas City, Missouri

The East Area Community Coalition is a grassroots resident organization that serves three neighborhoods on the Eastside of Kansas City, all economically depressed and physically tattered. Resident members of the coalition pay dues in cash or by volunteering their time in one of the Coalition's efforts. One tangible membership benefit is the opportunity to purchase food grown at one of the many Coalition food parks at substantially reduced rates. Weatherization programs, block clubs, fundraising events, and distributing surplus commodities are other Coalition activities.

The Coalition is a model for two reasons: first, it helps people with basic survival needs and second, it puts a premium on fundraising from the immediate community. People who join the Coalition have a strong sense of belonging and community. They are helping others make it through tough economic times while building a strong organization.

As Johnnie Henson from the Greater Kansas City Community Foundation stated, "The East Area Community Coalition is trying to help their neighborhoods and residents survive. They sell food they grow

themselves at very cheap prices. They are also well organized, everyone has a membership card and feels like they belong."

The Coalition also benefits from having a dynamic leader, Ms. Anna Mae Towner. Ms. Towner has a keen sense for how to publicize the organization and keep people involved. The only problems for the organization now are trying to find more space to expand their operation which is severely cramped in their current quarters.

San Diego, California

The borders of the wedge-shaped Normal Heights neighborhood in San Diego are defined by freeways and major streets. This city neighborhood was ignored for years as development focused on the unbuilt parts of the city. Yet, the neighborhood was slowly changing due to pressure from real estate speculators and apartment builders which have built a number of apartment buildings on the sites of single family dwellings. The Normal Heights Community Association was formed as a reaction to the haphazard development of the neighborhood to provide a citizen voice into the development process.

The strength of the organization comes from taking on reasonable tasks, implementing them very well and keeping residents involved without burning them out. Even though the organization has grown rapidly, it has been able to move beyond reacting to crises and develop into a rational and organized residents' group able to set its own agenda.

As Jeff Hale of the San Diego Community Foundation said of the Normal Heights Community Association, "They have a core of dedicated volunteers that had very strong civic skills and feeling of community responsibility. They started being reactionary to neighborhood development issues and then realized that to maintain the neighborhood they needed more than just a reactive attitude, they needed a proactive approach. They reactivated the community newspaper, relighted the neighborhood sign over the commercial district, started a Community Development Corporation, and started working with neighborhood businesses."

Today, Normal Heights profits from the strong neighborhood organization. They influenced the city council to rezone the neighborhood for less density, got the city to rehabilitate the only neighborhood park, were awarded "All-American City" status, and successfully responded to a neighborhood disaster when a fire raced through the community last summer.

