CITY-SPONSORED COMMUNITY BUILDING: SAVANNAH'S GRANTS FOR BLOCKS STORY

A COMMUNITY BUILDING WORKBOOK
FROM
THE ASSET-BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

CITY-SPONSORED COMMUNITY BUILDING: SAVANNAH'S GRANTS FOR BLOCKS STORY

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CHAPTER ONE

GRANTS FOR BLOCKS: THE PROGRAM

"The community is really coming together as a result of Grants for Blocks. There is more involvement, more participation, and more cooperation."
Kenneth Dunham—West Savannah

"Grants for Blocks brought residents through the doors of the city."
Pamela Jones—Cuyler-Brownsville

"If you get a community together, you've got the power to do anything"
Linda Larry—East Victorian

In 1993, the City of Savannah introduced Grants for Blocks, an enormously successful small grants program that enables residents of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) neighborhoods to initiate and implement their own neighborhood improvement projects. Currently in its sixth year, the Grants for Blocks Program generates a positive impact in Savannah neighborhoods by providing a simple mechanism for local people to become involved with their neighbors, to develop and improve relationships with the city, to acquire and utilize new skills, and to take an active role in building their own dreams and visions for their community.

Grants for Blocks was initiated as a result of Savannah's being awarded a prize of $20,000 for its Showcase Program's finalist ranking in the *Innovations in State and Local Government Awards Program*, sponsored jointly by the Ford Foundation and the Harvard University Kennedy School of Government. The city set out to use the windfall as creatively as possible. It decided on a program design in which Savannah makes grants of up to $500 to residents of CDBG-eligible neighborhoods for improvement projects that address the substandard physical and social conditions facing these communities. Residents and neighborhoods who participate are encouraged to be creative in their interpretation of what neighborhood improvement means, and design projects each year in the categories of beautification and landscaping; workshops and training; supplies, equipment, and tools; economic development; housing; and neighborhood festivals and neighborhood pride. From the beginning of the Grants for Blocks Program, the city provided staff support to get the ball rolling in neighborhoods, and then turned over control of the program to residents.

At the same time, the city established a separate but linked program that funds leadership training workshops to further develop the leadership potential of individuals identified through the Grants for Blocks Program and previous Showcase activities.   Each year, the Neighborhood Leadership Development Institute trains new and emerging resident leaders in such varied topics as youth development, resident-based strategies to address crime, housing improvement, and community organizing.   The purpose of the leadership program is to transfer knowledge and experience between neighborhoods, help build citywide coalitions, encourage the emergence of new community leaders, and generally further the leadership development goals of the Savannah Showcase Program.

The Grants for Blocks Program is resident-controlled, with representatives from all participating neighborhoods serving on the Steering and Decision-Making Committee, establishing application review teams, and determining the amount of awards. Program interest and participation has grown significantly since the first year of the program in 1993, when 89 applications were submitted, and 76 grants awarded. By 1997, response to the program had increased to 315 applications submitted and 145 grants awarded.

The Grants for Blocks Program has promoted and achieved increased resident participation in neighborhood activities and cohesion among individuals who were previously isolated within their own communities. The program has empowered residents and neighborhood associations to initiate and carry out small neighborhood-improvement projects, including planning, community organizing, and self-help activities. It has increased cooperation between neighborhood residents and city departments and staff. The program has identified new resident leaders and provided training for the assumption of neighborhood leadership roles for these individuals.   Visible, concrete improvements to neighborhoods that have resulted from resident involvement in the Grants for Blocks Program include extensive block beautification, upgraded street lighting, and neighborhood "welcome" signs. Other activities have included neighborhood tool-lending libraries and educational and skills-building workshops.

The specific design of the Grants for Blocks Program enables the city not only to address issues of inner-city blight but also to generate one key ingredient that is necessary in order to achieve sustained neighborhood improvement—**resident ownership** of the program and its activities and outcomes.   The program is itself an exercise in resident empowerment, as grant application preparation, review, and award decisions are solely determined by residents who participate in every aspect of the program. Through this participation, residents assume leadership roles within their neighborhoods, in the Grants for

Blocks Program, and in regular interactions with the city. The role of the city in the program is limited to providing staff support, coordinating the delivery of funds, and providing technical assistance when needed.

Since 1993, the City of Savannah has learned a great deal about the best methods of organizing and administering such a neighborhood-oriented small grants program. This volume describes the Grants for Blocks Program through:

- Exploring the program itself, its history, and its operation;

- Offering perspectives on the program extended by neighborhood participants, city staff and officials, other individuals interested in neighborhood development at the local level, and various media sources;

- Presenting an historical overview of the outcomes produced in neighborhoods through resident participation in Grants for Blocks;

- Sharing specific information and details about the process of developing and administering such a small grants program.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF GRANTS FOR BLOCKS

Although the Grants for Blocks Program is well known as a distinct program and specific annual activity in the City of Savannah, it is rooted in a history of community-building strategies and is even now embedded in a larger set of neighborhood-development activities. For example, the Showcase Savannah Program was started in two neighborhoods in an effort to increase resident involvement in community-building activities, and to improve housing conditions, address inadequate and deteriorating infrastructure, and increase public safety. This program was popular with neighborhood residents and ultimately led to the establishment of 22 Showcase neighborhoods.

In 1987, Don Mendonsa, the Savannah city manager recognized that there were serious blighting influences at work in certain inner-city neighborhoods. Two neighborhoods, Cuyler-Brownsville and Eastside Savannah were declining at an especially rapid pace. Litter, overgrown lots, and debris were causing both communities to appear very unkempt and as undesirable places to live. Over a 25-year period, middle-class residents had gradually been moving away from the neighborhoods, contributing to the increase in the number of abandoned houses. At the same time that blight emerged as a serious neighborhood issue, crack cocaine arrived on the Savannah scene. Drug dealers began doing business in some of the same areas of the city, exacerbating the problems facing these neighborhoods. The combination of general neighborhood decline and

the emergence of drug-related problems resulted in an increase in the number of residents departing the inner city and a pervasive sense of fear and hopelessness among those remaining. Only those individuals and families who could not afford to leave were left behind. Resident organizations that had been active in the 1960s and 1970s were either disbanded or very ineffective, and residents who remained in these neighborhoods were unable to organize themselves adequately and fight against the negative influences. The only time residents were sure to come together to try to respond to the lack of order was when a major event occurred such as a shooting or a death.

At this critical time, the city manager decided to meet with residents and find out if there was any interest in the neighborhoods in joining forces to form a partnership with the city government to help change these conditions. As a result of these discussions, the Showcase Savannah Neighborhood Program was born. The two most seriously deteriorating neighborhoods—Eastside and Cuyler-Brownsville—became the first Showcase neighborhoods to participate. This partnership between the city and its citizens was inclusive from the start, with both the city and residents agreeing that the goal was to define the future of Savannah neighborhoods. Visioning sessions were held with residents to determine what the communities should look like in 20 years, and through this process, a vision for each neighborhood was established. Residents and city staff walked every block in each neighborhood identifying conditions of blight that needed improving.   The Bureau of Public Development created maps illustrating all of the issues and then met with residents to discuss ways to reduce or eliminate these conditions and to develop improvement strategies. Specific goals and objectives for each area were identified, and an action plan for each neighborhood was developed by residents working together with city staff.

The city agreed to attack the problems if residents would organize and help.   The president of each neighborhood association signed a symbolic agreement with the city manager that identified what neighborhood residents would do and what the city would do toward improving the community. Residents agreed to attend meetings, conduct cleanup campaigns, and help fight drug dealers. In addition, residents committed to organizing neighborhood block parties and festivals, and to hosting house-of-the-month and other neighborhood pride events.   The city agreed to target accelerated code enforcement, infrastructure improvements, and police and fire services. City officials and staff understood that in order to get residents active and engaged in community building, someone would need to knock on doors and ask residents to come to meetings and to help organize meetings around this partnership. The city therefore committed to hiring neighborhood coordinators to serve in that capacity in the neighborhoods in order to jump start the Showcase Savannah Program. Coordinators scheduled meetings, prepared flyers, and

staffed cleanup campaigns and neighborhood pride events such as house-of-the-month, yard-of-the-month, block-of-the-month, and neighborhood block parties and festivals. In general, they helped residents by doing whatever was needed in order to achieve their vision for the neighborhood.

In retrospect, the perspective on neighborhood development that drove these efforts—although typical for city planning departments in the 1980s—had focused almost entirely on the deficiencies of the neighborhoods, using a "glass half empty" perspective. With the hiring of the first neighborhood coordinator, this perspective began to change. The first coordinator hired was sent to a week-long training in assets-oriented community organizing through a program recommended by John McKnight, a professor in Northwestern University's Institute for Policy Research. The focus of the training was on reorienting the approach to community building to thinking of neighborhoods as places in which people with gifts and talents live. This "glass half full" perspective promotes the idea that local people can use their own capacities for rebuilding their communities. The first coordinator received this training in 1988, and the mayor and aldermen consistently increased funding for adding coordinators in order to meet the demands of the community residents and the expanded Showcase Savannah Program. By 1989, there were two coordinators; the number increased by one in 1990; in 1992, two more coordinators were added; and in 1993, the number was increased by five. As of January 1998, there were 10 coordinators providing support to 22 target neighborhoods.

The neighborhood coordinators proved to be a key component to Showcase Savannah and to the larger citizen-engagement process. The job is demanding, and includes responsibility for encouraging resident participation, planning and coordinating comprehensive training and development programs, researching and collecting data, and compiling and submitting reports. In addition, the neighborhood coordinators are expected to be prepared to take on whatever additional activities are deemed important to the neighborhood-development process. Coordinators are required to possess a Bachelor's Degree, and have the aptitude to perform a wide variety of specific job functions.

During this period, the City of Savannah promoted a vision for neighborhood well-being that was shared with residents but was still primarily a city-driven partnership.   The city encouraged residents to feel that the city/neighborhood collaboration that was developing was something more than the usual public sector offering that would eventually result in disappointment to the residents. One major effort on the part of the city was the extensive targeting of resources to at-risk neighborhoods. Although neighborhood pride activities and celebrations were in place, they were insufficient to truly empower

neighborhoods and inadequate as the sole reward for resident efforts. The city began to ask residents in each neighborhood on a regular basis what the priorities were in that locale. The city council was charged with finding the funds to address each and every priority brought to its attention. If housing was a neighborhood priority, the Bureau of Public Development asked for names of families with housing problems and directed repair services and assistance to them. The Bureau organized one of the most aggressive home- repair responses in the nation, and implemented infrastructure repair and maintenance programs for sidewalks, lighting, and trees in the city-owned curbside area. One unique aspect of these improvement activities was that they were limited to those neighborhoods that did their part by actually requesting specific kinds of assistance. The city quit telling the neighborhoods what they needed and instead took on the role of civil servants, serving citizens who were expected to define this for themselves and demand the assistance to which they were entitled. The collaboration between the city and the neighborhoods worked in this case because each partner took responsibility for its own part of the process: the residents identified priorities and made reasonable requests for assistance; the city made internal changes that allowed it to respond quickly and effectively to these reasonable requests.

The city was very effective during this period in using the council's full range of public policy tools to affect rapid change in neighborhood conditions. It altered the way garbage was removed from back-door pickups to once-a-week lane pickups from large cans purchased by the city for every home. Providing the cans and changing the pickup routine reduced litter conditions substantially in target neighborhoods. The council developed a nuisance ordinance to deal with recalcitrant and absentee landlords whose property was deteriorating, an action that required authorization from the state legislature. They increased the size of the code enforcement staff in order to accelerate code inspections. The Police Department became active in strategies such as neighborhood drug sweeps, driver's license checks, and local mounted patrols. The council adopted a lead-based paint ordinance, approved the towing of abandoned and inoperable vehicles from the streets and lots, approved redevelopment plans for key neighborhoods complete with eminent domain authority, and implemented a plan to address dilapidated housing.

Thus, the initial efforts during this period could be described as *getting organized*, while later efforts could be described as *targeting resources*. By early 1993, although the effort to organize the neighborhoods had expanded, and the partnership between the city and its citizens was beginning to produce some changes, no one was completely satisfied with the extent of the impact of these efforts. Although these city responses contributed to getting residents motivated and involved, and to developing a fresh belief in the commitment of the city to

help them with neighborhood issues, everyone recognized that something was still missing. In spite of the fact that many neighborhood associations had a core of residents who were involved in the Showcase Program, the situation in the neighborhoods was still characterized by a general lack of cohesion among residents. Many of the neighborhood organizations that had re-emerged as part of the Showcase Program were held together by the commitment of two or three key individuals, but had insufficient magnitude or power to accomplish very much in terms of the kinds of issues they were facing.

One additional action taken by the city at this time was critical for identifying individuals who would potentially take on active leadership roles in their neighborhoods and beginning to get them involved in community-building activities. In 1992, the City of Savannah was awarded a finalist ranking in the *Innovations in State and Local Government Awards Program.* Sponsored jointly by the Ford Foundation and the Harvard University Kennedy School of Government, the program awarded Savannah a prize of $20,000 for its innovative Neighborhood Showcase Program. In exploring possibilities for using the award money, the city turned again to John McKnight of the Asset-Based Community Development Institute for ideas. Knowing that it wanted to maintain and develop the assets approach to neighborhood revitalization, the city ultimately decided to execute one of his ideas: a small neighborhood grants program that would enable residents to use their initiative to develop and implement their own neighborhood-building ideas and projects. The Grants for Blocks Program was the result. Initiated in 1993, the program has dramatically expanded on earlier efforts to increase resident involvement, fundamentally changing the way that things happen in Savannah neighborhoods. With the Grants for Blocks Program, the city succeeded in transforming its commitment to helping things happen in Savannah neighborhoods into an effective process of "leading by stepping back," in which the city acts as a responsible supporter and facilitator of neighborhood-generated efforts, while eliminating the traditional top-down government management style.

HOW THE GRANTS FOR BLOCKS PROGRAM OPERATES

Each year, the Grants for Blocks annual program cycle begins in January with an announcement and promotions to the neighborhood associations in the CDBG-eligible neighborhoods by neighborhood coordinators and Community Services staff. The program timeline continues through late summer or early autumn when the culminating event—the Neighborhood Convention—takes place to celebrate the neighborhood-building activities that have taken place during the year. The 36 neighborhoods that are eligible for the Grants for Blocks Program are distributed across the city.

Application workshops are scheduled by the neighborhood coordinators, and neighborhood association representatives and resident leaders help spread the word and help distribute information packets in their communities.   The packets contain clear descriptions of the program requirements, expectations for submitting a grant application, and program deadlines and important dates for the annual granting cycle.   Residents of target neighborhoods who submit proposals for projects under the Grants for Blocks Program must do so according to a set of established project guidelines that require them to:

1.   Partner with at least one other individual on their block to develop a small grant proposal;

2.   Prepare a proposal and complete an application that clearly explains the project they intend to do;

3.   Define the neighborhood issue or issues the project will address;

4.   Explain what the anticipated benefit of the project will be to the neighborhood and its residents;

5.   Detail the extent of resident participation in the project's implementation;

6.   Provide an estimate of all the costs associated with completing the project up to a maximum of $500;

7.   Demonstrate that they have received acknowledgment of their proposed project by obtaining a signature from their local neighborhood association.

As part of the rules governing participation, residents must also be willing to take part in the Grants for Blocks decision-making processes.   To oversee the approval process and encourage the development of neighborhood associations, a resident Decision-Making Committee is established each year, made up of two representatives from each neighborhood association that sponsors applications for grants.   Backing off and letting the residents control the process has sometimes been a challenge, but the city staff now believe that trusting the residents to review the grants has not only relieved the city's burden of responsibility, but it has given the neighborhoods additional ownership over the process, because they know that each individual grant applicant is being judged by a group of their peers.

Once the deadline has passed and city staff have received the applications for the year, the Grants for Blocks decision-making work really begins.

• The city conducts a preliminary review of all grant applications for eligibility and completeness.   Incomplete applications and applications for
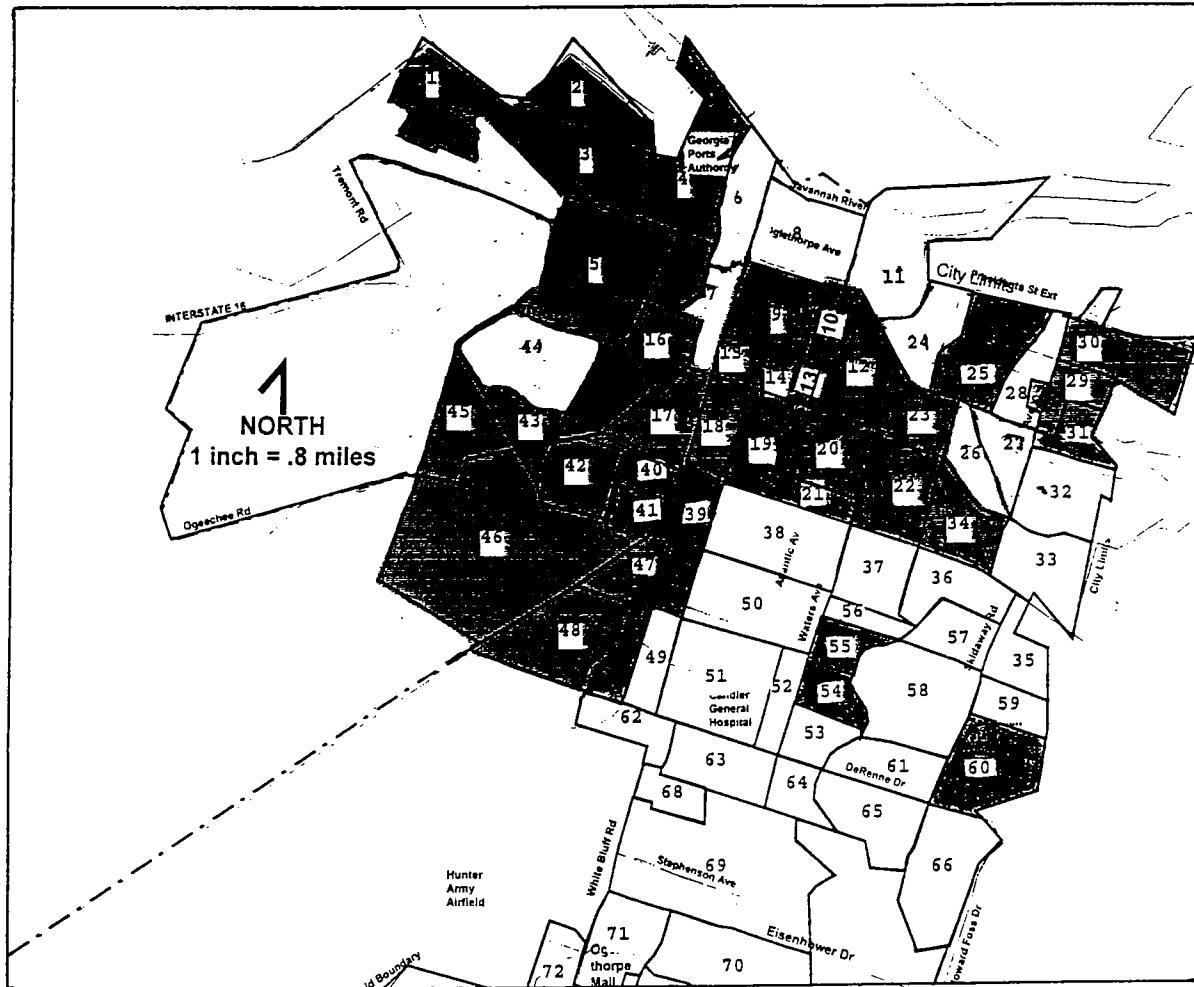
projects that do not meet the Grants for Blocks criteria are returned to the unsuccessful applicants with a letter of denial.

- A resident Decision-Making Committee is established, comprised of at least one resident of every neighborhood submitting a grant application. The committee meets for a day of grant proposal review, breaking itself down into several review teams. Review teams score each application according to a standardized set of criteria originally established by the residents themselves. These criteria include:

  - The level of resident involvement and participation planned;
  - The project's benefit to the neighborhood;
  - The extent of realistic planning that has gone into developing the project.

- Following the Decision-Making Committee meeting, successful applicants are notified by letter of their award and the amount they will receive, and then are requested to attend a contract-signing meeting.

- At the contract signing, residents enter into a formal agreement with the City of Savannah, which outlines the responsibilities and expectations of each party.

- Following the decision-making and awarding of the Grants for Blocks, the City of Savannah plans a celebration to honor all program participants, both awardees and unfunded applicants, as well as members of the Steering and Decision-Making Committees who volunteered their time.

- During the grant implementation period, which is generally early to late Summer, the residents execute their projects in the neighborhoods.

To cut down on monitoring time, the city developed a system of payment in which it either reimburses individuals for documented expenditures related to the specific grant, or cuts checks directly to the suppliers of materials. Overall, the city has reduced its role to purely administrative functions. City staff now only distribute and collect the applications, log all the applications into a database, ensure eligibility under CDBG requirements, and write the checks. Otherwise the role of the Community Services staff and neighborhood coordinators is purely supportive in function. "I tell my employees to treat the neighborhood committees as if they were the city council. We are their staff. We serve them," says the assistant city manager, Henry Moore.

NEIGHBORHOODS ELIGIBLE FOR THE GRANTS FOR BLOCKS PROGRAM

City of Savannah: Bureau of Public Development

1. Woodsville/Bartow
2. Hudson Hill/Bayview
3. West Savannah
4. Bay Street Viaduct Area
5. Carver Heights
6. South Historic District
7. Beach Institute
8. Eastside
9. Dixon Park
10. East Victorian
11. West Victorian
12. Laurel Grove/Railroad Area
13. Cuyler/Brownsville
14. Metropolitan

15. Thomas Square
16. Midtown
17. Baldwin Park
18. Live Oak
19. Benjamin Van Clark Park
20. Hillcrest Area
21. Savannah Gardens
22. Pine Gardens
23. East Savannah
24. Victory Manor/East Hill/Donwood
25. Bingville
26. Cann Park
27. Jackson Park
28. Beach High School Area

29. Ogeecheeton/Dawes Avenue
30. Tremont Park
31. Liberty City/Summerside/Southover/Richfield
32. Feiler Park/Hussars Terrace/Dittmerville
33. Tatumville
34. Memorial Hospital/Fairfield
35. Sackville
36. Savannah State/Glynwood/Placentia Plantation/Brentwood/DeRenne

Grants for Blocks Annual Timeline:

January and February	City staff announce the program at monthly neighborhood association meetings; review and prepare all promotional materials; distribute materials in the neighborhoods; prepare news releases; prepare application packets.
February	Mail notification letters and application packets to neighborhood association leaders.
February	Advise mayor, aldermen, city manager, and assistant city manager of Grants for Blocks Award Ceremony and place on calendars; plan Awards Ceremony.
March	Assist residents with applications, conduct application workshops; review grant eligibility requirements; plan and prepare for resident Decision-Making Committee meeting and confirm participants.
April	City staff review applications for eligibility; log applications and enter into database; finalize Decision-Making Committee meeting.
	Conduct Decision-Making Committee meeting; enter application scores into data base.
	Advise grant recipients of their award in a letter; advise unsuccessful applicants of denial; advise Department of Neighborhood Planning and Community Development of the awards for assignment to specific funding streams.
	Invite all participants in Grants for Blocks— both successful and unsuccessful applicants—to the Awards Ceremony.
	Prepare news releases; organize video coverage of Awards Ceremony; promote the ceremony in the neighborhoods; design and print program.
May	Awards Ceremony and contract signing.
June, July, and August	The period of implementation of Grants for Blocks projects by residents. Monitoring and

	support by Community Services staff. (Projects must be completed by December.)
September	Showcase Grants for Blocks projects at the Neighborhood Convention
September through December	Complete and file close-out reports when projects are completed.

The city has capitalized on the Grants for Blocks Program by sponsoring leadership workshops that introduce resident leaders to each other and provide opportunities for learning new skills and developing new ideas.   Having identified over 772 new resident leaders through the grant process, the city has also formed inter-neighborhood steering committees to address common issues and develop better neighborhood-marketing techniques that focus on positive aspects of community life and the identification of assets and capacities of local residents.   Additionally, the city sponsors a Neighborhood Convention each year, at which all Savannah neighborhoods are invited to promote their community and its activities, compete for various neighborhood prizes, and to meet with and share their enthusiasm with other Savannah residents.   As a result of the extensive participation in Grants for Blocks, the Neighborhood Convention has become a place to showcase the neighborhood activities that have been supported by the program.   All of the activities related to neighborhood building in Savannah are really about trying to create a truly citizen-driven government.   In overseeing this program and spreading this movement through the city, the main goal of city officials is just to keep out of the way of residents as they work to improve their own communities.

The nature of grant requests has changed over the six years that the program has been in existence as the sophistication of residents has increased. More applications now come from residents who want to create youth programs, cultural programs, skills workshops, or services for the elderly than from residents who want to do beautification projects.   Neighborhoods also have different models of negotiating the Grants for Blocks process:

• Some residents get two or three neighbors on their block together and write a grant, without additional discussion or planning with other people living in the neighborhood.   Once they have done so, they obtain the signature of the neighborhood association president, but in general, work on their grant development independent of the association.

• Other residents meet together as a neighborhood association and think collectively about the grants they want to implement for the benefit of the whole community.

•   Some neighborhoods do it both ways, with some residents working independently and others working together as a group.

Each neighborhood can make the choice for itself about how it wants to participate. The neighborhood association sign-off on the grants is a formality, although it does tend to encourage people to discuss things as a neighborhood. However, the program was designed for the individuals living on blocks, so proposals coming from a small group of residents are still acceptable. Grants for Blocks both builds associations and builds satellites consisting of blocks that operate independently.

HOW THE GRANTS FOR BLOCKS PROGRAM IS FUNDED

During the first year of Grants for Blocks, the city added $35,000 from Community Development Block Grant funds to the $20,000 Innovations Award money. Since the second year of the program, the city has also added between $30,000 and $40,000 from the General Funds to the Grants for Blocks budget. Because the requirements attached to the city and CDBG funds are quite specific and different from each other, part of the administration of Grants for Blocks deals with assigning funds from the different sources to specific grants based on which set of regulations the project complies with. Savannah uses some of its CDBG Capacity Building dollars for running the Community Services Department, as capacity building is one of its primary functions. Restrictions governing the use of City of Savannah General Funds for Grants for Blocks are somewhat less specific, and include reducing slum conditions and blight, and helping the needy. The following table illustrates where funds for the Grants for Blocks Program originated and the program elements to which they were distributed in the 1995 funding cycle.

1995 GRANTS FOR BLOCKS FUNDING

Program Element	Funding Source	1995 Amount	%
Grants for Blocks	CDBG	$35,000	32%
Grants for Blocks	General Fund	$25,400	24%
Leadership Training	General Fund	$9,600	9%
Staff Assistance	General Fund	$37,800	35%
Total	All Sources	$107,800	100%

City of Savannah: Bureau of Public Development

In 1994, as residents took greater control over the program, the Department of Neighborhood Planning and Community Development also

merged a number of older programs with Grants for Blocks. For example, in the 1980s the Community Services Department paid directly for neighborhood festivals out of their own budget. Savannah Showcase neighborhoods were initially the only ones eligible for these festivals, but as more neighborhoods got Showcase status the amount of money budgeted for the festivals proved insufficient to cover all the eligible groups. The neighborhood festivals were shifted into the Grants for Blocks Program, and now can be funded each year through resident planning for the festival and writing a block grant to cover their expenses. This means that neighborhoods organize their own festivals and pay for them themselves out of a Grants for Blocks grant, rather than Community Services planning and paying for it out of its budget.

There has been an ongoing discussion among staff members in the Department of Neighborhood Planning and Community Development and the Community Services Department about better ways to fund the Grants for Blocks Program. Some are currently urging that Grants for Blocks rely more on General Funds than on CDBG dollars in order to eliminate the potential for future problems with this funding source. Many of them believe that with the increasing sophistication of residents, the kinds of grants that they are likely to be proposing in the future will be less likely to fall within the eligibility requirements for these funds.

HOW THE GRANTS FOR BLOCKS PROGRAM HAS EVOLVED OVER TIME

Grants for Blocks is a continually developing program that offers resident participants as well as city staff the opportunity to criticize the program rules or administration and to offer creative suggestions for program improvement. Additionally, city officials continually discuss the possibility of increasing the size of the grants, explore alternative sources of funding, and examine ways to make program administration more efficient. 1998 is the sixth Grants for Blocks cycle; the intervening years have produced a number of changes in the program and suggestions for further modifications are being considered now.

In 1994, coordination of the Grants for Blocks Program shifted from Neighborhood Planning and Community Development to the Community Services Department. The process was initiated in February, 1994, with the establishment of a resident-based Grants for Blocks Steering Committee, comprised of neighborhood leaders and additional resident volunteers. The Steering Committee has served as the guiding force of the process, setting the program time line, improving the application process, and serving as the decision-making body for grant awards. The Steering Committee has been instrumental in making small-scale decisions about such matters as changing the information available to residents in the application materials, to more

important matters such as changing the criteria for projects that will qualify for a small grant.

The project guidelines and participation rules have changed over time as a result of input both from residents who did not like the way the program was operated and offered ideas for improvement, and from city staff who were interested in streamlining the process and turning over more control of it to neighborhood residents. An ongoing issue has been the time line for the Grants for Blocks Program, and a gradual pulling back of the start dates for different activities has resulted from too short an annual program cycle. Now the promotion and application process begins in January, and residents are able to access funds by late spring, a change that has eased the initial difficulties with getting projects finished by the late-summer deadline. Other changes in Grants for Blocks have occurred because of dissatisfaction on the part of city staff due to administrative difficulties, for example, in added work monitoring incomplete or inappropriate applications, and following up on inadequately supported requests for grants funds. Both of these issues were satisfactorily resolved by redistributing a more equal share of the responsibility to residents for following program guidelines (incomplete or inappropriate applications are now rejected immediately) and for submitting documentation for grant dollar disbursements.

One important change occurred in the granting process itself. During the first two years of Grants for Blocks, the grant decision-making process included an in-person interview of each grant applicant that was conducted by an Interviewing Subcommittee comprised of local residents. Although it was generally agreed that engaging in the interview process as part of the subcom-

OLD AND NEW DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

OLD MODEL: Decision-Making Process for Grants for Blocks Awards	**CURRENT MODEL**: Decision-Making Process for Grants for Blocks Awards
Interviewing Subcommittee:	Decision-Making Subcommittee:
Comprised of local residents	Comprised of local residents
Interviewed each applicant about application	Scores each application according to a set of objective standards
Made decisions based on interviews and application	Makes decisions based on overall application scores
Problems:	Problems Resolved:
Lack of confidentiality	Blind reviews assure confidentiality
Favoritism and inequitable awards	Objective scoring system
Time consuming	One-or-two-day process

mittee or as an interviewee increased residents' communication skills, there were nonetheless several problematic issues associated with the interviews. As a result, there were many complaints and few people involved in the Grants for Blocks Program were satisfied with this aspect of the process. Some of the problems were associated with the size of the Interviewing Subcommittees, which fluctuated from 12 persons to only 1, depending on who was available to participate in the process. Maintaining the interest and commitment of interviewers throughout the large number of necessary interviews was also a problem and interviewers dropped out of the process rapidly. A few interviewers were unable to maintain confidentiality and divulged comments made by interviewers to applicants. This caused problems after the awards were granted and general dissatisfaction with the process. After the first two years, the interviews were eliminated from the Grants for Blocks process, and replaced by the resident Decision-Making Committee, who make award decisions based on a consistent scoring scheme.

Another change that is still under discussion is the possibility of increasing the size of the grants available to residents. The Grants for Blocks Program has successfully fostered effective ways for residents and community organizations to initiate and carry out small-scale neighborhood improvement projects; forged strong alliances among residents, businesses, neighborhoods, and the city; and increased investment of resources in target neighborhoods through private and public efforts. As a result, some residents have increasingly larger and more sophisticated ideas about what kinds of activities they can effectively implement in their neighborhoods, and would like to be able to submit proposals for larger awards. Many of the city staff agree, noting that many of the residents have risen to the challenge of the current Grants for Blocks Program and are ready to move to larger and more demanding projects. Most people who have contributed to this discussion would like to see some sort of incrementally sized grants made available, retaining the small grants for those residents who are just getting involved in the neighborhood development process, but also offering larger grants to those residents who are ready for a next step.

Other suggestions for program modification have not been implemented, although the healthy way in which the process of arguing through the issues has been carried out is a testament to the level of commitment all participants feel for the Grants for Blocks Program. One suggestion from a city planner focused on the lack of cost-effectiveness of administering the program due to the very small size of the grants awarded, and argued for increasing the minimum size of the grants and changing the criteria so that concrete project outcomes became more of a focus. Staff in the Community Services Department successfully argued that while some additional emphasis should be placed on

advising the Decision-Making Committee of the need to fully fund good, sound projects, the program was functioning overall in exactly the way it was intended to function. That is, the residents were in charge and making appropriate decisions; with small project successes and failures residents were becoming more sophisticated and asking for such assistance as they felt was necessary; and the focus of the program on process rather than outcome was entirely appropriate given the proven community-building results.

GRANTS FOR BLOCKS PARTICIPATION 1993-1998

GRANTS FOR BLOCKS Application & Implementation Data	Program Years						
	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	Total
Total number of applications	89	312	245	281	315	241	1,483
Total number of grants awarded	76	198	180	163	145	113	875
Implementation rate (%)	85%	90%	86%	93%	96%	Not yet computed	N A

City of Savannah: Bureau of Public Development

OVERVIEW OF PARTICIPATION

Participation in Grants for Blocks expanded dramatically within one year of the initiation of the program in 1993. The opportunity for residents to design and implement their own neighborhood-building ideas provoked curiosity and interest and the program grew quickly in the second year as residents really started to get involved. During the 1993 funding cycle, Grants for Blocks received 89 applications; the following year 312 applications were submitted, representing a 350% increase in expressed interest. In subsequent years, applications for block grants have remained high, fluctuating between 241 and 315 applications annually. The percentage of applications awarded grants during each funding cycle has also fluctuated, in part the result of efforts to maintain a high implementation rate. All of the grant awards were based upon the funding recommendations proposed by neighborhood resident leadership.

The kinds of grant proposals submitted by residents have changed over the years the Grants for Blocks Program has been in operation. During the 1993 and 1994 funding cycles, there were far more beautification and landscaping projects than any other kind, with more than 70% of the projects falling into this grant category. In the 1995 funding cycle, beautification and landscaping

projects began to fall in popularity relative to other kinds of projects. As people gained experience in designing and implementing their own development ideas, they gained confidence in their ability to achieve increasingly sophisticated goals. Consequently, they began to submit a greater proportion of applications for other forms of neighborhood-building activities, including neighborhood-pride activities, crime-prevention activities, youth development, and community-building workshops. In the 1998 funding cycle, beautification and landscaping projects comprised just 46% of the total number of projects funded by Grants for Blocks, with a low in this type of project occurring in 1997 with just 34%.

GRANTS FOR BLOCKS BY PROJECT TYPE 1993-1998
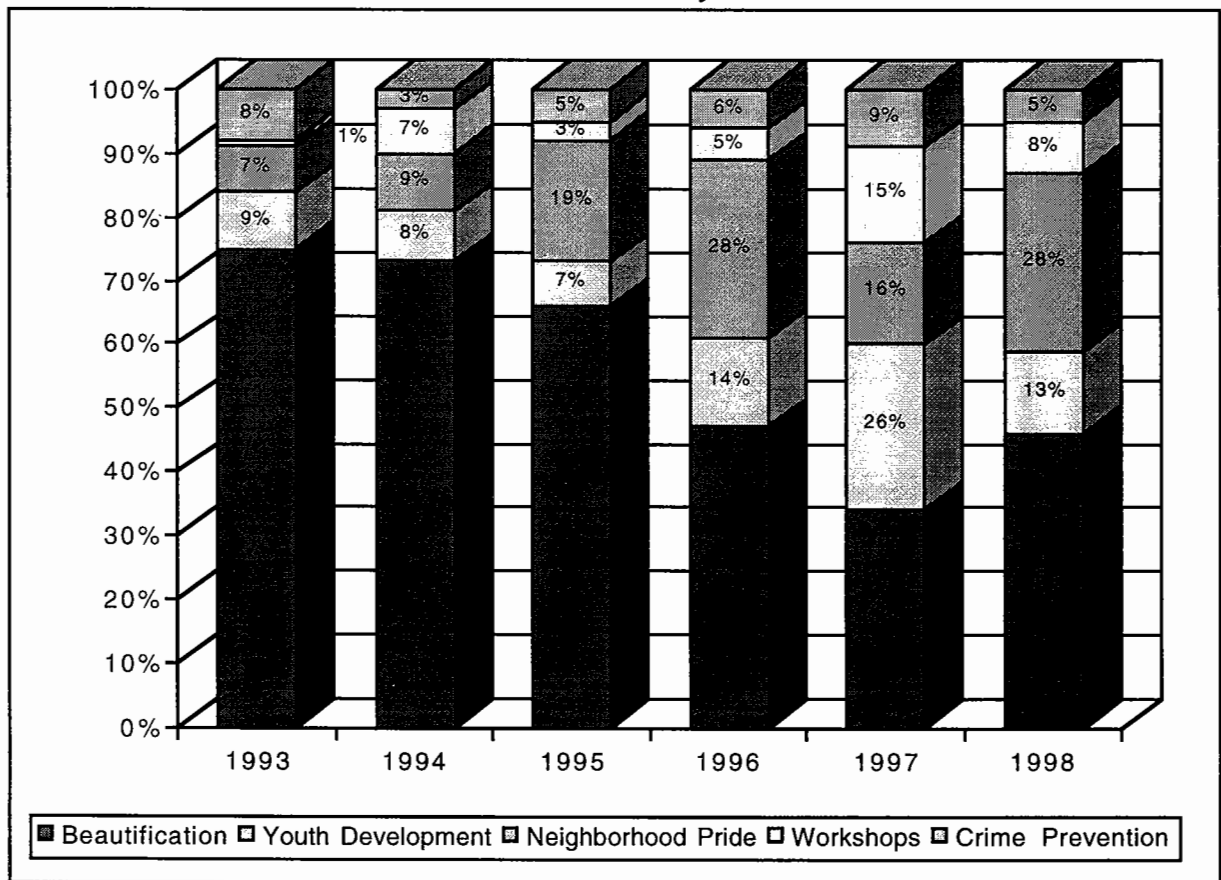
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In each of the grant categories, a number of different kinds of activities have been undertaken:

- **Beautification** projects have included the planting of trees and shrubs in prominent locations on the blocks and throughout neighborhoods, the

development and maintenance of Adopt-a-Spot sites, neighborhood clean-up activities, and neighborhood tool-lending libraries.

- **Youth Development** projects have included Back-to-School Festivals, Teen-Employment Projects, and Reading Workshops.

- **Neighborhood Pride** activities have included Annual Neighborhood Festivals, Friends and Family Parties, the development of prominently placed neighborhood welcome signs, and neighborhood promotion T-shirts.

- **Workshops** have included Sewing Classes, Training for Sustainable Community Development, and Arts and Crafts Classes for seniors.

- **Crime-Prevention** activities have included National Night Out festivities, security lighting, equipment for block captains and safe street patrol members, and self-defense strategies for senior citizens.

From the city perspective, participation in Grants for Blocks has produced far more in the way of community building than these project breakdowns suggest. Indeed, the city believes that residents are now much more connected to city budgeting, project management, neighborhood marketing, infrastructure improvements, and protecting the environment in a way that no one could have ever dreamed. Although it is a very small budget item, the Grants for Blocks Program has resulted in an extraordinary community-building project.

CHAPTER TWO

GRANTS FOR BLOCKS: THE STORY

The Grants for Blocks Program has a reputation for excellence among all the individuals whose lives it has touched. From neighborhood residents who have participated in the program over the years, to city staff and officials, to individuals outside the City of Savannah interested in neighborhood development issues, attitudes about this program are unequivocally positive. This chapter tells the Grants for Blocks story from the perspectives of a number of such individuals who were asked to contribute to this volume. They include neighborhood residents and neighborhood association leaders, members of the Community Services staff, members of the Bureau of Public Development staff, city officials, and neighborhood and housing experts outside of Savannah. In addition, examples of media coverage of the program are included here. Each individual who tells the Grants for Blocks Story in this chapter does so from his or her own unique perspective, depending on that individual's role in the life of the program.

The views presented here include some mention of difficulties encountered along the way, of frustrations experienced in trying to make the program work, and of ongoing hopes and ideas for making the program even better. What is remarkable is that people feel able to criticize Grants for Blocks without in any way diminishing their respect for, and belief in, the program. Part of the story that emerges here is that the program has changed and evolved over time in part due to the willingness of residents and others to make suggestions for its improvement.   Praise for the Grants for Blocks Program comes in many different voices and in many different forms. This is a program that Savannah loves; it is a program that people are willing to work for, to applaud, to defend, and to transform in order that it continue to work for the citizens of the city. In every case, no matter who is telling the story, the final analysis remains the same: Grants for Blocks is considered a wonderful program and a huge success.

THE NEIGHBORHOOD RESIDENTS' STORY

Each year, neighborhood residents are given the opportunity to comment on and evaluate the Grants for Blocks Program. The following responses to a series of questions about the program illustrate how positively residents think about the program and participation in it.

What did you get out of this program?

- I felt I had a voice in the process.

- It helped me to be more assertive.

- It helped me understand the process by which government works; it has changed my attitude completely.

- I learned I can influence others; persuade them to come in to a program and help change things.

- It was a learning experience, a chance to gain skills. It was the first time I had written a grant application or interviewed people.

- I learned there will be disappointments; but even with disappointments you can win.

- I used it to bring people into the neighborhood association.

- I was able to meet people from other neighborhoods and learn about their issues.

- I didn't realize how much people were concerned about the look of their neighborhood.

- I never knew where Ogeecheeton was before Grants for Blocks.

- Our community can hardly wait for this year's program.

What was the program's single most important achievement?

- It let people know they can achieve their goals.

- People have always had good ideas, they know how to solve their problems, but they need a little help. Grants for Blocks has helped us put our ideas into action.

- The spirit of cooperation created excitement; the neighborhoods are energized.

- It brought people together within neighborhoods and across the city.

- There was a new sense of trust—people from one area approving what was done in another.

- In our neighborhood it brought a closeness, togetherness, awareness, and concern for each other.

- It brought a group of black men in our neighborhood together in a brotherhood association.

- It increased cultural awareness.

Who made it happen?

- The people!

What obstacles did you encounter?

- People not knowing how to put together an application.

- People had no experience and did not know the process. They knew what they wanted to do but did not have everything in place to describe it.

- Residents did not know what was expected during the interview, and the interviewers did not know how to act either.

- Some interviews were conducted in an intimidating way.

- More time was needed for applications and selection.

- Lack of a clear Grants for Blocks timetable was a frustration.

- There was some misunderstanding about the process by neighborhood groups which had to be dispelled at the interviews.

- The amounts were too small for some projects.

- Some people thought everyone would get $500; they were disappointed to get less.

- Some people didn't understand they had to get receipts.

- Learning to trust each other.

- No one in the neighborhood thought it was really going to happen until I bought all the plants [for a landscaping project] and put them out where they could see them.

- The Neighborhood Leadership Training Institute was great, but things fell through the cracks when we got back to Savannah.

- It will be better this year; we're more prepared.

Did city staff get in the way?

- No. It was controlled by the residents. We got advice when we wanted it.

How did the skills building and leadership training help?

- At the first Neighborhood Leadership Training Institute, people got to meet each other and understand each other's needs and concerns.

- We're still working with the outline of goals and objectives in our neighborhood.

Each resident who has participated has been able to give positive feedback about the program. Most residents acknowledge that difficulties have arisen, but no one feels that the difficulties are insurmountable. In fact, most take the same perspective of the individual who said, "It will be better this year; we're more prepared."

Other residents were invited to discuss the program in 1997 when publication of the Grants for Blocks story became a reality.

Helen Washington of the Dixon Park Neighborhood

Mrs. Helen Washington of the Dixon Park Neighborhood Improvement Association thinks that "Grants for Blocks has made a substantial difference to Savannah neighborhoods." A long-time resident of Dixon Park, she notes that the program was instrumental in sustaining the resurgence of interest among residents in the neighborhood association that occurred about 1992 after several years of neighborhood disinterest. The neighborhood has been part of many development efforts, including Model Cities, and there are National Housing Services (NHS) homes in the neighborhood. Mrs. Washington feels that while some early programs didn't really produce any ongoing positive results, the Grants for Blocks Program has really worked to get things happening in the neighborhood.

In Mrs. Washington's view, Grants for Blocks is special in part because it is a regular source of money for community projects. She says, "We can count on it, and that's important." Mrs. Washington says the entire process is organized in such a way that it works for everyone. She appreciates the great relationship the Dixon Park Neighborhood Improvement Association has with its neighborhood coordinator from the Community Services Department; she likes the way the neighborhood association members themselves form a committee to decide on grant awards. Mrs. Washington also mentioned some difficulties she feels neighborhoods face with regard to the sometimes lax enforcement of laws that define how tenants should care for the property in which they live, and of landlord care of property. She says that as a result of participation in Grants for Blocks and the increased contact with city representatives that has resulted, residents in her neighborhood are much more willing to demand attention if city property maintenance crews take too long to respond to a complaint.

Mrs. Washington described some of the Grants for Blocks projects that were proposed, awarded a grant, and successfully implemented by the Dixon Park Neighborhood Improvement Association itself and by neighborhood residents applying independently.

- The neighborhood association "adopted" the Carnegie Library branch and celebrated its anniversary by purchasing a piece of artwork and buying some books for the library as its major grant.

- Residents put on three years of Back-to-School Festivities.

- Residents planned an Adopt-a-Spot project that cleaned and landscaped a vacant lot in the neighborhood.

- Residents purchased a camcorder for recording of local drug activities (this was an early project and this type of purchase is no longer allowed by Grants for Blocks).

- Residents organized a neighborhood tool library including a rototiller.

- Residents sponsored a graffiti removal project in which they cooperated with kids from the Family Resource Center.

- The Dixon Park Neighborhood Improvement Association incorporated as a 501c3.

- The association has established a Double Dutch program for local kids that helps provide for equipment, travel, and competition fees.

- The association developed a neighborhood newsletter.

- The association assisted the local black history museum in clearing its outdoor area of trash and debris.

Mrs. Washington says the Dixon Park folks do their Grants for Blocks planning at both the block and association level. While many individuals on specific blocks will submit their own grant proposals, most of the larger projects come from the association. The larger projects often have to do with a project that is clearly of interest to the entire neighborhood, for example, the ongoing grants for projects that benefit the local Carnegie Library. Dixon Park also puts a great deal of effort into including a variety of people in their grant implementation, including young people who live in the neighborhood, Community Service kids who needed to do volunteer work, as well as County Extension Program people.

Overall, Mrs. Washington reports that Grants for Blocks enables the neighborhood to do the small improvements as well as some larger ones that they might otherwise not have had the resources to accomplish.

Ken Croslen of the Metropolitan Neighborhood

Mr. Ken Croslen, president of the Metropolitan Community Organization, got involved in the association because he wanted to see people's

attitudes change and more spirit develop in the neighborhood. Metropolitan used to have some problems with local involvement, but Mr. Croslen estimates that about 20 people in the neighborhood are now actively involved in the association and its activities. He hopes that one reason for this change is the "Let's Raise our Standards" workshop he gave when he first became involved as president of the association, but he also notes enthusiastically that the Grants for Blocks Program has played a major part in initiating and sustaining the change.

Mr. Croslen says there are a number of visible differences in the neighborhood that have resulted from its participation in the Grants for Blocks Program. He first mentions the increased community awareness and pride, an outcome he is personally very pleased about. Mr. Croslen also notes that the residents of Metropolitan now feel a sense of partnership with the City of Savannah, and that this new feeling includes more security among residents in dealing with the city; more comfort in telling the city what they want, need, and deserve; and more confidence that assistance will be forthcoming at their request. He says that more neighborhood people feel comfortable going directly to the city and speaking their minds, and that there is a new belief in Metropolitan that the city cares about the neighborhood and the people living there. Mr. Croslen also compliments the city on its Community Services staff, and notes that he is impressed with how these individuals really are meant to serve neighborhood residents, even to the point of assisting residents in the occasional difficulties that arise between themselves and the city. He notes that the neighborhood coordinators participate in neighborhood association meetings and are considered by the residents to be part of the community.

In the early years of the Grants for Blocks Program, Mr. Croslen and the residents of Metropolitan were not very happy with how the program was organized and did not apply after the first year. Their neighborhood coordinator kept coming back to talk to him and after a year without participating, got the neighborhood interested again. Mr. Croslen likes the process better now that the expectations are more clearly defined, more information is provided to residents, and the planning process has been improved. The following projects were designed and implemented by the residents of the Metropolitan neighborhood.

- The neighborhood association has sponsored workshops on Parental Involvement, Youth Development, and Health Awareness; each workshop was attended by about 20 people.

- A program on Community Awareness was developed for National Night Out, in which law enforcement and public officials participated.

- The neighborhood association obtained their 501c3 status.

- Residents engaged in a number of neighborhood landscaping projects.

- A neighborhood tool library was developed.

- The neighborhood association sponsored a tutoring program for local youth.

Initially, Mr. Croslen says, individuals came up with their own ideas for the grants. Now there is more collective work around discussing and deciding which ideas are best for the neighborhood and whether or not the applications put in by the neighborhood as a whole will be good ones.

In 1998, Mr. Croslen thinks things are really going to start to happen. Because of the enthusiasm generated in the neighborhood through participation in Grants for Blocks, Metropolitan is thinking about how to partner with private industry and local businesses for activities such as trash collection and property upkeep. They are working with a local bank on the opening of a branch in the neighborhood, and hope that their partnership will include bank sponsorship of loan workshops for local people, or assistance to local residents with loans for such items as education. Metropolitan plans to continue seeking Grants for Blocks in line with the trend they have developed of putting on workshops and engaging in local education. They want to try to involve people who used to live in the neighborhood and have moved away but who may return to visit relatives or attend church.   Mr. Croslen also notes that Metropolitan has recently put in an application to the National Register of Historic Places because of the unique local architecture that is similar to that of the historic district of Savannah. They want to save this resource and hope to be able to plan future Grants for Blocks that will support this effort at neighborhood maintenance.

Linda Larry of the East Victorian Neighborhood

Ms. Linda Larry says the East Victorian District Neighborhood Association has participated in the Grants for Blocks Program since 1994, and the program has promoted both formal and informal neighborhood involvement. She says, "Grants for Blocks helps a lot because it gives you the choice to do something positive in your community."   Although East Victorian used to be a neighborhood in which few people would come out and participate in local events, residents now apply every year for grants that benefit the entire neighborhood. East Victorian is a neighborhood comprised mostly of renters, a group that is generally considered more difficult to organize and involve in community-building efforts than homeowners.   East Victorian has had enormous success in mobilizing the renting residents, who now actively participate in neighborhood-building activities. As a result of the Grants for Blocks Program, involvement in local efforts has grown and residents now

voluntarily organize efforts that benefit the area. For example, parents have collaborated informally on bus stop patrols that escort children going to and coming home from school through unsafe intersections; and on assisting working or homebound parents by attending school meetings with their children, so that the children will have an interested adult present to interact with teachers and school officials.

Ms. Larry indicates that the neighborhood coordinators are especially helpful during the Grants for Blocks process. If their own neighborhood coordinator is unavailable to respond to a question, someone else will help them out. "Nobody at Community Services ever says 'wait for your own coordinator,'" notes Ms. Larry, "They all are willing to direct neighborhood folks to the services available to them."

Ms. Larry describes East Victorian as an activist organization and says they push hard for the things they want and need. The main goal in the neighborhood is to make it a cleaner place and to eliminate drug activities. East Victorian has a Neighborhood Watch Program, and an anonymous Eyes and Ears Program that allows residents to report drug activity without fear of reprisal. The neighborhood association has partnered with the police and with local property management organizations to try to make these activities work. She believes that part of the reason they have been successful is because of the increased involvement that has resulted from the Grants for Blocks Program.

The East Victorian District Neighborhood Association has participated in the Grants for Blocks Program every year since 1994. It has developed and implemented a wide variety of projects over the years, including neighborhood beautification, educational programs, and neighborhood festivities.

- The neighborhood sponsored a job readiness program for young people 14 to 21 years of age which received a grant for several years running. The program taught them how to dress for a job interview, how to complete an application, and how to prepare themselves mentally for employment.

- Project Right Choice for young people between the ages of 12 and 21 was developed in the neighborhood. The program is conducted in collaboration with the police department, whose officers take participants to visit prisons, jails, and the sheriff and police precincts in order to illustrate what the ramifications of wrong choices might be. This program has been funded for several years.

- A community tool library was developed by applying for grants over the course of several years.

- The neighborhood association sponsors an annual Back-to-School Program in which school supplies donated by a local retail store are distributed among kids preparing for school.

- A Career Day introduced residents to career and educational opportunities.

- Numerous block beautification projects have been undertaken, including neighborhood shrubs, trees, flowers, landscaping and fences; several grants for their Adopt-a-Spot; and a shed for their community tool library. The Adopt-a-Spot in East Victorian is a lovely, well-maintained park that residents developed through Grants for Blocks; it is a quiet place where local people work in the garden, or just sit and enjoy the shade and flowers.

Ms. Larry is willing to freely criticize the Grants for Blocks Program as well as praise it. She believes that some aspects of the operation of the program in place during the first few years were preferable to the current process. Ms. Larry argues that everyone's application should get funded, that there should be no judging and no choices made by other residents. She thinks that different neighborhoods need different things, that residents have different capacities, and that some neighborhoods are unable to compete with neighborhoods that are more sophisticated. Ms. Larry then laughs at herself and her criticism of the program and says that this doesn't mean it's a bad program. She adds, "The best thing is, you get a chance to improve your neighborhood." The value, she says, is both the money and the increased involvement. Ms. Larry likes the fact that she knows the city manager and assistant city manager personally as a result of participating in Grants for Blocks. She says that the program has increased the accessibility of the mayor and other officials in city government, and that residents now see that there are real people in local government who recognize people in the community. She likes being able to just go downtown and talk to someone if she needs to.

Jeanette Scott and Hattie Mayes of the Tatumville Neighborhood

The Tatumville Community Improvement Association, unlike some others in Savannah, has been in existence since the Civil Rights Movement, and its roots can be traced to the 1920s when neighborhood residents tried to organize local people in community-building projects. Because of its long history, Tatumville was a strong neighborhood before the Grants for Blocks Program was initiated. However, Mrs. Hattie Mayes says the program has helped them grow stronger and partially credits Grants for Blocks with a recent renewal of local interest and involvement. She says, "The best thing about Grants for Blocks is that it enhances the ability of the neighborhood to do things

for itself." Mrs. Jeanette Scott agrees, saying that "Grants for Blocks provides an excellent incentive for people in the neighborhood to become involved."

The Tatumville Community Improvement Association has designed and implemented a variety of different projects toward neighborhood beautification. Mrs. Mayes says the neighborhood especially likes to take advantage of the program in order to keep the neighborhood clean and that they have focused many of their grants on neighborhood beautification.

- Two Adopt-a-Spots have been developed within the neighborhood, one across the street from Mrs. Mayes's home. By applying for improvement grants year after year from the Grants for Blocks Program, they first cleaned off the messy lots, then planted flowers along the fronts of the lots, and, most recently, have purchased such amenities as picnic tables, trash containers, and a barbecue. Next year they plan to try for a grant to install children's play equipment at one of the spots.

- The neighborhood has requested grants every year for an annual neighborhood banquet.

- Adult residents have been awarded grants to conduct several children's programs, including singing, dancing, and other activities which take place at a local church.

- The Tatumville Reunion, an ongoing program sponsored by the Brotherhood, has lately been supported by Grants for Blocks.

- An afternoon tutorial program for school children has been developed.

- Many neighborhood beautification projects have been undertaken over the years.

- Community festivities, including National Night Out, are regularly on Tatumville's list of Grants for Blocks activities.

- Workshops, including a parenting workshop and a self-esteem workshop, have been held for local residents.

- A neighborhood sign welcoming people to the Tatumville neighborhood was designed and built by residents.

Mrs. Scott says the Tatumville Community Improvement Association organizes its Grants for Blocks by having block captains bring ideas to the association meeting. The cooperation across smaller neighborhoods within Tatumville means they can spread the word about Grants for Blocks and build enthusiasm for the program. About 25 to 30 people come regularly to community meetings, and the neighborhood can bring out as many as 75 if

there is, a particular issue on the table.   The association tries to encourage residents to think of Grants for Blocks projects that have a long-term focus.

Mrs. Mayes believes that Grants for Blocks has helped to open up relationships between neighborhood people and the City of Savannah.   She reports that their neighborhood coordinators have been especially helpful to Tatumville residents who are going through the Grants for Blocks process. These new relationships with the city have impacted other Tatumville activities too, according to Mrs. Scott, especially in giving them the confidence to tackle large issues with government entities.   The neighborhood was recently successful in stopping a highway developer from removing soil from a large undeveloped section of land, and leaving nothing but an empty pit behind. Over time, and with their increased confidence in dealing with the government entities, neighborhood residents were successful in lobbying for the development of a large county park on the site, including a lake, park activity buildings, tennis courts, jogging paths, and play equipment in a park that will serve the five surrounding neighborhoods.

Mrs. Scott says, "Grants for Blocks is an excellent program.   The best thing about it is that it provides resources to bring about change."   She is especially impressed by the fact that it has increased the Tatumville Community Improvement Association's ability to accomplish goals and has brought new membership into the association.   "It is a real motivator at getting neighbors involved in the community."   Mrs. Scott notes the city "has been wonderful, supportive, and involved.   The Grants for Blocks Program has definitely helped to build good relationships with the city."

Mrs. Mayes mentions the importance of the Savannah Neighborhood Convention to local residents.   She notes the convention has assumed a position of priority in the minds of neighborhood residents and acts as the final celebration for the end of the Grants for Blocks annual cycle.   Tatumville was awarded second place at the 1997 convention for the Best Booth award.   They displayed a quilt that was made entirely by neighborhood women.

Mary Hunter and Dorothy Vaughn of the Midtown Neighborhood

Mrs. Mary Hunter and Mrs. Dorothy Vaughn of the Midtown Neighborhood Association are both enthusiastic fans of the Grants for Blocks Program.   They are very impressed with the community-building aspects of the program, especially the increase in neighbors working together.   Mrs. Vaughn states, "Grants for Blocks got us interested in trying to beautify the neighborhood but also to actually work with the neighbors."   Mrs. Hunter adds, "If it wasn't for the Grants for Blocks Program, a lot of people wouldn't have the opportunity to

do any of this." Both ladies have been active in the neighborhood for years, and it was through their involvement with the nearby Family Resource Center that they heard about the program. The Midtown Neighborhood Association was started in 1994, as a response to the opportunity offered by Grants for Blocks, and the ladies both report that it is an active association.

In 1994, the first year of their participation, the Midtown Neighborhood Association was more active in the program than at any other time. In subsequent years, residents have mostly used the grants to refurbish and renew the projects that originated in earlier years.

- A neighborhood tool library accessible to all residents was developed early and has been maintained and expanded through subsequent grants.

- Extensive block beautification consisting of sturdy wood-frame planters in the grass strip along the street, and plantings of flowers brighten the neighborhood and contribute to its current well-maintained appearance.

- A neighborhood promotion sign welcomes visitors and residents to the neighborhood.

Every block in the Midtown neighborhood prepares a grant according to what the residents of that particular block want to accomplish. For the most part, they do not work collectively as an entire neighborhood, but instead work very closely with individuals on their block. After the first two years of participation, Mrs. Hunter and Mrs. Vaughn noted that some of the older residents had become discouraged because they felt that the extensive plantings they had done for the beautification of the neighborhood were not respected by some of the younger people. Since many of the active residents are older homeowners, the ladies believe that they take a more long-term view of the value the projects have to the neighborhood. Mrs. Hunter and Mrs. Vaughn described a point when the active association members decided that they needed to regroup and reconsider the projects they were doing, and include younger people in them as much as possible. Despite their concern about the care given to the projects that are implemented through Grants for Blocks, the ladies remain very enthusiastic.

William Reese of the Pine Gardens Neighborhood

Mr. William Reese, president of the Pine Gardens Neighborhood Association, proudly reports that membership in the association is currently more than 10% of the neighborhood population. The association itself originated before the Grants for Blocks Program, in a neighborhood of long-term homeowners with a strong tradition of "taking care of their own."

Pine Gardens first participated in Grants for Blocks in 1995, with early projects focusing on cleanup and beautification of the neighborhood.   When residents in the neighborhood heard about Grants for Blocks, they decided to use this resource to accomplish some of the projects they wanted to do as a neighborhood.   The Pine Gardens Neighborhood Association has applied for and implemented a number of Grants for Blocks over the years.

- Residents have participated in a number of neighborhood cleanup projects which have improved the appearance of the neighborhood.

- Several beautification projects have been undertaken that include the planting of flowers and shrubs.

- A grant was obtained for the training of local residents at the police academy.

- Children's Day activities including visits from a city Fire Department truck, the "Drug dog," members of Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), and blood pressure testing have been popular grant requests.

- A tool library and shed has been developed that serves the residents of one block in the neighborhood.

Mr. Reese reports that 50 to 60 people regularly attend their neighborhood meetings with enthusiasm.   The Pine Gardens Neighborhood Association is especially involved in the annual Neighborhood Convention, which wraps up the Grants for Blocks Program each year.   In 1996, the neighborhood won the award for the best booth, which was decorated with the neighborhood residents' interpretation of the steps leading to success and the steps leading to failure. They compete vigorously every year and look forward to planning each booth and display.

Olivia Swanson and Pamela Jones of the Cuyler-Brownsville Neighborhood

Mrs. Olivia Swanson, the president of the Cuyler-Brownsville Neighborhood Association, is a very active and enthusiastic supporter of the Grants for Blocks Program.   Mrs. Swanson says, "Grants for Blocks helps build community in a way residents may not be able to do on their own.   It pulls people together and makes them work together."   Ms. Pamela Jones agrees, and says, "Grants for Blocks helps us with funding for things we would like to do for ourselves."   The Cuyler-Brownsville Neighborhood Association started long before the Grants for Blocks Program originated, but Ms. Jones notes that the program has been helpful in getting the association formally organized, although not necessarily in increasing community participation.   This is the result of the fragmentation that has occurred when smaller communities break

off from the community as a whole. Mrs. Swanson describes Cuyler-Brownsville as two different neighborhoods, with the residents living on both sides of a main thoroughfare and acting like they live in two separate places. Ms. Jones believes that the distinctions have more to do with strong church and family groups who tend to remain autonomous and disassociated from the neighborhood association. As a result of this lack of community cohesiveness, participation in the neighborhood association is not as strong as Mrs. Swanson and Ms. Jones would like, with only about 20 to 25 people attending regularly. However, Mrs. Swanson reports that these are very devoted members and that they do manage to put together about 10-15 grant proposals each year. In their first year, the Cuyler-Brownsville Neighborhood Association sponsored mostly community pride projects, but have branched out to include community celebrations, and cultural and educational programs.

- A grant was used to promote the revitalized Cuyler-Brownsville Neighborhood Association. The promotion included hand outs and residents spreading the word about participation.

- Every year Cuyler-Brownsville sponsors a Friends and Family Day celebration for neighborhood residents and their families, and other Neighborhood Festivals.

- Two separate community tool libraries serving different parts of the community have been developed.

- A Back-to-School Supplies giveaway of school supplies is sponsored each year for the youngsters in the neighborhood.

- A Soccer in the Street Program has been formed.

- An after-school program at the local library has been sponsored.

- The neighborhood association has sponsored a History Walk for neighborhood children, featuring important local sites, local people, and local stories.

- The association has partnered with local schools and the Savannah College of Art and Design on local beautification projects.

- A set of neighborhood signs that promote the community has been designed and constructed. On this Grants for Blocks project the neighborhood partnered with Habitat for Humanity for labor.

- A Youth and Seniors Reception has been conducted through a grant. The program was intended to promote more interaction between the young and the older residents of the neighborhood.

- The neighborhood association established itself as a nonprofit corporation with 501c3 status.

Partly because Cuyler-Brownsville is such a large neighborhood, there are several different ways of approaching the Grants for Blocks process within the community.   Some blocks think up ideas independently, prepare their application, and share it with the association just before they submit.   Other blocks get together as a group, and decide collectively on several grants to apply for.   According to Mrs. Swanson, both methods work very well for this neighborhood.

Because the neighborhood is diverse, Mrs. Swanson sometimes feels that the Grants for Blocks Program ought to be more neighborhood-specific and take into account the abilities of each group in order to provide some of the less sophisticated residents the opportunity to grow. Ms. Jones says that, as a result of some initial difficulties with the application procedures encountered by these residents, she has since developed a process for helping to generate complete and fundable grant applications for all neighborhood people.   However, complaints from Cuyler-Brownsville about the Grants for Blocks process are outweighed by the positive things both ladies have to say about the program. "Neighborhoods really appreciate what they get from Grants for Blocks, from the grants to the relationships," says Mrs. Swanson. She notes that everyone in the neighborhood likes their neighborhood coordinator, that she is willing to do whatever is needed, and that every resident feels free to talk to her honestly.

Mrs. Swanson also notes another positive outcome from the Grants for Blocks Program, stating that although she herself has never been intimidated by dealing with the city, other residents have learned to feel more comfortable and have developed new and better relationships with the city's representatives. Ms. Jones agrees, saying that "Grants for Blocks brought residents through the doors of the city," and that people work with the city now where once they did not.

Kenneth and Francis Dunham of the West Savannah Neighborhood

Mr. Kenneth Dunham, the president of the West Savannah Community Organization, reports that the Grants for Blocks Program has helped the association develop an interest in community building among previously uninvolved people. "The community is really coming together as a result of Grants for Blocks. There is more involvement, more participation, and more cooperation," he says. The West Savannah Community Organization is a very organized group of residents, and Mr. and Mrs. Dunham are very active as leaders in the numerous efforts undertaken by residents. The organization was

started before Grants for Blocks, but neighborhood residents really liked the idea and got involved right away.

Mr. Dunham says, "The Grants for Blocks Program has been very helpful in beautifying the neighborhood." About the same time as Grants for Blocks started, the city sponsored a tin fence removal project, and the enthusiasm for neighborhood beautification expanded in West Savannah as a result of both programs. Grants for Blocks increased participation in the community organization, and the neighborhood submits and is awarded more grants than most other neighborhoods in Savannah. Mr. Dunham describes some initial hesitation to participate on the part of some residents who were fearful there might be some kind of negative ramifications from the city as a result. However, he notes, these fears were calmed very quickly through both a local effort to promote the program and the good experiences that everyone had through participation. Some of the projects accomplished by the West Savannah Community Organization include:

- A total of 22 Adopt-a-Spots have been adopted in strategic locations along the main street in West Savannah. Residents have used the Grants for Blocks Program year after year to help them provide ongoing maintenance for each of these sites.

- The neighborhood association has provided Block Leader Recognition awards for the work accomplished by active residents.

- Three neighborhood tool-lending libraries have been developed.

- Community Celebrations such as Family and Friends Day, National Night Out, and Penny-a-Thon donation projects are regular events.

- Residents have conducted Community Workshops, including two on crime and two on drugs; three parenting workshops; and four youth development workshops.

- A computer tutorial program has been developed.

- More than 20 beautification projects have been undertaken.

The West Savannah Community Organization has one of the most comprehensive and effective methods of involving residents of any neighborhood in the city. The neighborhood is broken down into a multilevel system of blocks, streets, and focus areas, resulting in a tiered system that culminates at the community organization. The residents have devised a communication system that goes both ways, from residents to block leaders, to street representatives, to focus area leaders, to community association, and back again. Messages and information are conveyed over the telephone, and the

association has developed a telephone directory of West Savannah residents that it updates regularly. The communication system operates in such a way that no one is responsible for calling more than a few people; this has helped to make it an effective system, because the organization has been able to avoid making too many demands on just a few very involved people. They have used this system to successfully challenge the activities of the city and other entities, through their ability to generate almost instantaneous resident response to various situations that have emerged in the neighborhood.

Because of its strong neighborhood network, it is easy for West Savannah to spread the word about Grants for Blocks each year, and it is very effective in getting people involved, says Mrs. Francis Dunham. The focus leaders get the information and contact the street representatives with it; the street representatives notify the block captains; the block captains talk to the residents and the neighbors on any block decide collectively what they want to do. In addition to the grants submitted by each block, focus area leaders often submit additional grants for the benefit of their area.

Mr. Dunham notes that additional benefits have accrued to the neighborhood as a result of their participation in Grants for Blocks. "The railroad [which runs through West Savannah] saw that residents were interested in beautification, and now they do a much better job of maintaining its property along the tracks." As a result of their improved relationship with the railroad, the West Savannah Community Organization was also successful in convincing the rail company to change its operating procedures and eliminate the very slow train car transfers that had been occurring in the neighborhood and seriously blocking traffic. Mrs. Dunham reports that "Grants for Blocks really helped make it possible for us to accomplish other programs we were already trying to do." For example, West Savannah Community Organization had struggled to provide Christmas decorations along one main thoroughfare each year, but with a Block Grant, they were able to accomplish this annual project much more easily.

Thelma Honeyblue of the Woodsville Neighborhood

Mrs. Thelma Honeyblue of the Woodsville Community Action Organization says that the best thing about Grants for Blocks is that "It has done great things for the neighborhood. It's more to do with the way it gets people to work together, although of course the neighborhood also looks more beautiful now." Woodsville is a small neighborhood, only about eight square blocks, but according to Mrs. Honeyblue, they have been successful at getting grants every year since 1993 when the program began. Mrs. Honeyblue is one of the block captains in the community, and says that the neighborhood activities of block

captains has increased as a result of Grants for Blocks. She says block captains walk around the community and identify property that needs upkeep or attention, and then talk to residents about problems with their property. They focus on cutting weeds and making sure that the streets remain clean. The residents of Woodsville tend to focus their grants on neighborhood beautification, although they have received grants and implemented several other kinds of projects.

- Small trees and shrubbery, cleanups, and other neighborhood beautification projects have been undertaken.

- The community has sponsored celebrations and parties for neighborhood children.

- The neighborhood has participated in community festivals, including National Night Out.

- The association regularly sponsors a Back-to-School program for school children.

The Woodsville community does Grants for Blocks on a block by block basis, with each block captain focusing their grant on one particular kind of activity. All of the block captains get together with the community organization and discuss what kinds of things they want to apply for. Mrs. Honeyblue especially likes working with their neighborhood coordinator and gets a great deal of help from her on the Grants for Blocks process. Mrs. Honeyblue reiterates her good feelings about what Grants for Blocks has accomplished in Woodsville: "I knew the older people in the neighborhood before the program started, but now younger people are getting involved and I know them too. And lots of other people who didn't know each other before now are getting to work together on a project every year. It has been very good for me and the neighborhood. We have improved a lot and changed for the better."

PERSPECTIVES FROM THE CITY

Charlotte Caplan, Community Development Administrator and Andre Overton, Program Analyst, both in the Department of Neighborhood Planning and Community Development

Ms. Caplan and Mr. Overton are both involved in the administration of the Grants for Blocks Program as part of their larger set of responsibilities for the city's community development grant operations, which includes grant writing, implementation of programs, and program development. They are both impressed with the Grants for Blocks Program and its achievements in terms of community building. Ms. Caplan says, "Over time there has been a shift from

landscaping and beautification projects to programs like workshops, classes, activities, and training. With the landscaping projects you get basic community organizing but the end result is really just a bush. The good thing about the shift to programs is that when people are working on a program together they are actually building a community."

The perspective offered on Grants for Blocks by Ms. Caplan and Mr. Overton is quite different from other perspectives, as their role is one of managing what happens in the fiscal background. According to Ms. Caplan, "The value of Grants for Blocks is not in the dollars that end up in poor communities, but in getting people working together, cooperating, volunteering, building those intangibles that make a community." However, the very flexibility of Grants for Blocks that results in a great program for residents has created some tough situations for the people in her office. According to Ms. Caplan, part of the difficulty arises from using CDBG dollars to fund Grants for Blocks. She notes that these funds have huge grey areas in the rules governing their use, and Grants for Blocks has, in a sense, been a test of these grey areas. Often the proposed projects are difficult to define within the categories of community building that CDBG allows, so Ms. Caplan is always concerned that their interpretation may leave the city liable to pay back grant money spent in ways that are ultimately deemed inappropriate. With CDBG funds it is also difficult to aggregate projects. While Savannah sees Grants for Blocks as one activity, CDBG tends to see each $500 grant as a separate expenditure. The strength of the program is the ability to give small grants, but having to justify each one independently makes administering the program very time consuming.

Ms. Caplan and Mr. Overton both laugh when they consider how the Grants for Blocks Program achieved more visibility in one year than CDBG did in 20 years. Prior to Grants for Blocks, calls about CDBG came in regularly from organizations, but the larger block grants were not in the minds of local residents at all. Within months of program inception, calls about Grants for Blocks started coming in from ordinary residents living in Savannah's low-income neighborhoods. As a result, residents are increasingly connected to city departments and city staff; residents have more information about programs for which they are eligible, and they know how to get help for the projects they want to do in their communities.

As a result of the changes in the Grants for Blocks Program over time, the Community Services staff take the role of direct interaction with the neighborhood residents, and Ms. Caplan and Mr. Overton deal with behind-the-scenes issues. Ms. Caplan states, "My own background is as a comptroller but instead of control we offer assistance to residents by working through the

regulations that govern the funds from which they get their grants. We smooth the path for residents getting things done in their own communities."

Bob Haywood, Director of the Department of Neighborhood Planning and Community Development

Mr. Bob Haywood is the Director of the Department of Neighborhood Planning and Community Development, which oversees three different programs: Downtown programs in the historic district; Community Development, which manages funds and agency projects; and Neighborhood Planning, which does planning and reporting for federal programs such as Community Development Block Grants, and for Housing and Urban Development.   The department is also responsible for developing and implementing the Georgia Redevelopment Law. The staff work out what the city will do, what neighborhoods will do, and create a blueprint for action. Every two years the department produces Neighborhood Quality Benchmark Reports for the 89 official neighborhoods in Savannah, which track infrastructure status and the status of past programs.

Mr. Haywood states that the best thing about the Grants for Blocks Program is "Participation!" He views the program from the perspective of his experiences trying to involve residents in the Neighborhood Planning process, which started several years before Grants for Blocks. When the city first started trying to produce neighborhood plans, residents would not come out and participate in the process. Mr. Haywood argues that the Grants for Blocks Program got people out of their houses and much more willing to be involved in various kinds of community projects, including the Neighborhood Planning process. Grants for Blocks helped residents look at development from the more manageable block level rather than being overwhelmed by the idea of having to develop a whole community.   The result of this shift in thinking is that residents now feel they can make a real contribution, and the Planning Department is now able to update each area plan based on the active participation of the residents living in the community in question.

Mr. Haywood was involved in the original discussions about the Grants for Blocks Program in which everyone agreed that the process of getting people involved was as important as the concrete outcomes. An important aspect of his department's role in neighborhood building is helping residents take over and assume responsibility for decision-making.   This was a challenge in Savannah, where the city sometimes refused to give control to residents unless they lived where things were already happening and where relationships had already developed.   Grants for Blocks overcomes this obstacle by generating

involvement in the less advantaged neighborhoods. The result is that there is less distance between the city and local people, and more credibility for the city.

In terms of administration, Mr. Haywood likes the current system in which the Community Services Department staff work directly with residents, while Planning staff are responsible for making sure that projects that are approved are acceptable under the conditions of the funds, and then for making sure that what is approved is ultimately implemented. They also help residents think about what they could do with Grants for Blocks, and explore new ideas for eligible projects. Mr. Haywood believes that in order for the city to continue as a good partner it should expand and revamp the Grants for Blocks Program. He agrees that as a result of the learning that occurred in the Grants for Blocks process, residents are ready for a tiered program, with grants of larger sizes available to those residents who are ready for a greater challenge.

Henry Moore, Assistant City Manager and Director of the Bureau of Public Development

Mr. Henry Moore, assistant city manager, sees the Grants for Blocks Program as a "movement" in Savannah that has produced energy, enthusiasm, involvement, new leadership, and progress among neighborhood residents. Like others in the Bureau of Public Development, his perspective on the program takes into account its position within a larger set of city activities designed to build communities. The Grants for Blocks Program started as an idea that would enable the City of Savannah to reach out into the neighborhoods, promote resident involvement, help residents break through their reserve, and build their leadership capacities. A key idea for the new program was designing it so that it would remain resident driven and resident controlled. Mr. Moore says, "The feeling was if we could get 40 resident leaders to come forward out of this project, we would have succeeded." Successful identification of new leaders actually occurred on a much larger scale, with the city able to distinguish 772 resident leaders after just five years of program operation. Participation in Grants for Blocks has also had an impact on residents' more general involvement in community-building activities. It is an incubator for people coming up in the community-building process.

Grants for Blocks is about organizing communities, not bureaucracy. There have been some difficulties involving the city's willingness to deal with an uncommon project, but "The problems have been worth the extra effort," says Mr. Moore. One message sent to residents by Grants for Blocks is that the city government is a place not of power, but of resources. Mr. Moore suggests the Grants for Blocks Program is about "finding a way to help residents to connect with each other, to have an opportunity to be proud of themselves and

their neighborhood," and that the city has accepted this and is prepared "to offer assistance and support in whatever ways we can."

Grants for Blocks has involved people in all sorts of community-building activities by initially getting them involved in doing something for their own block. "There is so much energy around Grants for Blocks. It is a buzz word all over town," says Mr. Moore who cites the *Midtown is a Caring Neighborhood* community promotion sign as an example of how many residents have started to take pride in their neighborhoods. He mentions the Neighborhood Convention, an outgrowth of Grants for Blocks, which has become an event at which each neighborhood has the opportunity to show off its community-building work for the year. Mr. Moore cites other evidence of the effectiveness of the Grants for Blocks Program: increased attendance at community meetings, an increase in the number of projects proposed over the years, an increase in the number of interactions between Community Services staff and residents, and the number of new residents wanting to get involved every year.

Michael Brown, City Manager, City of Savannah

Mr. Michael Brown, Savannah's city manager, shares yet another perspective about the Grants for Blocks Program. He is responsible for the well-being of the entire city and says that the Grants for Blocks Program has made working with all of the neighborhoods a much easier job. He says, "The best thing about Grants for Blocks is that it builds a hopeful spirit in the neighborhoods and connects that spirit to rest of the community." When city staff and representatives come out of their downtown offices and work together with neighborhood people on Grants for Blocks, it promotes the perception that the city is approachable. Because the city has become better at listening to neighborhood people, residents have become more skillful at voicing their concerns and expectations to the city.

While Grants for Blocks works to build neighborhoods, Mr. Brown says that his responsibility is to focus the business community on all of Savannah's neighborhoods and get them to realize that they can't write off whole areas of the city. Regarding allocation of taxes and other issues, the view is sometimes that the inner city wastes resources and so growth and investment in the periphery get the votes. Mr. Brown is concerned about how to get inner-city Savannah residents to jobs that exist outside the city when there is little support for new transportation systems from the city neighborhoods to the periphery. He wants to make sure that Savannah deals with the issues of all areas in the city and region by looking at all parts of the larger community as an asset.

Mr. Brown suggests that Grants for Blocks could be used as a stepping stone to funnel residents into larger development efforts by defining incremental steps for the neighborhood people. He mentions the Savannah Economic Development Authority (SEDA), which recruits industry to the area as potential partners. SEDA recently turned a housing authority building into a small half-acre mini-industrial park near downtown and has incorporated inner-city development into its overall objectives. One of the outcomes of Grants for Blocks is that more potential partners have come to the table to talk about everyone's role in neighborhood development.

Mr. Brown says the idea for and implementation of the Grants for Blocks Program really came from Henry Moore through a consensus among Mr. Moore, his staff, and neighborhood people. The heart of the Grants for Blocks Program is, in Mr. Brown's view, making Savannah neighborhoods quality places to live: "We needed to find a way to develop the people, to build on their capacities to recreate their own healthy neighborhoods." Mr. Brown suggests that the Grants for Blocks Program did that. As a program, it is not a gigantic panacea or a huge amount of money, but it gives people something to rally around to build spirit and cohesiveness. If you feed people they get together; if you use a geographic anchor (a school, a church, a fire station) they come. Grants for Blocks provides the wherewithal, the residents define the goal and bring the energy, and the result is something neighborhood people can point to as a success.

Mr. Brown supports the work of the Bureau of Public Development, saying, "Henry Moore and his folks are really great. They keep people pumped up and enthusiastic. They're not just out there putting medicine on the problem, they're really trying to make a change." He notes that the city council is beginning to understanding the issues. "We have stopped abandoning city anchors like fire stations in neighborhoods; we're making an effort to keep these facilities looking good and having a function in the neighborhood, even if it isn't the original function; we're diligent on code enforcement and on neighborhood cleanliness issues. We are trying to work with people, make it a partnership, rather than just being in the business of serving."

PERSPECTIVES FROM OTHER INTERESTED INDIVIDUALS

Gwen Goodman, 2nd District Alderman in the City of Savannah

Ms. Gwen Goodman is definitely a neighborhood supporter, but she tends to view "neighborhoods" a little differently due to her position as alderman of a large and diverse area in Savannah. Within her district are all kinds of neighborhoods, including the Historic District, middle and low-income

neighborhoods, and four public housing developments, a fact that emphasizes her need to be able to deal with all kinds of people. Ms. Goodman says, "I think the community as a whole profits extensively from the Grants for Blocks Program." She says it gives participating neighborhoods a chance to bring citizens together, it provides a forum for getting people talking about issues, and it helps neighborhoods with the critical issue of keeping children on the right track. As an advocate for strong parent/child relationships, she declares that "it broadens the base for child discipline when people know their neighbors and their neighbors' kids."

Ms. Goodman also notes the value to the community of some of the specific projects that have been done, including tool libraries, house numbers, promotional signs, and paint for neatening up the neighborhoods. She is in agreement with many others who think the program now needs to provide a mechanism for people to move on, to design and implement larger ideas. Ms. Goodman says that when community members become involved in planning and making a wish list for themselves, it comes down to people really wanting to stay where they are and improve the community in which they live. She thinks that people often leave neighborhoods because they feel powerless to make a change, but says that Grants for Blocks is having a positive impact on that attitude by getting people to be active and learning to be leaders and to speak up for what they want and need.

George Knight, Director of the Neighborhood Housing Service

Mr. George Knight of the Neighborhood Housing Service thinks that "Grants for Blocks is a terrific program; it really is something other cities ought to be doing." He says that although he has seen similar things done on a smaller basis, what is great about Grants for Blocks is that a city government is doing it. He also applauds the ability of the City of Savannah to improve and expand the program year after year. "What Grants for Blocks really is about is slowly building neighborhoods from the bottom up. This kind of program really works and they've proved that," he says. According to Mr. Knight, he has watched the blocks in Savannah improve, not necessarily as an exclusive result of Grants for Blocks, but of the combination of neighborhood-building activities that are going on there. "The beauty of Grants for Blocks is that it is a way to encourage resident involvement, and that involvement spills over into all sorts of other activities that are happening around development and improvement issues."

Mr. Knight thinks that one of the strengths of the program's design for other cities considering such an activity is the smallness of the grants. Even though Savannah has a very high implementation rate, all its funding eggs

aren't in one basket, and one failure of a Grants for Blocks grant means almost nothing to the program overall. On the other hand, Mr. Knight says it will be a challenge for Savannah to grow the Grants for Blocks Program even larger, by providing next steps for neighborhood organizations who have outgrown the small size of grants available through the current program. The Savannah Grants for Blocks Program receives a lot of attention through the work of the Neighborhood Housing Service. Mr. Knight reports that they really showcase the program, and have used the concept on a regular basis at their neighborhood training sessions.

PERSPECTIVES PRESENTED IN THE MEDIA AND LOCAL PUBLICATIONS

The Grants for Blocks Program has also received attention from various media sources, from regional newspapers to neighborhood newsletters. The following excerpts illustrate how resident accomplishments are highlighted and centrally featured in the coverage.

MORNING NEWS
Wednesday May 10, 1997
Neighborhood   groups   honored during annual celebration

Kenneth Dunham recalls a time about five years ago when he didn't really know his neighbors and his community needed some physical improvements. He is now president of the West Savannah Community Organization and much has changed in his community as a result of residents participating in the Grants for Blocks Program.

"Today, I am in touch with my neighbors, the neighborhood is cleaner, and a spiritual bond and a deeper sense of community exists

that was not there before, he said. Those changes are the result of the hard work of the West Savannah Community Organization and neighborhood residents."

The West Savannah Community Organization was one of 23 associations honored in the Grants for Blocks Fifth Anniversary Celebration. The organizations were honored for their dedication to excellence and their participation in the 1997 Grants for Blocks Program.

MORNING NEWS
Wednesday June 18, 1997
Grants give neighborhoods tools to better themselves

The difference between the Grants for Blocks Program in Savannah, Georgia and other governmental programs is that in Savannah the residents—not the experts—come up with the ideas. They decide what the neighborhoods need. They take ownership. While administering the program, the city has to let go, which is never easy for bureaucrats.

This year, Essie Richards and the Carver Heights Mission Improvement Organization opted to use a grant to teach local children about their roots. The neighborhood was one of the first subdivisions where African Americans could own homes.

Richards, the president of the Carver Heights neighborhood association says, "Family and community history is very important. I never talked to my grandfather, who was retiring from the waterfront when I was growing up, and I regret that. Later on, I left for work at dawn and came home in the evening, so I never had much time to socialize or to learn about my community."

For the past year, Richards, Stewart and other residents like George Stewart, a longshoreman, have been using Grants for Blocks funds to research their past at Savannah State University and the Georgia Historical Society. They will make a video for next year's 50th anniversary of the organization.

Residents of other Savannah neighborhoods also credit the Grants for Blocks Program with helping to build involvement in neighborhood activities. "Since we started the tool library, people got to know one another. We get 50 and 60 people at our monthly meetings. This gave us the push," says Kenneth Dunham of West Savannah. "When you think about it, the city can't do everything for people. But we get lazy and expect them to. Now there's more self-esteem in the neighborhood. We're helping one another. We know our city inspector, the police officer, the firefighter. We know who to call on in an emergency. We decided what we need."

"That's exactly why Grants for Blocks works so well," says Taffanye Young, Savannah's Community Services Director. "If we did it, we wouldn't get the same results, " she said. "When they do it, they back it up. They own it."

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NEIGHBORHOOD *focus*

VOLUME 1, NUMBER 3, FALL 1994
THE CITY OF SAVANNAH COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Grants for Blocks Makes Midtown Resident's Dream a Reality

Rose Anderson, Block Captain in Midtown applied for funds from the Grants for Blocks Program to have a block party for the children and young adults living in the area. Her mission was to unify neighbors and bring youth and adults together. Anderson reported "The response was tremendous." Almost 200 parents and children from age 2 to 17 participated in the August 20th party. They danced, enjoyed great food and, more importantly, took steps to bridge the gap between them. Special thanks to the East 38th Street volunteers for their support and to the men who helped make the day unforgettable!

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NEIGHBORHOOD *focus*

VOLUME 1, NUMBER 5, SPRING/SUMMER 1995
THE CITY OF SAVANNAH COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

The Grants for Blocks Award Ceremony was held in the Savannah Civic Center Ballroom on May 3, 1995. A total of 244 applications were received this year with 180 applications being funded. Approximately $65,710 was awarded to 180 applicants from 21 CDBG neighborhoods. Grant awards range from $75 to $500. Six Review Committees composed of neighborhood residents who volunteered their time were organized to review applications. The City of Savannah would like to extend a special thanks to residents who volunteered to serve on the Grants for Blocks Review and Steering Committees.

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NEIGHBORHOOD focus

VOLUME 1, NUMBER 5, FALL 1996
THE CITY OF SAVANNAH COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Second Annual Neighborhood Convention a Great Success!!

The Second Annual Neighborhood Convention was a great success with 38 neighborhood volunteer organizations and approximately 800 visitors throughout the five-hour event. The Brotherhood Association of Tatumville captured the Project of the Year Award, and Deacon George Stewart of the Carver Heights neighborhood received the Block Leader of the Year Award. The Carver Heights Mission Improvement Association walked away with what some would consider the biggest prize of the day, a $500 Spirit Award for bringing the largest number of supporters to the event. The Spirit Award was provided by Neighborhood Housing Services of Savannah. The Property of the Year Award went to Joyce Williams of the 500 block of East Duffy Street, and Best Booth Prizes were awarded to Pine Gardens (1st Place), Brotherhood Association of Tatumville (2nd Place), and Live Oak (3rd Place).

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BUILDING *BLOCKS*

THE CITY OF SAVANNAH COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Block Leader Spotlight: Mr. Benjamin Jenkins

The Dixon Park Neighborhood Improvement Association (DPNIA) is proud to spotlight Mr. Benjamin Jenkins. Mr. Jenkins has lived in his beautiful home on East Duffy Street for 35 years. He has been an active member of the DPNIA since its beginning in 1979. Even before Mr. Jenkins became an official block leader of his Model Block, he cleaned and raked the Duffy land and the 500 block of East Duffy Street. He also maintains and adds plantings to the street's Adopt-A-Spot. Mr. Jenkins can always be found repairing or replacing his neighbors' walkways and sidewalks or assisting them with landscaping. Mr. Jenkins is a fine example of a Block Leader.

CHAPTER THREE

GRANTS FOR BLOCKS: THE OUTCOMES

In 1993, when the Grants for Blocks Program was started, staff in the various departments of the city's Bureau of Public Development envisioned the identification of 40 new neighborhood leaders as the most likely major program outcome, and believed that if they achieved that, the program would have been a success. Instead, Grants for Blocks caught on in the neighborhoods in ways that no one predicted and has produced not just one but many measurable outcomes. The program has resulted not only in the hoped for identification of new neighborhood leaders, but also in positive results in a number of other categories:

- **Increased interest and participation at the block level** over the six years the program has been in operation; more proposals, more completed projects, and more neighborhood residents actively involved in community-building activities.

- **Concrete physical improvements** in the neighborhoods, including cleaner streets; new plantings of trees, shrubs, and flowers; reduced neighborhood blight; increased maintenance of housing stock; and the development and maintenance of vacant land for public use.

- **Expanded relationships and collaborative activity** among residents living in the Grants for Blocks neighborhoods, both between residents living in specific neighborhoods, and among residents living in different neighborhoods.

- **Increased resident empowerment** of residents in their contact with and relationships with the city and other entities; improved neighborhood self-esteem and willingness to speak out about neighborhood issues.

- **Other outcomes** including expanded interest and participation in the Neighborhood Convention; more interest in neighborhood promotion and visibility; and more requests for city assistance with economic development and other activities extending beyond the program.

INCREASED INTEREST AND PARTICIPATION AT THE BLOCK LEVEL

From a neighborhood perspective, Grants for Blocks affords Savannah's CDBG neighborhoods the opportunity to engage in community-building projects without having to raise the money themselves.   While many people were involved in small, local efforts to improve their neighborhoods prior to Grants for Blocks, the program opened up new opportunities for residents to do creative projects by tapping into a funding stream intended to support their work.   In addition, Grants for Blocks sets no limit on the number of grants a neighborhood can be awarded; the more active the residents are in designing projects and applying for grants, the more they can achieve in the community.

Program interest and participation have far exceeded original expectations and estimates of the Bureau of Public Development.   In 1993, 89 residents applied for grants and 76 of these proposals were funded.   The following year, the number of applications more than tripled to 312, and the awards more than doubled to 198.   In subsequent years, the number of grant applications submitted has fluctuated from a low of 241 in 1998 to a high of 315 in 1997.   The fluctuation can be attributed to a number of factors.   There has been a tendency over time for Grants for Blocks to become more competitive and to award fewer grants in higher dollar amounts, rather than to award every applicant less than the amount requested.   There is also some tendency for individuals to "take a rest" from participation.   Many people will apply for grants and implement projects year after year, and then decide to take some time off from participation. Finally, as a result of participation, many people have become more interested in other community-building activities, and parcel out their time in ways that enable them to be involved in all of these various activities.

GRANTS FOR BLOCKS PARTICIPATION 1993-1998

GRANTS FOR BLOCKS Application & Implementation Data	Program Years						
	1993	**1994**	**1995**	**1996**	**1997**	**1998**	**Total**
Total number of applications	89	312	245	281	315	241	1,483
Total number of grants awarded	76	198	180	163	145	113	875
Implementation rate (%)	85%	90%	86%	93%	96%	Incomplete	Incomplete

City of Savannah: Bureau of Public Development

Over a six-year period, Grants for Blocks has generated and sustained interest from neighborhood residents and neighborhood associations. A total of 1,483 applications have been prepared and submitted, a testament to the enthusiasm Savannah citizens feel for this program. Averaged out among the 36 eligible neighborhoods and over the six years of program operation, this means that on average seven blocks or seven groups of residents from each neighborhood have applied per year. Some neighborhoods have been more active than others, and have really rallied around the opportunities offered by the Grants for Blocks Program. Impressive as the participation figures are, the number of applications and project implementations for Grants for Blocks do not clearly reflect the extent of the impact of this program. For example, in the 1994 funding cycle, Community Services staff calculated that the 312 applications and 198 project implementations were the result of the work of more than 1,546 individual residents. Overall, Savannah estimates that the lives of the more than 55,000 residents of the target neighborhoods have been impacted by this program.

CONCRETE IMPROVEMENTS IN THE NEIGHBORHOODS

Savannah residents who have participated in the Grants for Blocks Program have contributed a wealth of improvements to their neighborhoods, both in visible, physical improvements and in capacity building. The improvements that are visible and concrete help make the neighborhoods more beautiful places, as well as more welcoming and more pleasant places to be. The improvements that build on the capacities of local people are less visible, but no less important to the neighborhoods and their residents. The majority of early Grants for Blocks efforts tended to be in the category of neighborhood landscaping and beautification. Six years later, although the kinds of projects that upgrade the image of a block or neighborhood no longer comprise the majority of grants, they remain popular among residents.

Landscaping and beautification projects include:

- Building planters for street beautification.

- Planting trees, grass, flowers, and shrubs on the public rights-of-way.

- Adopting vacant properties and developing and maintaining them as community parks or public gathering spaces. The Adopt-A-Spot projects have proved very popular and have greatly enhanced the look of neighborhoods.

- Conducting general neighborhood cleanup campaigns.

- Developing community tool libraries for sharing among local residents.

- Renting equipment for garden preparation or other large-scale landscaping projects.

- Developing community signs that are prominently displayed and that welcome people to the neighborhood.

- Restoring signs on important neighborhood buildings.

- Conducting neighborhood graffiti-removal campaigns.

- Providing permanent trash disposal containers for public spaces.

- Furnishing benches and other seating in public areas.

- Replacing or repairing broken driveways and sidewalks.

- Developing play areas with play equipment for neighborhood children.

- Painting of visible house identification numbers.

- Repairing of neighborhood fences.

- Displaying Christmas and holiday decorations.

In addition to the Grants for Blocks projects that upgrade the image of the neighborhood, a number of other kinds of projects have been supported by the program. Although the creativity and imagination of the residents have produced a list of neighborhood-building projects far too extensive to cover completely, the following examples give a good idea of how many wonderful ideas have been carried out in Savannah's neighborhoods.

Neighborhood identity and pride-building projects include:

- Developing decals, T-shirts, parking stickers, neighborhood promotional banners, and other neighborhood promotional objects.

- Holding an annual neighborhood open house of properties for sale.

- Publishing neighborhood newsletters.

- Organizing a Neighborhood Pride Festival.

- Honoring local police officers at an Appreciation Festival.

- Establishing an animal control (neutering) program.

- Holding a Friends and Family Day Festival.

- Displaying plaques that identify the homes of block leaders.

- Developing neighborhood association letterhead.

- Holding a Block Leader Recognition Festival.
- Celebrating neighborhood volunteers through an Appreciation Banquet.
- Supporting local oral history projects.

Youth development projects include:

- Providing after-school tutoring programs for young people.
- Offering mentoring programs for youth.
- Giving away school supplies at back-to-school time.
- Holding a Back-to-School Festival.
- Cleaning a vacant lot for the Soccer in the Streets Program.
- Offering special activities for youth at a Friends and Family Festival.
- Holding a Youth Block Party.
- Offering a Stories in the Park Program.
- Taking young people on special interest field trips.
- Sponsoring membership in the Boys and Girls Club.
- Supporting young people to go to summer camp.
- Having a Christmas social for young people.
- Promoting an Adopt-a-Grandparent Program.
- Organizing a Youth Working Together project.
- Providing music and dance lessons for youth.

Crime prevention projects include:

- Holding a neighborhood anti-drug march.
- Installing motion detector lights for yards and public areas.
- Hosting a supper seminar on crime prevention.
- Participating in the National Night Out Festival.
- Developing neighborhood T-shirts for National Night Out.
- Holding a substance abuse workshop.
- Sponsoring a Stop the Violence Youth Rally.

Workshops and fairs include:

- Sharing knowledge about health at a community Health Fair.

- Holding workshops on health-related special needs.

- Making holiday arts and crafts.

- Offering a workshop on small business development.

- Holding a community-awareness workshop.

- Supporting a parental-involvement workshop.

- Offering a home-buying workshop.

The following table illustrates the kinds of Grants for Blocks projects that have been implemented in the neighborhoods over the six years of the program. Beautification projects, while still popular, have diminished as a proportion of all projects, while Neighborhood Identity and Pride projects, Youth Development projects, and Workshops and Fairs have increased.

NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF PROJECT TYPE BY YEAR

GRANTS FOR BLOCKS	Program Years					
Project Type - Number of Awards	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Crime Prevention: drug marches/rallies, motion detector lights along streets and lanes, etc.	6 (8%)	6 (3%)	8 (5%)	11 (6%)	13 (9%)	6 (5%)
Beautification: cleanups, landscaping in the public right-of-way, tool-lending libraries, Adopt-A-Spot parks, etc.	57 (75%)	145 (73%)	119 (66%)	76 (47%)	49 (34%)	52 (46%)
Workshops/Fairs: health & safety fairs, job-readiness workshops, literacy classes, sewing classes, arts and crafts, etc.	1 (1%)	14 (7%)	6 (3%)	8 (5%)	22 (15%)	9 (8%)
Youth Development: tutorial programs, school supply giveaways, mentoring programs, recreation programs, etc.	7 (9%)	15 (8%)	13 (7%)	23 (14%)	38 (26%)	14 (13%)
Neighborhood Identity & Pride: neighborhood signs & decals, T-shirts, neighborhood newsletters, festivals, etc.	5 (7%)	17 (9%)	34 (19%)	45 (28%)	23 (16%)	32 (28%)
TOTAL PROJECTS	76 (100%)	198 (100%)	180 (100%)	163 (100%)	145 (100%)	113 (100%)

City of Savannah: Bureau of Public Development

EXPANDED RELATIONSHIPS AND COLLABORATIVE ACTIVITY

The outcomes that result from participation in these Grants for Blocks projects have also included higher levels of acquaintance and friendliness among neighbors, a greater degree of networking among resident leaders across the CDBG eligible neighborhoods, and an expansion of collaborative skills in terms of completing grant applications, planning and implementing projects, and project management by the members of neighborhood associations. And, as the neighborhood associations serve as the clearinghouse for each neighborhood's grant applications, participation in the Grants for Blocks Program has also increased the visibility and credibility of neighborhood associations among residents who were not formerly aware of these organizations. This has produced an increase in membership and involvement and "has stitched back together neighborhood associations that for years were either dormant, or dead," says assistant city manager Henry Moore. People who participate in the program, especially the members of the Resident Steering Committee, understand that the real benefit is not just in the projects themselves, it is in the collaboration they inspire. People get to know their neighbors and they get involved in their neighborhood associations.

The Grants for Blocks Program requires that residents work together if they want to submit a grant application. At least two residents on a block or two community members must collaborate on a project proposal in order to be eligible for an award. This brings people together to think about and plan their neighborhood-improvement project, to share and gain sponsorship of their project from the neighborhood association, and to implement their project once they have received their award. Additionally, people come together to enjoy each other's work, and to celebrate completed projects in the neighborhood.

Different neighborhoods have different models for approaching their participation in Grants for Blocks. In some neighborhoods, residents tend to work in twos and threes on projects that benefit the entire community although they are block specific. In other neighborhoods, residents tend to get together as a group and discuss what kinds of projects they want to accomplish throughout the community, and then assign different people to prepare the grant proposals for each one. Both models result in expanded relationships among community members.

INCREASED RESIDENT EMPOWERMENT

One of the most important achievements of the Grants for Blocks Program is the resident mobilization and empowerment that has resulted from participation. When the program was initiated in 1993, resident involvement

in neighborhood improvement and self-advocacy was stagnant and there were few people who could be counted as active neighborhood leaders. By 1997, the Grants for Blocks Program successfully surfaced 772 new resident leaders. These individuals have taken on active roles in their communities, encouraging their neighbors to come together, promoting new ideas, and generating enthusiasm for building a better place to live.

RESIDENT LEADERS AT THE BLOCK LEVEL
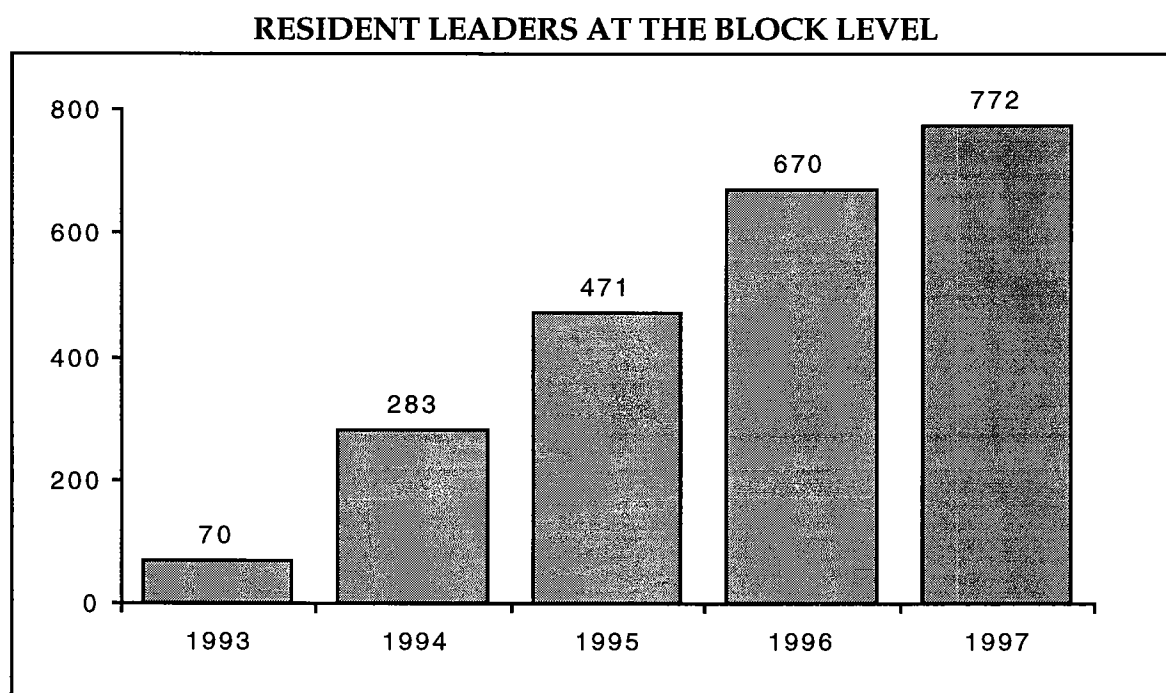
City of Savannah: Bureau of Public Development

Grants for Blocks also generates a key ingredient to sustaining neighborhood improvement: a sense of resident ownership of the program and its accomplishments.   The program is itself an exercise in resident empowerment, as the application preparation, review and award decisions, and staffing and training needs are determined solely by resident leadership. The role of the city is limited to providing staff support, coordinating the delivery of funds, and providing technical assistance when needed. The sense of local ownership of locally run programs that are designed by residents and funded through Grants for Blocks have produced high levels of support in the neighborhoods. For example, previous attempts by the Community Services Department to hold tutoring and literacy workshops never generated much neighborhood interest, but similar programs initiated by residents have been extremely popular, well attended, and sources of local pride.

CITY OF SAVANNAH
Neighborhood Block Leaders

City Limits

NORTH

1 inch = .8 miles
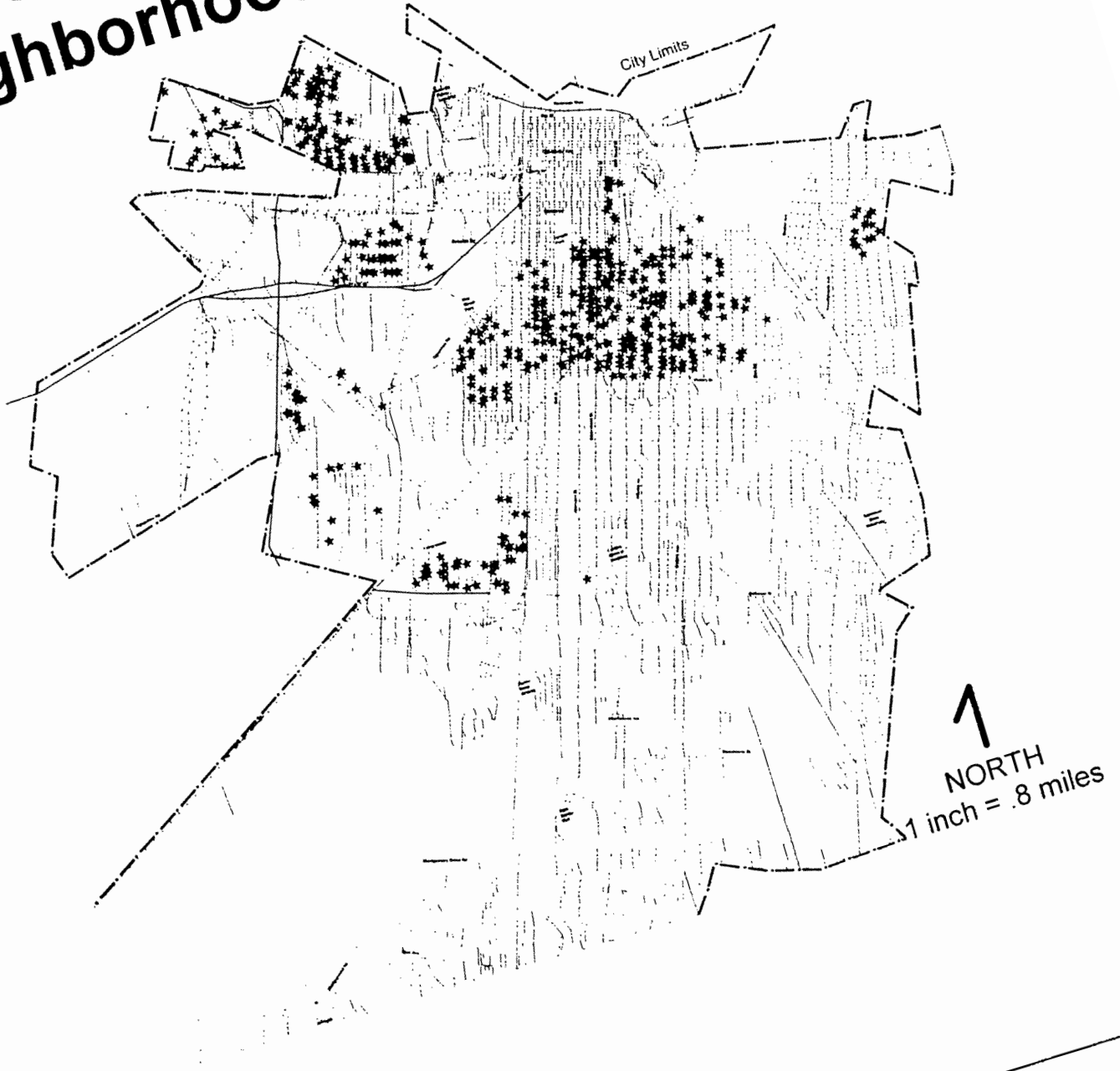
City staff and officials describe a dramatic democratization of the way that Savannah does business with its citizens. Before Grants for Blocks, residents had some distrust of the city, a situation some described as like a wall was separating residents and the city. Residents had a limited role in community development; when public hearings were held, residents discussed proposed projects but had no role in their selection or implementation. The partnership between the City of Savannah and the residents and their neighborhood associations is very strong these days. Residents have learned that the city is approachable; they attend city meetings, they make their voices heard. City officials attribute this empowerment to participation in the Grants for Blocks Program. Involvement in the program has broken down barriers by providing opportunities for residents to work alongside city staff, by demonstrating to them that the city staff is prepared to truly act as civil servants and do what residents ask them to do, and by creating situations in which residents come together with city officials for recognition and praise for their community-building efforts.

Currently, Savannah residents maintain a strong city presence and are vocal about what they want for their neighborhoods. For example, in a letter dated February 20, 1998 from the Cuyler-Brownsville Neighborhood Association to the mayor of Savannah, residents made their desires known by requesting that a city-sponsored revitalization study of the Martin Luther King/Montgomery Corridor be expanded to include the Cuyler-Brownsville area. In the letter, residents cited the historic status of their district, their own revitalization plan, and their desire to be included in the study of the neighboring district. Copies of the letter were sent to the city manager, the assistant city manager, and the council member for the district. Mr. Henry Moore, the assistant city manager, comments on the neighborhood pride and leadership that prompted the community to speak out in this way. "They would never have made this request 10 years ago," he says, noting that the increase in civil engagement that has occurred in Savannah in recent years is partly due to resident participation in Grants for Blocks. Savannah is witnessing an emergence of more vocal residents who complain about code violations and who attend city council meetings to protest liquor licenses and request zoning changes.

Through its complementary program, the Neighborhood Leadership Training Institute, the Grants for Blocks Program has also increased the capacity of formerly disenfranchised residents to impact neighborhood conditions and local government, by linking emerging leaders to leadership training, skills building, and networking opportunities; by linking new leaders to existing leaders; and by keeping leaders involved in decision-making processes. The Institute is designed to strengthen, reinforce, and build upon the natural

leadership skills that exist among residents. Residents have gained skills in planning, organizing, budgeting, recordkeeping, grantsmanship, and public presentation. Over the course of six years, a total of 1,577 residents have attended leadership training events.

LEADERSHIP TRAINING—TOTAL PARTICIPANTS
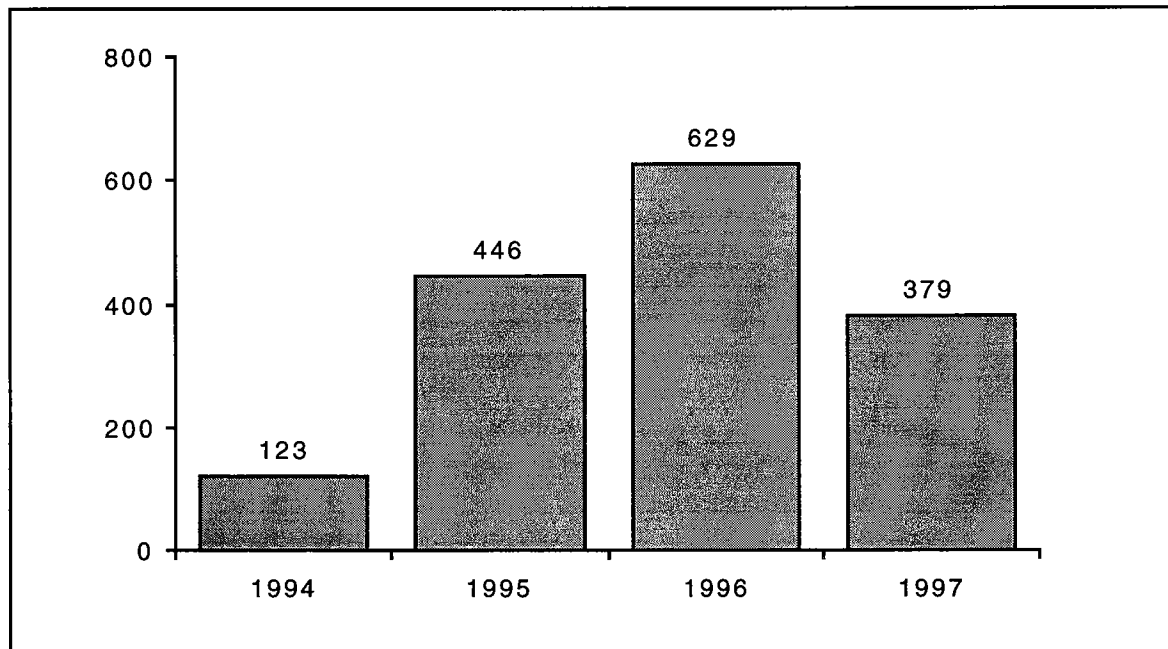
City of Savannah: Bureau of Public Development

The Neighborhood Leadership Training Institute provides targeted training on topics that increase the ability of residents to address the issues facing their communities. To ensure that training is relevant and useful, the Community Services Department asks neighborhood leaders to determine the issues about which they would like to learn more. A resident-based Training Steering Committee was established in 1994 to refine the specific training needed, while Community Services staff locate individuals and programs—both local and national—to provide the training workshops. Participants have generally rated the training sessions as informative, and the presenters as highly effective. They note that the training workshops have made their organizations stronger, the information they learned has extended their knowledge in working as community leaders, the training provided good principles and examples of how to utilize them, and the training increased knowledge about resources available to them. Resident participants also felt that the workshops gave leaders from different areas an opportunity to come together as a unit in the community, allowing them to learn from each other.

Topics that have been presented at the training workshops include:

- Housing development.
- Youth development.
- Neighborhood beautification.
- Effective community organizing.
- How to establish barter services and skill banks.
- Innovative ways to excite people and get them involved through neighborhood promotion, publicity, and communication.
- How to utilize block captains to contact neighborhood residents and assess the residents' desires and interests.
- Building the community in terms of skills, confidence, and self-esteem.
- Developing partnerships between the city, schools, and neighborhoods.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION MEETING ATTENDANCE AND CONTACTS WITH COMMUNITY SERVICES STAFF
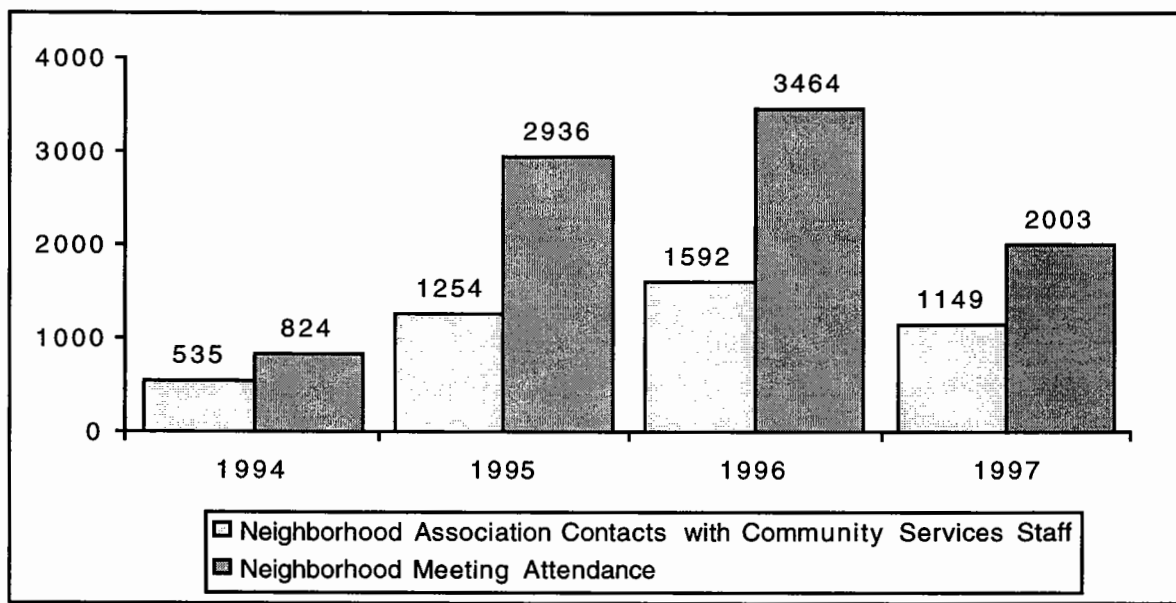
City of Savannah: Bureau of Public Development

The City of Savannah makes a strong argument for the importance of the Community Services staff to the developing neighborhood groups as a result of

seeing the large increase in attendance at neighborhood meetings since the Grants for Blocks Program started in 1993. By comparing the relationship between the number of interactions between the staff members and neighborhood associations, and the corresponding levels of attendance at neighborhood meetings, they can see the how critical this support has been. Starting in 1994, Savannah tracked this relationship, and the results are dramatic. Each year, neighborhood meeting attendance increased along with the level of interaction between the neighborhood associations and Community Services staff members, suggesting the value of the staff members as both motivators and supporters of resident activity. In 1997, a reduction in attendance at neighborhood association meetings occurred for the first time in the life of the Grants for Blocks Program. Savannah attributes this to the fact that the Community Services staff spent a larger percentage of their time in late 1997 on other community-building activities, and were in less direct contact than usual with neighborhood groups late in the year. Without the visibility and presence of their city partners, resident participation dwindled somewhat in response.

OTHER OUTCOMES

Among the unanticipated results of the Grants for Blocks Program is the dramatically increased participation and enthusiasm demonstrated at the annual Neighborhood Convention. Each year the convention provides the opportunity for neighborhood associations to develop a booth in which they can promote their neighborhoods, display their Grants for Blocks neighborhood improvement projects, and discuss the issues in their neighborhood and directions for the future. In addition, the convention is a fun day full of celebration and festivities. Awards are offered to the neighborhood associations that develop the best booth, bring the most resident supporters to the convention, and to leaders who have done the most impressive community-building work throughout the year. Speakers—from city officials to national figures—enthusiastically extol the meaningful work of Savannah neighborhood residents; an informal banquet is served and mementos of the occasion are distributed. The convention is a day of celebration for the residents; they are the center of attention throughout the day and use the occasion to celebrate with other neighborhoods the pride they feel in their accomplishments.

In one sense, the community-building outcomes of Grants for Blocks are merged with those of all the neighborhood-development efforts happening in Savannah. But many people attribute some of the successes of the other programs to the fact that Grants for Blocks got residents out and participating in local improvement efforts. West Savannah produced the following table of their many community-building accomplishments between 1993 and 1996. Not

all of them are a direct result of participation in Grants for Blocks, but the increased engagement and involvement of residents in local improvement efforts that allowed them to be accomplished, can be attributed to the program.

COMMUNITY-BUILDING ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN WEST SAVANNAH

ISSUE	OBJECTIVE	ISSUE STATUS 1993	1996	REMARKS
Low membership in association	Increase by 10% annually	30 members	65 members	116% increase overall
Large # of sub-standard units	Reduce # of sub-standard units	880 substandard units	580 substandard units	34% reduction substandard units
Slow homeowner-ship growth rate	Increase home-ownership 10%	723 homeowners	727 homeowners	.5% increase in homeownership
High # nuisance properties	Reduce # nuisance properties	108 nuisance properties	58 nuisance properties	46% reduction in such properties
Large # tin fences in poor condition	Reduce # of tin fences	106 tin fences in poor condition	106 tin fences replaced with chain link	100% reduction in tin fences in poor condition
Large # derelict vehicles	Reduce by 10% annually	83 derelict vehicles	48 derelict vehicles	Derelict vehicles reduced 42%
Large # vacant lots	Reduce # vacant lots by 10%	108 vacant lots	84 vacant lots	Vacant lots reduced by 22%
Deficient pedes-trian lighting	Reduce areas w/ poor lighting	47 areas with deficient lighting	0 areas with deficient lighting	Now meet city standards
Large # substand-ard sidewalks	Reduce substand-ard sidewalks by 10% annually	64 substandard sidewalks	0 substandard sidewalks	100% reduction in substandard sidewalks
Large # littered intersections and overgrown lots	Reduce # littered intersections and overgrown lots by 10% annually	5 littered intersections; 153 overgrown lots	0 littered intersections; 40 overgrown lots	Littered inter-sections and overgrown lots adopted and maintained
Lack of neighbor-hood pride	Increase neigh-borhood pride activities by 20%	Annual Family and Friends Day Festival	29 Festivals; 31 Recognition Ceremonies; 15 Community Clean-Ups	Residents used Grants for Blocks Program funds to accomplish this pride building
Lack of residents participating in improvement	Increase resident participation	25 block leaders	79 block leaders	22% increase in neighborhood volunteers
Lack of promotion of neighborhood activities	Increase promo-tion of local activities	0 neighborhood newsletters	Visible in neighborhood newsletter and city newsletter	Neighborhood coordinator manages promo activities

City of Savannah: Bureau of Public Development

Another outcome of the Grants for Blocks Program has been the establishment of an inter-neighborhood council of resident leaders identified through the program to begin collaboration across neighborhood boundaries. The neighborhood council meets on a quarterly basis to pool its resources and tackle tough issues, such as crime, teen pregnancy, and dilapidated housing, as an inter-neighborhood effort.   An example of the impact of the growing network of resident leaders was their impressive mobilization of 350 citizens petitioning the county to favorably renegotiate the local option sales tax for the city.   As a result of petitions, presentations at hearings and lobbying county officials, the city saved more than $40 million over seven years.

The Grants for Blocks Program has also generated enthusiasm from city planners. They acknowledge the importance of the program and, in one case, as a result of the ongoing participation of one planner, have gone so far as to prepare an extensive proposal for expanding and improving the program. Most conceptualizations for program expansion include an increase in the amount of money available through the program. The $500 grants are, by city terms, tiny grants that have served the purpose of bringing residents to the table, helping to get them involved and active, and producing worthwhile neighborhood improvements. However, as residents continue to participate in the Grants for Blocks, their own personal and associational growth leads them to seek larger grants for more extensive neighborhood development projects, and everyone involved seeks to address the need for larger grants. The possibilities include making the Grants for Blocks available in incremental categories for increasingly experienced and sophisticated resident groups, and creating new intermediate and advanced grants programs that will be able to address the growing capacities of residents to plan and implement their own development projects.

CHAPTER FOUR

GRANTS FOR BLOCKS: THE PROCESS

This chapter offers a step-by-step guide for other cities and localities planning to implement a similar neighborhood small grants program, as well as an overview of problems encountered by the City of Savannah over five years of program development and implementation. The exact set of program-development steps outlined here may not be appropriate for every other city and locality endeavoring to design a neighborhood grants program as each will be different in some ways than the Savannah Grants for Blocks Program. Nonetheless, each of these suggested steps should at least be considered. They are based on lessons learned through the experience of guiding the Grants for Blocks Program over time, and through the continual process of changing and updating different aspects of the program in order to make it work better for everyone involved. Following the step-by-step guide, the reader will find a set of problems and issues that arose in the Grants for Blocks Program over the five years of its existence, and an explanation of how each was effectively resolved.

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO ADMINISTERING A SMALL GRANTS PROGRAM

Getting Started

1.   Determine the most appropriate funding source.

The city or locality should determine which source of funds might best be directed to this kind of program. They should decide upon a single source or combination of sources depending on the regulations attached to each and the expected uses of funds that will be allowed through the small grants program. As administrative tasks for the grants program increase with the complexity of the rules attached to specific sources of funding, these decisions should be made with an overall goal of simplicity in mind.

2.   Determine eligible neighborhood criteria/restrictions.

The city or locality should define neighborhoods or areas in which residents will be eligible to apply for the neighborhood improvement grants. These decisions may be based on regulations attached to the funding source (e.g., CDBG funds) on the city's own definition of target neighborhoods, or on other inclusionary considerations.

3.   Gain resident participation in tailoring the process to your city. A cross section of residents representing all eligible neighborhoods should be asked to participate in the process. Form a Program Steering Committee.

Resident participation is critical, and resident ownership of the program will only be accomplished if residents are active participants in the planning and design stage of the process as well as in the actual grant process. It is therefore important to invite and encourage a wide variety of residents to become involved, and to make certain that each eligible neighborhood is represented on the Program Steering Committee. Additionally, it is important to make sure that the representatives on this committee understand that their role is an active one and that the decisions they make will guide the program.

4.   In cooperation with residents on the Program Steering Committee, define the neighborhood process for applying for and implementing a small grant. Defining the process includes the design of a number of forms and criteria that will be used throughout by both resident participants and representatives of the city or locality. Make sure to include each of the following:

- Grant Application Form.
- Eligibility Criteria (explaining which neighborhoods, groups, or individuals are eligible).
- Project Restrictions (explaining where projects can be completed, what types of projects are eligible, what purchases can or cannot be made using grant funds).
- Process Components for Residents (explaining what steps are involved in participating in the program, what responsibilities are associated with participation, what kind of timeline and deadlines are involved in participation, and what kind of contract will be required).
- Process Components for the city (identifying tasks and responsibilities to be undertaken by city staff, grant payment methods).
- Promotional Information.
- Administrative Forms (including whatever is necessary to track and manage the process, with the exception of those forms—such as the contract—that need to be designed by city authorities).
- Annual Program Timeline (including all program deadlines).

Be sure to keep the grant application and process SIMPLE. Most residents are not going to be experts in completing a grant application, so eliminate the red tape.   Appendix A includes examples of many of the administrative forms developed by the Savannah participants.

During the Application Period

1.   Advertise and promote the grants throughout the eligible neighborhoods.

It is critical that all eligible residents be made aware of the program and its opportunities if interest and involvement are to result. The program can be advertised through neighborhood newsletters, through various media sources, through flyers and notices posted in community locations, through neighborhood associations, and through word-of-mouth promotion. Make certain that residents are advised of the opportunity sufficiently in advance of program deadlines that they have time to become involved and to prepare their grant application.

2.   Offer application workshops to assist residents in completing applications and to provide general information about the program and the process. Workshop facilitators need to be able to answer questions about the program (e.g., what residents can and cannot do and why, and to offer encouragement and build enthusiasm among residents in response to the ideas they come up with). If you decide that these workshops should be mandatory for all applicants, grant applications can be distributed at this time; if the workshops will not be mandatory, applications can be distributed through neighborhood associations, by neighborhood leaders, or at a specific location within the city.

Application Review Period

1.   Following the application deadline, log in each application with an identification number.

In order to manage the applications effectively, each one should be assigned a number that will identify it and keep it distinct from other applications that come in from the same neighborhood, association, or individual. This task should be assigned to the individual or department within the city that will be responsible for the maintenance of the data produced by the program, or at least defined by this person.

2.   Review all applications for eligibility and completeness.

City representatives should examine each application for consistency with the program guidelines, making certain that there is nothing in the proposal that conflicts with these guidelines, especially those that are related to the type of funds that will be used.

3.   Notify applicants whose projects are ineligible that they are no longer in the process. A written letter is the best way to convey this information; be sure to include the reason for ineligibility in the notification.

4.   Establish a database of all applications, using the application number assigned to organize them.

Develop a standard set of variables to include in the database, for example, the name of the neighborhood applying, the type of project, the amount of funds requested, and—eventually—whether or not the project was awarded a grant, and whether or not the project was ultimately implemented. By maintaining this database, you will be able to track the progress of the program over time and compare each funding cycle to previous cycles in terms of the characteristics you include.

Rating and Awards Process

1.   Establish a Review and Decision-Making Committee, ensuring that every applying neighborhood sends a representative to this committee.

The best starting point for developing this group is the Program Steering Committee already in existence, but this group may need to be expanded to ensure involvement from all participating neighborhoods. The more individuals you can interest in active involvement, the more visibility the program will have and the more quickly it will grow.

2.   Divide the Committee into smaller Review Teams.

While each eligible neighborhood should be represented on the Review and Decision-Making Committee, committee members should not ever be in a position of reviewing or deciding upon a grant proposal submitted by a resident in their own neighborhood. By dividing the committee into small groups, grant proposals may be distributed among the groups so this does not occur.

3.   Divide applications into groups for review by teams and scoring, again making certain not to allow residents to review applications from their own neighborhoods.

4.   Review applications and tally the scores.

Each group of reviewers should be given a form for scoring the applications assigned to them. They should complete the forms as indicated in the instructions, and give each application a total score.

5.   List application scores from highest to lowest and the amount of funding needed for each.

The committee or city representatives should list all applications in the order of the scores they were given by the committee. On the list, the amount of funding requested (or suggested) should be indicated.

6.   Using this list, calculate the number of applications you can fund, starting from the highest scores.

Notification of Awards and Denials

1.   Mail notification letters to both successful and unsuccessful applicants.

Make sure that the notification letters you developed in your design phase are sent immediately after the Review and Decision-Making Committee has completed its work. For successful applicants, be sure to include any important information grantees may require in order to remain in good standing with the grants process (e.g., contract signing date, and other important deadlines). For unsuccessful applicants, be sure to include the reason the application was denied funding and suggestions for improving future applications. In addition, provide a telephone number, should applicants want to seek further information.

Commemorate the Occasion Through Celebration

1.   Plan some type of celebration to honor awardees (as well as unfunded applicants) and members of the Steering Committee who volunteered their time throughout the process. This should be an activity at which all participating individuals, groups, or neighborhoods can show off their accomplishments after the implementation phase is complete. This celebration may take the form of an Awards Dinner, a Neighborhood Convention of some sort, or a Community Fair or Picnic.

Contract Development and Signing

1.   City representatives should design the administrative process for monitoring grants.

The city must be responsible for designing the standard contract that will be established between the individual, group, or neighborhood association undertaking a grant project. In order to keep the individual grants distinct from one another, a numbering system should be established that will enable the city to track each grant through the process. The city should also design (or review the design offered by the Steering Committee) forms that will enable residents to draw on their grant funds, and design a system for expenditure accounting.

2.   Prepare contracts.

Once the decision-making process is complete and award amounts have been decided, the city should prepare a contract for each individual, group, or association that has been awarded a small grant. Each contract should be generated according to the standard established for all grant recipients, with the specific details of each grant entered as appropriate.

3.   Conduct mandatory contract-signing meeting. The meeting should be used to explain each portion of the contract, how to draw funds, time frames for receiving payments (turnaround time), and the deadline for completing the entire project.

4.   Get signatures of grantees on two copies of the contract: one for their records; one for the funding source.

5.   Provide grantees with any necessary forms to draw funds and process guidelines that they will need.

6.   Once contracts are signed, grantees can draw funds and implement their projects.

Close-Out Process

1.   Before the final deadline for project implementation completion for a given program year, the city should send a timely reminder to applicants who have not implemented their project, encouraging them to complete the project by the deadline.

The reminder should be sent out well in advance of the final deadline for project implementation. The purpose of the reminder is both to make certain that residents succeed in turning in their requests for grants disbursements prior to the deadline, and to gently prod them to complete their projects if they have not already done so. The reminder should indicate all relevant dates and times for finalizing their projects.

2.   In cooperation with the grantees, the city should complete a Close-Out Report on each grant, verifying that the project was completed, that funds were spent, and any other facts about the project that you would like documented.

Evaluation

1.   Be sure to schedule time throughout the process to review the program and make any necessary adjustments and improvements.

Even with the best intentions and intensive advance planning, issues and problems will inevitably arise. These may originate with the city in its efforts to administer the program, or with the Steering Committee who may be able to identify difficulties not necessarily obvious to the city, or with the participants themselves. Keep the lines of communication open, and address each issue as it arises.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS AND SUGGESTED RESOLUTIONS

The primary obstacle for the City of Savannah was to change the traditional planning and development model established through decades of professional practice. For city staff, it meant facing uncertainty through the transfer of control of a city program to residents. For residents, it meant facing uncertainty by taking responsibility for the program. The challenge to both was to understand that the content of the program was secondary to the process. Some of the problems and issues that arose in the process are discussed below.

1.   Time Line Problems and Issues: The annual time line for the Grants for Blocks Program was adjusted several times over the years due to the unexpectedly high number of applications that were received. Resident and city tasks were originally assigned according to estimates of how many applications would need to be reviewed, awarded, implemented, and administered. When these estimates proved too low, more time was required in order for everyone involved to carry out their assigned responsibilities. In addition, during the first years, the application process started too late in the year thereby inhibiting the ability of grant recipients to begin their projects in early summer, which was the target. As a result, every aspect of the program was rushed, and residents felt that it was too difficult to get their projects completed on time.

Time Line Resolutions: The time line for the Grants for Blocks Program was adjusted to begin earlier in the year. Staff now organize the Steering Committee in February and make applications available in March.

Neighborhood leaders are now experienced with this program; therefore staff need only conduct one meeting before making the applications available. Decision-making begins in April, and applicants can be notified and begin drawing funds by May, before the summer begins.

2.   Application Process Problems and Issues: In the first year, incomplete applications and ineligible projects were not immediately eliminated from the process. The applicants were allowed to continue through the process with the hope of eventually acquiring that information that should have been on the application initially or modifying the project to meet the requirements.   Once the application deadline had passed, it became clear to the city how disorganized the applications were and a criteria sheet for the types of projects allowed was developed and distributed in an effort to weed out inappropriate applications.   Many applicants felt it was unfair for the city to change the number of projects that would be eligible after the application deadline had passed. While applicants were given the option to change their applications to a qualifying project during their interviews, this only resulted in haphazard, rushed project changes and unplanned projects.

Application Process Resolutions: Currently, the project criteria are provided in the initial grants information packet that is distributed to all interested residents.   In these materials, eligible projects are clearly defined so there is no confusion about what kind of activity has a chance of being funded. In addition, residents can obtain assistance by attending an application workshop. With the degree of sophistication among neighborhood associations, the opportunity to attend any of four applications workshops, and the individual assistance available from neighborhood coordinators, residents are expected to take responsibility for designing an appropriate project and adequately preparing their grant application.   Incomplete applications are now eliminated from the process early on, and the applicant is notified immediately.

3.   Decision-Making Process Problems and Issues: During the first two years of Grants for Blocks, the grant decision-making process included interviews among all grant applicants. The interviews were conducted by an Interviewing Subcommittee whose members were responsible for talking to every individual who was the primary contact for a proposal. Several problems were associated with the interviews, with the result that no one involved was satisfied with this aspect of the process.

The size of the Interviewing Subcommittees fluctuated from twelve persons to only one, depending on who was available to participate.

There was a problem with maintaining interviewer interest through the process (approximately 72 interviews per subcommittee).   Interviewers dropped out of the process rapidly, and the dedicated few were tired by the extensive responsibility, a situation that impacted the quality of the interviews.

Some interviewers were unable to maintain confidentiality and divulged comments made by interviewers to applicants.   This caused problems once awards were granted, and general dissatisfaction with the process.

The interviews were effective at weeding out applications that were unlikely to be implemented, but were annoying to those whose applications were complete in every detail.   In some cases, the interviews were redundant as questions were asked that had already been clearly answered on the application.

There was considerable disparity between the amounts awarded by different Interview Subcommittees.   Some groups had a tendency to make larger awards to fewer applicants; others awarded less money to more applicants in an effort to ensure that every applicant received "a little something."

Decision-Making Process Resolutions: The combination of difficulties posed by the interviewing process eventually resulted in its being eliminated from the grants award process.   The Grants for Blocks Program now utilizes one decision-making body comprised of association presidents or a designee.   In organizing this body, two principles should be followed: (1) A representative from each participating neighborhood should be on the decision-making team, and (2) The representative of any neighborhood should not be in the position of reviewing the applications from his or her own neighborhood when they are under consideration.

In addition to eliminating the interview process, the decision was made to base decision-making on the content of the grant application only, thus requiring residents to put a reasonable amount of effort into preparing their proposal along stated guidelines.   Applicants are now contacted only when additional clarity is requested by the decision-making body but not to gather information that should have been included in the proposal.

The decision-making process should be limited to one or two meetings. Savannah found that neighborhood leaders are more likely to commit to a few, well-structured sessions than sporadic meetings over an extended period of time.

Finally, staff must emphasize to the members of the decision-making body the criteria they should be using to score applications and make grant awards. In addition, the body should be reminded about the need to recommend sufficient funding to quality projects and to discourage recommendations for insufficient awards.

4.   <u>Database Development Problems and Issues</u>: In the first year of the Grants for Blocks Program, an electronic computer file was created using WordPerfect software. Given that WordPerfect is not a database program, staff were unable to easily query information from the database. All data were compiled and tabulated manually. With the large number of applications the first year, and the increase in numbers of applicants and awards in subsequent years, this system resulted in an unnecessarily high number of work hours devoted to analyzing data.

     <u>Database Development Resolutions</u>: The Community Services and Neighborhood Planning and Community Development staff collaborated on the design of a more usable database for the Grants for Blocks Program. Currently the staff uses the Paradox program, which allows for easy data management and retrieval.

5.   <u>Contract-Signing Problems and Issues</u>: During the first year of Grants for Blocks, contract packets were distributed at the contract-signing meeting among the designated neighborhoods. Several contracts were lost due to a failure on the part of the city staff to maintain strict control over the contracts. For example, some residents picked up contracts for another resident in their neighborhood, or accidentally took contracts that were not their own. In addition, some people who did not attend the contract-signing meeting also failed to appear at the city offices to sign their contracts. The confusion produced a great deal of difficulty and extra work for the staff, which continued for many months.

     <u>Contract-Signing Resolutions</u>: During the contract-signing meeting, grant recipients should have access to their own contract only, and the additional contracts should remain with staff. In the award letter, grant recipients should be informed that they have 30 days after the contract-signing meeting to sign their contracts or the grant will be withdrawn. Staff should make every effort to contact these recipients and get the contract signed during this 30-day period.

6.   <u>Drawing Funds Problems and Issues</u>: Since two departments in Savannah—Neighborhood Planning and Community Development and Community Services—have been involved in the internal process for drawing funds for the Grants for Blocks Program, the amount of time it

takes for residents to receive funds is significant; forms and work are sometimes duplicated by both departments; and when a problem arises, tracing it to the originator is difficult and slows the payment of grants.

Drawing Funds Resolutions: A concise one-page guide to drawing funds was prepared and grant recipients were given a copy. The approximate time frames expected for payment were included so that residents are not surprised by the length of time it takes to receive their grant funds.

7.   Project Implementation Problems and Issues: In the first few years of Grants for Blocks, many of the projects were started late in the year due to both the late time line associated with the program and situations beyond anyone's control. For example, the spring floods that occurred in some areas seriously hampered the ability of the city or residents to get their Grants for Blocks projects moving. Also impacting the number of projects completed was the number of duplicate grants that were submitted by associations hoping to receive as much funding as possible and the high number of project modifications required due to ineligibility.

Project Implementation Resolutions: City staff need to review forms and internal coordination issues and propose or make necessary adjustments to improve the internal process.

A number of other issues had to be worked out by the Grants for Blocks participants. These difficulties were less specific and were overcome through ongoing attention to both relationships and commitment on the city's part to the principle of "leading by stepping back."

•   Residents' initial fear and distrust of government.

•   CDBG rules that work against resident control of projects.

•   The heavy demands on city staff time that are produced when assisting is the goal rather than controlling the program and its participants.

•   Competition among some residents and local organizations instead of cooperation.

•   Dealing with cultural awareness.

APPENDIX A

EXAMPLES OF ADMINISTRATIVE MATERIALS

The City of Savannah has generously allowed us to share the various forms, letters, and promotional materials that are used in the Grants for Blocks administrative process each year. These materials were designed specifically for use in Savannah, but modified versions may be generated by other city or regional entities interested in them for use in their own small grants programs.

- **Application Workshop Packet**: The application workshop packet is distributed to residents attending the annual workshops put on by the city to introduce the process to individuals who have not participated previously, and to remind past participants of the requirements for the current year. It provides a brief description of the purpose and goals of the program, an outline of the steps required to complete the process and the dates by which each step must be completed, reminders of important issues, and encouragement for grants development.

- **Program Fact Sheet**: The program fact sheet is distributed more generally and provides details about the Grants for Blocks Program such as who can apply for a grant, what kinds of projects are eligible, how projects are selected, and a map of eligible neighborhoods.

- **Application**: The application is an easy-to-complete, two-page document that records relevant information about the proposed project.

- **Project Guidelines**: The Grants for Blocks project guidelines explain in more detail what the requirements are for each category of community project—beautification projects; trips or workshops; supplies, equipment, or tool projects; economic development or employment projects; block festival projects; housing projects. Other guideline sheets provide specific rules that may apply to a particular kind of grant.

- **Application Scoring Guidelines**: The application scoring guidelines provide the information necessary for application reviewers to organize their work, to make objective decisions about each grant application, and to rate the individual grant applications.

- **Application Score Sheet**: The application score sheet is used to record the extent to which each project meets the Grants for Blocks requirements.

- **Letters of Grant Award and Grant Denial**: The letters of grant award and grant denial are sent out by the city once the grant decisions have been made. These letters can be used to advise recipients of events and activities in which they are required to engage as part of the process.

- **Agreement Between the City and Neighborhood Associations**: The agreement is a contract between the city and each neighborhood association or the individual residents awarded a grant. It outlines the responsibilities of the grantee according to the proposal submitted, and of the city according to a standard set of expectations on each grant.

- **City Letter of Introduction of the Grants for Blocks Program to Vendors**: The letter of introduction to vendors is provided by the city to each grant recipient for the purpose of assisting them to develop relationships with local vendors on whom they will rely for the purchases related to their projects. The letter provides a very brief explanation of the Grants for Blocks Program and requests that the vendor cooperate with the grantee by providing equipment or supplies as requested.

- **Guidelines for Drawing on Grant Funds and Payment Request Form**: The guidelines for drawing on funds outlines the rules that must be followed in order to access grant funds. The payment request form is used by grant recipients to request reimbursement for expenditures or payments to vendors or employees who invested hours in the project.

- **Community Services Staff Activity Assignments**: The staff activity assignments sheet is a simple—although lengthy—method of keeping track of all the tasks associated with the Grants for Blocks annual process that are undertaken by the Community Services staff members. The sheet provides space to indicate when the task needs to be done, which staff member has been assigned to it, and a place to indicate completion.

- **News Releases**: These are two examples of the kinds of information that are provided to the press or other media representatives for the purpose of promoting the Grants for Blocks Program, its participants, its activities, and its outcomes.

- **Close-Out and Evaluation Form:** The close-out and evaluation form is used to obtain feedback from the participating residents about their own performance in the program. It asks them if they are satisfied with their project and the level of participation they were able to obtain from their neighbors, and whether or not they anticipate participating in the future.

WELCOME

TO THE

GRANTS FOR BLOCKS

PROCESS

GRANTS FOR BLOCKS:

PURPOSE:

Grants for Blocks is a neighborhood-based, community-improvement program which builds upon the knowledge that residents are the key to strengthening the communities in which we live.

GOALS:

- Bring people together
- Benefit the neighborhood
- Provide creative solutions to problems
- Increase pride in yourself, your neighbors, and your community
- Improve the quality of life for families

PROCESS AND DEADLINES:

Applications period begins:	March 3rd
Application Workshops:	
Precinct II	March 5th
Precinct I	March 12th
Family Resource Center	March 19th
Deadline to turn in applications:	March 31st
Decision-Making period:	April 19th
Notify applicants about awards by:	April 30th
Awards Ceremony:	May 7th
Contract Signing:	May 22nd
Begin Projects!	May 29th
Last day to draw funds:	December 5th
Completion of all projects:	December 31st

The COMMUNITY STEERING COMMITTEE:

The Steering Committee is a group of neighborhood leaders who live within the eligible neighborhoods and who have volunteered their time and energy to develop and guide the Grants For Blocks Program.

HOW WILL THE PROJECTS BE SELECTED?

Applications are reviewed by a volunteer committee of residents (representing applying neighborhoods). This group determines which applications are chosen. Decisions will be based on the projects' benefit to the neighborhood, the involvement of residents in carrying out the project and participating in the activity, and whether it is realistic and well-planned. For previous grantees, future grant awards will be impacted by whether past projects were successfully implemented. Results will be announced before April 30, 1997. To ask any questions about the program or the application, contact Community Services.

DEVELOPING YOUR IDEA

Be Creative
Involve others
Plan, Plan, Plan

REMINDER

All neighborhood associations participating in the Grants for Blocks Program must provide names of two volunteers to serve on the Grants for Blocks Decision-Making Committee. If you have not submitted your names, please contact your neighborhood coordinator by Monday, March 31st.

This committee will determine which applications are chosen by reading, discussing, reviewing, rating and individually scoring applications. Decisions will be based on the project's benefit to the neighborhood, the involvement of residents in carrying out the project and participating in the activity, and whether it is realistic and well-planned. The committee will meet on Saturday, April 19, to review and score applications.

Thank you for your cooperation!

GRANTS FOR BLOCKS
PROGRAM FACT SHEET

Have you ever had a good idea for a project that would make your neighborhood a better place to live, but you didn't know where to get money to carry it out?

Through the Grants for Blocks Program, the City of Savannah makes available to eligible neighborhoods grants up to $500 each to implement neighborhood improvement projects. If your neighborhood is eligible to receive Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds (see map) and you would like to make your idea come to life, read the following information and complete and return the attached application to your Neighborhood Services Coordinator. Applications must be received or postmarked no later than: 5:00 p.m., March 31, 1997.

WHO CAN APPLY?

Residents living within CDBG target neighborhoods can apply. Proposed projects must be implemented with the neighborhood of residency. All applications must be endorsed by the neighborhood association/organization representing that neighborhood. A group qualifying as a neighborhood association must be incorporated by the State of Georgia and have:

- Membership open to all residents of the neighborhood

- Officers (President, Secretary, Treasurer)

- By-laws (Must provide a copy of Bylaws)

- A mission that includes neighborhood improvement

- Regular meetings, meeting minutes

Unincorporated neighborhood associations may apply for grants, however, be advised that funding may be limited. The above requirements must be verified by copy of documentation.

WHAT TYPES OF PROJECTS CAN GET A GRANT?

- **LANDSCAPING** projects must address blight/slum conditions (i.e., overgrown, unmaintained property), be completed on the public right of way, and be permanent improvements to the area.

- **WORKSHOPS** must benefit neighborhood residents and be cultural or skills-building activities which improve the quality of life for participants.

- **TOOL/SUPPLY** projects must address blight conditions, be accessible and available for use by all neighborhood residents, and be centrally located and maintained by the neighborhood association. NOTE: electronic equipment is ineligible (i.e., video cameras, copiers, radios, telephones, video cassette recorders, televisions, electronic transmissions, etc.).

- **BEAUTIFICATION** projects that clean or clear an area of trash and debris, graffiti, or other unsightly conditions that detract from the neighborhood's appearance. Permanent fixtures, (i.e., trash cans), must be installed on public property.

- **FESTIVALS AND NEIGHBORHOOD PRIDE** activities must have a positive theme and positive impact on the neighborhood, address one or more serious issues (i.e., health education, crime awareness, etc.), highlight the positive aspects of the neighborhood or its residents, be open to all neighborhood residents, and not be for profit.

- **OTHER** project ideas that address blight conditions, benefit and involve residents, and are realistic and well-planned will also receive full consideration.

HOW WILL THE PROJECTS BE SELECTED?

Applications are reviewed by a volunteer committee of residents (representing applying neighborhoods). This group determines which applications are chosen. Decisions will be based on the projects' benefit to the neighborhood, the involvement of residents in carrying out the project and participating in the activity, and whether it is realistic and well-planned. For previous grantees, future grant awards will be impacted by whether past projects were successfully implemented. Results will be announced before April 30, 1997. To ask any questions about the program or the application, contact Community Services.

Application Workshops will be held at 6:30 p.m. at the following locations:

March 5	Precinct I
March 12	Precinct II
March 19	The Family Resource Center

GRANTS FOR BLOCKS PROGRAM ELIGIBLE AREAS

1. Woodsville/Bartow
2. Hudson Hill/Bayview
3. West Savannah
4. Bay Street Viaduct Area
5. Carver Heights
6. South Historic District
7. Beach Institute
8. Eastside
9. Dixon Park
10. East Victorian
11. West Victorian
12. Laurel Grove/Railroad Area
13. Cuyler/Brownsville
14. Metropolitan
15. Thomas Square
16. Midtown
17. Baldwin Park
18. Live Oak
19. Benjamin Van Clark Park
20. Hillcrest Area
21. Savannah Gardens
22. Pine Gardens
23. East Savannah
24. Victory Manor/East Hill/Donwood
25. Bingville
26. Cann Park
27. Jackson Park
28. Beach High School Area
29. Ogeecheeton/Dawes Avenue
30. Tremont Park
31. Liberty City/Summerside/
    Southover/Richfield
32. Feiler Park/Hussars Terrace/Dittmerville
33. Tatumville
34. Memorial Hospital/Fairfield
35. Sackville
36. Savannah State/Glynwood/Placentia
    Plantation/Brentwood/DeRenne

GRANTS FOR BLOCKS
APPLICATION

ID Number:

Neighborhood/Organization:

Name of President:

Telephone:

Mailing Address:

Zip Code:

Contact Person:

Telephone:

Mailing Address:

Zip Code:

Alternate Contact Person:

Telephone:

Mailing Address:

Zip Code:

Please answer the following questions. Be very thorough in completing your application. Decisions will be based on the information provided on the applications. Attach additional sheets if necessary.

1. Where will the project take place?

2. What issues will the project address? Check ONE category that best describes the issue your project will address.

_____Youth
_____Crime and Drugs
_____Beautification
_____Skills Development
_____Housing
_____Health Care
_____Other

3. Briefly describe the project you are proposing.

4. How many neighborhood residents will be involved in implementing (carrying out) the project?

5. What tasks will they complete?

6. What is the benefit of your project to the residents of the neighborhood?

7. Attach invoice/cost estimate verifying purchase described below.

8. TOTAL FUNDING REQUESTED:

Describe how you want to spend this money.

Contact Person Signature:

Alternate Contact Person Signature:

Attach photos, drawings, or other types of supporting material if needed.

Endorsement:

NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT or Designated Authority

GRANTS FOR BLOCKS
PROJECT GUIDELINES

BEAUTIFICATION PROJECTS must:
a.   Address blight/slum conditions.
b.   Be completed on the public right-of-way or the tree lawn.
c.   Consist of substantially permanent shrubs or gardens planted in the ground or immovable ground level planters. NOTE: Planters must be approved by the city.

TRIPS/WORKSHOP PROJECTS must be:
a.   Cultural or skill-building activities that will improve the lives of people.
b.   Be targeted for neighborhood residents.

SUPPLIES/EQUIPMENT/TOOL PROJECTS must:
a.   Address conditions (i.e., overgrown, unmaintained, unsightly property) as identified and agreed upon by block residents, on property that is unmaintained due to the inability of property owner to maintain the property (i.e., absentee, elderly, disabled, disadvantaged property owners).
b.   Be accessible to all neighborhood residents at any time.
c.   Be centrally controlled/maintained by the neighborhood association.
d.   Have a stated public procedure for loaning the equipment to residents.

NOTE: Equipment/appliances that can be used for the private benefit of individuals beyond its intended use (i.e., camcorders, video cameras, copiers, radios, cordless telephones, video cassette players, televisions, are ineligible).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT/EMPLOYMENT PROJECTS must:
a.   Be educational or skill enhancing in nature.
b.   Target disadvantaged neighborhood residents or youth as recipients.
c.   Result in a final product of labor that benefits neighborhood residents.

BLOCK FESTIVAL PROJECTS must:
a.   Be an extension of neighborhood pride efforts.
b.   Be an integral part of some blight-reducing or Showcase event (i.e., House of the Month or other recognition activities to highlight community involvement, good citizenship, or community awareness).

HOUSING PROJECTS must:
a.   Address blight conditions that have been identified by block residents.
b.   Aid residents who are unable to improve the property themselves (i.e., elderly, disabled, or disadvantaged persons).

GRANTS FOR BLOCKS
APPLICATION SCORING GUIDELINES

Members of the Application Scoring Committee should bear the following questions in mind when reviewing and scoring the Grants for Blocks applications.

Resident Involvement:

1. Will other neighborhood residents be involved in the implementation of this project?
2. Will other neighborhood residents benefit from this project?

Benefit to the neighborhood:

1. In what ways will the project benefit the neighborhood as a whole?
2. Does the project address an important neighborhood issue?
3. What impact is this project likely to achieve?

Feasibility:

1. Is the project stated in clear terms?
2. Does the applicant appear to have a good grasp of what will be involved in implementing the project?
3. Is the requested funding and list of purchases realistic for the stated project?
4. Is the proposed timeline sufficient to complete the project?

GRANTS FOR BLOCKS
APPLICATION SCORE SHEET

Application #

Team: Reviewer's Name:

RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT/PARTICIPATION

Consider: The number of residents who will help to implement the project;
the number of residents who will benefit from the project.

LOW   MODERATE   HIGH

1   2   3

LEVEL OF RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT AND PARTICIPATION SCORE

BENEFIT TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Consider: Does the project address an important issue impacting the
neighborhood? Will the project benefit the neighborhood?

LOW   MODERATE   HIGH

1   2   3

BENEFIT TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD SCORE

REALISTIC AND WELL PLANNED

Consider: Is the project stated in clear terms? Does the applicant appear to
have a good grasp of the project? Is the requested funding and list of purchases
realistic?

LOW   MODERATE   HIGH

1   2   3

REALISTIC AND WELL-PLANNED SCORE

RECOMMENDED FUNDING: $

GRANTS FOR BLOCKS
LETTER OF GRANT AWARD

(Date)

Applicant Name
Applicant Address
Savannah, GA

Dear (Grants for Blocks Applicant):

Congratulations! Your CRIME AND DRUGS application has been selected for a Grants for Blocks Award.

We would like you to attend two very important events:

(Date and time)	Grants for Blocks Awards Ceremony to recognize your neighborhood's participation in this year's process. Savannah Civic Center Ballroom.
(Date and time)	Contract Orientation and Signing Meeting to review federal and city regulations which must be followed in order to spend these funds, and to obtain signatures on your grant contract. Savannah Civic Center.

Seating is limited. Please RSVP your attendance for both of these activities by calling the Community Services Department. If for some reason you will not be able to attend the contract signing, please call our office to arrange another time to complete this important part of the process. All contracts must be signed by June 30, in order to draw funds.

I want to thank you for your involvement in the Grants for Blocks Program. Your leadership is necessary if our community is to improve the quality of life for its residents. I look forward to seeing you at the Awards Ceremony.

Sincerely,

Taffanye Young
Community Services Director

GRANTS FOR BLOCKS
LETTER OF GRANT DENIAL

(Date)

Applicant Name
Applicant Address
Savannah, GA

Dear (Grants for Blocks Applicant):

Please accept this letter as formal notice that your Grants for Blocks application for (Type of Project) was not approved. We received many applications and unfortunately are not able to fund them all.

I want to thank you for all your time and energy. Your leadership skills are an important part of the resources of this community.

It is my hope that you will continue to stay involved in the activities of your neighborhood and that we will be able to anticipate receipt of your grant application next year. Once again, please accept my sincere appreciation for the leadership you provide for this community.

Sincerely,

Taffanye Young
Community Services Director

GRANTS FOR BLOCKS PROGRAM

AGREEMENT BETWEEN CITY OF SAVANNAH
AND
NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

THIS Agreement is made as of the 1st day of July, 1994, by and between the mayor and aldermen of the City of Savannah, Georgia (the CITY), and Neighborhood Association (the GRANTEE).

WHEREAS the CITY has allocated both general funds and federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds for the purpose of revitalizing low- and moderate-income neighborhoods through the Grants for Blocks Program, and

WHEREAS the GRANTEE has submitted a proposal for a neighborhood improvement project (the Project);

NOW, therefore, the CITY and the GRANTEE, agree as follows:

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE GRANTEE

A.   The GRANTEE shall:

1. Pay for the neutering and spaying of dogs and cats in the neighborhood.
2. Care for animals until stitches are removed.
3. Return animals to the veterinarian for removal of stitches.

B.   The GRANTEE shall keep the following records:

1. Financial records showing all of the organization's income and expenses relating to the Project;
2. Any correspondence or other records relating to the Project.

C.   The GRANTEE shall inform the CITY when the Project is completed.

D.   All records must be kept for at least three years, and must be made available for inspection by the CITY if required.

COORDINATION

E.   For the purposes of coordination between the CITY and the GRANTEE, the primary contact persons shall be:

For the CITY:

For the GRANTEE:

F.   The CITY may at any time inspect the progress of work.

PAYMENT OF GRANT

G.   The CITY shall pay to the GRANTEE an amount not to exceed $400, for expenses incurred on the Project. Costs that can be paid out of the grant include the purchase of goods or services or labor. The following costs may <u>not</u> be paid out of the grant:

1. Cash payments to individuals other than wages for persons legally employed in accordance with state and federal law;
2. Wages to the GRANTEE'S members;
3. Mileage or gas for travel in private vehicles;
4. Costs reimbursed from another source;
5. Costs of political or religious activities.

H.   The GRANTEE shall request reimbursement, not more often than once a week, for the costs actually incurred on the Project. Reimbursement requests must be accompanied by the suppliers' receipts for each item of expenditure. Provided all documentation is complete, the CITY will pay the reimbursement by check on the Friday of the week following the request. Alternatively, if the GRANTEE submits a supplier's invoice, the city will pay the supplier directly on behalf of the GRANTEE.

TERMINATION OF THE AGREEMENT

I.   This Agreement shall end on December 31, 1994. No payments will be made after that date. This time limit may be extended at the city's discretion, if requested in writing.

J.   The CITY may at any time terminate this Agreement if it decides that it is in the public interest to do so.

OTHER CONDITIONS.

K.   The GRANTEE undertakes that no person shall, on the ground of race, color, sex, national origin, or disability, be excluded from employment or participation in, or the benefits of the Project.

L.   The GRANTEE shall indemnify and save harmless the CITY from all claims, damage, expense, costs and liability due to the activities of the GRANTEE in carrying out the Project.

M.   The CITY may at any time inspect the progress of work.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties hereto have made and executed this Agreement the day and year first written above:

FOR: THE MAYOR AND ALDERMEN OF THE CITY OF SAVANNAH GEORGIA

BY:

ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER

WITNESS:

DATE:

FOR: Neighborhood Association:

BY:

President

Contact Person

WITNESS:

DATE:

GRANTS FOR BLOCKS
CITY LETTER OF INTRODUCTION OF THE PROGRAM TO VENDORS

CITY OF SAVANNAH
Office of the Assistant City Manager/Public Development
P.O. Box 1027
Savannah, Georgia 31402
91265-6520

February 29, 1996

To Whom It May Concern:

Beginning March 1, 1996, the City of Savannah is sponsoring the Grants for Blocks Program. The Grants for Blocks Program helps individuals living in Community Development Block Grant target areas to improve their neighborhoods by providing grants up to $500 to implement neighborhood improvement projects.

Over the past three years, residents spent hundreds of dollars at local vendors, purchasing items to implement their projects. Residents are required to submit cost estimates prior to receiving funds from the city; however, we would appreciate your cooperation again this year in providing these invoices/estimates to inquiring residents.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Henry Moore

Assistant City Manager

GRANTS FOR BLOCKS
GUIDELINES FOR DRAWING ON GRANT FUNDS

A.   BUYING GOODS

There are two methods of drawing on the grant funds awarded to you to buy the goods you need to carry out your project:

1. *Reimbursement Method*

    a. Purchase the goods you need, using your own funds.
    b. Fill out a payment request form and bring it or mail it with the receipt.
    c. We will write you a check for the amount, and give it or mail it to you on the Friday of the week following your request.

2. *Invoice Method*

    a. Choose the goods you want to buy, and have the store make out an invoice to you, showing the full cost (including tax).
    b. Fill out a payment request form and bring it or mail it to us with the invoice.
    c. We will write a check to the store, and give it or mail it to you, with a return envelope addressed to the city. The check will be ready by the Friday of the week following your draw request.
    d. Take the check to the store and collect the goods.
    e. Put the store's receipt in the envelope and mail it to us. You will not be able to make any more draws until we have the receipt.

Method 1 is quicker and simpler. Method 2 will cover those purchases that are too expensive to make with your own funds.

B.   PAYING WAGES

If you employ people to work on your project, you must keep paperwork showing who has been employed, and how much each person is to be paid. This is how to do it:

a. Each week, prepare a payroll, showing how many hours each person has worked, and how much is due them.
b. Fill in a payment request and bring or mail it to us with the payroll.

GRANTS FOR BLOCKS PROGRAM
PAYMENT REQUEST

Project Number (as on Grant Agreement):

Name of Grantee:

Amount of Grant: $

Request Date:

The Grantee requests payment of $ _____ of the grant funds for the project.

Receipts, invoices, or payrolls are attached in support of the payment request. The grantee certifies that these expenses have been (or will be) incurred solely for the purpose of carrying out the project, in accordance with the grant agreement.

Please:

(A) Mail the payment to the following address:

(B) Call us on (telephone no.) when the payment is ready so we can collect it.

Signed on behalf of the grantee:

Name in capitals:

....

For city use only

Original Grant Amount:

Check mailed   or

      Previous Payments Check collected by:

      This Request

      Signature

      Balance to be requested

      Approved for payment by: Date:

GRANTS FOR BLOCKS
STAFF ASSIGNMENTS

TASKS	TIME FRAME	STAFF ASSIGNED	TASK DONE
PRIOR TO APPLICATION PERIOD			
Announce GFB program at monthly meetings			
Review and revise the application, news release, flyers and notification letters to presidents/organizations/businesses			
Distribute flyers to block leaders and residents announcing the program			
Get assistant city manager's signature on notification letters			
Mail the news release to Public Information Office, television and radio stations			
Duplicate application (500 copies)			
Mail notification letters along with an application to the leaders			
Distribute applications at various locations (precincts, family resource center, etc.)			
APPLICATION PERIOD			
Assist residents with applications			
Log applications received			
Application Workshops			
Confirm locations for Decision-Making Meetings			
Mail 2nd letter requesting representatives for Decision-Making Committee (those who did not respond to the first letter)			
Confirm caterer/food for Decision-Making Mtg			
Confirm representatives for Decision-Making Mtg			
Call to remind of GFB deadline			
Prepare or order invitations for Awards Ceremony			
Review and/or revise ineligibility, award and disapproval letters and get assistant city manager's signature			
Pick up applications			

TASKS	TIME FRAME	STAFF ASSIGNED	TASK DONE
STAFF REVIEW OF APPLICATIONS			
Confirm reservations for conference room			
Staff review applications for completeness and eligibility			
Review and update task list at staff meeting if necessary			
Enter information into Paradox Database			
Get president signatures on unsigned applications			
Create transparency of each application			
Secure supplies and equipment for Decision-Making Meeting (pencils, score sheets, staplers, overheads, adding machines, etc.)			
Deliver supplies and equipment downtown			
Application Summary for assistant city manager's review			
Review and/or revise Quattro Pro spreadsheet for scores			
Mail ineligibility letters (after assistant city manager's approval)			
DECISION-MAKING MEETING			
Set up equipment, take applications to room, put out refreshments, etc.			
Welcome, Introduction, Explanation of Process and Room Assignments			
Staff support for Break-Out Groups (help group select chair to facilitate review of applications and put applications on overhead projector)			
Collect score sheets from Coordinators			
Tabulate scores and maintain score sheets			
Input scores in computer and print out results			
Overall review of recommendations			
APPLICATION NOTIFICATION AND DATA PREPARATION			
Quattro Pro data to assistant city manager			
Paradox printout to DPCD to assign funding source and preparation of contracts			

TASKS	TIME FRAME	STAFF ASSIGNED	TASK DONE
Prepare notification letters and mailing labels			
Verify correct info for awards and denials			
Stuff notification letters along with invitations			
After clearance, mail out letters and invitations			
Enter funding source in database & prep. folders			
AWARDS CEREMONY			
Place ceremony on mayor, aldermen, city manager, and assistant city manager's calendars			
Plan Awards Ceremony (staff meeting)			
Confirm menu and caterer for Awards Ceremony			
Confirm Mistress/Master of Ceremony			
Prepare news releases and coordinate publicity			
Confirm layout of room with Civic Center staff			
Confirm video with Public Information Office			
Purchase materials (decorations, name tags, etc.)			
Design layout for program and get approval			
Confirm music and sound system			
Print program			
Prepare neighborhood certificates			
Special invitations and information packets			
Promote participation within neighborhoods			
Picture board prep. and display table signage			
CONTRACT SIGNING AND FUNDS			
Contract preparation, obtain signatures			
Contract Meeting			
Create files for Grants Awards			
IMPLEMENTATION OF GFB PROJECTS			
Take before and after pictures (if possible)			
Monitor projects; give monthly updates			
Handle necessary paperwork and collect receipts			
Do close-out report forms on complete projects			
Reminder of last day to draw funds			

GRANTS FOR BLOCKS
NEWS RELEASES

Specific News Release Announcing the Grants for Blocks Award Ceremony:

The City of Savannah's Bureau of Public Development will host the 5th Annual Grants for Blocks Award Ceremony Wednesday, May 7, 1997 at the Savannah Civic Center at 6:00 p.m.

The Grants for Blocks Program assists individuals living in Community Development Block Grant target areas to improve their neighborhoods. With grants up to $500, individuals and/or neighborhood groups living in target neighborhoods enhance their neighborhoods with neighborhood improvement projects. These projects include beautification projects, tool lending libraries, workshops/tutorials programs and neighborhood pride activities.

For more information contact Community Services.

General News Release Content for Reporting the Neighborhood Convention:

Indicate who was honored at neighborhood convention.

Report the names of city officials attending.

Provide a list of the types of programs implemented.

List the neighborhoods involved.

Announce the amount awarded overall.

Share stories from residents about their Grants for Blocks experience.

Note beneficial outcomes from grants.

GRANTS FOR BLOCKS
CLOSE-OUT AND EVALUATION REPORT

Grant Contact Person:

Type of Project:

Briefly describe your project:

Did you have to modify or change your project in any way from your original project idea? If yes, why?

Do you feel your project was successful? Why or why not?

How many people participated in the project?

Do you plan to apply for future grants to do additional projects in your neighborhood?

YES   NO

Signature:

Date:

Thank you for your time in completing this close-out report and the commitment that you have shown to improving the quality of life in your neighborhood.

Sincerely,

The Community Services Department

APPENDIX B

SMALL GRANTS PROGRAMS IN OTHER CITIES

We would also like to share the names of small grants programs being operated by other cities around the nation, as well as contacts for obtaining information about these programs. The list is limited; many other cities offer similar programs, but we are unable to provide information on all of them.

- **Beaverton, Oregon: Neighborhood Program**

  For information: Megan Callahan, Program Manager
                      Neighborhood Program
                      City of Beaverton
                      4755 SW Griffith Drive Room 130
                      Beaverton, OR 97076
                      Telephone: (503) 526-2243
                      Alternate: (503) 526-2543
                      FAX: (503) 526-2572

- **Bellevue, Washington: Neighborhood Enhancement Program**

  For information: Kari Page, Community Outreach Planner
                      Department of Planning and Community
                          Development
                      City of Bellevue
                      P.O. Box 90012
                      Bellevue, WA 98009-9012
                      Telephone: (425) 452-4075
                      FAX: (425) 452-7115
                      E-mail: kpage@ci.bellevue.wa.us
                      Web: www.ci.bellevue.wa.us

- **Boulder, Colorado: Neighborhood Mini-Grants Program**

  For information: Molly Tayer, Neighborhood Liaison
                      Neighborhood Mini-Grants Program
                      City Manager's Office
                      City of Boulder
                      P.O. Box 791
                      Boulder, CO 80306
                      Telephone: (303) 441-3090
                      FAX: (303) 441-4478
                      E-mail: tayerm@ci.boulder.co.us

- **Charlotte, North Carolina: Neighborhood Matching Grants Program**

    For information: Shirley Stevenson, Coordinator
             Neighborhood Matching Grants Program
             Neighborhood Development Department
             City of Charlotte
             600 East Trade Street
             Charlotte, NC 28202
             Telephone: (704) 336-2349
             FAX: (704) 336-2537

- **Duluth, Minnesota:**   **Neighborhood Matching Grants Fund**

    For information: Lynn Hollatz
             Neighborhood Program Coordinator
             Community Development and Housing
              Division
             407 City Hall
             City of Duluth
             Duluth, MN 55802
             Telephone: (218) 723-3357
             FAX: (218) 723-3400
             E-mail: lhollatz@ci.duluth.mn.us
             Web: http://www.ci.duluth.mn.ci

- **Everett, Washington: Neighborhood Minigrant Program**

    For information: Marian Krell, Director
             Neighborhood Minigrant Program
             Office of Neighborhoods
             City of Everett
             Wall Street Building
             2930 Wetmore Avenue Suite 9F
             Everett, WA 98201
             Telephone: (425) 257-8717
             FAX: (425) 257-8651
             E-mail: mkrell@ci.everett.wa.us
             Web: www.ci.everett.wa.us

- **Kirkland, Washington: Neighborhood Association/Business/ Community Event Matching Grants Program**

  For information: Lynn Stokesbary, Assistant City Manager
                            City Manager's Office
                            City of Kirkland
                            123 Fifth Avenue
                            Kirkland, WA 98033-6189
                            Telephone: (425) 828-1199
                            FAX: (425) 803-1914
                            E-mail: lstokes@ci.kirkland.wa.us
                            Web: www.ci.kirkland.wa.us

- **Los Angeles, California: Neighborhood Matching Fund Program**

  For information: Delphia Jones, Director
                            Operation Clean Sweep
                            Board of Public Works
                            433 S. Spring Street Room 600
                            Los Angeles, CA 90013
                            Telephone: (800) 611-2489
                            FAX: (213) 485-9238
                            E-mail: djones@loop.com

- **Redmond, Washington: Neighborhood Matching Fund**

  For information: Marta Hurwitz, Community Affairs Planner
                            City of Redmond
                            Planning Department, CHPL
                            P.O. Box 97010
                            Redmond, WA 98073-9710
                            Telephone: (425) 556-2427
                            FAX: (425) 556-4242
                            E-mail: mhurwitz@ci.redmond.wa.us
                            Web: www.ci.redmond.wa.us

- **Seattle, Washington:**   **Neighborhood Matching Fund Program**

  For information: Rebecca Sadinsky, Neighborhood Programs
    Manager
  Department of Neighborhoods
  City of Seattle
  400 Arctic Building
  700 Third Avenue Suite 400
  Seattle, WA 98104-1848
  Telephone: (206) 684-0462
  FAX: (206) 233-5142
  E-mail: rebecca.sadinsky@ci.seattle.wa.us
  Web: www.ci.seattle.wa.us/don

- **St. Petersburg, Florida: Neighborhood Partnership Grant Program**

  For information: Michael Dove
  Neighborhood Services Administrator
  Neighborhood Partnership Grant Program
  City of St. Petersburg
  P.O. Box 2842
  St. Petersburg, FL 33731
  Telephone: (727) 893-7171
  FAX: (727) 892-5323
  E-mail: mrdove@stpete.org
  Web: www.stpete.org

- **Vancouver, Washington: Neighborhood Matching Grants Program**

  For information: Carol Hansen, Community Resources Manager
  Office of Neighborhoods and Community
    Resources
  Community Development Department
  City of Vancouver
  P.O. Box 1995
  Vancouver, WA 98668-1995
  Telephone: (360) 696-8222
  FAX: (360) 696-8073
  E-mail: chansen@ci.vancouver.wa.us
  Web: www.ci.vancouver.wa.us

More resources on the Community Building approach . . .

Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets, by John P. Kretzmann and John L. McKnight. This 376-page book is being used by thousands of community groups, educational institutions, and government agencies throughout the United States and Canada as a blueprint for a new approach to community building. It suggests that communities cannot be rebuilt by focusing on their needs, problems, and deficiencies. Rather, community building starts with the process of locating the assets, skills, and capacities of residents, citizens, citizens' associations, and local institutions. **$20.00 for a single copy. Discounts available for multiple copies.**

Mobilizing Community Assets—This video training program for *Building Communities from the Inside Out* introduces the concept of "asset-based community development" as a new and more effective method of community building. The program consists of six separate "modules," each segment lasting 30-45 minutes. McKnight and Kretzmann present clear, practical ways to mobilize the capacities of local residents, the power of citizens' associations, and the resources of local institutions to build stronger and more vibrant communities. **($79.50)**

Other Workbooks **($9.00 each):**
A Guide to Mapping and Mobilizing the Economic Capacities of Local Residents

A Guide to Mapping Local Business Assets and Mobilizing Local Business Capacities

A Guide to Mapping Consumer Expenditures and Mobilizing Consumer Expenditure Capacities

A Guide to Capacity Inventories: Mobilizing the Community Skills of Local Residents

A Guide to Evaluating Asset-Based Community Development: Lessons, Challenges, and Opportunities

A Guide to Creating a Neighborhood Information Exchange: Building Communities by Connecting Local Skills and Knowledge

Exclusive distributor: ACTA Publications, 4848 North Clark Street, Chicago, IL 60640. Phone: 800-397-2282. Fax: 800-397-0079. E-mail: acta@one.org. All orders must be prepaid or charged to Visa or Master Card.

A Community Building Workbook
from
The Asset-Based Community Development Institute
Institute for Policy Research
Northwestern University